**Epistemology of the Social Sciences**

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This postgraduate seminar focuses on the study of key-texts that shaped the epistemological landscape of the 20th Century. It begins with an examination of early positivism and the ensuing *Methodenstreit* of the last quarter of the 19th Century and progresses to the study of the theses of the Vienna Circle. Popper and Kuhn, and concludes with an assessment of the *Positivismusstreit* of the late 1960s, the linguistic turn, Bhaskar’s critical realism and Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism. At the same time we are going to study key-texts in the sociology of knowledge, social constructivism, phenomenology and critical theory, most notably by Scheler, Mannheim, Berger & Luckmann, Ricoeur, Gadamer and Habermas. A series of questions unfolds in this context: What is science? Should the social and the natural sciences share the same methods? When should a theory, an assumption or a hypothesis be considered as scientific? What is "truth" and how is "reality" constituted? What is the relationship between the lifeworld, ideology and scientific constructs? What is the essence of language and how is it related to the issues of reality, representation and truth? What are the epistemological presuppositions of the various research methods in the social sciences? These questions are often disregarded or seen as self-evident, but as we are going to see at the seminar, they have been answered in various -and often conflicting- ways.