

# Social Construction

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## Description

The idea that aspects of our world are social constructed has defended within a number of domains. It is a mainstay of Science and Technology Studies, and a widespread presupposition within recent Continental Philosophy. Defenses of social construction can be found within analytic philosophy of science, feminist philosophy, critical race theory, philosophy of psychiatry, and other subfields. It also has defenders in fields outside of philosophy, including sociology, social psychology, anthropology, gender studies, disability studies, and literary theory. The goal of this seminar is to better understand and assess social constructionist claims. For example, how does the idea of social construction relate to relativism, nominalism, and anti-realism? Is social constructionism a thesis about norms, concepts, causation, or constitution? How does social construction take place? Does it apply to all kinds of categories (e.g., both social kinds and so-called natural kinds)? We will look at both broad theoretical discussions as well as applications to particular topics: biological and chemical kinds, emotions, mental illness, gender, sexual orientation, race, and racism. In each case, there are questions about whether the phenomenon in question is natural, cultural, or some combination of the two. We will consider a diverse range of different constructivist perspectives, as well as some opposing views.

<b>Sep 1</b>	<i>Planets, Quarks, and everything in Be-Tween: Hacking, The Social Construction of What</i> , chap. 1; Mallon, "A Field Guide to Social Construction"; Haslanger, "Ontology and Social Construction"
<b>Constructionism vs. Realism</b>	
<b>Sep 8</b>	<i>Thoroughgoing Constructionism</i> : Whorf, "Science and Linguistics"; Goodman, "The Way the World Is"; Foucault, "Truth and Power"
<b>Sep 15</b>	<i>Realisms and Resistance</i> : Devitt, "Scientific Realism"; Millikan, "Substances: The Ontology"; Boghossian, "What Is Social Construction?"
<b>Social and Natural Kinds</b>	
<b>Sep 25</b>	<i>Social Kinds</i> : Searle, "Language and Social Ontology"; Thomasson, "Realism and Human Kinds"; Khalidi, "Three Kinds of Social Kinds"
<b>Sep 29</b>	<i>Beyond the Social</i> : Quine, "Ontological Relativity"; Churchland, "Conceptual Progress and Word/World Relations"; Longino, "Beyond Bad Science"
<b>Constructionism in Science</b>	
<b>Oct 6</b>	<i>Biological Kinds</i> : Dupré, "On the Impossibility of a Monistic Account of Species"; Ereshefsky, "Species Pluralism and Anti-Realism"; Latour, "From Fabrication to Reality"
<b>Oct 13</b>	<i>Chemical Kinds</i> : Malt, "Water is Not H <sub>2</sub> O"; LaPorte, "Chemical Kind Term Reference and the Discovery of Essence"; Needham, "The Discovery that Water is H <sub>2</sub> O"; Chang, "Water: The Long Road ..."
<b>Emotion and Illness</b>	
<b>Oct 20</b>	<i>Emotions</i> : Averill, "The Social Construction of Emotion with Special Reference to Love"; Mesquita and Leu, "The Cultural Psychology of Emotions"; Barrett, "Are Emotions Natural Kinds?"
<b>Oct 27</b>	<i>Mental Illness</i> : Wakefield, "The concept of mental disorder"; Church, "Making Order out of Disorder"; Picard, "Mental Illness is Indeed a Myth"; Reinerman, "Addiction as Accomplishment"
<b>Gender, Sex, and Sexuality</b>	
<b>Nov 3</b>	<i>Sex and Gender</i> : Beauvoir, <i>Second Sex</i> , chap. 10; Butler, <i>Gender Trouble</i> , chap. 1; Haslanger, "On Being Objective and Being Objectified"; Hird, "For a Sociology of Transgenderism"
<b>Nov 10</b>	<i>Constructing Differences</i> : Fausto-Sterling, "Am I a Boy or Am I a Girl"; Grossi and Fine, "The Role of Fetal Testosterone in the Development of the 'Essential Difference' Between the Sexes"; Eagly and Wood, "25 Years of Challenges in Understanding the Psychology of Gender"
<b>Nov 17</b>	<i>Sexual Preferences</i> : Stein, "Précis of The Mismeasure of Desire"; Kitzinger, <i>Social Construction of Lesbianism</i> , chap. 4 (excerpt); Pitts-Taylor, "Queering Kinship"; Katz "The Invention of Heterosexuality"
<b>Race</b>	
<b>Nov 25</b>	<i>Constructing Race</i> : Appiah, "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connection" (excerpt); Mills, "But What Are You Really?"; Alcoff, "Toward a Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment"; Jordan-Zachery "Cultural Images and Black Womanhood"
<b>Dec 1</b>	<i>Constructing Racism</i> : West, "The Genealogy of Modern Racism"; Mallon and Kelly, "Making Race out of Nothing"; Goff et al, "Not Yet Human"; Semati, "Islamophobia, Culture and Race in the Age of Empire"
<b>Dec 8</b>	<i>Eliminating Race?</i> Fanon, <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> (excerpt); Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races" (excerpt); Johnson, "(Re)conceptualizing Blackness"