

WHY MAJOR IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

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The social sciences have been a popular major in undergrad and postgrad levels for decades, levelling with engineering and medicine. Despite this, the most frequently asked question remains: "What's a social science?" As an undergrad student of Anthropology, I face the FAQs on a daily basis.

The social sciences encompass an academic field concerned with studying human society and human relationships. Each branch in this field takes a different angle to studying human society and the relationships between individuals within societies. There are some disciplines we have all heard of such as Economics, Sociology, International Relations, Political Science and Public Administration. There are lesser known branches such as Anthropology, Mass Communication and Journalism, Population Sciences and Development Studies. Others such as Peace and Conflict Studies and

SOCIOLOGY

Sociology is defined as the scientific study of social behaviour or society and it includes understanding its origins, development through time, organisation around various factors, networks and links between people and elements of society like culture, and institutions such as schools or governments. Sociological studies involve collecting data and forming critical analysis of the information to create understanding of how and why society operates and changes the way it does.

Sociology asks and answers questions about the social world around us. How and why were families formed? What led to the formation of private property? Why do people protest in masses? Sociology is primarily a research-based discipline involving both mathematical/scientific methods as well as methodology for obtaining qualitative data. The former refers to obtaining data through methods such as conducting

standing these through political theory which explain power relations between political entities and the how that affects human society. The discipline explores politics at both the domestic level as well as the international level. It also sheds light on how governments operate, create their policies and form systems of governance.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

This discipline picks up from governance aspect of Political Science and looks into how policies are implemented. It also serves the purpose of creating the human resource for administrative jobs in the public service sector. Public Administration also involves analysing activities of the administration (state/government) to judge whether policies are effective and productive or ineffective and counter-productive. These aspects help determine whether or not the administration is doing a good job.

FURTHER EDUCATION

The best part about working towards a degree such as the Bachelors of Social Science in any of the disciplines is that it opens doors to a wide range of fields for Masters. Holding a degree in one discipline of social science allows a postgrad degree to be pursued in another discipline within the social science field.

Social sciences also make great minor subjects. A minor is a social science subject with a non-related major. A minor of a different discipline while pursuing a major in social science is also a great way of increasing one's understanding of the social world.

CAREER PROSPECTS

With a social science degree, the most obvious career prospects is in the fields of research as well as in the development sector. NGOs and other such organisations are the most popular destinations for social science graduates. However, with a social science degree, your career choices can be diverse. Due to the wide array of topics taught through each discipline, a career can be made in just about any field – from banking to teaching.

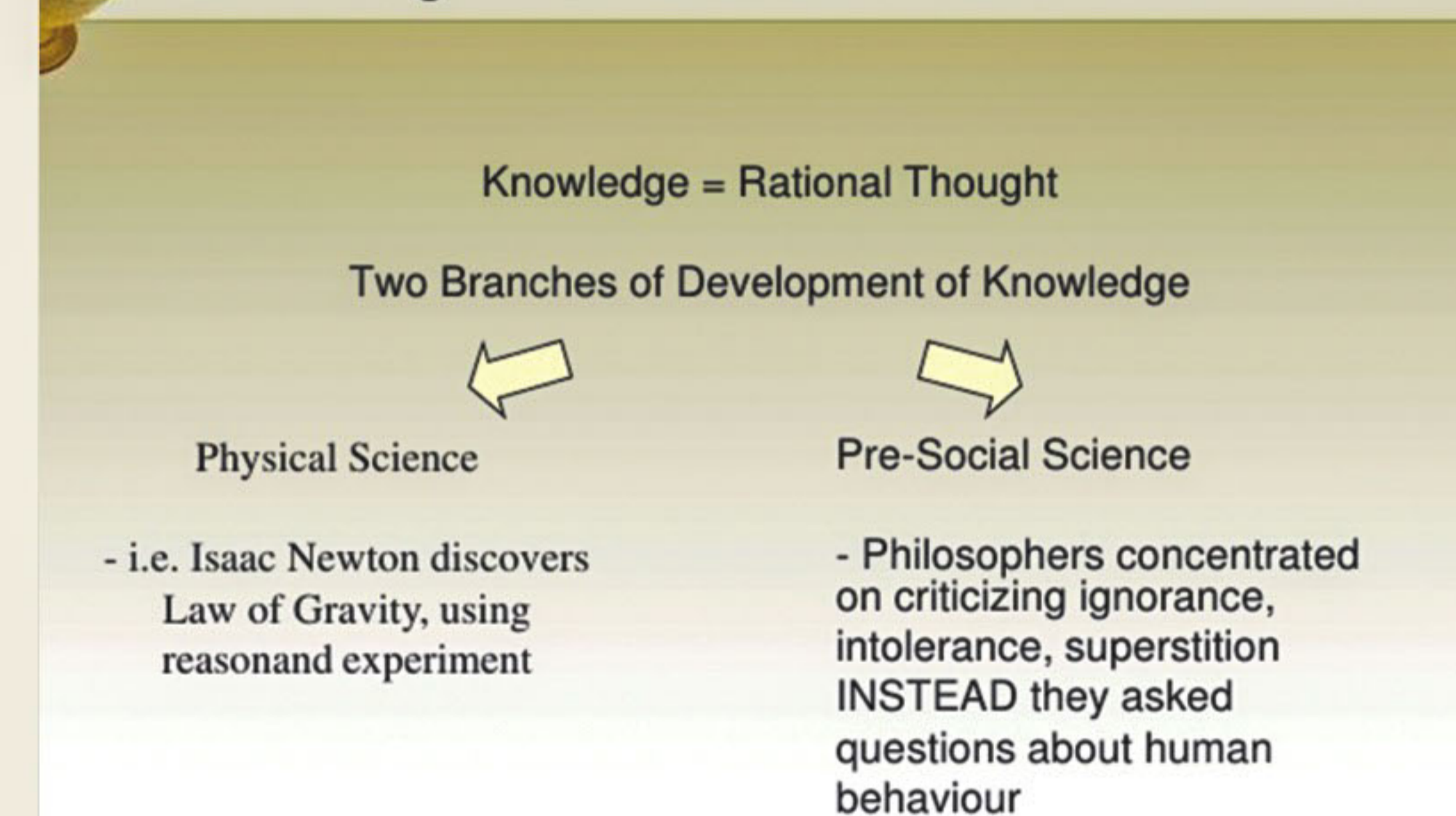
WHERE ARE SOCIAL SCIENCES MAJORS OFFERED?

