A. Syllabus for Philosophy of Science for the Social Sciences, 7.5 credits, 3rd cycle

(Vetenskapsteori i samhällsvetenskaperna, 7,5 hp, forskarnivå)

The course was adopted and the syllabus was approved by the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Lund University, 17 November, 2011. This syllabus is valid from 17 November 2011.

B. Course Details

The course is offered as a freestanding course for the social sciences. The course is offered jointly with the School of Economics and Management, Lund University. The language of instruction is English or Swedish, depending on the student group.

C. Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, the student shall be able to

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the philosophy of the social sciences as an intellectual tradition and activity,
- critically examine different contributions within the philosophy of the social sciences and their impact on various social science traditions,
- discuss key concepts within the field and their relevance for the conduct of social scientific inquiry,
- formulate a stance on various schools within the philosophy of the social sciences,
- address relevant scientific issues of the philosophy of the social sciences in his/her own dissertation project.

D. Course Content

The course aims at providing a critical introduction to some of the classical texts and contemporary debates in the philosophy of the social sciences. The course begins with a series of lectures that discuss the history of the field, as well as the four main contemporary positions. Two lectures discourse on the conceptual Enlightenment origins of the social sciences, the breakthrough with theorists as Comte, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, and the 20th century theory of science with i.a. positivism, Popper and Kuhn. Thereafter four lectures deal with contemporary positivism, constructivism broadly understood, critical social science, and realism. Thereafter, a series of eight seminars are concerned with specific themes and debates within the philosophy of the social sciences. Examples of themes are the
fact-value distinction, agency, or the philosophy of social science at work in research design. At each seminar a group of students makes an oral presentation on the theme, and all students prepare a short text on “how this problem is relevant in my dissertation project”?

E. Teaching and Assessment
The teaching consists of lectures and seminars. Active participation is required. Continuous examination is applied: students make oral presentations and written contributions at seminars. A final paper will conclude the course.

F. Grades
The grades awarded are Pass or Fail. To receive a Pass the doctoral student must fulfil the learning outcomes of the course.

G. Admission Requirements and Selection
Applicants must be admitted to a doctoral programme. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of available places, students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the School of Economics and Management, Lund University, are given priority.