The Oulu Centre for Theoretical and Philosophical Studies of History functions as a hub for junior and senior researchers interested in conceptual and philosophical studies of history and historiography. It organizes workshops, conferences and talks on the topic. Through publications and other public dissemination it aims to deepen understanding of the philosophy of history and historiography. Its long term goal is to function as a node in the international network of institutions and create a community of scholars interested in similar topics in Oulu, Finland and beyond. In the global, inter-connected world, we feel that geographical presence is not a necessary requirement of membership. Hence we actively encourage scholars to get in touch with us. If you would like to join the Centre or receive information on activities, please send an email to jouni-matti.kuukkanen@oulu.fi

Scope and areas of research

History and philosophy are two of the most traditional humanistic disciplines in the current university curriculum. One can make three observations of their relationship in contemporary academia. First, history and philosophy are both impressively flourishing fields, but most often practiced independently of each other. Second, interest in the ‘theory and philosophy of history’ has increased in recent years and a number of centres and collaborative networks on the theory of history have been established, such as The Centre for the Philosophy of History at Saint Mary’s University, Twickenham, London and the International Network for the Theory of History. Third, institutional co-operation between the history of science and the philosophy of science is decades old, but a few of energetic initiatives to properly integrate these areas have recently emerged, the Integrated History and Philosophy of Science initiative and Integrated History and Philosophy of Science workshops.

There are two major insufficiencies in the current situation. One stems from the tendency to practice the history of science in distinction from the histories of non-scientific subjects, such as political ideas. This is not to claim that science is not situated in the socio-political context or that its ethical-moral dimensions are not considered. These are common considerations nowadays. The claim is, rather, that historiography that takes science as the primary object of research is typically practiced in separation from historiographies that focus on other research objects. The first problem is then that the philosophical studies of (general) historiography are not related to conceptual studies of the historiography of science, although it is reasonable to assume that at least some of the concerns and problems are shared. For example, it has been debated whether all historiographical presentations must share the same form, such as the narrative. In addition, while there is relatively much theorising on historiography on the one hand and socio-historical theory-building on science in the form of sociological studies of science on the other, there is relatively little explicit philosophical and conceptual study of either general historiography or the historiography of science.
The second problem is that the relationship between philosophy and history itself has not been sufficiently analysed although numerous traditions presuppose some kind of relation between them. In general, we might say that there are both positive and negative approaches. For example, Kuhn and Foucault attempted to write 'theoretical history' and bring forward philosophical views on the basis of the record of history. By contrast, the case-study based philosophy of science, such as Arthur Donovan's and Larry and Rachel Laudan's classic *Scrutinizing Science: Empirical Studies of Scientific Change*, tests the tenability of some philosophical ideas. In both cases, history or the historical record is seen as an evidence base, which validates some views of history and falsifies others. There is a need for more studies on whether and how history could function as a basis for philosophical views.

The Oulu Centre for Theoretical and Philosophical Studies of History hopes to remedy the situation with regard to these problems. It is the only centre of its kind that focuses on both the philosophy of (general) historiography and the philosophy of the historiography of science – with 'historiography' understood as the discipline of history, including the writing of history. Further, a central aim is to analyze and deepen our understanding of the relationships between history and philosophy in general. The Oulu Centre for Theoretical and Philosophical Studies of History thus has two main areas of interest:

1) THE CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

2) THE EXAMINATION OF HISTORY AS AN EVIDENCE BASE FOR PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS

1) The Conceptual Study of Historiography covers both the traditional analytic approach to such concepts as causation, evidence, and laws in history, as well as the analysis of the concepts used or implied in current historiographical practice, such as contingency, symmetry, representation, location, space and memory. The first set of concepts formed the core of philosophical discussion from the 1950s to the 1970s among the analytic philosophers of history influenced by logical empiricism and specifically by Hempel. Although that debate has lost much of its appeal, philosophical work, for example, on causation and explanation in historiography still continues and is relevant. The latter kind of conceptual examination has received too little attention and is therefore specifically interesting and called for. The focus is on unexplicated historiographical assumptions manifested in historical writing. For example, it is important to discuss the meaning and philosophical consequences of the oft-heard claim that history is contingent or the currently popular tendency in the historiography of science to localize and contextualize everything. Further, in the philosophy of historiography, the notions of representation and narrative, for example, have been subjects of interest. Finally, 'philosophy of history' itself naturally has a long history. The great 'speculative' tradition, as in Hegel, for example, forms not only the historical background for the conceptual study of history, but is also a source of inspiration and an object of study in its own right.

