



# Course syllabus

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## Philosophy of Science for Gender Studies, 4,5 CTS

Vetenskapsfilosofi för genusvetare, 4,5 hp

**Credit points:** 4,5

**Responsible department:** Umeå Centre for Gender Studies

**Main field of study:** Gender Studies

**Level:** PhD Studies

**Subject area:** Gender Studies

### 1. Confirmation

The course syllabus has been confirmed by the Director of Umeå Centre for Gender Studies on October 1, 2012 on delegation from the Board of Umeå Centre for Gender Studies (decision for delegation April 4, 2008) and is valid from autumn term 2012.

### 2. Contents

Gender Studies—as an academic discipline—is firmly rooted within the Social Sciences and Humanities, but research in the subject is conducted within all faculties. Researchers in the subject therefore must often orientate themselves within very different research traditions, either individually or as part of multi-disciplinary research groups. However, PhD students often lack background knowledge of other research traditions than those that dominate the specific subject that was a part of their undergraduate and graduate training. The aim of this course is to give PhD students in Gender Studies an enhanced understanding of the basics of scientific research generally, as well as for similarities and differences between Natural Science, Social Science and the Humanities.

The course contains a survey of various schools of thought in the philosophy of science, such as Positivism, Falsificationism, Kuhn's Theory of Paradigms, and Hermeneutics. Also, of how these philosophical schools of thought have influenced the development of various research traditions. A particular focus is on the distinction between Quantitative and Qualitative Research, but also on the multitude of research-practices within the Qualitative Research tradition.

The course will address an often overlooked but important difference between the conditions of different scientific disciplines, notably the difference in the 'ontology' of each discipline—



basically, differences in the kind of phenomena that constitute the subject matter of each discipline; the Natural Sciences study mind-independent matter in all its forms, while the Social Sciences and the Humanities study phenomena that are often only contingently related to material objects and therefore cannot be directly studied with the use of objective measurements. The goal is to clarify how that ontology is relevant for the difference in methodology between disciplines. In this respect much attention will be paid to the nature of social constructions and how they might be scientifically studied.

### 3. Expected learning outcomes

After the course the doctoral student should:

- have an understanding of main schools of thought in the philosophy of science
- be able to independently and critically reflect on the ontological, epistemological, and methodological aspects of research in scientific disciplines within all the main research traditions.

### 4. Form of instruction

The instruction will be in the form of lectures and discussion seminars where participants will critically scrutinize research reports from a philosophical perspective.

### 5. Examination modes

Examination of the course consists of a final paper on an assigned topic, and student evaluation will be based in part on active seminar participation.

### 6. Course literature

#### *Books*

Chalmers, Alan, *What is This Thing Called Science?*, 3rd edition, Maidenhead: Open University Press, 1999.

Rosenberg, Alexander, *Philosophy of Social Science*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1995.

#### *Articles*

Carter, Stacy M. & Miles Little, 'Justifying Knowledge, Justifying Method, Taking Action: Epistemologies, Methodologies, and Methods in Qualitative Research', *Qual Health Res* 17(10): 1316–1328, 2007

Durkheim, Emile, 'Social Facts', in Martin and McIntyre (eds.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994, pp. 433-40. [available online: <http://media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener/dss/Durkheim/SOCFACT.HTML>]

Hacking, I. (1999). *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, USA, Harvard University Press.

Haslanger, Sally, "'Objective" Reality, "Male" Reality, and Social Construction,' in A. Garry and M. Pearsall, ed., *Women, Knowledge, and Reality*, 2nd edition (NY: Routledge, 1996) pp. 84-107. (or "Ontology and Social Construction," *Philosophical Topics* 23:2 (Fall 1995): 95-125.)

Ingthorsson, Rögnvaldur, 'Det är skillnad på att studera människor och salt', *Tvårsnitt* 2007:4, [English translation available from:  
[http://lu.academia.edu/RögnvaldurIngthorsson/Papers/305903/Studying\\_Salt\\_is\\_Different\\_from\\_Studying\\_Humans\\_On\\_the\\_Defining\\_Characteristics\\_of\\_the\\_Human\\_Sciences](http://lu.academia.edu/RögnvaldurIngthorsson/Papers/305903/Studying_Salt_is_Different_from_Studying_Humans_On_the_Defining_Characteristics_of_the_Human_Sciences)]

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[http://lu.academia.edu/RögnvaldurIngthorsson/Papers/305901/Social\\_Constructions\\_are\\_Objectively\\_Real](http://lu.academia.edu/RögnvaldurIngthorsson/Papers/305901/Social_Constructions_are_Objectively_Real)]

Johnson, Julie K. & Paul Barach, 'The Role of Qualitative Methods in Designing Health Care Organizations', *Environment and Behavior*, 40 (2): 191-204, 2008.

Longino, Helen, 'Can there be a feminist Science?', *Hypatia* 2(3): 51-64, 1987; (also: in A. Garry and M. Pearsall, ed., *Women, Knowledge, and Reality*, 2nd edition (NY: Routledge, 1996) pp. 251-63.

Janice M. Morse, "'It's Only a Qualitative Study!" Considering the Qualitative Foundations of Social Sciences', *Qual Health Res* 18(2): 147-48, 2008.

Skeat, J. & A. Perry, 'Grounded theory as a method for research in speech and language therapy', *Int J Lang Comm Dis*, 43(2): 95-109, 2008.

Westmarland, Nicole, 'The Quantitative/Qualitative Debate and Feminist Research: A Subjective View of Objectivity', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 2(1) [On-line Journal], 2001. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/1-01/1-01westmarland-e.htm> [Date of Access: 2007-11-23].

## **Other useful sources**

Bird, Alexander, "Thomas Kuhn", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, [online resource], Edward N. Zalta (ed.), [available online : <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/thomas-kuhn/> ], 2011.

Bohman, James and Rehg, William, 'Jürgen Habermas', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online resource], Edward N. Zalta (ed.), [available online: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/habermas/> ]. (Section 3.2. Habermas's Discourse Theory), 2011.

Hansson, Sven Ove, 'Science and Pseudo-Science', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, [online resource], Edward N. Zalta (ed.), [available online: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/pseudo-science/>], 2008.

Mallon, Ron, 'Naturalistic Approaches to Social Construction', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online resource], Edward N. Zalta (ed.), [available online: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2008/entries/social-construction-naturalistic/> ], 2008.

Malpas, Jeff, 'Hans-Georg Gadamer', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, [online resource], Edward N. Zalta (ed.), [available online: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/gadamer/>], 2009.



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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbolic\\_interactionism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbolic_interactionism); retrieved Aug 2012], 2012.

*Supplementary literature will be added*