

Welcome to Theories of Science

KULT8850/1

Spring 2024

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KULT (=Dept. of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture)

Plan for today

- Until 12.00
 - First: Why taking this course is a good idea and
 - Then: a hopefully (already) useful way of getting to know each other
- A simple lunch (from Godt Brød) is served at 12.00
- from 13.00 to 15.00: Ståle on "the body", knowledge and science

About the course

- Why?
- What?
- How?

Mandatory for HF but why?

1. Faculty of Humanities (and guests): No science without **critical reflection** of the philosophical underpinnings and the socio-cultural context of research and how both affect research process and outcomes
2. Encourage **collaboration and exchange** (in its broadest sense) across different projects and disciplines within the humanities and across faculties
3. Help PhD students to **navigate** their PhD projects



**What do we do to achieve
these goals?**



1. Guided reflection

in lectures and group work covering

1. Philosophy and research ethics (days 1+2)
2. Socio-cultural context of scientific knowledge production (days 3+4)
3. Critical perspectives (days 5+6)

2. Collaboration and exchange

in multi-, inter, transdisciplinary discussions

1. across different approaches to knowledge, objectivity, truth, and research ethics (days 1+2)
2. as intrinsic feature of research (days 3+4)
3. beyond individualising and individualised grievances (days 5+6)





3. Navigational support

1. Through helping you to find your way of dealing with thorny issues of objectivity, truth, and ethics (days 1+2)
2. By painting a map of the socio-cultural and institutional landscapes that you will have to navigate (days 3+4)
3. Helping you to redraw the map in a better way (days 5+6)

Plus: By giving you an assignment which allows you to

How?

- 3x2 course days + 1 conference day
 - Mandatory attendance important to achieve the "why's" but I have made some exceptions for people that for various reasons **have to** take this course now
 - Life happens, just keep me updated
- The **conference** will be prepared collaboratively on course days 3+4
- Mandatory assignments are related to the conference
 - deliver a very short abstract before the conference
 - present at the conference ("physical" or online), and
 - hand in an extended abstract (7.5 ECTS) or a short conference paper (10 ECTS) by 31 August 2024

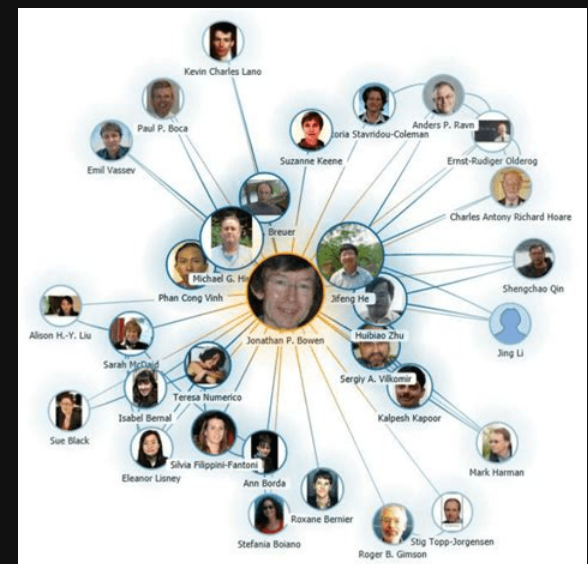
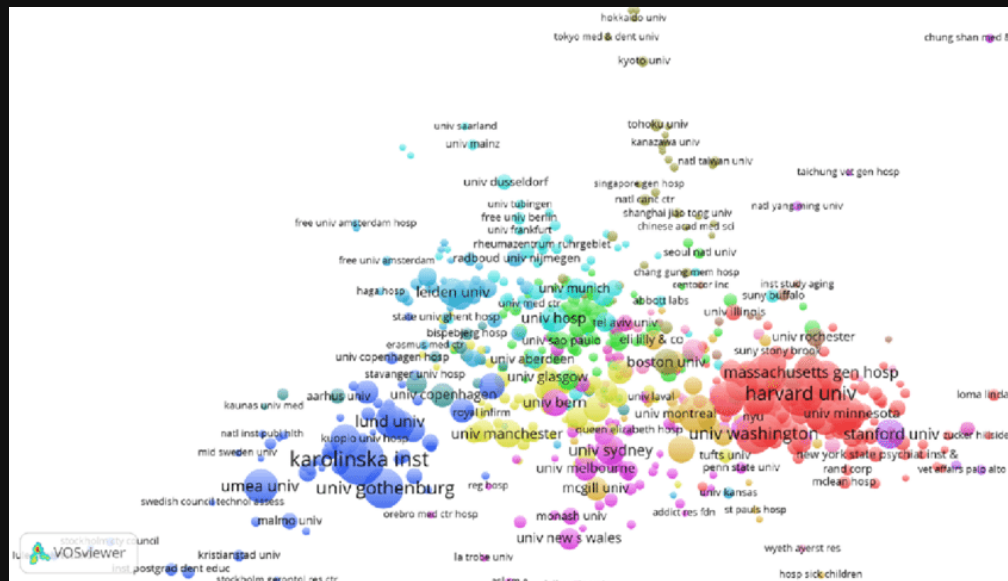
More how

