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Critical Thinking and Social Theory

Introduction

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Introduction

- First part of the session we are going to discuss why philosophy and critical thinking is essential to research
- We will discuss the paper on 'Introducing theory'
- Second part of the session we will discuss the paper entitled 'Thinking about maps' as an illustration of how alternative theoretical positions lead to radically different positions about the same concept

Why engage with philosophy?

- Use as white screen for student arguments

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Why engage with philosophy?

- Our argument
- This is academia
 - we are interested in how we can productively think about the world and contribute to debates about such thinking
 - we need to be able to explain in detail our world view and why we conceive of an issue in the way we do
 - our philosophical thinking underpins the questions we ask and how we ask them
- From a career perspective it is essential to be able to do the above
 - to produce a high quality PhD
 - to get papers accepted in the top international journals
 - to understand the key debates in the top journals
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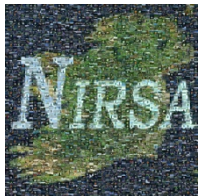


Example of Airport Security

- We could describe what is going on with airport security – an atheoretical, empirical analysis of procedure and policy
- We could try employ existing theory to think about security (say Foucault – surveillance and disciplining regime)
- We could try and extend existing theory so that it more adequately explains a system that is changing (automated surveillance) – Good PhD
- Or we could try and make a more fundamental contribution to how we conceptualise the nature of governance (automated management) – Strong PhD

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Questions for discussion/debate from first reading

- Your questions relating to the chapter

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Questions for discussion/debate from first reading

- How is/should praxis be related to theory?
- Should academic research be ideological neutral/loaded?
- Should academic research tackle metaphysical questions?
- Can we undertake research that is truly objective?

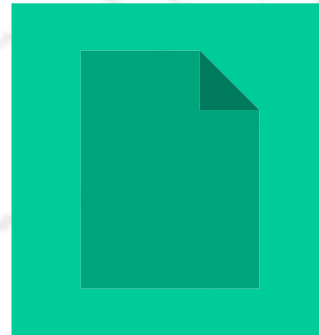
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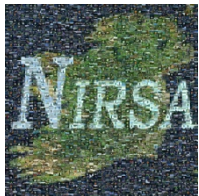
Key Concepts

- Hundreds of concepts in Social Sciences
- International Encyclopedia of Human Geography



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'ologies' and 'isms'

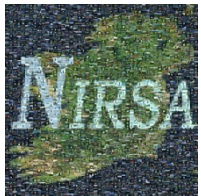
- If you don't know the history of 'ologies' and 'isms' in your discipline then you need to get familiar with them – ASAP!
- You cannot just pick a theory off the shelf!
 - this is about forming a worldview that has value and utility and you can defend
- When a supervisor (or examiner or conference delegate) starts asking you penetrating questions about the ontology, epistemology, ideology and methodology of your research you should be able:
 - to give robust answers
 - explain how your views sit into the wider disciplinary context

Sessions

- Each session (from 3 onward) will be led by one or two students who will set out the main arguments of the readings and suggest key questions that the rest of the group might consider
- The rest of the session will discuss those questions and explore other questions and the arguments the readings make
- It is essential to do the reading!

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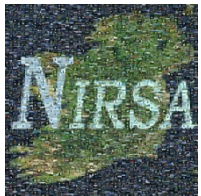


Assessment

- The assignment has been designed to stimulate critical thinking about the conceptual underpinnings of your research and will provide an initial literature review that can be built upon as the thesis develops
- 1) Identify a concept related to your PhD research. Prepare a literature review detailing how that concept has been variously conceptualised (within and across disciplines) (5000 words)
- 2) Present a 5 minute overview of the main theoretical positions vis-à-vis your chosen concept and facilitate a 10 minute discussion about the concept

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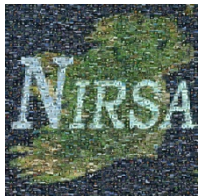


Questions for discussion/debate from second reading

- Your questions relating to the chapter

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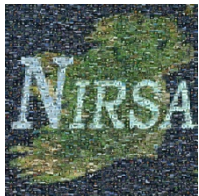


Questions for discussion/debate from second reading

- Add questions relating to the chapter
- Are maps objective, neutral, truth documents that reveal the world as it is?
- Are maps better understood as social constructions?
- Do maps inscribe or proscribe the world rather than represent the world?
- Does it make sense to use non-representational theories to understand maps?
- Maps chapter is essentially about the ontology of maps – what maps are – what do different ontologies mean for the epistemology of maps (how we come to know the world through mapping)?

