

Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration

Fall 2018

PPPA 8190: Philosophical Foundations of Policy and Administrative Research

CRN: 22749

MPA Building 601Z Wednesday, 6:10PM-8PM

Professor: Sanjay K. Pandey, PhD
Shapiro Professor of Public Policy and Public Administration

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Office hours: Wednesday, 5PM-6PM and by appointment

About the Professor:

Professor Pandey has a number of research interests. For more on the professor, please see his Trachtenberg School website: <http://tspppa.gwu.edu/sanjay-k-pandey> or his ResearchGate profile at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sanjay_Pandey15

Course Description (from bulletin):

PPPA 8190. Philosophical Foundations of Policy and Administrative Research. 3 Credits.
Philosophy of science as applied to research in public policy and public administration. Topics include the nature and current problems of epistemology, development and role of theories, and relationships among theory, methodology, and empirical data.

Focus of Course and Learning Objectives

Some philosophers contend that whether you know it or not, you are a philosopher! You are a philosopher in the sense that you subscribe to key assumptions about the nature of reality, appropriate ways of understanding, and developing knowledge about social reality. Where the “rubber hits the road” is the level of self-awareness you may have about your philosophical leanings. Most mature social sciences informing research on public policy and public administration (e.g., economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology etc.) proceed with social inquiry about individuals and collectivities without significant reference to philosophical underpinnings. Philosophers argue that even as areas of inquiry mature and move into their own, they must relegate thorny concerns about reality and knowledge to philosophy. Thus, this course will examine philosophical foundations as well as important debates that endure.

The learning objectives for this course are:

1. To stimulate and raise your awareness of the relation between philosophical concerns and social science research
2. To surface implicit assumptions that underlie different scholarly traditions
3. To develop your ability to engage in critical and reflective appreciation of public policy and public administration scholarship.

Readings:

Two required books for the course are listed below. To accomplish the learning objectives, you are expected to go beyond the required readings. Although suggestions on additional readings and resources may be provided, you are expected to display dedication and initiative in compiling and selecting relevant readings to complete course requirements.

Kuhn, Thomas, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

Rosenberg, Alexander. 2015. *Philosophy of Social Science, Fifth Edition*. Westview Press

Course Requirements:

1) *Readings and Participation (40% of the grade)*

Most sessions will have the following structure:

1. Opening remarks setting the context for the week's readings
2. 1 (or 2) students leading discussion on key reading(s)
3. A debate (pros and cons) of a philosophical concern related to the weekly theme

If you use text from a reading, be sure to put this text within quotation marks and note the page number(s).

-As a discussion leader your focus should be on the assigned reading (but you are expected to also draw upon supplemental reading/research). **You should share an outline of your presentation – you are expected to develop graphics or tables as part of this outline to communicate key points.** (Please review Jim Pryor's suggestions on how to read philosophical texts available at: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>)

- In researching the arguments for the debate, you are expected to **conduct research, identify, and use a few readings** to support your position. I want you to consult and pay heed to Peter Horban's advice in writing your position paper for the debate, available at <http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/resources/writing.html> **You should write a 2-4 page position paper in support of your position (be sure to cite sources consulted).**

Please be sure to submit this position paper to the professor on the day of the presentation.

Your grade on this part of the course will be based on your attendance, participation, and performance in the following roles:

- a) Discussion leader (15%)
- b) Debate participant (15%)
- c) Participation in the conversation (5%)
- d) Other assigned analysis and presentations (5%)

2) *Book Review (20% of the grade)*

You will read a philosophy of social science book and write a review. Your review should summarize core arguments of the book and also discuss its relevance for public policy and public administration research. The review should be no longer than 10 pages. Please review and use Edwin Battistella's **advice on writing a book review** available at <https://blog.oup.com/2015/08/how-write-book-review/>

