Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities
http://www.jssshonline.com/
JSSSH, Volume 11, No. 1, 2025, 72-90
ISSN: 2413-9270

Between Meaning and Method: The Humanities–Social Sciences Nexus in Understanding Society

Enongene Mirabeau Sone
Email: enongenes@yahoo.com
Department of Arts, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa

Abstract

In an era defined by global crises, technological disruption, and epistemic fragmentation, the traditional divide between the Humanities and the Social Sciences has become increasingly untenable. This paper re-examines that divide, proposing a dynamic nexus between *meaning* and *method* as the foundation for a more holistic understanding of society. Drawing on interdisciplinary theory, critical realism, and transdisciplinary praxis, the researcher argues that genuine social insight emerges when the interpretive richness of the Humanities intersects with the empirical precision of the Social Sciences. The study integrates global and local education reform examples—including UNESCO's *Futures of Education Initiative* (2021), the Bologna Process, Finland's *Phenomenon-Based Learning Curriculum* (2016), and South Africa's *National Development Plan* (2030) and *Humanities Charter* (2019)—to demonstrate how institutional frameworks can operationalise interdisciplinarity in teaching, research, and policy. Through case studies in gender studies, postcolonial theory, environmental humanities, and digital scholarship, the paper illustrates how narrative, ethics, and data converge to produce decolonial, inclusive, and socially responsive knowledge. Ultimately, it contends that the Humanities–Social Sciences nexus is not merely an academic ideal, but a transformative paradigm for ethical governance, sustainable development, and epistemic justice in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Cultural Interpretation; epistemological pluralism; humanities and social sciences; holistic social inquiry; Interdisciplinarity; Narrative and Method

Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed rapid transformations in knowledge production, technological innovation, and social organization that have disrupted traditional disciplinary boundaries. The Humanities and the Social Sciences—once distinct in purpose and method—are increasingly called upon to respond to the complex realities of globalization, digitalization, ecological crisis, and postcolonial transition. The Humanities, with their emphasis on meaning, interpretation, and ethics, offer insight into the symbolic and moral dimensions of the human experience. The Social Sciences, grounded in methodological rigor and empirical analysis, illuminate the structural and causal dynamics that shape societies. Yet the persistent separation of these domains has often limited our capacity to understand the full texture of human life. This paper argues for a dynamic convergence between meaning and method as a framework for producing knowledge that is both intellectually rigorous and socially transformative.

The argument is grounded in interdisciplinary theory, critical realism, and transdisciplinary praxis—three complementary perspectives that together provide a holistic epistemological foundation. Interdisciplinary theory (Giddens, 1984; Klein, 1990) emphasizes

the cross-fertilization of ideas and methods across disciplinary boundaries, enabling the study of complex phenomena through multiple lenses. Critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978, 1998; Sayer, 2000) provides the ontological and epistemological foundation for such a synthesis, positing that while social reality exists independently of perception, it can only be apprehended through interpretive frameworks mediated by human understanding. Transdisciplinary praxis, meanwhile, extends beyond the academic world, linking knowledge production to societal application through collaboration among scholars, policymakers, and communities. Together, these frameworks redefine the Humanities–Social Sciences nexus not as a methodological compromise, but as an ethical, epistemic, and practical imperative.

Historically, the bifurcation of the Humanities and the Social Sciences emerged from nineteenth-century positivism, which privileged quantification and empirical regularity over subjective meaning (Comte, 1853; Dilthey, 1989). This intellectual legacy entrenched institutional divisions in universities and funding systems, reinforcing a false dichotomy between value and fact. Yet, as Bourdieu (1991) and Foucault (1972) remind us, meaning and power are inseparable; understanding that society requires not only measuring patterns, but also interpretation of the symbolic systems through which social order is constructed. Contemporary scholarship increasingly rejects rigid methodological hierarchies in favor of dialogic engagement between qualitative and quantitative approaches—a movement reflected in cultural sociology, digital ethnography, and environmental humanities.

Global education reforms further validate this paradigm shift. The UNESCO Futures of Education Initiative (2021) calls for a "new social contract for education" that integrates ethical reflection, cultural literacy, and technological adaptability. The European Higher Education Area's Bologna Process (1999–present) similarly redefines curricular coherence and mobility in terms of interdisciplinarity and citizenship. In South Africa, the Council on Higher Education's (CHE, 2017) National Framework for Curriculum Renewal and the National Development Plan (NDP, 2030) emphasize the embedding of indigenous knowledge systems, social justice, and sustainability within higher education. The SAHUDA Humanities Charter (2019) further situates this integration within the African intellectual tradition, advocating for humanistic education that reconciles global competitiveness with decolonial transformation. These reforms collectively signal that the Humanities–Social Sciences nexus has shifted from a theoretical aspiration to a policy imperative.

Institutional practices illustrate how these frameworks are materializing. Finland's Phenomenon-Based Learning Curriculum (2016) dissolves subject boundaries, engaging students in thematic, real-world inquiry that blends empirical research with narrative reflection. Universities such as Arizona State University, University College London, and the National University of Singapore have established integrative programmes combining science, art, and social inquiry to foster epistemic versatility. In South Africa, the University of Cape Town's Curriculum Change Framework (2018) and the University of Johannesburg's transdisciplinary research hubs exemplify continental leadership in this domain. Walter Sisulu University's Learning for Impact agenda also reflects this shift, emphasizing community-based learning and collaborative research. These institutional reforms demonstrate that bridging meaning and method is not only conceptually sound, but also operationally feasible when supported by coherent policy, leadership, and vision.

From a critical realist standpoint, interdisciplinarity must also engage with questions of causality and structure. Social phenomena cannot be reduced to cultural interpretation alone; they are shaped by material conditions, historical legacies, and institutional power. However, purely empirical models risk overlooking the subjective and moral dimensions of human agency. A critical realist synthesis acknowledges that both perspectives are necessary:

empirical analysis elucidates how social mechanisms operate, while interpretive inquiry examines why they matter and what they signify for human flourishing. This dialectic yields a deeper, more reflexive understanding that can inform ethical governance, policy design, and educational reform.

At the pedagogical level, transdisciplinary praxis transforms classrooms into laboratories of social imagination. By linking research, teaching, and community engagement, it cultivates not only intellectual competence, but also civic responsibility. Integrative courses that combine philosophy with data analytics, or anthropology with environmental science, model the epistemic agility required in a world defined by complexity and uncertainty. Moreover, drawing on African epistemologies that value communal wisdom and relational knowledge, transdisciplinary education restores the moral and cultural dimensions often lost in technocratic paradigms. It positions the Humanities–Social Sciences nexus as a site of epistemic justice—where diverse ways of knowing coexist, establish dialogue, and co-create meaning.

