



Research traditions and theoretical perspectives, 15 hp

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Introduction- course content

During this course we will focus on the underlying questions and concepts that have shaped research within the social sciences, and more specifically, educational research. We will start our journey with a retake on the history of science: what has shaped the overall ideas of what gets legitimized as “knowledge” in relation to other forms of knowing and proposing (epistemology) and the nature of our existence (ontology).

The course aims at developing *generic academic competences* rather than on the particularities of the doctoral project.

The course will focus on questions and original hypotheses concerning overarching phenomena/concepts like “society” and “individuals”, “language”, “power”, “symbols”, and “knowledge”, “agency” as well as central phenomena within education like “learning” and “identity” and “subject formation”. These features are discussed with examples from various theoretical perspectives and methodological traditions.

A scientific theory can be described as a net of concepts trying to frame and define a particular phenomenon and hence placing various aspects thereof in focus while others will fall into the shadow: Contrasting theoretical and methodological traditions produce data and carry out analysis on individual, intrapersonal, interactional, institutional, overarching historical and societal or conceptual levels (philosophical methods) as well as analysis of materiality. These traditions construe different forms of knowledge of complex phenomena. Some traditions describe theory as what comes out of an *empirical close-up analysis* while others state their philosophical assumptions *before* they engage in data production and data analysis.

During the course we will focus on the relationship between *theory*, *methodology* and *data*, and on how these parts of the research process are carried out and represented within different research traditions. Finally, we will discuss analysis and how results are represented, and conclusions are drawn from data in relation to the overall theoretical assumptions confining the phenomena studied. This will give us the opportunity to critically assess the claims made in different traditions and to examine issues of validity and reliability in relation to research questions in education.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completing the course, the doctoral student is expected to have:

- a broad competence within and a systematic understanding of the research area of education/didactics,
- developed an increased familiarity with scientific theoretical foundations, scientific methodology, in general, and specific theories and methods applied especially within the field of pedagogy/didactics,
- competence to critically assess philosophical and scientific assumptions within different research traditions in education.

Preparations for seminar 1

Read and write an abstract about the following:

Benton, T. Craib, I. (2023). Introduction; Empiricism and Positivism in Science; Some Problems of Empiricism and Positivism and the chapter Science, Nature and Society: Some Alternatives to Empiricism.

Scruton, R. (1995). *A short history of modern philosophy: from Descartes to Wittgenstein*. (2. rev. and enl. ed.) London: Routledge. Chapter 34, 7 & 9 (58 p.)

Writing process and knowledge making

Studies at the doctoral level require that students focus on *representing* their reading of the course texts *in written form*. Seminars and workshops are therefore prepared when doctoral students *write compulsory abstracts on literature*. Externalizing reading is central for capturing every text's central idea and critically reviewing and comparing the research traditions in focus. The abstracts will serve well when working with the final paper.

An abstract - with critical questions - is a knowledge representation that forms the basis for discussions and further deepening reflections and hence contributes to making significant associations with prior learning. Abstracts, about minimum 2 maximum 4 pages, should address key themes and concepts in literature. *It is a requirement to have published an abstract in Athena two days before each seminar and to give constructive feedback to one student*. Course leaders read abstracts before the seminars and give verbal feedback to the group by raising themes and issues stemming from the doctoral students' reflections

Further purposes of the abstract writing are:

- to set the basis for group discussions,



- produce materials for the final examination,
- to make it possible to get an insight into one's own and the peers' thinking throughout the learning process.

Feedback and group discussions with a “critical friend”

During course, doctoral students work continuously together by giving each other feedback (critical friend) on abstracts in small group discussions..

Course Activities and preparations: the steps of engagement

The course is built on a sequence of seven steps of engagement and reflection focusing on the themes and issues for each of the 10 full-day group sessions.

1. A) Videotaped lectures. The lectures will address the core concepts and themes in literature B) individual reading of the course literature.
2. Writing an abstract on the literature including preparing seminar questions.
3. Acting ‘critical friend’ by reading and reflecting on a peer’s paper. (Athena provides you with the paper you are supposed to read and comment on.)
4. Plenum seminar: the group discusses issues in relation to literature and video lectures. The course leaders relate the overall themes and questions of the course to the lectures

At the end of the course:

1. A doctoral student lead seminar on a topic of student’s choosing.
2. Individual work and symposia: presenting and critiquing the individual exam papers during a symposium.
3. Revising your paper after the symposia and uploading the final version for grading.

Schedule

<https://cloud.timeedit.net/su/web/stud1/riq6YQ09019Z69Qy6Q75Z1Q666Z250435Yh4Y0gQ10og764XZ7y5cnQ6xxvZqaQo.html>

For detailed planning see the appendix.