3) *Course Project (40% of the grade)*

You will do a course project on which you will write a report and make an oral presentation in class. Your overarching goal for this project is to learn philosophy of science relevant to public policy and public administration research broadly defined. I want this project to engage and excite you and therefore I will work with you so that you have a significant role in framing and choosing a project. I am also willing to allow you to work either on an individual basis or as part of a team. **You should take advantage of consultations offered to do the best work you can!**

Some possible exercises you can do for the course project are (**I recommend option a)**):

- a) **A review and synthesis of research on advancing causal claims using your preferred methodological approach**
- b) Identify a knotty debate in public policy and public administration and explore how philosophy of science can help us think through this debate
- c) Identify a school of thought on which you assemble a set of readings and write a report
- d) Anything else you want to propose for the professor to consider/approve

To sum up, you are expected to:

- 1) When serving as a discussion leader, prepare and share an outline for the assigned reading (Due the day you make a presentation)
- 2) When serving as a debate participant, prepare a position paper and submit it to the professor (Due the day of the debate)
- 3) Choose a book to review by the second week of the semester and submit the review to the professor (Due October 3)
- 4) Work on a course project all through the semester, submit a written report, and make a class presentation on it (Due December 12)

Course Schedule (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Notes:

1. The debate prompts are intendedly provocative to make it easier to take sides.
2. Please review Jim Pryor's suggestions on how to read philosophical texts available at -- <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>.
3. **Note: We will have invited speakers on different themes that may require adjustment to the schedule.**

Session 1 – August 29, 2018

Introduction and Overview

➔ select a book to review and email to skpandey@gwu.edu by Tuesday of second week

Session 2 -- September 5, 2018 – Normal Science; Role of Philosophy

Kuhn, Chapter 1 to 6

Rosenberg, Chapter 1

Debate prompt: Kuhn delivered a body blow to logical empiricism.

On Logical Empiricism, see:

Creath, Richard, "Logical Empiricism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/logical-empiricism/>.

You may also be interested in the SEP entry on Vienna Circle.

Session 3 -- September 12, 2018 – Revolutions; Naturalism versus Interpretation

Kuhn, Chapter 7 to 13

Rosenberg, Chapter 2

Debate prompt: Kuhn opened the door wide for relativism in the social sciences.

On Relativism, see:

Swoyer, Chris, "Relativism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/relativism/>.

Session 4 – September 19, 2018 – Human Action, Intentionality, and the Mind-Body Problem

Rosenberg, Chapter 3, 4

Debate prompt: The only legitimate way to develop social science theory is by adopting the methods of natural science that put a premium on careful design and execution of experiments.

Session 5 – September 26, 2018 -- Behaviorism and Rational Choice

Rosenberg, Chapter 5, 6

Debate prompt: Behavioral economics underestimates the capacity of human being to make rational choices.

Session 6 – October 3, 2018 – Course Project Consultations in MPA 601R (1-on-1 meetings)

➔ Book review due

Session 7 – October 10, 2018 – Interpretive theories and perspectives

Rosenberg, Chapter 7, 8

Debate Prompt: Advancing causal knowledge in social sciences requires us to turn our back on the meaning of individual action.

Session 8 – October 17, 2018 -- Holism, Social Facts, and Functionalism

Rosenberg, Chapter 9, 10

Debate Prompt: The only reasonable explanation for social facts is aggregation of individual actions.

Session 9 -- October 24, 2018 – Nature or Nurture – Social Sciences and Sociobiology

Rosenberg, Chapter 11, 12

Debate Prompt: Social sciences have lagged because of their inability to integrate insights from biological theories.

Session 10 -- October 31, 2018 -- Facts and Values; Ethics in Social Inquiry

Rosenberg, Chapter 13, 14

Debate Prompt: The Simon/Waldo debate had little lasting influence on public administration scholarship.