Ethically, the integration of meaning and method also challenges the colonial hierarchies embedded in global knowledge systems. Decolonial scholars argue that interdisciplinarity must involve epistemic humility and inclusivity, recognizing indigenous, oral, and experiential knowledge as legitimate contributors to scholarship (Dei, 2011; Mbembe, 2001). Integrating such perspectives resists the universalization of Western epistemologies and affirms the plurality of intellectual traditions shaping humanity's collective future. The Humanities–Social Sciences nexus thus becomes a moral project: to democratize knowledge, bridge cultural divides, and re-center human dignity in an increasingly data-driven world.

Ultimately, reimagining the relationship between the Humanities and the Social Sciences is both a theoretical and practical necessity. It requires an education system that fosters curiosity, empathy, and analytical precision; a research culture that values collaboration over competition; and institutions willing to reconfigure their epistemic architectures for a more just and sustainable future. The convergence of meaning and method offers not only an academic framework but also a moral compass for navigating the complexities of the twenty-first century. By uniting interpretation with explanation, reflection with measurement, and humanistic ethics with scientific insight, the Humanities–Social Sciences nexus provides the intellectual infrastructure for understanding—and transforming—our shared world.

Conceptual Foundations

Understanding the intersection of the humanities and social sciences requires a clear engagement with their conceptual underpinnings—particularly how each tradition conceives of knowledge, human agency, and the process of inquiry. At the heart of this distinction lies a tension between meaning and method: the Humanities privilege the interpretive and symbolic dimensions of human experience, whereas the Social Sciences foreground systematic methods of observation, analysis, and explanation. However, these distinctions are neither absolute nor impermeable; rather, they reflect different epistemological orientations often complementary when critically examined.

The Humanities: Meaning, Interpretation, and Human Experience

The Humanities are primarily concerned with how individuals and cultures create, express, and contest meaning. Rooted in traditions of hermeneutics, phenomenology, and critical theory, the Humanities pursue questions of value, ethics, aesthetics, and identity (Gadamer, 2004; Ricoeur, 1981). Central to this orientation is the belief that human experience cannot be fully understood through empirical data alone, but must be interpreted within its cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts.

Disciplines such as literature, philosophy, history, and the arts function as interpretive frameworks that seek to uncover the symbolic and narrative structures through which societies make sense of themselves. Reading a text, viewing a painting, or interpreting a historical event becomes a mode of engaging with the human condition—marked by ambiguity, contradiction, and layered meanings (Taylor, 1985). As Nussbaum (2010) argues, the Humanities cultivate the moral imagination and empathetic understanding essential for democratic citizenship and ethical engagement in a pluralistic world.

Moreover, the Humanities often resist universalist claims, favoring particularism and contextualism, recognizing that meaning is always embedded in social, linguistic, and ideological structures. This emphasis on the local, the historical, and the subjective challenges the assumptions of neutrality and objectivity often associated with the scientific method (Clifford, 1986; Spivak, 1988).

The Social Sciences: Method, Empiricism, and Theorizing Society

The Social Sciences, in contrast, developed under the influence of Enlightenment rationalism and positivism, aspiring to generate systematic knowledge about human behavior and social organisation through empirical observation and methodological rigor (Comte, 1853; Durkheim, 1982). Like nature, their foundational premise is that society can be studied through structured inquiry—formulating hypotheses, collecting data, and testing theories.

This orientation has yielded powerful insights into social structures, institutions, patterns of inequality, and processes of change. For instance, sociological theories of class (Marx, 1976), bureaucracy (Weber, 1949), and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) have provided compelling frameworks for understanding the dynamics of power, economy, and identity in modern societies. Methodologically, the social sciences rely on a range of quantitative and qualitative tools—from statistical models to ethnographic observation—each aimed at enhancing research reliability, validity, and replicability (Silverman, 2016).

Nevertheless, within the Social Sciences, there is growing recognition of the limitations of pure positivism and the necessity of interpretive approaches. The rise of interpretive sociology (Weber, 1949), symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), and critical ethnography (Madison, 2011) signals a shift toward embracing the hermeneutic dimension of social life—where meaning, symbolism, and agency become central analytic categories.

As Flyvbjerg (2001) persuasively argues, the most pressing questions in the Social Sciences are often "phronetic"—ethical and context-dependent—rather than purely technical. Therefore, the capacity to understand society lies in measuring variables and engaging deeply with the values, discourses, and power relations that shape human action.

Converging Trajectories: Meaning and Method as Complementary Epistemes

Despite their differing emphases, the Humanities and Social Sciences share a commitment to understanding the human world in its complexity. Both traditions acknowledge that knowledge is socially constructed, historically situated, and politically mediated. The Humanities emphasize depth, reflexivity, and interpretation; the Social Sciences emphasize structure, comparison, and generalization. When brought into conversation, these approaches enrich one another. For example, in the field of gender studies, literary criticism and sociological theory intersect to illuminate how gender identities are both discursively constructed and socially regulated (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2002). Similarly, postcolonial studies draw upon historical inquiry, anthropological fieldwork, and literary theory to challenge Eurocentric narratives and recover the voices of subaltern groups (Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978). These examples

demonstrate that meaning and method are not mutually exclusive, but mutually reinforcing dimensions of knowledge production.

In summary, this section highlights that the Humanities and Social Sciences are not merely divided by epistemological preferences, but are connected through a shared concern with interpreting and explaining human life. Rather than seeing them in opposition, it is more fruitful to see them as engaging in a dialectical relationship—where the method is enriched by meaning and meaning gains clarity through the method.

The convergence between meaning and method is also a site of epistemic negotiation, particularly in the Global South, where intellectual traditions are often hybrid by necessity. African, Asian, and Latin American scholarship increasingly demonstrates that interdisciplinary dialogue is not merely a methodological choice, but a condition for epistemic survival. In these contexts, integrating interpretive insight with empirical validation becomes an act of intellectual sovereignty—a way of reclaiming the authority to theorize from lived realities rather than imported paradigms.

