

Methodology of Economics and Political Science

Lecturer: Asbjørn Steglich-Petersen

In this course, we will go through some of the most important philosophical and methodological issues in social science with particular emphasis on economics and political science. With reference to these disciplines, we will examine the nature of explanation, the possibility of scientific laws, the role of scientific models, the limits and prospects of rational choice theory, the justifiability of methodological individualism, the entanglement of facts and values in scientific practice, the nature of randomized control trials and their use in public policy, the influence of expert knowledge on public policy making, and the epistemology of group decision making.

Syllabus

1. Introduction: themes from Mill and Friedman

- J.S. Mill (1844): "On the definition of political economy; and on the method of investigation proper to it." In *Essays on Some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy*. London: Parker, 120-64. (e-book available online via Statsbiblioteket)
- M. Friedman (1953): "The methodology of positive economics." In *Essays in Positive Economics*. University of Chicago Press, 3-43. (e-book available online via Statsbiblioteket)

2. Social scientific laws and explanation

- H. Kincaid (2004): "There are laws in the social sciences." In Christopher Hitchcock (ed.), *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Science*. Blackwell Publishing, 168-186. (Blackboard)
- J.T. Roberts: "There are no laws in the social sciences." In Christopher Hitchcock (ed.), *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Science*. Blackwell Publishing, 151-167. (Blackboard)

3. Social scientific models

- J. Reiss (2012): "The explanation paradox." *Journal of Economic Methodology* 19: 43-62. AUL
- R. Sudgen (2000): "Credible worlds: the status of theoretical models in economics." *Journal of Economic Methodology* 7: 1-31. AUL

4. Rational choice theory I: Limits and Challenges

- D. Green and I. Shapiro (1994): *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press: ch. 1, 2, 3, pp. 1-46. (Blackboard)
- J. Ferejohn, D. Satz, (1995): "Unification, Universalism, and Rational Choice Theory" *Critical Review* 9.1: 71-84. AUL

5. Rational choice theory II: Behavioural (Law &) Economics

- C. Jolls, C.R., Sunstein, and R. Thaler (1998): "A Behavioral Approach to Law and Economics." *Stanford law Review*, 50: 1471-1550. AUL
- R. A. Posner (1998): "Rational Choice, Behavioral Economics, and the Law." *Stanford Law Review* 50: 1551-1575. AUL

- 6. Methodological individualism and holism I: General issues**
- J. Heath (2015): "Methodological Individualism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.)
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/methodological-individualism/>
 - C. List & K. Spiekermann (2013): "Methodological Individualism and Holism in Political Science: A Reconciliation." *American Political Science Review* 107: 629-643. AUL
- 7. Methodological individualism and holism II: The possibility of group agency**
- C. List & P. Pettit (2011): *Group Agency: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents*. Oxford University Press, pp. 1-78. (e-book available online via Statsbiblioteket)
- 8. Facts and values in social science I: General Issues**
- J. Dupré (2009): "Facts and Values" in H. Kincaid, J. Dupré, A. Wylie (eds.), *Value Free Science: Ideal or Illusion?* Oxford University Press, pp. 27-41 (e-book available online via Statsbiblioteket)
 - J. Reiss (2017): "Fact-Value Entanglement in Positive Economics." *Journal of Economic Methodology* 24: 134-49. AUL
- 9. Facts and values in social science II: The Economics of Climate Change**
- N. Stern (2007): *Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change*. Sections 2 and 2A (23-52)
http://mudancasclimaticas.cptec.inpe.br/~rmclima/pdfs/destaques/stern_review_report_complete.pdf
 - P. Dasgupta (2007): "Commentary: The Stern Review's Economics of Climate Change", *National Institute Economic Review*, 199: 4-7. AUL
 - J. Broome (2007) - 'Climate Change: Why Economics Requires Ethics', The Knox Lecture, University of St Andrews.
<http://benjaminferguson.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Broome-2007.pdf>
- 10. RCTs and Evidence Based Policy**
- N. Cartwright & J. Hardie (2012): "Evidence-based policy: A practical guide to doing it better." Oxford University Press. Part I. pp. 3-58. (e-book available online via Statsbiblioteket)
 - J. Reiss (2013): *Philosophy of Economics. A Contemporary Introduction*. Routledge. Chapter 11, pp. 195-207. (Blackboard)
- 11. Judgment aggregation and group deliberation (ASP)**
- C. List (2005): "Group knowledge and group rationality." *Episteme* 2: 25-38. AUL
 - C.R. Sunstein (2006): "Deliberating groups versus prediction markets (or Hayek's challenge to Habermas)." *Episteme* 3: 192-213. AUL
- 12. The epistemology of relying on experts (ASP)**
- A. Goldman (2001): "Experts: Which ones should you trust." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63: 185-210. AUL
 - D. Coady (2006): "When experts disagree." *Episteme* 3: 68-79. AUL