

(Note: This is an incomplete draft, with more readings to be specified shortly after the start of the semester.)

UST 802:

Frameworks of Inquiry

Spring Semester, 2007

Monday, 6 - 9:40

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This is a seminar for doctoral students. It has a two-fold purpose:

1. To explore various **frameworks of inquiry** in social science, especially in specialization areas included in the College's PhD program: the ontological, epistemological and value underpinnings of scholarly work in these fields.
2. To begin to socialize students into **the role of scholar** and into the life of the mind.

The course covers the ontological, epistemological, and value dimensions of major frameworks of inquiry in social science:

- Quantitative empirical/positive social science
- Interpretive social science (phenomenology, hermeneutics)
- Critical theory
- Pragmatism
- Post-structuralism and post-modernism
- Political theory/philosophy
- Historical

It includes methodologies, methods, techniques, and standards of quality for each research approach. It also includes examination of major debates in applied social science scholarship:

- Relationships between theory and practice
- The question of whether diverse frameworks are incommensurable
- Debates and practices specific to the College's specialty areas (public administration, economic development, housing/neighborhood development, environmental studies)

Frameworks of Inquiry: This seminar will immerse students in considering the proposition that inquiry has a logic. Finding out about and making sense of things and activities, objects, and situations takes place based on assumptions about the nature of reality, truth, knowledge, and the purposes of inquiry. This is the case whether one is finding out how to deal with a practical problem in an agency or conducting the more

formal inquiry that characterizes scholarship. Agreements among inquirers about these assumptions shape intellectual work. These agreements define what counts as evidence, proper relationships between the inquirer and the field of inquiry, appropriate methodology, standards of validity, and standards of scholarly quality.

The idea of framework implies the existence of a structure of premises and processes on which inquiry is based. In social science generally and the College's specialty areas in particular no one framework governs all inquiry. There are several frameworks with which students need to become familiar. We will explore them in depth. By the end of the semester, students will be expected to have a working knowledge of the foundational premises and operational agreements that govern inquiry in these frameworks and a grounded sense of how they might be employed in the student's specialty area. Consciousness of these assumptions and agreement will help students turn themselves into scholars, by understanding better what they are up to when they do particular kinds of scholarly work.

The Role of Scholar: Pursuing a Ph.D. is significantly different from pursuing a professional degree such as an MPA or an MUPPD. In professional education, you aim primarily to improve practice skills: to acquire knowledge that will help you directly or indirectly to be a more effective practitioner on the job. In the case of the Ph.D. you are aiming to become a scholar. While some of the challenge lies in acquiring specific knowledge and skills, much of it entails shifting yourself from the role of student to the role of scholar and intellectual -- from *consumer* to *producer* of scholarship:

Moving **away** from the idea that the course is simply an exercise in mentally digesting information and then demonstrating mastery of it.

Moving **toward** the idea that the course is an opportunity to engage in the exchange of ideas and to explore the fit between your existing interests and major issues in the field.

Moving **away** from regarding yourself as an object that is being evaluated by the professor for its mental quality.

Moving **toward** a sense of yourself as an organized inquirer, pursuing evolving interests and an evolving scholarly identity.

Moving **away** from regarding one's colleagues in the class as competitors and judges in a mutual game of who has the best intellect.

Moving **toward** regarding one's colleagues as a learning community.

Exploration of the frameworks of inquiry, along with examples from the various literatures, will facilitate the process of connecting yourself with the field of your specialty area, beginning to find a place in it that is uniquely yours. We will also spend considerable time discussing the meaning of "scholarship" and "scholarly standards" within the context of these areas.

Considerable debate has taken place over the last two decades or so about what the foundations of inquiry should be, what kind of research is most valuable, and what

standards of quality should be applied to research, including what counts as a good doctoral dissertation. We will become familiar with this dialogue and examine its implications for the design and execution of dissertations and other scholarly work, as well as for academic careers in public administration.