Historical Trajectories and Disciplinary Boundaries

The institutional and epistemological distinction between the Humanities and Social Sciences is not a natural or fixed condition, but a historical construct that has evolved in tandem with broader socio-political, intellectual, and technological shifts. Understanding how these disciplines emerged, diverged, and at times converged is crucial for situating the current debate about their nexus in the production of social knowledge. This section traces the genealogies of the Humanities and Social Sciences, interrogates the boundaries erected between them, and reflects on the shifting intellectual landscapes that have enabled dialogue, friction, and synthesis.

The Enlightenment and the Rise of Disciplinarity

The roots of modern disciplinary formations can be traced back to the European Enlightenment (late seventeenth to eighteenth centuries), when rationalism, empiricism, and the ideal of universal knowledge gained ascendancy. During this period, knowledge was increasingly classified, categorized, and institutionalized within specific domains—giving rise to the early contours of the modern university (Foucault, 1970; Porter, 1995). Enlightenment thinkers like Kant, Diderot, and Comte contributed to this project by delineating the boundaries between moral philosophy, natural science, and political economy (Outram, 2013).

Auguste Comte's positivism laid the foundation for the Social Sciences by proposing that society could and should be studied using methods similar to those of the natural sciences (Comte, 1853). This marked a pivotal moment: the idea that social life could be explained through empirical observation and classification introduced a new epistemic ethos grounded in methodological regularity, causality, and prediction. Meanwhile, the Humanities, particularly History and Philology, retained their commitment to interpretive, diachronic, and normative inquiries (Shumway, 2004).

The late nineteenth century witnessed the institutionalization of both domains in European and American universities. The faculties of arts and letters were separated from the emerging Social Science departments, each with distinct curricular goals, funding mechanisms, and scholarly standards. This disciplinary segmentation, while promoting internal rigor, also led to the compartmentalization of knowledge, often reinforcing artificial boundaries between meaning and method (Readings, 1996).

Divergence and the Positivist-Interpretivist Divide

By the early twentieth century, the divergence between the Humanities and the Social Sciences had crystallized into what became known as the positivist–interpretivist divide. Social Sciences—particularly Economics, Psychology, and Political Science—gravitated toward quantification, objectivity, and scientific neutrality (Durkheim, 1982; Popper, 1959). In contrast, the Humanities have increasingly embraced critical theory, historicism, and hermeneutics as modes of contesting the neutrality and universality of knowledge (Dilthey, 1989; Gadamer, 2004).

This epistemological rift was most clearly articulated in the German distinction between the *Naturwissenschaften* (Natural Sciences) and the *Geisteswissenschaften* (Human Sciences), with thinkers like Wilhelm Dilthey arguing that the social world must be understood (*Verstehen*) rather than merely explained (*Erklären*) (Dilthey, 1989). In the Anglo-American context, C. P. Snow's famous "Two Cultures" lecture (1959) lamented the growing chasm between scientific and literary intellectuals, framing it as a crisis of communication and epistemological hostility.

Moreover, the twentieth-century growth of professionalized academic disciplines, peer-reviewed journals, and research funding further entrenched disciplinary identities. Humanities scholars were often excluded from research councils that prioritized "measurable" outcomes, while social scientists found themselves tethered to policy-oriented research agendas that sometimes compromised their critical autonomy (Frickel & Gross, 2005).

Convergences: The Interdisciplinary Turn

Despite this entrenched separation, the latter half of the twentieth century saw growing convergences between the Humanities and Social Sciences, catalyzed by intellectual movements that challenged disciplinary orthodoxies. Cultural studies, critical theory, poststructuralism, and feminist epistemologies emerged as hybrid spaces where interpretive and empirical methods were combined to analyze power, identity, and representation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Hall, 1992; Haraway, 1988).

For instance, the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies under Stuart Hall foregrounded popular culture and media as serious objects of analysis, drawing on both Marxist theory and ethnographic methods (Hall, 1992). Michel Foucault's archaeology and genealogy of knowledge (Foucault, 1972, 1980) reconfigured historical inquiry by blending philosophical critique with archival investigation, thereby blurring the distinction between historians and sociologists.

Simultaneously, fields like anthropology became inherently interdisciplinary, straddling the realms of narrative interpretation and fieldwork methodology. Influential works such as Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) advocated for "thick description"—an approach that recognized culture as a text to be read, decoded, and contextualized.

In the twenty-first century, area studies, gender studies, postcolonial studies, and digital humanities have continued to trouble disciplinary boundaries, reinforcing the need for transdisciplinary dialogue. These fields challenge the assumption that method and meaning must operate in isolation, demonstrating how interpretive frameworks and empirical analysis can be mutually generative.

Institutional and Pedagogical Challenges

Despite these convergences, significant institutional and pedagogical barriers persist. University structures, funding models, and performance metrics continue to privilege

disciplines that align with market-driven outcomes and scientific legitimacy (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Humanities departments often face existential threats in the form of budget cuts, while interdisciplinary programs are frequently marginalized within broader academic hierarchies.

Recent global and local education reforms underscore both the urgency and the possibility of institutional transformation. Internationally, frameworks such as the UNESCO Futures of Education Initiative (2021) and the European Higher Education Area's Bologna Process have emphasized interdisciplinarity, ethical reasoning, and citizenship as core to twenty-first century education. In South Africa, reforms driven by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)—including the National Framework for Curriculum Renewal in Higher Education (2017)—call for curricula that integrate indigenous knowledge systems, social innovation, and digital literacy across disciplines. Walter Sisulu University's own strategic orientation toward "learning for impact" similarly repositions the Humanities and Social Sciences as engines for community-engaged scholarship and transformative learning.

These reforms demonstrate that interdisciplinarity is not only a theoretical aspiration but also a policy-driven educational priority, both globally and locally. The challenge remains to translate these frameworks into sustainable pedagogical and research practices that genuinely bridge the gap between meaning and method.

Addressing these challenges requires more than administrative restructuring; it calls for a paradigm shift in how universities conceive of knowledge. Institutional reward systems must value integrative scholarship equally with disciplinary specialization. Collaborative research clusters, shared postgraduate programmes, and co-supervision models between faculties can operationalise interdisciplinarity, transforming it from a rhetorical commitment into an institutional reality.

Nevertheless, interdisciplinary teaching and research centers have emerged as critical spaces for experimentation and innovation. Institutions such as the University of California's Humanities Research Institute and the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton offer templates for fostering sustained engagement across epistemic boundaries. These initiatives underscore the importance of reimagining what we study and how we conceptualize knowledge itself (Klein, 1990; Nowotny et al., 2001).