The last session on January 26, 2026 (13:00-17:00) when PhD student's papers are presented and critiqued by a fellow student. After that PhD students have until February 13 to their disposal to revise their papers before they are uploaded to Athena and graded by the course teachers.

Reading schedule and preparations for the first seminar on September 15.

To reach the learning outcomes doctoral students are supposed to allocate 50% of their work time for course work. The course literature amounts to ca 1200 pages in total which makes **It necessary to prepare a reading schedule** for the course work. You will find detailed planning in the attachment to this guide. Written an abstract/pm of 2-4 pages. Note, the abstracts are supposed to be an externalization of your reading and **not** a 'perfect paper! (If you fall ill or need to take care of a sick child etc., just mention this to the course leaders and move on in the schedule. You can write a PM on the missed content/seminar later.)

Compensation for absence

If you miss a mandatory seminar you can compensate. Please contact the teachers.

Examination

The final paper should contain the various themes presented during the course as well as a critical, comparative reflection on these themes. The paper is supposed to demonstrate that learning outcomes have been achieved. Doctoral students can choose to relate the course literature to their own project, and the more specific questions this raises. Each paper will be discussed during the symposium at the end of the course. The final paper should be sent to the course leaders on February 1. The grades used are G (pass) or U (fail). Students will be notified of their grade within 15 working days, via email. Possible re-examinations are submitted after the first consultation with the course leaders.

Criteria for Grading

To receive a passing grade, the doctoral student must demonstrate in their final paper that they have fulfilled the learning outcomes of the course through:

- Presenting, conducting analysis, and critically reflecting over the main themes of the course and the course literature, in a coherent manner.



- Being able to demonstrate differences and similarities between the original hypotheses and methodologies as well as the analytical premises presented in the course concerning perspectives and research traditions.
- Making concise arguments and being grammatically correct to demonstrate an attention to detail that is expected of scholarly work.
- Being precise and correctly citing and referencing according to the APA System.

Plagiarism and self-plagiarism

One can cite other sources, but both direct and indirect quotes must always be referenced using correct and full references. Copying or extracting shorter or longer sections of text and indicating that one is the author of this text is prohibited. This is considered plagiarism. Also prohibited is using sections from previously graded text (aka self-plagiarism).

Plagiarism is regarded fundamentally as a crime, not only against established research ethics, but also against the general approach towards one's own and others' texts. Plagiarism is cheating and may be grounds for suspension. All course papers are submitted to Mondo and checked by software for originality.

Examination: draft, public discussion, and grading

In their assessment report, the doctoral students will show in the text that they achieved the expected learning outcomes for respective courses. Generally, for all examinations at the doctoral level the doctoral student can:

- report, comparatively analyze and critically meta-reflect on the course's main themes and literature in a coherent way,
- argue nuanced and linguistically correctly in line with the requirements and contingency of the academic genre and,
- manage accuracy and referencing correctly according to the APA or Harvard system.

Course Evaluation

Once the grading has been done, students will receive a link to the course evaluation via email. All comments made in the course evaluation are completely anonymous.

Course literature

Beck, U. (2010). Unpacking cosmopolitanism for the social sciences: a research agenda. *The British Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 61, 381-403. (22 p.)

Benton, T. Craib. I. (2023). *The Philosophical Foundations of Social Thought Philosophy of Social Science* Bloomsbury Publishing PLC E-book. (328 p.)

Bernstein, R. (1992) The Resurgence of Pragmatism. *Social Research*, 59(4), 813-840.(28 p.)

Biesta, G., Priestley, M. & Robinson, S. (2015). The role of beliefs in teacher agency. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 21(6), 624 - 640. (17p)

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Chapter 1-3 (36p).

Burr, V., & Dick, P. (2017). Social constructionism (pp. 59-80). *Palgrave Handbook of Critical Social Psychology* Palgrave Macmillan UK. (25 p.)

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/978-1-137-51018-1_4

Corman, S. (2005). Postpositivism. In S. May, D. K. Mumby (Eds.) (2004). *Engaging organizational communication theory and research: Multiple perspectives*. Sage Publications. (16 p.)

Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., & Giri, R. A. (2021). Mixed-methods research: A discussion on its types, challenges, and criticisms. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 2(2), 25-36. (11 p.)

Delanty, G. (2006). The cosmopolitan imagination: critical cosmopolitanism and social theory. *British Journal of Sociology* 57(1), 25-47 (12 p.)

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education*. New York: The Free Press. Selected Chapters. (about 40 p.)

Douven, I. (2022). *The art of abduction*. MIT press. Chapter 1-2 (68 p.)

