

Social Psychology Methods Proseminar,
Section 1 (PSYCH 5606)
Wednesday 1:00 – 3:30 PM
Spring 2007

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Office hrs: Mon 2 – 4, or by appt.

Philosophical and Theoretical Issues in Social Psychology

We all know that psychology is a science with distinct methods and rules. All too often that definition blinds us to the larger issues and choices that guide our work. In this section of the social proseminar we are first going to discuss the philosophical roots of our field, with the goal of identifying and evaluating our assumptions about science and scientific progress. We will then focus our attention on the development and evaluation of theory and the knowledge it generates.

Requirements

- Written assignments [50%].
- Class participation [50%]. Public discussion and debate are essential scientific skills that must be practiced, daily if possible. Thus, I expect everyone to participate in class discussion each week. Think of it this way, each person should come to class prepared to share her/his thoughts on the readings for 15-20 minutes.

Classes and Readings

January 17: Introduction

January 24: Philosophy of Science: Truth and Theory Testing

Magee, B. (1985). *Philosophy and real world: An introduction to Karl Popper* (ch. 2 & 3, pp. 13-54). La Salle, IL: Open Court.

Putnam, H. (1991). The “corroboration” of theories. In R. Boyd, P. Gasper, and J. D. Trout (Eds), *The philosophy of science* (ch. 6, pp. 121 – 138). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

McGuire, W. J. (1999). *Constructing social psychology : creative and critical processes* (Ch. 12, pp. 395-432). New York: Cambridge University Press.

January 31: Philosophy of Science: Empiricism and Constructionism

Jost, J. T., & Kruglanski A. W. (2002). The estrangement of social constructionism and experimental social psychology: History of the rift and prospects for reconciliation. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6, 168-187.

Gergen, K. J. (2002). Beyond the empiricist/constructionist divide in social psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6, 188-191.

Potter, J. (2002). Experimenting with reconciliation: A comment on Jost and Kruglanski. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6, 192 - 193.

Pratto, F. (2002). Integrating experimental and social constructivist social psychology: Some of us are already doing it. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6, 194-198.

Schaller, M. (2002). Any theory can be useful theory, even if it gets on our nerves. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6, 199-203.

February 7 & 14: Building Theory in Social Psychology

Kuhn, T. (1991). Scientific Revolutions. In R. Boyd, P. Gasper, and J. D. Trout (Eds), *The philosophy of science* (ch. 7, pp. 139 – 158). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

McGuire, W. J. (1997). Creative hypothesis generating in psychology: Some useful heuristics. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 48, 1-30.

Fiske, S. T. (2004). Mind the gap: In praise of informal sources of formal theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8, 132 – 137.

Higgins, E. T. (2004). Making a theory useful: Lessons handed down. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8, 138 – 145.