The Nexus in Practice: Case Studies

While the Humanities—including institutional structures and epistemological assumptions—have often reinforced the divide between the social sciences, real-world intellectual practice frequently defies these boundaries. Contemporary scholarship increasingly draws upon a hybridized epistemology, in which meaning and method are not seen as oppositional but as co-constitutive elements in understanding complex social realities. This section explores how the Humanities–Social Sciences nexus operates in practice through interdisciplinary case studies, illustrating the powerful synergies that emerge when interpretive and empirical frameworks are brought into dynamic interaction.

Gender Studies: Interweaving Discourse and Structure

Gender studies exemplify the confluence of Humanities-based interpretation and Social Science methodologies. Originating in feminist literary criticism and political theory, the field has evolved into a robust interdisciplinary domain incorporating Cultural Theory, Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2002). Central to gender studies is the

recognition that gender is not merely a biological category, but a discursively produced and socially regulated identity shaped by language, power, and institutions.

Judith Butler's seminal work *Gender Trouble* (1990) draws from poststructuralist literary theory, particularly the writings of Foucault and Derrida, to argue that gender is performative—produced through repeated acts and norms rather than inherent traits. At the same time, sociologists such as Raewyn Connell (2002) have emphasized the structural dimensions of gender, including the institutionalization of hegemonic masculinity and gendered patterns of labor and inequality. Here, method and meaning converge: empirical studies of gender disparities in education, labor, or politics are enriched by interpretive analyses of representation, language, and identity.

Feminist epistemologies further underscore this nexus by rejecting the dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity, insisting instead on "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988) that foregrounds the positionality of the researcher and the partiality of all knowledge claims. In practice, gender studies thus mobilize both quantitative data (e.g., wage gaps, educational attainment statistics) and qualitative inquiry (e.g., autoethnography, discourse analysis) to understand how gender operates across domains of culture, policy, and personal identity.

Postcolonial Studies: Hybrid Histories, Hybrid Methods

Postcolonial studies represent another domain in which the nexus between the Humanities and the Social Sciences is both methodological and philosophical. Drawing from Literary Theory, History, Anthropology, and Political Economy, postcolonial scholarship interrogates the legacies of imperialism, colonial domination, and the ongoing dynamics of global inequality (Mbembe, 2001; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988).

The field partly emerged from literary and cultural analysis, with scholars such as Edward Said employing textual criticism to expose how Orientalist discourse framed the East as inferior, exotic, and "other" (Said, 1978). However, postcolonial studies have always engaged deeply with social science concerns—especially those relating to state formation, migration, economic dependency, and identity politics. Anthropologists such as Talal Asad (1973) and Veena Das (2006) have employed ethnographic methods to examine postcolonial subjects, demonstrating how historical trauma, state violence, and cultural memory are experienced and narrated in everyday life. One powerful example is Gayatri Spivak's (1988) famous question—"Can the Subaltern Speak?"—which combines deconstructive textual analysis with Marxist historiography and a critique of Eurocentric knowledge systems. Her work exemplifies the fusion of critical theory with empirical attention to the erasure of marginalized voices. Similarly, Achille Mbembe's (2001) concept of "necropolitics" extends Foucault's biopolitics into a critique of postcolonial state violence, drawing from both political theory and case studies of contemporary Africa.

Postcolonial scholarship thus operates as an epistemological critique and a methodological reconfiguration, destabilizing the Western canon while proposing alternative ways of knowing rooted in lived experience and theoretically expansive. Yet its significance lies not merely in challenging Eurocentric narratives, but in demonstrating how meaning and method must function together in the production of socially responsive knowledge. Postcolonial inquiry refuses the separation of textual interpretation from material analysis: it reads literature as archive, discourse as structure, and narrative as a site where historical violence, economic dependency, and cultural resistance intersect. In doing so, it integrates the hermeneutic sensitivity of the Humanities with the empirical attentiveness of the Social Sciences. Archival research, ethnographic engagement, political economy analysis, and

discourse critique become mutually reinforcing tools rather than isolated techniques. This methodological hybridity embodies the very nexus this study advances—an approach in which explanation does not eclipse interpretation, and interpretation does not evade structural analysis. Postcolonial studies, therefore, model a praxis of epistemic justice: one that re-centers marginalized voices, interrogates the institutional production of knowledge, and affirms the legitimacy of oral, indigenous, and experiential epistemologies within global scholarship. In this sense, postcolonial methodology is not simply oppositional; it is reconstructive—offering a blueprint for a Humanities–Social Sciences synthesis capable of addressing historical inequality and contemporary global asymmetries.

Environmental Humanities and Political Ecology: Narratives and Systems

As the planet faces unprecedented environmental crises, the intersection of the Humanities and the Social Sciences has found urgent expression in the emerging fields of environmental humanities and political ecology. These fields address the material causes and consequences of ecological degradation, as well as the cultural narratives, ethical frameworks, and symbolic systems through which societies understand nature and the environment (Heise, 2008; Nixon, 2011; Robbins, 2012).

Political ecology, rooted in geography and anthropology, examines how environmental change is shaped by power relations, political institutions, and economic systems. It employs empirical tools such as land-use mapping, resource governance studies, and policy analysis (Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987). However, these studies often fall short by failing to attend to how people narrate their relationships with nature, experience ecological loss, and envision sustainable futures.

This is where the environmental humanities intervene. Scholars like Rob Nixon (2011) and Ursula Heise (2008) argue that environmental degradation is also a crisis of representation—what Nixon calls the "slow violence" that defies spectacular media coverage and demands narrative strategies attuned to temporal complexity and emotional resonance. Literature, film, and indigenous oral traditions become vital archives for understanding the human dimensions of ecological crisis. One compelling example is the interdisciplinary analysis of climate change: while climate models and atmospheric data provide crucial projections, they cannot alone account for the social inertia, moral dissonance, and psychological denial that shape human responses. By integrating climate science with narrative ethics, myth, and memory, scholars in this space are forging new paths for both scholarship and activism.

Digital Humanities and Computational Social Science: Bridging the Methodological Spectrum

In the digital age, the divide between the Humanities and Social Sciences is further complicated—and potentially bridged—by the rise of digital humanities and computational social science. These fields exemplify the mutual appropriation of tools, theories, and methods across traditional boundaries.