Session 11 -- November 7, 2018 -- Course Project Consultations in MPA 601R (1-on-1 meetings)

Session 12 -- November 14, 2018 – Social Science and Philosophy -- Recap
Rosenberg, Chapter 15

*****Thanksgiving Break*****

Session 13 -- November 28, 2018 – Course Project Presentations

Session 14 -- December 5, 2018 – continued

→ Course Project paper due on December 12

Course Policies: Grades

Late Work Policy: Assignments turned in late will be assessed a penalty: a half-letter grade for anything from 1 – 12 hours late, a full-letter grade for 12-24 hours. Students will not receive credit for any assignments turned in after 24 hours.

Professor Pandey's Policy on grading concerns: The professor will not consider any verbal or oral statement of concerns about grading. The student must write a detailed memo to the professor explaining how his/her work met the requirements outlined in the respective evaluation rubric for the professor to consider the grade.

Expectations of Written Work: For all written material you submit or share in this course, be sure to use quotation marks to denote exact quotations and provide the page number(s). Failure to attribute sources correctly may constitute plagiarism and result in a grade of F for the course.

Course Policies: Technology and Media

Blackboard: Blackboard may be used as an aid to the course for providing course readings and for sharing course materials and carrying out course-related exchanges.

Computer and cellphone usage: If you use a computer during class to take notes, please only take notes. The class is a cellphone-free zone. In the case of an emergency, please step out of the classroom discreetly and without distracting others. Any use of technology to distract one's self or others in the class may lead to suspension of the privilege to use technology during class.

Course Policies: Student Expectations

Respect for Diversity: It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. I strive to create an inclusive classroom and present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity including gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, and political affiliation. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

Civility Policy: Higher education works best when it becomes a vigorous and lively marketplace of ideas in which all points of view are heard. Free expression in the classroom is an integral part of this process. At the same time, higher education works best when all of us approach the enterprise with empathy and respect for others, irrespective of their ideology, political views, or identity. We value civility because that is the kind of community we want, and we care for it because civility permits intellectual exploration and growth.

Attendance and Participation Policy: Attendance and participation is crucial to learning and you are expected to attend all classes except in case of extreme hardship such as an unforeseen medical emergency.

Professionalism Policy: Per university policy and classroom etiquette; mobile phones, iPods, *etc.* must be silenced during all classroom lectures. Those not heeding this rule will be asked to step

outside the classroom so that the learning environment is not disrupted.

Please arrive on time for all class meetings. Students who habitually disturb the class by talking, arriving late, *etc.*, and have been warned, will result in a letter grade reduction to their final grade.

Policies in The Trachtenberg School Courses:

1. Incompletes: A student must consult with the instructor to obtain a grade of I (incomplete) no later than the last day of classes in a semester. At that time, the student and instructor will both sign the CCAS contract for incompletes and submit a copy to the School Director. Please consult the TSPPPA Student Handbook or visit <http://bulletin.gwu.edu/university-regulations/#GIncomplete> for the policy on incompletes.
2. Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom: It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that an instructor receives each written assignment. Students can submit written work electronically only with the express permission of the instructor.
3. Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date: Policy on Late Work: All work must be turned in by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit for that assignment, unless an exception is expressly made by the instructor.
4. Academic Honesty: Please consult the “policies” section of the GW student handbook for the university code of academic integrity. Note especially the definition of plagiarism: “intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information.” All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. See the GW Academic Integrity Code at studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity
5. Changing Grades After Completion of Course: No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.
6. The Syllabus: This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her/his discretion, change content and requirements during the semester. Excused absences will be given for absences due to religious holidays as per the university schedule, but please advise the instructor ahead of time

University Policies

University Policy on Religious Holidays

1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.

2. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.
3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

Support for Students Outside the Classroom

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu>

Mental Health Services 202-994-5300

The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. For additional information see <https://healthcenter.gwu.edu/mental-health>

Academic Integrity Code

Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For the remainder of the code, see: studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity

Out of Class Learning

Average minimum amount of independent, out-of- class, learning expected per week: In a 15-week semester, including exam week, students are expected to spend a minimum of 100 minutes of out-of- class work for every 50 minutes of direct instruction, for a **minimum** total of 2.5 hours a week.