By the end of the course, students should be able to demonstrate the following abilities:

- Articulate ontological, epistemological, and value assumptions of frameworks of inquiry in social science
- Identify frameworks as displayed in published research
- Critique published research in terms appropriate to its framework
- State research question(s) appropriate to each framework
- Specify methodologies, methods, and techniques appropriate to each framework and articulate the logic that connects them
- State the nature of the theory-practice issue for each framework
- Articulate appropriate standards of quality for each framework
- Describe the state of the field in the student's specialty area and develop an initial reading of research practice in the field.

Course Approach

This course will be conducted as a seminar. This means that the primary learning approach will be group discussion. The model for the seminar will be that of the learning community -- a collaborative group process based on mutual respect and support. Members of a learning community are active seekers after knowledge, good listeners, participants in the ongoing discussions, and constructive critics of their own and one another's work.

A genuine learning community will only be possible if all members including the instructor prepare thoroughly for each class by reading carefully the material to be discussed. While people vary in their comfort with active participation in discussions, you can't become a scholar without engaging in scholarly dialogue. Therefore all students will be expected to speak. In the same way, those who like to talk a lot will need to work on limiting their contributions so as to ensure air time for everyone.

Class Materials

There are six textbooks, all but one of which may be obtained from the bookstore. Most of them are also available new and used on line, such as through Amazon.

Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*

P. Godfrey-Smith, *Theory and Reality*

Brian Fay, *Social Theory and Political Practice* (on ECR)

Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*

Lynn, Heinrich, and Hill, *Improving Governance*
Bent Flyvberg, *Making Social Science Matter*

Several articles and book chapters will be placed on electronic course reserve or handed out in class. ***This is not yet a complete list.***

Articles illustrating use of frameworks in public administration:

Gene A. Brewer, Sally Coleman Selden, and Rex L. Facer, "Individual conceptions of public service motivation," *Public Administration Review*, 2000.
Ralph P. Hummel, "Stories managers tell," *Public Administration Review*, 1990.
Clare Ginger, "Interpreting roads in roadless areas." *Administration and Society*, 1998.
Wolf V. Heydebrand, "Organization and praxis"

Articles dealing with research controversies in specialty areas:

Howard McCurdy and Robert Cleary, "Why can't we resolve the research issue in public administration?" *PAR* Jan-Feb 1984.
Guy B. Adams and Jay D. White, "Dissertation research in public administration and cognate fields," *PAR* Nov-Dec 1994.
Jay D. White, Guy B. Adams and John Forrester, "Knowledge and theory development in public administration," *PAR* Sept-Oct 1996.
"Dialogue: Knowledge and Research," *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, June 2000.
Laura A. Reese & Raymond A. Rosenfeld, "Yes, but...: Questioning the conventional wisdom about economic development." *EDQ*, November 2001.
Clarence N. Stone, "If civic culture is the answer, what is the question?" *EDQ*, November 2001
Ann M. O'Bowman, "Two steps forward, one step back" *EDQ*, November 2001.
Susan E. Clarke, "Well, maybe...: Taking context seriously in analyzing local economic development." *EDQ* November 2001.
Reese & Rosenfeld, "What is the question to which the answer is: Local civic culture?" *EDQ*, November 2001.

Assignments

Seminar questions: Students should bring with them to each class one or two questions or issues raised in your mind by the reading for that evening. Bring enough copies for everyone. We will circulate these before the discussion begins and use them to help us cover the topics everyone is interested in raising. Each topic or issue should be posed briefly -- 2-3 sentences at most. They can be things you think are important and need discussion or things you sense may be important but don't quite understand.

In-Class Writing: Several times during the semester, we will spend the last half hour or so of class practicing writing out answers to comps-type questions. On these occasions, you will write out an answer to a single question. This is so you will have more chances

to practice becoming skilled at thinking about and writing out answers to essay questions in an “in class” format.

Application of frameworks to published research: As we discuss the various approaches to social research, we will analyze examples of each approach in class. Then students will be required to analyze another example, handed out at the end of the class and due one week later.

