



Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit - 2021-2022

History of Social Science

Course Code	S_HSS
Credits	6
Period	P5
Course Level	200
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Social Sciences
Course Coordinator	dr. F. Colombijn
Examiner	dr. F. Colombijn
Teaching Staff	dr. F. Colombijn
Teaching method(s)	Lecture

Course Objective

The course has six learning objectives:

Knowledge and understanding. At the end of this course, students are able to

- (1) Argue that social sciences are the work of people, with all the concomitant social differences, forms of inequality, coincidences, forms of cooperation, et cetera;
- (2) Explain the emergence of disciplines in the social sciences from general historical, societal changes.

Application. At the end of this course, students are able to

- (1) Recognize risks of societal developments that threaten the independence of researchers;
- (2) Make a well-argued assessment which sometimes contradictory ethical considerations must prevail in concrete cases.

Making judgements. At the end of this course, students are able to

- (1) Make a critical judgment of the position of the own discipline in the social sciences;
- (2) Understand that competition is a driving force in science, and are able to make a critical assessment of unequal chances of success (measured at the level of countries, languages, gender and ethnicity).

Course Content

Science in general, or social science in particular, is an institutionalized practice, embedded in a societal context. Science is a form of human behaviour, in which processes of institutionalisation interact with making rational choices, fully based on scientific insights and scientific standards. Scientists must operate in social structures of which they are only partially in control. By its focus on science as an institutionalized practice, the course connects perfectly to one of the main themes in social sciences: the tension between structure and agency. Various themes will be discussed weekly within this general framework, such as: the reasons why new disciplines emerge, great, inspiring examples of scientists, societal and political doubt about the value of science, the white, male, Western hegemony of science, coincidence in science, fraud, the relationship to clients, and the reason why big scientific debates are rarely settled on the basis of strictly rational grounds.

Teaching Methods

Lectures, possibly formative tests and clips

Method of Assessment

Multiple choice questions and essay questions

Literature

Eller, J.D. (2017). Social science and historical perspectives: Society, science, and ways of knowing. London & New York: Routledge. An additional reading list will be published on Canvas.

Target Audience

BSc1 CADS, CS, POL; other students are welcome to take this course as an elective course.