Digital humanities employ computational tools (e.g., text mining, data visualization, GIS mapping) to analyze cultural artifacts, ranging from literature and archives to music and film (Berry, 2011). Conversely, computational social science applies algorithmic models, big data analytics, and network theory to understand social phenomena such as migration, misinformation, or political mobilization (Lazer et al., 2009).

The intersection lies in projects that require both algorithmic precision and interpretive insight. For instance, digital mapping of slave trade routes or refugee migrations benefits from

statistical accuracy, but gains cultural significance only when interpreted through historical, ethical, and narrative lenses (Presner et al., 2014). These new domains highlight the technical convergence of the Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as the shared imperative to ask humanistic questions of technological systems: Who is included or excluded in the data? What histories are visible or erased? What values are encoded in our algorithms?

Yet, this digital convergence also demands vigilance. As data analytics and algorithmic systems increasingly shape both research and social reality, scholars must interrogate the ethical, racial, and geopolitical biases inscribed within digital infrastructures. A critical humanities perspective ensures that computational methods remain accountable to human values, narrative integrity, and epistemic justice, preventing the dehumanization of knowledge production.

Epistemological Tensions and Complementarities

While the intersection between the Humanities and Social Sciences offers fertile ground for interdisciplinary innovation, it is also marked by profound epistemological tensions. These tensions often manifest in differing assumptions about what constitutes valid knowledge, the role of the researcher, the aims of inquiry, and the criteria for truth and generalization. Yet, beneath these friction points lies a rich terrain of complementarities that can enhance and deepen our understanding of social life. This section critically engages with these tensions—subjectivity versus objectivity, interpretation versus explanation, and depth versus generalizability—and explores how they may be reframed not as barriers, but as productive divergences within a broader epistemic ecology.

Objectivity, Subjectivity, and the Role of the Researcher

One of the most persistent epistemological divides between the Humanities and the Social Sciences concerns the role of the researcher and the question of objectivity. Social Sciences, particularly those influenced by positivist traditions, have historically privileged objectivity, neutrality, and detachment as ideals of scientific rigor (Durkheim, 1982; Popper, 1959). Researchers are expected to minimise bias, maintain distance from their subjects, and produce findings that are replicable and generalizable.

In contrast, the Humanities often embrace subjectivity as a valid and even essential dimension of scholarly inquiry. Interpretation is seen not as a distortion of truth, but as a mode of understanding that is inevitably mediated by the positionality of the interpreter. Hermeneutics, as advanced by Gadamer (2004), holds that understanding is always historically and linguistically situated, shaped by the interpreter's preconceptions and horizons. Similarly, feminist and postcolonial scholars argue that claims of neutrality often conceal the implicit values and ideologies inherent in dominant epistemologies (Haraway, 1988; Spivak, 1988).

However, this opposition is not as absolute as it appears. Many social scientists now acknowledge the impossibility of value-free inquiry and advocate for reflexivity—an awareness of how the researcher's background, beliefs, and location influence the research process (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Conversely, scholars in the Humanities increasingly utilize systematic approaches such as grounded theory, ethnography, and content analysis to support their interpretive claims (Charmaz, 2006). This evolving understanding suggests that the tension between subjectivity and objectivity is best seen not as binary, but as a spectrum, with each position offering unique insights depending on the research context.

Explanation versus Interpretation: Competing Goals of Inquiry

Another key distinction lies in the goals of knowledge production. Social Sciences often aim to explain phenomena by identifying causal relationships, social mechanisms, or statistical correlations. The logic of explanation seeks to reduce complexity, uncover patterns, and make generalizations that can inform policy, practice, or theory (Elster, 1989; Giddens, 1984). By contrast, the Humanities typically strive to interpret, focusing on the particular, the contingent, and the culturally embedded. Their goal is not generalization, but understanding—a nuanced, contextualized account of how individuals and communities make sense of their world (Taylor, 1985).

This difference has led to criticisms on both sides. Social scientists have sometimes accused humanities scholars of being relativists, obscurantists, or having an aversion to evidence-based reasoning. Meanwhile, humanities scholars have challenged the social sciences for their reliance on reductionist models that often fail to capture the richness and ambiguity of lived experience (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Yet these criticisms often obscure that explanation and interpretation are complementary modes of inquiry, not mutually exclusive.

The rise of interpretive social science—exemplified in symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, and hermeneutic sociology—demonstrates how these approaches can converge. Scholars like Max Weber (1949) and Clifford Geertz (1973) have shown that understanding the "meaning" of social action is not a detour from explanation, but a precondition for it. In this light, interpretation becomes a form of explanation that accounts for social actors' intentions, beliefs, and symbolic frameworks.

Generalizability and Particularism: The Tension of Scale

Closely tied to the explanation is the interpretive divide between generalizability and particularism. Social Sciences, particularly in their quantitative modes, strive for findings that are applicable across cases, contexts, and time. Statistical significance, random sampling, and theory-building aim to produce replicable and scalable knowledge (King et al., 1994).

In contrast, the Humanities are often deeply invested in the singular, the unique, and the local. A literary analysis of a single novel, a close reading of a historical speech, or an ethnographic portrait of a community resists abstraction in favor of thick description (Geertz, 1973). This focus on specificity is not a limitation, but a deliberate epistemic stance that values depth over breadth and complexity over oversimplification.

Nonetheless, both approaches have much to learn from each other. The Humanities can benefit from Social Science tools that facilitate comparative analysis or pattern recognition. At the same time, the humanistic emphasis on case-based reasoning, narrative, and emotional resonance can enrich the Social Sciences. Critical realism, as developed by Roy Bhaskar (1978), offers one possible bridge: it recognizes the stratified nature of reality and the need for both empirical data and interpretive depth to understand social phenomena.

Language, Power, and Epistemic Authority

Another epistemological fault line concerns the role of language and power in constructing knowledge. Humanities scholars, especially those influenced by poststructuralism and critical theory, have long argued that knowledge is not a neutral reflection of reality, but a discursive construction shaped by power relations (Derrida, 1976; Foucault, 1972). This insight has profound implications for the Social Sciences, which have historically aimed to produce objective, value-free knowledge.

By exposing how language encodes ideologies, normalizes hierarchies, and silences dissent, humanities scholarship invites a critical re-evaluation of social-scientific categories such as "development," "rationality," and "objectivity." Scholars like Pierre Bourdieu (1991) have demonstrated that even the most technical fields—like Economics or Education—are underpinned by symbolic power and classificatory struggles.

