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| **Doctoral Programme**  **Course Unit Outline 2021/22** | | |
| **Unit code:** | **BMAN 80032** | |
| **Title:** | **Epistemology – the quest for causalities (and creating knowledge)** | |
| **Credit value:** | 5 | |
| **Semester:** | 2 | |
| **Course Coordinator**  **contact details:** | Laszlo Czaban,  6.004  [Laszlo.czaban@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Laszlo.czaban@manchester.ac.uk)  Appointment by arrangement, but highly flexible | |
| **Other staff involved contact details:** |  | |
| **Pre-requisites**  **Co-requisites**  **Dependent course units**  **Restrictions** | Research Process 1 | |
| **Course unit overview** | | |
| This is a restructured version of the module that has been very successful for several years. The purpose of the restructuring is to accommodate the academic development of doctoral students better.  The goal of the module is to enhance the participants’ awareness of the epistemological problems in research in social science, in particular causalities, modelling, regression to the infinite, systemic analysis, etc.. The consequences of these to methodology and fallacies are thoroughly integrated. This is done through highly interactive sessions, centred around several papers in which epistemological issues are particularly important.  Building on the epistemology section of RP1, participants will be provided with the key frameworks related to the epistemological issues concerned, and these will be connected to concrete research problems that the students may encounter. | | |
| **Aims** | | |
| While participants will gain an understanding of the philosophy of social science, the key learning outcome is the ability of the participant to apply this understanding to his or her own research, as well as the ability to engage with other people’s academic work.  The module covers all the key issues in epistemology, the way in which epistemology influences research, conclusions and the formulation of theoretical frameworks. While all these aspects are covered in the course, in the available format it would be impossible to address them to the sufficient depth, thus a combination of highlighting issues, experiential learning and discussions are used.  The course discusses the key approaches to knowledge (rationalism, positivism, Marxism, critical realism, interpretivist approaches), their differences and similarities. Special attention is paid to the influence of personal (and social) values and beliefs to the formation of knowledge.  This is followed by discussions about the epistemological basis of the key tools of research such as categories, relationships, causalities, and so on. This then raises the question of the existence of theoretical laws in social science.  The course then covers the relationship between such assumed laws (or causalities) and the phenomenon, and the description of this (in particular the relationship between the narratives and the evidence).  Systemic views of the phenomena, multidisciplinary approaches are commonly applied, but the epistemological implications are often skipped or even ignored. The course covers these implications to enable the participants to recognise the need of managing these through methodology and/or construction of a framework, thus the course also covers the relationship between methodology and epistemology.  Finally, the course discusses the epistemology of the presentation of the research or analysis – the need of simplification and the danger of it in creating knowledge. Throughout the course these issues will be discussed at the level of the individual, at the level of the institutional influences and at the level of social influences.  In the process of the sessions, other approaches in philosophy (ontology, ethics, social construction) will also be extensively referred to. | | |
| **Objectives (Learning outcomes)** | | |
| Students will be able to  Understand the key epistemological problems and thoughts in social science  Understand the effects of epistemology on the methodology that they would use in their own research.  Apply the necessary corrective measures when epistemological issues influence the research outcomes (findings)  Being able to interact with thoughts coming from different epistemological stances.  The group work element, in addition to creating a dynamics and a learning environment for philosophical questions, would also enable students to  Structure their argument along the lines normally followed in keynote speeches and conference presentations  Encourage students to be able to respond to questions and objections on the fly  Provide skills of defending arguments while being inclusive of appropriate objections | | |
| **Syllabus content** | | |
| *Workshop 1*  *Session 1:* ***Laws in social science, do laws exist?***  *Discussion reading*: F. A. Hayek (1967): The Theory of Complex Phenomena, pp 22-42 in *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (uploaded to Blackboard)  *Session 2:* ***Constructed history, the question of path dependency and the analysis of the phenomenon***  *Discussion reading:* Wallerstein, I: Does India exist? (uploaded to Blackboard)  Session 3: ***Systemic views: trying to deal with the infinite in all directions: setting the boundaries of the research topic***  *Discussion reading*: Rosenkopf and Tushman: The Coevolution of Technology and Organization (uploaded to Blackboard)  Workshop 2  *Session 1:* ***Society and individuals – the level of analysis (Part I)***  *Discussion reading:* Hodgson, G. (2007). Meanings of methodological individualism. *Journal of Economic Methodology*, 14: 211-226  *Session 2:* ***Functional analysis in social science – the level of analysis (Part II)***  *Discussion reading*: Dore, R. F. (1961): Function and cause, American Sociological Review, Vol 16, pp. 843-583  *Session 3:* ***Reductionism versus simplification – Analysis versus presentation***  *Discussion reading*: Optimisation and Evolution (uploaded to Blackboard)  Workshop 3:  ***Reflections: Implications of epistemology to your own research***  **Session structure:**  In each session after a lecture of about 45-60 minutes, there will be group presentations (these can be formal (slides) or informal – ideally the style of a conference presentation) on the discussion reading (listed above). Each group present the same paper by answering the following questions:  What is the problem that the paper tackles?  How the logic is built to address the problem?  What are the epistemological implications of the logic?  What is the contribution to knowledge (if you were the reviewer, what would be your decision about the paper)?  What implications it may have to (any of the) group members’ research?  Interruptions of the presentations are encouraged, providing that the interruption is a question and the intention is clarification and helping the presenting group.  The discussion is followed by a summary by the tutor. | | |
