Chapter 11 Human Sciences Lesson Plans


I. Understanding human sciences
      a. *Written Homework*: Questions to Abel Chapter 11

II. Understanding nature and understanding society
      (1) *Written Homework*: Questions to Abel Chapter 11

III. What are the differences between social and natural realities?
   1. Reading: Skinner vs Ayer p.193
   2. Exercise: Description of movement p. 193
   4. *Class Jigsaw Activity #1* The class will be divided into four groups–A, B, C and D–by counting off at your seats. Each group A, B, C and D will be assigned one of the three Discussion Questions below. Students in each group A, B, C and D will now count off 1, 2, 3 and 4 for the next stage of the activity. Each group A, B, C and D will discuss the meaning of the assigned quote [fifteen minutes]. Students should apply what they have learned so far in any of their classes, in this class, or in personal experience / research. Their explication of the quote should eventually find concrete examples to illustrate their point. Each student should make notes of the group’s conclusions. Then four new groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 will be formed. Their task will be to synthesize (if possible) the meaning of the three quotes [twenty minutes]
      a. *Discussion Question*: How might the language used in polls, questionnaires and other information-gathering devices of this sort influence the conclusions reached? If there is an influence, does it, or a similar one, occur in natural science research? Does the extent of the influence relate to the degree of certainty attributed to the natural sciences and the human sciences respectively, or to the social status or value associated with each?
      b. *Discussion Question*: In what ways does language play a similar or different role in the human sciences and the
natural sciences? In what senses can empathy, intuition and feeling be considered legitimate or especially powerful ways of knowing in the human sciences? Are there circumstances under which this might not be the case?

c. **Discussion Question:** In what ways might the beliefs and interests of human scientists influence their conclusions? Do the same considerations apply in other areas of knowledge such as the natural sciences or mathematics?

d. **Discussion Question:** In what ways might social, political, cultural and religious factors affect the types of human science research that are financed and undertaken, or rejected?

B. Durkheim and suicide: the quest for objectivity  
C. Weber and capitalism: meaning and social action  
   1. Exercise: Dichotomies p. 198

IV. Human thought and dichotomies (either/or polar opposites)  
V. Social science, values and objective knowledge  
VI. A plurality of disciplines  
   1. **Class Jigsaw Activity # 2** The class will be divided into four groups—A, B, C and D—by counting off at your seats. Each group A, B, C and D will be assigned one of the three Discussion Questions below. Students in each group A, B, C and D will now count off 1, 2, 3 and 4 for the next stage of the activity. Each group A, B, C and D will discuss the meaning of the assigned quote [fifteen minutes]. Students should apply what they have learned so far in any of their classes, in this class, or in personal experience / research. Their explication of the quote should eventually find concrete examples to illustrate their point. Each student should make notes of the group’s conclusions. Then four new groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 will be formed. Their task will be to synthesize (if possible) the meaning of the three quotes [twenty minutes].
   a. **Discussion Question:** Is research in the human sciences a viable route to learn about and, in the long run, transform or improve public policy or the common good? Or is human science research intrinsically valuable for the sake of the knowledge that can be gained? Might it rather have a utilitarian or even covert purpose behind it? How, if at all, can we determine when it is which, and if one or another of these purposes predominates?
b. **Discussion Question:** It is not uncommon for very different approaches to coexist within a single human science (for example, classical versus Keynesian versus Marxist economics, or psychodynamic versus behaviourist versus humanistic approaches in psychology). If two competing paradigms give different explanations of a phenomenon, how can we decide which is correct?

c. **Discussion Question:** How does the use of numbers, statistics, graphs and other quantitative instruments affect the way knowledge claims in the human sciences are valued?

d. **Discussion Question:** Is it reasonable to attempt to explain human behaviour independently of what people claim are their intentions? Are there insights into behaviour that can only be afforded by finding these out?

