
Study guide

Research traditions and theoretical perspectives (15 ECT)

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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, pedagogical/didactical 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).

During this course doctoral students are supposed to focus on the course themes and not so much on their own research project since the course aims at developing generic academic competences rather than focusing 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*, as well as central phenomena within education like *teaching*, *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. Within contrasting theoretical and methodological traditions, data is produced and analysis is carried out on individual, intrapersonal, interactional, institutional, overarching historical and societal or conceptual levels (philosophical methods) as well as in the form of analysis of materiality. Different forms of knowledge of complex phenomena is construed within these traditions. Some traditions describe theory as what comes out of an *inductive analysis* while others state their philosophical assumptions *before* they engage in the data production and data analysis.

During the course, we will focus on the relationship between *theory*, *methodology* and *the analysis of data*, and on how these parts of the research process are carried out and represented within different research traditions. Finally, we will discuss different forms of 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 render us the possibility 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.

Schedule and planning

<https://cloud.timeedit.net/su/web/stud1/ri107575X05Z06Q6Z66g0Y60y6096Y30Q04gQY6Q54737.html>

The course consists of 11 full day meetings 9:00-15:00. (The first half of the course will be given via Zoom depending on the status of the Pandemic.)

The last session in January 2022 will be a full day symposium when student papers are presented and critiqued by a fellow student. After that PhD students have 2 weeks 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 7.

To reach the learning outcomes, doctoral students are supposed to allocate 50 percent of their work time for course work. It is favorable to make a reading schedule. You will find a detailed planning in Athena. The course literature amounts to ca 1550 pages in total during about 10 weeks: You will need to read about 150 pages each week to prepare for the upcoming seminar. (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.)

The first week you will start by reading the following in preparation for the first seminar:

- Noddings (2015). chapter 3-4
- Potter, G. (2017). chapter 1- 3
- Sady, W. (2019) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/fleck/>
- Scruton, R. (1995). chapter 3 and 4 in Part 1 – Rationalism, and chapter 7 and 9 in Part 2 - Empiricism

Course activities and preparations: the steps of engagement

The course is built on a sequence of six steps of engagement and reflection focusing on the themes and issues for each of the eleven full day group session (number 12 is the symposia):

1. Individual preparations (reading and writing a PM of 2-4 pages concerning the themes of the course in relation to the literature for the upcoming seminar (and the videoclips). The PM will be uploaded in Athena no later than 3 days before the seminar). *Writing a PM as a preparation for the seminars and the exam is mandatory.*
2. Videotaped lectures as well as “live lectures”: The lectures will address the core concepts and themes in the literature as well as address the essential issues in the individual PMs.
3. Plenum seminar: the group discusses issues in relation to the literature and the lectures. The course leaders relate the overall themes and questions of the course to the lectures (Seminar days 9 am to 10:30 am).
4. Small group/critical friend seminar: reading and critiquing the PMs and posing questions for the following plenum seminar and preparations for interviews with the lecturers (Seminar days 10:30 -13:30 with a lunch break at 12:00-12:45).
5. Plenum seminar: students presenting their group work and reflecting together on upcoming new questions after completing the course seminars and lecturers (Seminar days 13:30-15:00).

6. Individual work: presenting and critiquing the individual exam papers during a symposium.

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 memos on the literature. A “PM” (memo) is a knowledge representation that forms the basis for discussions and further deepening reflections, and hence contributes into making significant associations with prior learning. PMs, about 2-4 pages, should address key themes and concepts in the literature for the upcoming seminar.

Further purposes of the PM writing are:

- to set the basis for group discussions,
- produce materials for the final examination,
- to make it possible to get an insight about one’s own and the peers’ thinking throughout the learning process.

Externalizing the reading is central for capturing every text’s central ideas and critically reviewing and comparing the texts in focus.

Feedback and group discussions: critical friends

At the courses, doctoral students work continuously together by giving each other feedback by acting *critical friend* on PMs in small group discussions (Costantino 2010). It is a course requirement to have published a PM three days before each seminar and to give constructive feedback to other students in small groups and at seminars. Teachers read all PMs before the seminars and give verbal feedback to the group by raising themes and issues stemming from the doctoral students’ reflections. Through the PMs, doctoral students get insight on various aspects of the texts by comparing each other’s readings and mind maps. They may at one point ask for oral or written feedback from teachers. In two occasions in connection with the examination, students get feedback once again.

In each PM and in conjunction with group discussions that introduce seminar days, doctoral students raise issues related to the course themes and literature that will be discussed in plenary sessions to further deepen the reflections. Doctoral students will interview the lecturers to deepen the understanding of the course themes.

Compensation of 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. Each paper will be discussed during the symposium at the end of the course. The final paper should be sent to the course leaders two weeks after the symposium. 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 about a month 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 Harvard 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 a software for originality.

Examination: draft, public discussion, and grading

In their assessment report, the doctoral students are expected to show that they have achieved the expected learning outcomes. Generally, for all examinations at the doctoral level the doctoral student is expected to:

- report, comparatively analyse 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 is completed, students will receive a link to the course evaluation via email. All comments made in the course evaluation are anonymous.

Course literature

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