



# Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

## Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

# History of Social Sciences

Course Code	S_HSS
Credits	6
Period	P5
Course Level	200
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Social Sciences
Course Coordinator	dr. F. Colombijn
Examiner	dr. F. Colombijn
Teaching Staff	dr. F. Colombijn
Teaching method(s)	Lecture

## Course Objective

The course has the following learning goals:

**Knowledge and understanding.** At the end of this course, students are able to

- Argue that social sciences are the work of people, with all the concomitant social differences, forms of inequality, coincidences, forms of cooperation, et cetera;
- Explain the emergence of disciplines in the social sciences from general historical, societal changes.
- Understand that competition has been a driving force in science, with historically unequal chances of success (measured at the level of countries, languages, gender or ethnicity).

**Application.** At the end of this course, students are able to

- Make a well-argued assessment which ethical considerations must prevail in concrete cases of research with sometimes contradictory moral guidelines.
- Make a critical judgment of the position of their own discipline in the social sciences.

**Making judgement.** At the end of this course, students are able to

- Recognize risks of societal developments that threaten the independence of researchers;
- Assess unequal chances to make an impact by doing social science research.

**Communication.** At the end of this course, students are able to

- Answers questions about the history of social sciences in writing.

## Course Content

Science in general, or social science in particular, is an institutionalized practice, embedded in a societal context. Science is a form of human behaviour, in which processes of institutionalisation interact with making rational choices, fully based on scientific insights and scientific standards. Scientists must operate in social structures of which they are only partially in control. By its focus on science as an institutionalized practice, the course connects perfectly to one of the main themes in social science: the tension between structure and agency. Various themes will be discussed weekly within this general framework, such as: the reasons why new disciplines emerge; great, inspiring examples of scientists; societal doubts about the value of science; the decolonization of universities; alternative knowledge systems like religion and art; the impact scientists want to make and the relationship to clients; activist research; fraud; the neoliberal management of universities; and the ecological footprint of universities.

## Additional Information Teaching Methods

Lectures, possibly formative tests and clips

## Method of Assessment

Exam with open questions

## Literature

The readings will be published on Canvas.

## Additional Information Target Audience

BSc1 CADS, CS, POL; other students are welcome to take this course as an elective.

## Additional Information

The course has a classical set-up with a series of lectures and a written exam at the end. The lectures are part of the exam, together with the readings. Attendance of the live lectures is not mandatory, but it is self-evident.