| **Methods of delivery** | | |
| **Lectures** | |  |
| **Seminar/Tutorial/Workshop/Lab Hours** | | Two 6-hour workshops and one 3-hour workshop |
| **Independent Study** | | 135 |
| **Total Study Hours** | | 150 |
| **Reading List** | | |
| **Pre Reading: Listed in the content section**  Selective reading:  ***The readings below contain the original articles and book chapters of today’s epistemological debates (as participants come from very different backgrounds, and with very different research interest, it would be unreasonable to provide discipline specific readings or to provide readings relevant to very specific methodological and epistemological issues). Such specific readings on current debates will be provided on the basis of requests and as a result of the discussions developing during the sessions. Also, some of the approaches changed their name over the time.***  Kuhn, T.S. (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press  Kuhn, Thomas (1977). *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*. University of Chicago Press. pp. 320–39  Davidson, Donald, (1974): Psychology as Philosophy in pp. 43-52 Brown, S. C. (ed) *Philosophy of Psychology*, London Macmillan Press  Cohen, G. A. (1978): Functional Explanation in Marxism pp 278-296 in Cohen, G. A. *Karl Marx’s Theory of History*. A Defence, Princeton: Princeton University Press  Mahner, M. and Bunge, M. (2001): Function and Functionalism: A Synthetic Perspective *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 68, No. 1, pp. 75-94  Kincaid, H. (1986): Reduction, Explanation and Individualism, *Philosophy of Science* Vol 53 pp 492-513  Elster, j. (1983): Functional explanation, pp 55-68 and pp 241-243 in Elster, J. *Explaining Technical Change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press  Kincaid, H. (1990): Defending Laws in the Social Sciences, *Philosophy of Social Sciences* Vol 20 pp, 56-83  McIntyre, L (1993): ‘Complexity’ and Social Scientific Laws, *Sythese* Vol 97  Friedman (1966) The Methodology of Positive Economics, In *Essays In Positive Economics* Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, pp. 3-16, 30-43  Davidson (1963) Action, Reasons and Causes. *Journal of Philosophy* 60 (23):685-700  Luke (1968):Methodological Individualism reconsidered*, British Journal of Sociology* 19, pp. 119–29  Watkins (1957):Historical explanation in the Social Sciences *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science,* Vol 8 (30) pp. 104-117  Whitley (2000) *The intellectual and social organisation of science,* Oxford: OUP  Margaret Archer (2012):*The Reflexive Imperative*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge  Leitch et al (2009): The Philosophy and Practice of Interpretivist Research in Entrepreneurship: Quality, Validation, and Trust, *Organisational Research* 13(1) | | |
| **Assessment** | | |

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| **Mode of Assessment** | **Length required** | **Weighting within unit** |
| **Assessment is for those requiring unit credits (please make this clear to the tutor at the start of the elective)**  Assessment is built around 6 group presentations. Each group produces a 15-minute presentation on the discussion paper in the sessions (as specified in the content section) following the specified questions.  Both the content of the presentation and the involvement in discussions on the presentations of the other groups are parts of the assessment.  The purpose of the presentations is engagement rather than adjustment to perceived expectations.  As there is no requirement of using any presentation tool, there is no requirement of submitting any slides or notes.  The marking follows the reduced step marking scheme, thus primarily it evaluates the quality of the presentation and the engagement with the questions, and debates. There is an influence of relative performance as all the groups present all the discussion papers and as all students are encouraged to engage with the presentations of other groups.  The students will receive a detailed explanation of the mark of each of their presentations. The final mark is an average of these marks.  Students who are dissatisfied with their mark are given the opportunity of submitting a 2,000-word assignment on evaluating a published paper structured along the following questions:  What is the problem that the paper tackles?  How the logic is built to address the problem?  What are the epistemological implications of the logic?  What is the contribution to knowledge (if you were the reviewer, what would be your decision about the paper)? | 15-20 minutes of each presentation | Each presentation represents 1/6th of the mark. |
| **Resits**:  a 2,000-word assignment on evaluating a published paper structured along the following questions:  What is the problem that the paper tackles?  How the logic is built to address the problem?  What are the epistemological implications of the logic?  What is the contribution to knowledge (if you were the reviewer, what would be your decision about the paper)? |  |  |

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| **Feedback methods** |
| An initial formative feedback is provided right after the presentations (oral).  A formal formative feedback is provided after the last session in writing.  Depending on the development of the discussion during the session, there will be a summary provided of the key points of the discussion, the current understanding in the current literature, and the relevance to the presentations. These will be uploaded to BB within three days after the session at a length of about 1000-1500 words.  Apart from the course unit survey, the last session (half a day workshop) is dedicated to the students’ reflections on the implications of the content of the course to their own research project. This inevitably (based on the experience of the last four years) includes discussion about the design and content of the course. These are accounted for when modifying, developing the course.  Students can ask for face-to-face meeting to discuss satisfaction with the course, special needs, relevance to their own project, and can request inclusion of some very specific topics (it has been utilised by some students every year). |