Conversely, the Social Sciences provide robust methodologies for empirically documenting how power operates in institutions, policies, and social practices. Thus, when the Humanities' critical sensitivity to discourse and meaning is combined with the Social Sciences' analytical tools for mapping structures and outcomes, a more nuanced and ethically attuned epistemology becomes possible.

Towards an Integrated Framework: Rethinking Disciplinary Boundaries

The preceding analyses have highlighted the historical tensions and methodological divergences between the Humanities and the Social Sciences, as well as the productive overlaps that have generated new modes of inquiry, critical insights, and transformative praxis. In this section, the discussion shifts toward the possibility of epistemological integration: not by flattening differences between disciplines, but by cultivating a pluralist framework in which diverse methodologies and interpretive traditions coexist and enrich one another.

This integration is not merely desirable; it is increasingly imperative in a world characterised by systemic crises—climate change, global inequality, technological disruption, and the erosion of democratic norms—that resist analysis from a single disciplinary lens. This section examines key theoretical approaches, institutional models, and pedagogical strategies that offer pathways toward a more holistic and integrated understanding of society.

Critical Realism: Bridging Ontology and Epistemology

Critical realism is one of the most promising philosophical frameworks for integrating the Humanities and Social Sciences, as developed by Roy Bhaskar (1978, 1998). Critical realism asserts that the social world, like the natural world, exists independently of our perceptions. However, our knowledge of it is theoretically mediated, partial, and always subject to revision. This framework distinguishes between the real (underlying structures and mechanisms), the actual (events that occur), and the empirical (what we observe or experience), thereby providing space for both explanatory models and interpretive accounts.

Critical realism acknowledges the socially constructed nature of knowledge; unlike positivism and radical constructivism, it maintains that there is a world beyond discourse. This ontological depth allows for a multi-level analysis that appreciates causality and meaning simultaneously. For example, in studying poverty, a critical realist would explore both the structural conditions (e.g., economic systems, policy frameworks) and the subjective narratives (e.g., lived experience, cultural stigma) that constitute its reality (Sayer, 2000).

Thus, critical realism offers a philosophical middle ground that resists methodological individualism and epistemic relativism, enabling researchers to combine quantitative, qualitative, and interpretive methods in a coherent analytical framework.

Transdisciplinarity: From Dialogue to Integration

Where interdisciplinarity suggests collaboration across established disciplines, transdisciplinarity calls for a more radical rethinking of disciplinary boundaries altogether (Nowotny et al., 2001). It emerges in response to the intractable, complex problems that transcend disciplinary expertise—what some scholars term "wicked problems" (Rittel & Webber, 1973). In a transdisciplinary model, knowledge production is not confined to

academic silos but rather encompasses multiple epistemologies, including indigenous knowledge systems, public expertise, and community-based research.

The transdisciplinary ethos is ecological rather than hierarchical, privileging connectivity, adaptability, and reflexivity. For instance, contemporary work in health humanities brings together clinical data, patient narratives, and cultural theory to rethink health not merely as a biological condition, but as a social and ethical phenomenon (Brody, 2011; Crawford et al., 2020). Similarly, urban studies integrate architecture, anthropology, literature, and environmental science to understand the city as both a material infrastructure and a site of symbolic production (Amin & Thrift, 2002).

Transdisciplinarity also challenges the binary system of academic versus applied research, by calling for action-oriented knowledge that informs policy, empowers communities, and fosters social transformation. It is thus not only a methodological imperative, but an ethical one, demanding that scholarship engage with the world rather than stand apart from it (Leavy, 2011).

Pedagogical Innovations: Teaching Across the Divide

Institutional efforts toward integration must be matched by pedagogical innovation that trains students to think critically across disciplinary boundaries. Traditional university curricula, structured by faculty divisions and degree specializations, often discourage integrative thinking. However, emerging models in liberal arts education, problem-based learning, and interdisciplinary degrees challenge this paradigm.

Globally, universities such as Arizona State University's School for the Future of Innovation in Society, University College London's Arts and Sciences Programme, and the National University of Singapore's College of Humanities and Sciences have pioneered integrative curricula that dissolve rigid disciplinary borders. These initiatives model how inquiry-based learning and collaborative teaching teams can cultivate epistemic versatility among students.

In the African context, the University of Cape Town's Curriculum Change Framework (2018) and the University of Johannesburg's transdisciplinary research hubs provide tangible examples of reform that reimagine the role of the Humanities and Social Sciences in addressing social justice, sustainability, and decolonial transformation. Such models prove that integration is achievable when institutional design aligns pedagogy, assessment, and research incentives toward a shared transformative vision.

It is also worth noting that courses on global development, climate justice, or human rights increasingly draw from Literature, Sociology, Philosophy, Political Science, and Economics to frame their inquiry. Such curricula do not merely juxtapose disciplinary perspectives, but actively foster the ability to synthesize diverse epistemologies (Jacobs & Frickel, 2009). Furthermore, teaching students to navigate both statistical analysis and narrative interpretation equips them with a versatile intellectual toolkit well-suited for addressing the uncertainties of the twenty-first century.

One model gaining traction is the capstone project, where students address a real-world problem by drawing on multiple disciplines and methods. This not only cultivates epistemic agility, but also reflects the actual structure of knowledge in the world, where economic data, cultural narratives, institutional structures, and personal experiences are inextricably intertwined.

Ethical and Political Stakes of Integration

Finally, the drive toward an integrated Humanities–Social Sciences framework must contend with the ethical and political stakes of knowledge production. As Foucault (1980) reminds us, all knowledge is inextricably linked to power. Who defines the research agenda? Who is authorized to speak? What kinds of knowledge are funded, published, or institutionalized?

Integration must not mean colonizing one domain by another, nor should it reproduce epistemic hierarchies that marginalize non-Western, subaltern, or indigenous ways of knowing. Instead, the integration must be guided by a commitment to epistemic justice—recognizing diverse knowledge traditions as legitimate and valuable in their own right (Fricker, 2007; Santos, 2014).

This is especially crucial in postcolonial and Global South contexts, where the legacy of epistemic extractivism has historically positioned Western science as the arbiter of truth. An integrated framework must, therefore, be decolonial in spirit and practice, committed to dialogical knowledge production, plurality, and all communities' right to define the terms of their reality. This necessitates a conscious dismantling of epistemic hierarchies that privilege Western modes of rationality as universal. Integrative frameworks must instead be dialogical, allowing indigenous, communal, and narrative forms of knowing to coexist alongside scientific rationality. True interdisciplinarity, therefore, involves epistemic humility—the recognition that no single knowledge system holds a monopoly on truth or relevance.