- The course is organised by KULT: Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture
 - Centre for Gender Research: Research on diversity and gender - days 5+6
 - Centre for Technology and Society: Science and Technology Studies (STS) - days 3+4
- We get a lot of help from other departments at the Faculty of Humanities, above all from philosophy on days 1+2, but also from language and literature and history on days 4+5
- Courses like this sometimes feel "additional" or "distracting", please bear with us, this is us trying to help you to become the best PhD students you can be

Even more how? Questions,
needs, wishes?

Getting to know
each other
("as academics"-
edition)

The academic standard approach A: Through affiliation (institutional, personal)



The academic standard approach B:

Your PhD projects in three sentences

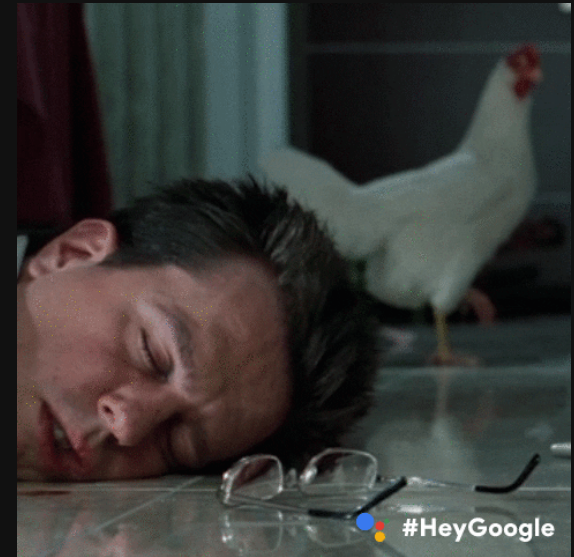
- Finally! Time to do in-depth work! So much to explore, so much to learn!
- And then we are forced to present our research in very compressed form - and often already at the very beginning of the work!
- And it gets even worse after concluding the research: What have you found out (in three sentences)?

Some related questions

- Days 1+2: Philosophy
 - What do we know **before** we do our research?
 - How do we know that our research is **concluded**?
- Days 3+4: Socio-cultural context
 - What are the institutional, cultural, societal **expectations** and where do they come from?
 - Why is our research important? For whom? Who decides?
- Days 5+6: Critique
 - How does "how" and "with whom" we do our research affect the outcome?
 - What does our research actually "do"? Who is served and who is excluded?

Non-standard approach:

Thought
experiment:
The day after
your defence



What would you like to be able to say the day after the defence

- A. Ultimately, my PhD work was committed to the search for **knowledge and truth** about XYZ.
- B. Ultimately, my PhD work was less about XYZ and more about my **personal development**.
- C. Ultimately, my PhD work was committed to the search for **solutions** to problem XYZ.
- D. Ultimately, my PhD work was committed to a **critique** of important misconceptions about XYZ.

The options

- **Knowledge and truth:** a thesis that adds "knowledge" about XYZ, no matter how useful or affirmative/critical this knowledge is.
- **Personal development:** a thesis as part of a "Bildung"-journey , you have become a "better" (= "whole") person, you have satisfied your curiosity, have met interesting people, etc.
- **Solutions, being useful:** a thesis that contributes (maybe only a little part of) a solution to an "important" contemporary problem
- **Critique:** a thesis in the critical tradition which assumes that the most important task is to reveal misconceptions (e.g., "ideologies") about XYZ

Group work

- Choose a combination of statements (5 min)
- Walk to your "coordinates" and find one person to talk with in your vicinity. Find out about why they are not somewhere else and what their "XYZ" is: 15 min
- This person then presents you and your "XYZ" to the whole group