Emirbayer, M. & Mische, A. (1998) What Is Agency. *American Journal of Sociology* 103(4), 962-1023. (50p)

Gadamer, H. (1988). On the circle of understanding. In H. Gadamer, J. M. Connolly, E. K. Specht, & W. Stegmüller (Eds.), *Hermeneutics versus science? Three German*



views: *Essays* (pp. 68–78). University of Notre Dame Press. (Access via Athena) (11 pages)

Garrison, J. and Neiman, A. (2002). Pragmatism and Education. In *The Blackwell Companion to the Philosophy of Education*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 19-37. (18 p.)

Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press. Chapter 1-2. (92p).

Gunnarsson, K. (2021). How to expand the boundaries: feminist posthumanist elaborations on change in education. *Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology*, 12(1).

Hekman, S.J. (2010). *The material of knowledge feminist disclosures*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press. [p. 1–9, 47–128, available online on SUB]

Insulander I., Kempe, A-L., Lindstrand, F., Selander, S. & West, T. (2021). Designs for learning– Designs in learning. I: G. Kress, S. Selander, R. Säljö & C. Wulf (red.). *Learning as social practice. Beyond education as an individual enterprise*. Routledge, Ebook p. 30–69 (39 p.)

Juelskjær, M. (2020). Mattering pedagogy in precarious times of (un) learning. *Matter: Journal of New Materialist Research*, 1(1), 52–79. (27 p.)

Kanselaar, G. (2002). *Constructivism and socio-constructivism. Constructivism and socio-constructivism*, 1-7. PDF on-line (6 p.)

Kelly, T., "Evidence", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/evidence/>.

Loh, J. (2013). Inquiry into issues of trustworthiness and quality in narrative studies: A perspective. *The qualitative report*, 18(33), 1. (15 p.)

Mische, A. (2009). Projects and possibilities: *Researching futures in action*. *Sociological Forum*, 24(3), 694–704. <https://doi-org.ezp.sub.su.se/10.1111/j.1573-7861.2009.01127.x> (20 pages)

Moran, D. (2000). Introduction. In *Introduction to phenomenology* (pp. 1–22). Routledge. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezp.sub.su.se/lib/sub/detail.action?docID=168648> (Access via Stockholm University Library) (22 pages)

- Nicholson, C. (2013). Education and the Pragmatic Temperament. In *Cambridge Companion to Pragmatism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 249-271. (22 p.)
- Nussbaum, M. (2008). *Toward a Globally Sensitive Patriotism*. *Daedalus*, 137(3), 78-93 (15 p.)
- Paltridge, B. (2021). Discourse Analysis. In: Mohebbi, H., Coombe, C. (eds) *Research Questions in Language Education and Applied Linguistics. Springer Texts in Education*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79143-8_7
- Rodrigues, M. V., & Emmeche, C. (2019). Abduction and styles of scientific thinking. *Syntheses*, 1-29 .(28. p.)
- Ryan, G. S. (2022). Postpositivist critical realism: philosophy, methodology and method for nursing research. *Nurse researcher*, 30(3). (16 p.)
- Rönström, N. (2019). Educational Cosmopolitanism: Complex Capabilities, Institutional Requirements and a Research Stance. *Knowledge Cultures*, 7(3), 87-109. (22 p.)
- Scruton, R. (1995). *A short history of modern philosophy: from Descartes to Wittgenstein*. (2. rev. and enl. ed.) London: Routledge. Chapter 3-4, 7 & 9 (58 p.)
- Schunk, D.H. (2020). *Learning theories: an educational perspective*. (Eighth edition). Pearson. Chapter 1-4 and 8.
- Schütz, A. (1953). Common-sense and scientific interpretation of human action. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 14(1), 1–38. <https://doi-org.ezp.sub.su.se/10.2307/2104013> (38 pages)
- Shook, J.R. & Margolis, J. (eds.) (2006) *A Companion to Pragmatism*. Oxford: Blackwell. Chapters 1, 4, 25, 27, 29, 31 and 36.
- Säljö, R. (2021). The conceptualization of learning in learning research. Form introspectionism and conditioned reflexes to meaning-making and performativity in situated practices in Kress, G, Selander, S., Säljö, R. & Wulf, C. (2021). *Learning As Social Practice: Beyond Education As an Individual Enterprise* . Routledge. Ebook page 146-168 (22 p.)



Tavory, I., & Timmermans, S. (2014). *Abductive analysis: Theorizing qualitative research*. The University of Chicago Press. Introduction + chapter 2-3, 5 (57 p.)

Thomas, G. (2010). Doing case study: Abduction not induction, phronesis not theory. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(7), 575-582. doi:10.1177/1077800410372601 (7 p.)

Youdell, D., Lindley, M., Shapiro, K., Sun, Y., & Leng, Y. (2020). From science wars to transdisciplinarity: the inescapability of the neuroscience, biology, and sociology of learning. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 41(6), 881-899.(18 p.)