Educational reforms worldwide are also revealing the ethical and political dimensions of integration. For instance, Finland's Phenomenon-Based Learning Curriculum (2016) integrates the arts, sciences, and social inquiry to address complex societal themes—such as climate change, migration, and inequality—through participatory pedagogy. Similarly, South Africa's revised National Development Plan (NDP, 2030) and the Humanities Charter (SAHUDA, 2019) call for research and teaching that dismantle inherited epistemic hierarchies, prioritizing decoloniality, multilingualism, and community-based knowledge.

These reform agendas collectively affirm that the Humanities–Social Sciences nexus is not a marginal or decorative ideal, but a strategic framework for ethical governance, inclusive citizenship, and global competitiveness.

Conclusion: Reimagining the Nexus of Meaning and Method in Understanding Society

The quest to understand society in all its complexity demands more than disciplinary allegiance, methodological orthodoxy, or epistemological insularity. This study has demonstrated that the enduring tension between *meaning* and *method*—embodied in the historical divide between the Humanities and the Social Sciences—can no longer sustain the demands of the twenty-first century. Rather than existing as parallel or competing paradigms, these domains represent mutually reinforcing dimensions of human inquiry whose integration offers the most comprehensive path toward understanding and transforming contemporary life. The Humanities–Social Sciences nexus thus emerges as both an intellectual and ethical project: one that situates interpretation and explanation, narrative and evidence, within a single continuum of inquiry.

The analysis began by tracing the historical roots of the disciplinary divide, locating its emergence in the Enlightenment's bifurcation between reason and value, objectivity and meaning (Foucault, 1970; Porter, 1995). These divisions, institutionalized through positivist science and the modern university system, entrenched epistemic hierarchies that still shape research, pedagogy, and policy. Yet, as this researcher has argued, the growing complexity of global challenges—ecological degradation, digital transformation, postcolonial inequality, and

moral disorientation—has eroded rigid epistemic borders, creating fertile ground for new forms of interdisciplinary theory, critical realism, and transdisciplinary praxis. Together, these frameworks enable scholars to integrate interpretive depth with empirical precision, opening pathways for knowledge that are both analytically rigorous and socially engaged.

From a critical realist perspective, integration is not a flattening of epistemic difference, but a dialectical synthesis that recognizes the real structures underpinning society while acknowledging the interpretive mediations through which those structures become meaningful (Bhaskar, 1998; Sayer, 2000). Interdisciplinary theory (Giddens, 1984; Klein, 1990) provides the conceptual scaffolding for such synthesis, while transdisciplinary praxis moves beyond academic theory to engage with real-world problems. In this triadic framework, the Humanities contribute ethical reflection, narrative imagination, and cultural insight; the Social Sciences offer methodological rigor, causal analysis, and empirical grounding; and their intersection generates actionable knowledge responsive to the human condition.

Empirical and institutional examples across the globe substantiate this theoretical synthesis. The UNESCO Futures of Education Initiative (2021) and the European Higher Education Area's Bologna Process (1999–present) exemplify global efforts to bridge disciplinary divides through integrated learning and research models. Locally, the Council on Higher Education's (CHE, 2017) National Framework for Curriculum Renewal, South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP, 2030), and the SAHUDA Humanities Charter (2019) collectively reimagine higher education as a site of ethical and epistemic renewal. Institutions such as the University of Cape Town, the University of Johannesburg, and Walter Sisulu University are operationalising these ideals through curriculum reform, community-engaged research, and transdisciplinary learning environments. Internationally, Finland's Phenomenon-Based Learning Curriculum (2016) demonstrates how integrated teaching can dissolve disciplinary boundaries and nurture critical, adaptive thinking among learners. These reforms affirm that interdisciplinary integration is not a utopian dream, but a measurable, attainable, and policy-supported reality.

The success of such frameworks lies in their ability to address both epistemological and ethical tensions. Integration requires confronting questions about what constitutes valid knowledge, whose voices are privileged, and how power is distributed within academia (Fricker, 2007; Santos, 2014). The Humanities–Social Sciences nexus must therefore serve not only as a site of intellectual synthesis, but also as a platform for epistemic justice, enabling the co-existence of diverse knowledge systems—Western, indigenous, oral, and experiential. In postcolonial and Global South contexts, such integration is crucial for reclaiming intellectual sovereignty and ensuring that scholarship makes meaningful contributions to social transformation.

At the pedagogical level, transdisciplinary praxis redefines the purpose of education as cultivating citizens who can think critically, ethically, and collaboratively. Integrative programmes that link philosophy with data science, anthropology with climate studies, or literature with public health demonstrate the transformative power of hybrid knowledge systems. These curricular innovations not only align with global reforms but also embody the decolonial imperative to reconnect education with community, environment, and moral responsibility. In this way, the Humanities–Social Sciences nexus becomes a living laboratory for social innovation—where knowledge is co-produced rather than hierarchically imposed.

In this light, the divide between the Humanities and the Social Sciences must be reimagined not as a barrier, but as a threshold—a generative space of negotiation, creativity, and mutual enrichment. At this threshold, the narrative imagination of the Humanities

converges with the analytical precision of the Social Sciences to confront humanity's most pressing challenges: climate change, digital ethics, migration, inequality, and the erosion of democratic discourse. None of these phenomena can be adequately understood or addressed without the interpretive nuance of the Humanities and the methodological discipline of the Social Sciences working in tandem. Integration thus becomes both an epistemic strategy and a moral necessity.

The future of scholarship depends on our capacity to cultivate hybrid intellectual ecologies—spaces where historians converse with economists, poets with technologists, and philosophers with policymakers in sustained dialogue. Such alliances will generate knowledge that is not only empirically sound but ethically resonant, capable of shaping governance, innovation, and the collective imagination. In this reconfigured academic landscape, the nexus between the Humanities and Social Sciences emerges as the crucible for ethical, decolonial, and globally relevant knowledge production.

Ultimately, understanding society requires embracing a multi-modal, reflexive, and ethically grounded mode of inquiry—one that integrates meaning and method, interpretation and explanation, data and value. As the world faces intensifying social, environmental, and epistemic challenges, the Humanities–Social Sciences nexus offers a model of intellectual resilience, moral clarity, and transformative potential. The challenge for scholars, educators, and institutions is not merely to bridge a gap, but to inhabit the space between—where disciplines converge, paradigms interact, and the full richness of the human condition is revealed.