All the disciplines mentioned are offered at public universities like Dhaka University, which has the country's oldest department of social sciences. Private universities don't offer as many options as Dhaka University but some of the most popular social sciences can be found across various universities such as North South University, BRAC University and University of Liberal Arts.

Population Studies, Development Studies, Women and Gender Studies, and Peace and Conflict Studies are more niche disciplines – usually interdisciplinary. Newer fields are also opening up such as Communication Disorders, Television and Film Studies, and Printing and Publication. These indicate the growing diversity in the field of social science as well as its growing relevance in our globalised world.



The Origins of Social Science



Social science... It's like normal science, only more talkative.



Women and Gender Studies used to be obscure but are on the rise.

Being a very diverse academic field, disciplines in social science often overlap with and draw from each other. Even then, they are all distinctive from each other based on the way the study is structured.

ECONOMICS

Economics is considered to be the most scientific of the social sciences. By definition, Economics is the study of the factors determining production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. If these jargons just flew over your head, it's okay. It took me around a year to become familiar with these.

In simpler terms, economists study how things are made and using what resources, along with how these things are divided among people and consumed. Economic studies are structured on both mathematical models (lots and lots of math and graphs) as well as theories. Economics is broken down to two major aspects: macroeconomics and microeconomics. Each corresponds to the level at which the economy is studied, such as national level (macro) and industry level (micro).

interviews or surveys.

ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology emerged out of sociology and is often called the most humanistic of the social sciences. Anthropology, by definition, is the study of human behaviour. It does so by looking at all aspects of the human world taking into account human psychology, culture, religion, politics, linguistics, gender, power dynamics, histories, biological factors and economics, among other things.

Anthropologists seek to understand how and why individuals behave the way they do by digging into each aspect of the individual's world. Anthropology, like Sociology, uses both quantitative and quantitative research but it relies primary on the latter. This means that this major requires its students to delve into journals and other literary works as well as interacting with people to extract various types of data.

POLITICAL SCIENCE

This discipline revolves around understanding the workings of the government, political activities and political behaviour. Political Science involves under-

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

International Relations is an interdisciplinary major that is a combination of Political Science, History, Economics and various other disciplines. It is sometimes also referred to as International Affairs and is largely an extended branch of Political Science. It studies the relationship between countries as well as various institutions such as NGOs and MNCs within the countries.

MASS COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM

Mass Communication is a field of study that involves understanding how individuals as well as organisations relay information to the masses using various media. Journalism, on the other hand, is the study of how this information should be gathered and organised for the process of relaying. These two disciplines are sometimes offered separately and sometimes combined, depending on the institution. Given the progress of technology and its role in transforming mass communication, this field of study has become more significant than ever.