

Scopes and Methods
Mandatory MA level class
2009 Fall, 2 credits

by Tamás Meszerics
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Office Hours: Tue/Thur 11-12:15 Appointment is always required

Class Website: <http://e-learning.ceu.hu>

You need to sign up for the on-line class. Once the class has started, you can log in with your CEU ID and password. The code to sign up for the class is: melon

All readings will be posted on line Assignments will also have to be submitted through the website.

Summary

The course will acquaint the students with some of the foundational questions in the philosophy of social sciences; it will offer a brief outline and evaluation of the main methodological approaches. By the end of the course students should be able to write a coherent research outline and justify their methodological choices.

Evaluation

A reaction paper is due 24 hours before the start of every class responding to the readings for that class. In these reaction papers you need to demonstrate that you have read and thought about the material. (No need to summarize what you have read at all, we have read it too, let us know what you think about the readings.) They will be graded within a week. (Grading your assignments before class helps us decide which topics to emphasize.) You can be up to two weeks late on one assignment without penalties. Use it wisely.

In addition to the weekly reaction papers you will be required to reflect on discussion questions posted on the topics covered class. This reflection will have to be posted on the on-line forum of the class by Monday at noon. You are also required to respond to **two** other reflections of your fellow students by the beginning of the class. Your reflections and responses will be graded.

No final paper in this course, but you might be assigned additional homework beyond your weekly duties.

Attendance (with timely arrival) is **required**. Three unexcused absences will lead to an automatic failure of the class. If you will miss a class for any reason, make sure we know about it **before** the class.

Grading

Weekly Reaction Papers: 40% (due 24 hours **before class**)

On-line Forum: 40% (reflections due **Monday Noon**, responses are due by the **start of class**)

Additional Assignments: 20% (due as assigned)

Important Notice

Complete academic honesty is expected of everyone. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in automatic failure in this course (and subsequently in the program) and additional disciplinary action on higher levels. This is an American university and American standards will be applied. For more information about these standards see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_dishonesty (**READ VERY CAREFULLY!**)

All assignments are to be done individually. You can talk about how to do it but none of the actual work can be done in a group. Any evidence to the contrary will be investigated.

Topics Covered

1. – Political Science as Science? (Sept 25)
2. – Philosophical Foundations of Positivism (Oct 2)
3. – Social Science as Methods (Oct 9)
4. – Methodological Individualism and Levels of Analysis (Oct 16)
5. – No class (National Holiday) (Oct 23)
6. – Rational Choice and Game Theory I: the Basics (Oct 30)
7. – Rational Choice and Game Theory II: Critique (Nov 6)
8. – Small N Methods: Case Study (Nov 13)
9. – Within Case Analysis: Process Tracing (Nov 20)
10. – Revisions of Positivist Methodology: Kuhn, Lakatos, Feyerabend (Nov. 27)
11. – Constructivism (Dec. 4)
12. – Qualitative Methods: Interviewing and Content Analysis (Dec 11)