Midterm exam: There will be a midterm modeled after the comprehensive exams. It will be intended to give you practice in writing acceptable comps answers. The exam will be structured like the comps. It will be a take-home exam, with one required question and one selected from two additional options. I will grade the exam as the comps are graded (pass or no-pass). For course purposes, each ‘pass’ question will be given an A, each ‘no-pass’ question a C. Handed out March 5, due March 19.

Final paper/report: Students will be required to prepare a report on research in their field of specialization. The report should be developed by reviewing several (at least three) major journals in this field for the last three years. Your report will describe the major topics on which scholars are currently focusing, the frameworks of inquiry used in this body of work, and the extent to which there is diversity of approach, and whether there is controversy about the issue of the most appropriate mode of research. The report should look for all the frameworks covered in the course and make clear which frameworks are being used a lot and which are not being used at all. The report should conclude with some “judgment calls” about whether the field needs more diversity of approach than it now reflects (if so, why), or whether there is in some sense “too much” diversity (if so, why), and make some recommendations about how research practice should develop in the future. There is no hard and fast page requirement, but I would guess that in order to do a good job this type of report would be about 10-15 pages long. The report is due on May 12.

Class Schedule

January 22: Introduction, review of syllabus
Discussion of Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*

January 29: Godfrey-Smith, *Theory and Reality*

February 5: Lynn, Heinrich & Hill, *Improving Governance*

February 12: Fay, *Social Theory and Political Practice*

February 19: No class (Presidents’ day)

February 26: Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*

- March 5: Ralph Hummel, “Stories managers tell: Why they are as valid as science”;
Clare Ginger, “Interpreting roads in roadless areas”;
Additional readings TBA
Midterm handed out
- March 12: Spring break
- March 19: Research controversies in PA, economic development, and housing
Review of dissertation abstracts
Midterm due
- March 26: No class (ASPA conference)
- April 3: Case studies (readings TBA)
- April 10: Pragmatism (readings TBA)
- April 17: Political theory and history (readings TBA)
- April 25: Postmodernism (readings TBA)
- May 2: Flyvberg, *Making Social Science Matter*

Grading

The grade for this course will be arrived at based on the following percentages:

Seminar participation (including questions):	20%
Critical reaction papers	10% each
Pragmatism report	20%
Exams	20% each

In assessing your work, I will be looking for signs of your development as a scholar:

- Ability to state and defend an intellectual position in writing
- Understanding of the various logics of inquiry and their significance for PA
- Active and collaborative participation in class discussions
- Use of additional material beyond class reading in written assignments, including exams

Please note that because of the emphasis on class discussions, attendance and active participation are crucial! More than two absences will lower your grade for the course, one notch (e.g., from A to A-) for each additional absence.

Please talk with me if you are having difficulty, don't understand what I'm looking for, or need other assistance. We will spend a lot of time in class making sure that all assignments and expectations are clear. Please let me know if you have suggestions that will make the seminar more effective.

Resource Material

Here are a few suggestions for background reading. There is a mountain of stuff in this area. Let me know if you need additional citations.

The following are classic or near-classic books. You should at least dip into some of them before you take your comprehensive exams. There is nothing like reading the original sources to give you a grounded sense of the issues involved.

Explanation

Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*

Jon Elster (ed.), *Rational Choice*

B. F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior*

Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*

Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*

Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*

Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*

Karl Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation*

Interpretation

R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*

Charles Taylor, *Explanation of Behavior*

Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture*

Zygmunt Bauman, *Hermeneutics and Social Science*

Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*

Fred Dallmayr and Thomas McCarthy(eds.), *Understanding and Social Inquiry*

Critique

Paul Connerton (ed.), *Critical Sociology*

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*

Frederic Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language*

Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*

Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*

Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (eds.), *Feminism as Critique*

Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*

Pragmatism

Most any of the writings of William James, Charles Sanders Pierce, or John Dewey will be enlightening. The most able contemporary commentator on pragmatism, in my judgment, is Richard Bernstein. Richard Rorty has transformed Deweyian pragmatism into a post-modern framework. See any of his writings, but especially *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.