**Division of Humanities**  
**Tentative Course Syllabus**

**Course Code:** HUMA5901  
**Course Title:** Philosophy of Social Science  
**Course Offered in:** Fall 2023, 3.00 – 5.50 pm on Tuesdays  
**Course Instructor:** Prof. Yafeng SHAN (Office: 3356; Office Hours: 2 – 4 pm on Wednesdays; Email: hmyfshan@ust.hk)

**Course Description:**  
This is an advanced module in the philosophy of social science. The students will be provided with an overview of important issues in the philosophy of social science. In particular, the module will examine some of the central debates in the philosophy of the social sciences, such as the paradigm wars and the methodological holism/individualism debate, and discuss some key concepts in the social sciences including ‘social mechanism’, ‘explanation’, and ‘causation’.

**Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course ILOs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the philosophical assumptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>behind the methodologies of the social sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Demonstrate an advanced understanding of key concepts in the social</td>
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<tr>
<td>sciences</td>
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<td>3. Demonstrate comprehensive familiarity of central debates in the</td>
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<tr>
<td>philosophy of the social sciences</td>
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<td>4. Demonstrate intellectual originality in their writing</td>
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<td>5. Consider the views of others, whether spoken or written, and develop</td>
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<td>a critique that furthers investigation</td>
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<td>6. Demonstrate their capacity to conduct extensive research and original,</td>
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<tr>
<td>independent study</td>
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<td>7. Construct and evaluate methodologies and arguments as well as propose</td>
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<td>new hypotheses</td>
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**Course Outline:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 Sep</td>
<td>An Introduction to the Origins of the Social Sciences</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>12 Sep</td>
<td>Positivism</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19 Sept</td>
<td>Interpretivism</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>26 Sep</td>
<td>Critical Realism</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 Oct</td>
<td>The Paradigm Wars</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10 Oct</td>
<td>Philosophical Foundations of Mixed Methods Research</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>17 Oct</td>
<td>Methodological Individualism and Holism</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>24 Oct</td>
<td>Explanation in the Social Sciences (1): Functionalism</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>31 Oct</td>
<td>Explanation in the Social Sciences (2): Structuralism</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in discussions.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Required Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 7 Nov</td>
<td>Causation in the Social Sciences (1): Causal Monism and Pluralism</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 14 Nov</td>
<td>Causation in the Social Sciences (2): Evidential Pluralism</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in the discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 21 Nov</td>
<td>Social Mechanism</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in the discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 28 Nov</td>
<td>Social Ontology</td>
<td>Read required reading, attend the lecture, and participate in the discussion.</td>
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**Planned Assessment Tasks:**

Final Assessment: A 3,500-word essay 100 %

Non-Assessed Assignment: A 20-minute presentation (NB. Each student is required to do one presentation.)

**Readings:**

**Week 1**

**Topic: An Introduction to the Origins of the Social Sciences**

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading**


**Week 1**

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading**


**Week 2**

**Topic: Positivism**

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading**


**Week 3**

**Topic: Interpretivism**

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading**


**Week 4**

**Topic: Critical Realism**

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading**
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**Week 5**  
**Topic: The Paradigm Wars**

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading**


**Week 6**  
**Topic: Philosophical Foundations of Mixed Methods Research**

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading**


**Week 7**  
**Topic: Methodological Individualism and Holism**

**Required Reading**

Further Reading

Week 8
Topic: Explanation in the Social Sciences (1): Functionalism
Required Reading

Further Reading

Week 9
Topic: Explanation in the Social Sciences (2): Structuralism
Required Reading

Further Reading
Jackson, Frank, and Philip Pettit. 1992. “Structural Explanation in Social Theory.” In Reduction, Explanation and Realism, edited by David Charles and Kathleen Lennon,
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Week 10  
Topic: Causation in the Social Sciences (1): Causal Monism and Pluralism

Required Reading

Further Reading

Week 11  
Topic: Causation in the Social Sciences (2): Evidential Pluralism

Required Reading

Further Reading

Week 12  
Topic: Social Mechanism

Required Reading

Further Reading


**Week 13**

**Topic: Social Ontology**

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading**