References

Amin, A. & Thrift, N. (2002). *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*. Polity Press.

Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.

Arizona State University (ASU). (n.d.). *School for the Future of Innovation in Society.* Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University. Available at: https://sfis.asu.edu [Accessed: 2nd October 2025].

Berry, D. M. (2011). *The Philosophy of Software: Code and Mediation in the Digital Age.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Bhaskar, R. (1978). *A Realist Theory of Science*. Harvester Press.

Bhaskar, R. (1998). *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences.* 3rd ed. Routledge.

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture.* Routledge.

Blaikie, P. & Brookfield, H. (1987). *Land Degradation and Society*. Methuen.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Prentice-Hall.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). 'The Forms of Capital', in Richardson, J. G. (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education.* pp. 241–258.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology.* University of Chicago Press.

Brody, H. (2011). *The Future of Bioethics.* Oxford University Press.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* Routledge.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis.* Sage.

Clifford, J. (1986). 'Introduction: Partial Truths', in Clifford, J. and Marcus, G. E. (eds) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. University of California Press, pp. 1–26.

Comte, A. (1853). *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*. Trübner & Co.
Connell, R. (2002*). Gender*. Polity Press.
Council on Higher Education (CHE). 2017**.** *National Framework for Curriculum Renewal in Higher Education.* Council on Higher Education.
Crawford, P., Brown, B., Baker, C., Tischler, V. & Abrams, B. (2020). *Health Humanities.* Palgrave Macmillan.
Das, V. (2006). *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. University of California Press.
Dei, G. J. S. (2011). Reclaiming African voice in education. *Counterpoints, 386*, 165–183.
Derrida, J. (1976). *Of Grammatology*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
Dilthey, W. (1989). *Introduction to the Human Sciences.* Translated by R. J. Betanzos. Wayne State University Press.
Durkheim, E. (1982). *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Translated by W. D. Halls. Free Press.
European Higher Education Area (EHEA). (1999). *The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999: Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education.* Bologna: EHEA Secretariat.
Elster, J. (1989). *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences.* Cambridge University Press.
Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it Can Succeed Again*. Cambridge University Press.
Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI). 2016. *National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2016: Phenomenon-Based Learning Approach.* Finnish National Agency for Education.
Foucault, M. (1970). *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Pantheon.
Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Pantheon.
Foucault, M. (1980*). Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*. Pantheon.
Fricker, M. (2007). Epistemic Injustice*: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*.Oxford University Press.
Frickel, S. & Gross, N. (2005). 'A General Theory of Scientific/Intellectual Movements', *American Sociological Review*, 70(2), pp. 204–232.
Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). *Truth and Method*. 2nd ed. Continuum.
Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.
Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration.* Polity Press.
Hall, S. (1992). 'Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies', in Grossberg, L., Nelson, C. and Treichler, P. (eds) *Cultural Studies*. Routledge, pp. 277–294.
Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage/Open University.
Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledge: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective*, Feminist Studies*, 14(3), pp. 575–599.
Heise, U. K. (2008). *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford University Press.
Jacobs, J. A. & Frickel, S. (2009). 'Interdisciplinarity: A Critical Assessment', Annual *Review of Sociology*, 35, pp. 43–65.
Kagan, J. (2009). *The Three Cultures: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and the Humanities in the 21st Century.* Cambridge University Press.
King, G., Keohane, R. O. & Verba, S. (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton University Press.
Klein, J. T. (1990). *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice*. Wayne State University Press.
Lazer, D. et al. (2009). Computational Social Science, *Science*, 323(5915), pp. 721–723.

Leavy, P. (2011*). Essentials of Transdisciplinary Research: Using Problem-Centered Methodologies.* Left Coast Press.
Madison, D. S. (2011). *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*. 2nd ed. Sage.
Marx, K. (1976). Capital: Volume I. Translated by B. Fowkes. Penguin.
Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the Postcolony.* University of California Press.
National University of Singapore (NUS). n.d. *College of Humanities and Sciences.* Singapore: National University of Singapore. Available at: https://chs.nus.edu.sg [Accessed: 10th October 2025].
Nowotny, H., Scott, P. & Gibbons, M. (2001). *Re-Thinking Science: Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Uncertainty*. Polity Press.
Nussbaum, M. C. (2010). *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities.* Princeton University Press.
Outram, D. (2013). *The Enlightenment*. Cambridge University Press.
Popper, K. (1959). *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Hutchinson.
Porter, T. M. (1995). *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life.* Princeton University Press.
Presner, T., Shepard, D. & Kawano, Y. (2014). *Hyper Cities: Thick Mapping in the Digital Humanities.* Harvard University Press.
Readings, B. (1996). *The University in Ruins*. Harvard University Press.
Ricoeur, P. (1981). *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge University Press.
Rittel, H. W. J. & Webber, M. M. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning, *Policy Sciences*, 4(2), pp. 155–169.
Robbins, P. (2012). *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell.
Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon.
Santos, B. de S. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide.* Paradigm Publishers.
Sayer, A. (2000). *Realism and Social Science*. Sage.
Shumway, D. R. (2004). A History of the Humanities and the Social Sciences: Disciplines and Discourses. Johns Hopkins University Press.
Silverman, D. (2016). *Qualitative Research*. Sage.
Slaughter, S. & Rhoades, G. (2004). *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
Snow, C. P. (1959). *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution.* Cambridge University Press.
South Africa. National Planning Commission. 2012**.** *National Development Plan 2030: Our Future – Make it Work.* The Presidency.
South African Humanities Deans Association (SAHUDA). 2019**.** *Humanities Charter for the 21st Century: Re-Imagining the Humanities in South Africa.* SAHUDA.
Spivak, G. C. (1988). 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. (eds) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. University of Illinois Press, pp. 271–313.
Taylor, C. (1985). *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers Volume 2.* Cambridge University Press.
UNESCO. (2021). *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education (Futures of Education Initiative).* United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
University College London (UCL). (n.d.). *Arts and Sciences (BASc) Programme.* University College London. Available at: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/basc [Accessed 4th October 2025].
University of Cape Town (UCT). 2018. *Curriculum Change Framework.* University of Cape Town.

University of Johannesburg (UJ). n.d. *Transdisciplinary Research Hubs and Centres.* University of Johannesburg. https://www.uj.ac.za/research/ [Accessed 10th October 2025].

Weber, M. (1949). *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Free Press.