

Topics in Philosophy of (Mostly Social) Science: Middle-level theorising
With Nancy Cartwright
Thursday 1:00 – 4:00

General content. Winter 2018 we did general philosophy and history of science. This year will be primarily social science, with a special orientation. Last year students complained that we read nothing by me. Well, this term I have to revise my recent Lullius lectures for publication, so am asking students to work through them with me, plus much material by others on the related topics. The topic, middle-level theory, is a big one in social science and in policy evaluation but not yet enough discussed in philosophy. I hope you will find it interesting.

Here is an abstract of the lectures...

Lullius Lectures 2018
Mid-level theory: Without it what could anyone do?
Nancy Cartwright, Durham University &UCSD

Philosophy of science used to be criticized for excessive focus on fundamental theory. Now we do better. We study experimenting, modelling, representing, and a host of other practices as well as the role of values in science. What we don't much study is non-fundamental theory – theory at the mid-level, which is where the heavy lifting is done. These lectures take us there.

Measurement practices are an example of mid-level theory par excellence. Mechanisms too are a big tool at mid-level. During the course of the lectures we will look at both, including mechanisms of 3 different kinds: structural mechanisms (like the ones familiar in philosophy of biology), 'theories of change' of the kind now widely required in policy planning and Jon Elster-type mechanisms, like priming and cognitive dissonance. The theory of the democratic peace, that democracies do not go to war with democracies, will serve as a running example.

Lecture 1: Markers, mechanisms and measures

Lecture 2: Causal-chain models and theories of change

Lecture 3: Mechanisms and mid-level laws

Here is a proposed syllabus

Week 1: Middle level theorizing and the theory of the democratic peace

Background reading: Cartwright, N. *Middle-range theory*. Lecture 1: Markers, mechanisms & measures

Presenters: Cartwright & Thresher

Week 2 & 3: Instrumentalism

Background reading: Kyle Stanford's entry on Instrumentalism in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Science* (2016) and Ryle, G. (1949). *The concept of mind*. Ch V, section 2, 'The Logic of Dispositional Statements'

Week 2

- Sellars, W. (1965). 'Scientific Realism or Irenic Instrumentalism: A Critique of Nagel and Feyerabend on Theoretical Explanation. In Robert Cohen & Max Wartofsky (ed.), *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. II*
- Psillos, S. (1999). *Scientific Realism*. Part I, Section 2, 'Theories as Instruments?'

Week 3

- Cartwright, N. (forthcoming). *Nature the Artful Modeller*. Lecture 1: 'Nature's methods are our methods'

Weeks 4 & 5: Causal Processes and casual chains

Week 4

- Russell, B. (1919). *Mysticism & Logic*. Ch 1: 'On the Notion of Cause'
- Nicholson, D. & Dupre, J. (2018). *Everything Flows*. 'Introduction: A Manifesto for a Processual Philosophy of Biology'
- Dupre, J. (2013) 'Mechanism and Causation in Biology: Living Causes', *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*

Week 5

- Crasnow, S. (2017.) 'Process tracing in political science: What's the story?', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*
- Dessler, D. (1991). 'Beyond Correlations: Toward a Causal Theory of War', *International Studies Quarterly*

Week 6

- Cartwright, N. (forthcoming). *Middle range theory*. Lecture 2: 'Causal-chain models and theories of change'

Weeks 7, 8, & 9 Mechanisms, maxims & middle-level theory

Week 7

Background reading: Mahoney, J. (2001) 'Beyond Correlational Analysis: Recent Innovations in Theory and Method', *Sociological Forum*

- Elster, J. (1989). *Nuts & Bolts for the Social Sciences*, 'Mechanisms'
- Hedstrom, P. & Swedburg, R. *Social Mechanisms*. 'Introduction'

Week 8

- Pawson, R. (2001). 'Middle-range realism', *European Journal of Sociology*

- Puddifort, K. (2017). 'Stereotyping: The Multifactorial View', *Philosophical Topics*

Week 9

- Cartwright, N. (forthcoming). *Middle range theory*. Lecture 3: Mechanisms and middle-level laws

Week 10 Middle level theory: Evidence in archaeology

Background reading: Salmon, M. *Philosophy & Archaeology*. Chs 2 & 3: 'Laws' and 'Confirmation'

- Wylie, A. (2002). *Thinking from Things*. 'Introduction: Philosophy from the ground up'
- Raab, L.M. & Goodyear, A. (1984) Middle-Range Theory in Archaeology: A Critical Review of Origins and Applications', *American Antiquity*

ALTERNATIVE. If people are really interested in archaeology and other historical sciences, we could read Adrian Currie's new book *Rock, Bone, and Ruin: An Optimist's Guide to the Historical Sciences* for week 10, dropping the Pawson in week 8. So

Week 8

- Cartwright, N. (forthcoming). *Middle range theory*. Lecture 3: Mechanisms and middle-level laws

Week 9

Background reading: Salmon, M. *Philosophy & Archaeology*. Chs 2 & 3: 'Laws' and 'Confirmation'

- Wylie, A. (2002). *Thinking from Things*. 'Introduction: Philosophy from the ground up'
- Raab, L.M. & Goodyear, A. (1984) Middle-Range Theory in Archaeology: A Critical Review of Origins and Applications', *American Antiquity*

Week 10

- Currie, A. (2018). *Rock, Bone, and Ruin: An Optimist's Guide to the Historical Sciences*.

