

PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ROUNDTABLE

10th Annual Philosophy of Social Science Roundtable University of Washington, March 7-9, 2008

Organizer and Program Chair: Alison Wylie, Departments of Philosophy and Anthropology
Program Committee: James Bohman (Department of Philosophy, St. Louis University)
Paul Roth, Department of Philosophy, University of California at Santa Cruz

The 10th anniversary Philosophy of Social Science Roundtable will be hosted by Simpson Center and the Department of Philosophy at the University of Washington, March 7-9, 2008. This workshop-style meeting brings together an intellectually diverse and international community of philosophers and social scientists who share an interest in philosophical questions raised by the social sciences. These include problems in social theory, epistemological issues specific to the forms of explanation and canons of evidence characteristic of the social sciences, and the ethical and political problems distinctive of research involving human, social subjects. An interdisciplinary Humanities seminar will provide graduate students an opportunity to engage work by Roundtable presenters and on the issues they will be addressing in the Winter quarter, 2008. This conference is one node in the Science Studies Network and will include a keynote address by Walker Ames Lecturer Nancy Cartwright (LSE).

Background on the Roundtable

The Philosophy of Social Science Roundtable was established by James Bohman, Paul Roth, and myself as an outgrowth of a National Endowment for the Humanities Institute on Philosophy of Social Science that was convened in St. Louis in the summer of 1998. The initial meeting drew such a strong response that we have hosted a Roundtable in the spring every year since 1998. The first five meetings rotated among three sponsoring universities in St. Louis (UM-SL, SLU, Washington University); the Roundtable has since been hosted at Barnard College/Columbia University (March 2005), at the University of California-Santa Cruz (March 2006), and at the University of South Florida (March 23-26, 2007). The projected date for the 10th Roundtable is March 7-9, 2008, and there is a great deal of enthusiasm, both on the part of the Roundtable organizers and among local colleagues, for bringing the Roundtable to the University of Washington.

Each year we invite two keynote speakers. These have included a number of prominent scholars in philosophy and the social sciences, for example, Linda Alcoff (Philosophy, Syracuse), Margaret Gilbert (Philosophy, Irvine), Alvin Goldman (Philosophy, Rutgers), Russell Hardin (Politics, NYU), Steven Lukes (Sociology, NYU), Philip Pettit (Politics, Princeton), Alex Rosenberg (Philosophy, Duke). The bulk of the Roundtable presentations are selected on the basis of a review of long abstracts; our call for papers typically draws 40 to 50 submissions from which we select 10 to 12 for a program that runs from Friday afternoon through Sunday mid-day. Roundtable participants come from all over Europe, including Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, Finland) and eastern Europe (Bulgaria), from the U.K. and Australia/New Zealand, and from across Canada and the U.S.. They represent widely diverse areas within philosophy—epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of mind and of language, action theory, and social/political theory—and the social sciences they study range from anthropology and history, through sociology and political science, to psychology, cognitive science, and economics. The point of connection among participants is a common set of concerns with the explanatory paradigms and theoretical presuppositions, the orienting epistemic ideals and methodologies, and the ethical and political implications of the social sciences.

The editors of the quarterly journal, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, have committed one issue a year to a selection of the Roundtable papers; we have published a Special Roundtable Issue of *PoSS* every March since 2000. In conjunction with the Roundtable email list, website, and our widely posted calls for papers, this special issue has significantly broadened the reach of the Roundtable. By all accounts the Roundtable is now widely regarded as the best venue in which to present cutting edge work, both by young, emerging scholars as well established seniors interested in philosophy of the social sciences. It is particularly valued because of the intensity and quality of discussion.

Roundtable Organizers

Alison Wylie

Professor of Philosophy and Anthropology
University of Washington

Wylie is a philosopher of social science who works on epistemological questions raised by archaeological practice and by feminist research in the social sciences. In *Thinking from Things: Essays in the Philosophy of Archaeology* (2002) she develops an analysis of the role of background knowledge and strategies of triangulation in stabilizing evidential claims. She is centrally interested, here and in connection with feminist science studies, in understanding how challenges to ideals of objectivity can be met when it is acknowledged that contextual values play an ineliminable role in the research process. She is co-editor of a forthcoming collection on *Science and Values* (OUP), and of *Feminist Science Studies*, a special issue of *Hypatia* (2004). She is currently working on a monograph, *Standpoint Matters, in Feminist Philosophy of Science*.

James F. Bohman

Danforth I Chair in the Humanities
Professor of Philosophy and International Studies
St. Louis University

Bohman's primary areas of research include political philosophy (deliberative and transnational democracy) and the philosophy of social science (rationality and normativity). In this connection he explores the possibilities for realizing democratic ideals under current conditions. In his latest book, *Democracy Across Borders* (MIT 2007), he discusses the need not only to think of democracy beyond the boundaries of the nation state, but also to consider how basic democratic concepts and ideals must be transformed in order to understand how this might be feasible. Earlier publications in this area include *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity and Democracy* (2000), and co-editor of *Deliberative Democracy: Reason and Politics* (1997). His interests in a broadly pragmatic philosophy of the social sciences are related to this concern with social facts and realizing moral and political ideals. He is the author of *New Philosophy of Social Science: Problems of Indeterminacy* (1993), and co-editor of *The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, Science, Culture* (1992).

Paul A. Roth

Professor and Chair of Philosophy
University of California – Santa Cruz

Roth's interests lie in philosophy of social science and philosophy of history, philosophy and sociology of science, and the history of analytic philosophy. He is the co-editor of *The Blackwell Guide to the Social Sciences* (2003), and the author of *Meaning and Method in the Social Sciences* (1987), and of numerous articles in his fields of interest. He has recently been publishing on problems of explanation, specifically as these arise in historical accounts of the Holocaust; "Hearts of Darkness: 'Perpetrator History' and Why There Is no Why" (*History of the Human Sciences* 2004); on historical inquiry generally, "Ways of Pastmaking" (*History of the Human Sciences* 2002); and on philosophical naturalism, "Naturalism Without Fears" (in the Elsevier *Handbook of Philosophy of Science*, 2007).