VII. Social research methods

1. *Reading:* New Dating Method Shows Cave Art is Older, Website

2. *Reading:* Alchin: Davis and Hersh: Testing, Website

VIII. The ethics of research in social science

   a. [Website on Milgram is from Wikipedia, Milgram and Brown and also Asch’s Conformity Experiment is on YouTube; YouTube is blocked, and I don’t like using Wikipedia since I keep preaching that “At Gables, Wikipedia does not exist.”]
   b. [Alternative: for Milgram
      http://psychology.about.com/od/historyofpsychology/a/milgram.htm
   c. [Alternative: for Asch
      http://psychology.about.com/od/classicpsychologystudies/p/conformity.htm

2. *Reading:* The Story of A-Town and B-ville pp. 203-205

3. *Exercise:* ABCity p. 205

IX. The lack of consensus in human science

1. *Class Jigsaw Activity # 4* The class will be divided into four groups–A, B, and C–by counting off at your seats. Each group A, B, and C will be assigned one of the three Discussion Questions below. Students in each group A, B, and C will now count off 1, 2, and 3 for the next stage of the activity. Each group A, B, and C will discuss the meaning of the assigned quote [fifteen minutes]. Students should apply what they have learned so far in any of their classes, in this class, or in personal
experience / research. Their explication of the quote should eventually find concrete examples to illustrate their point. Each student should make notes of the group’s conclusions. Then four new groups 1, 2, and 3 will be formed. Their task will be to synthesize (if possible) the meaning of the three quotes [twenty minutes]

a. **Discussion Question:** “Under the most rigorously controlled conditions of pressure, temperature, humidity, and other variables, the organism will do exactly as it pleases” (Anon). In what ways and to what extent are the objects of study in the natural and the human sciences similar or different?

b. **Discussion Question:** What kinds of explanations do human sciences offer, and how do these explanations compare with those in other areas of knowledge? To what extent do the human sciences offer any of the following: scientific laws, recognition of general patterns and tendencies, prediction of the future? To what extent do they offer insight or understanding?

c. **Discussion Question:** Are the human sciences, as a whole, fundamentally different from the natural sciences? Or are there sometimes surprising similarities between the two areas in, for example, the ways they use models and theories, their methods for collecting data, the nature of facts, the role of observation and experimentation, the impact of the observer on the observed phenomena, quantification, falsifiability, precise prediction, identification of constants, and the degree of complexity of the phenomena studied?

X. A tale of two perspectives
1. Exercise: Bind and Break p.206
2. Exercise: The Story of A-Town and B-ville Revisited p. 207

XI. Some other complications
1. Exercise: Intelligent Behaviour and Emotion p. 208
2. Reading: Today’s World Internet Galaxy p. 209
3. Reading: Zygmunt Baumann p. 209
4. **Class Jigsaw Activity # 4** The class will be divided into four groups—A, B, and C—by counting off at your seats. Each group A, B, and C will be
assigned one of the three Discussion Questions below. Students in each group A, B, and C will now count off 1, 2, and 3 for the next stage of the activity. Each group A, B, and C will discuss the meaning of the assigned quote [fifteen minutes]. Students should apply what they have learned so far in any of their classes, in this class, or in personal experience / research. Their explication of the quote should eventually find concrete examples to illustrate their point. Each student should make notes of the group’s conclusions. Then four new groups 1, 2, and 3 will be formed. Their task will be to synthesize (if possible) the meaning of the three quotes [twenty minutes]

a. **Discussion Question**: What kinds of knowledge are usually included in the category of human science? How do we decide whether a particular area of study is a human science? What are the similarities and differences between the subject matter and methodologies of the various human sciences?

b. **Discussion Question**: Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be, therefore, not an experimental science in search of laws but an interpretive one in search of meaning. Clifford Geertz

c. **Discussion Question**: To what extent does the human subject matter of this area of knowledge affect a scientific approach? Is it reasonable to think that human behaviour can be studied scientifically?

5. Student Presentation: # 1 Social Problem
6. Student Presentation: # 2 Nature vs Nurture