Maps as ...

- Maps as truth
 - Maps as social constructions
 - Maps as inscriptions
 - Maps as propositions
 - Maps as immutable mobiles and actants
 - Maps as performativity
 - Maps as practices
- Maps as ...





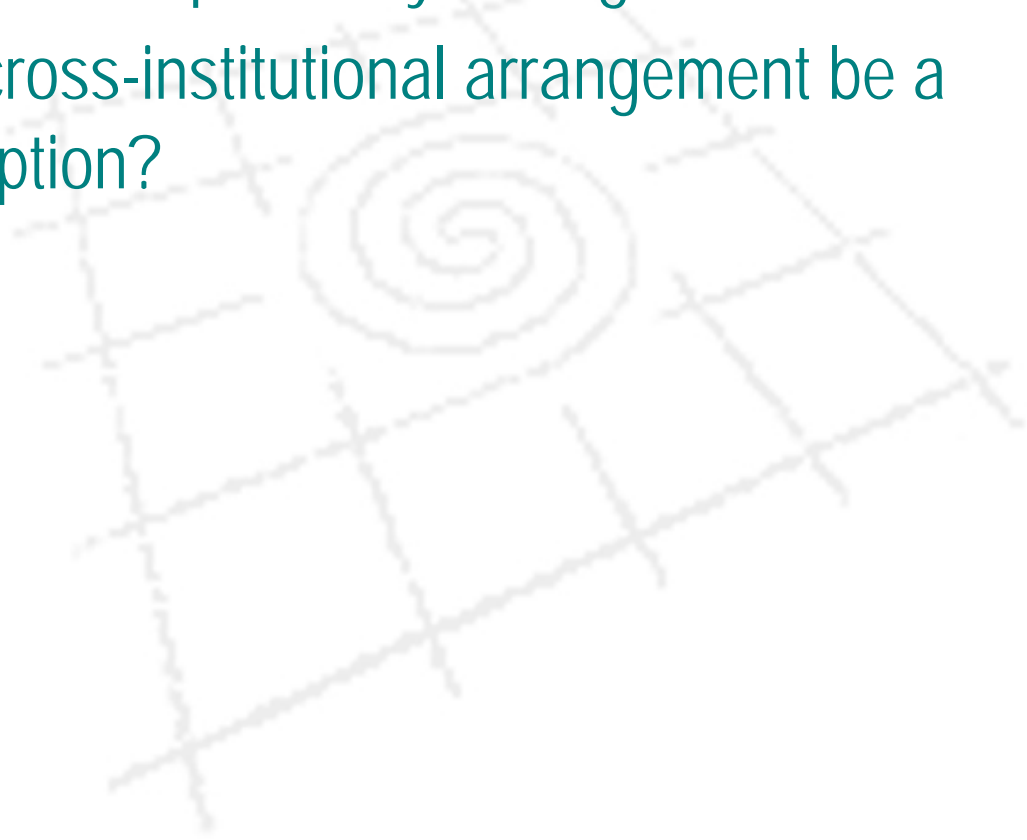
Maps as ...

- Maps as reminders
- Maps as analytic tools
- Maps as spatial communication
- Maps as cognitive models
- Maps as propaganda
- Maps as sign systems
- Maps as performance
- Maps as counter knowledge
- Maps as participatory action
- Maps as emancipatory
- Maps as indexical
- Maps as affective
- Maps as narrative



Supervision

- Need to know supervisory arrangements
- Would a cross-institutional arrangement be a suitable option?

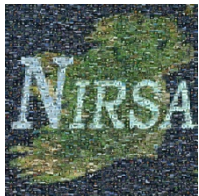


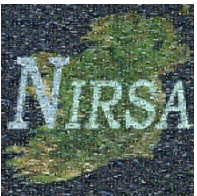
Signing up for modules

- Get some sense of preferences for modules on offer

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Photoarchive

- Those interested in contributing to the photoarchive project stay behind for five minutes