2) Examination of history as an evidence base for philosophy means studying projects that have tried to establish philosophical points or argue for philosophical views through history. The easiest way to explain what is meant is by way of examples. Thomas Kuhn's career, as well as the rationale for his career, is one of the best examples of an approach that used the historical record to argue for philosophical views. Kuhn decided to "move into history of science with an eye to doing something philosophical with it" (Kuhn 2000,
and he “turned historian for philosophical purposes” (Kuhn 2000, 321). Indeed, Kuhn considered The Structure of Scientific Revolutions to be “a book for philosophers” (Kuhn 2000, 276). Alexander Bird has usefully called Kuhn’s approach in The Structure ‘theoretical history’ (Bird 2000, viii). According to Bird, the central claim of Kuhn’s book is that the history of science displays a certain pattern that can be explained by there being ‘paradigms.’ The relevance of Kuhn’s historical work for philosophical purposes naturally goes well beyond this. Kuhn suggests that the acceptance of fundamental scientific revolutions calls for a new ‘epistemological paradigm’ (Kuhn 1970, 121). Or one might consider the philosophical consequences of Kuhn’s views of meaning-change and incommensurability, both of which were initially historically established.

Using history or the historical record as an evidence base for philosophical views has naturally found many other applications as well. R. G. Collingwood talked about his ‘laboratory of historical thought’ for testing epistemological theories (Collingwood, An Autobiography (1982), 26-28). One could mention Foucault’s archaeology of knowledge as an example of an approach that tries to pin down the rules for the formation of knowledge through historical analyses. Other examples include historical epistemology, which has attracted a lot of attention in recent years and which tries to learn something epistemologically significant through history. Also Ian Hacking has made interesting attempts to understand some fundamental concepts of science, such as probability (Hacking 1990) by attending to history. More generally, the study of conceptual history is an important area of conceptual investigation. First, on the methodological and philosophical level, it is necessary to consider what the concepts that change are and what their change is. Second, the history of concepts may provide invaluable insights regarding the foundations of our thinking. Further, the case-study approach may be seen as one way to treat history as an evidence base for philosophical views, although one usually tests some pre-conceived philosophical idea rather than tries to find ‘patterns’ in the historical record. Indeed, in Scrutinizing Science, many of Kuhn’s notions, such as ‘paradigm’ were subjected to the historiographical test. One notable debate, which was initiated by Laudan’s (1981) paper “A Confutation of Convergent Realism” and which continues still today, is the evaluation of scientific realism in light of historical evidence.

The examination of history as an evidence base for philosophy may, perhaps surprisingly, be said to cover at least some forms of what used to be called ‘speculative philosophy of history.’ For example, both Oswald Spengler and Arnold J. Toynbee made large-scale generalizations on the nature and function of history on the basis of very extensive comparative empirical work. In other words, they attempted find patterns in a very similar fashion as Kuhn did in his ‘theoretical history.’ Another interesting recent approach that looks for patterns in the historical record and uses history as an evidence base is historical sociology and economics, such as a recent book by Thomas Piketty’s (2014) Capital in the 21st Century.

Fields of investigation

In terms of a more customary division of subjects, the Centre concentrates on three areas: the philosophy of history/historiography, the philosophy of history/historiography of science and the philosophy of science, including epistemology. In general, the first area covers any philosophical research on the concepts and problems of historiography, but also those traditions that have tried to say something general on the nature of history itself. The second area of emphasis focus on the respective questions on the historiography of science and on the history of science. These two are our main areas of interest, but
because of their overlap with the philosophy of science and epistemology these latter are also included among our emphases. Many concepts and problems of historiography have been discussed and are related to wider debates in the philosophy of science and epistemology. The 'Theory of history' is also a topic of interest and may be seen subsumed under the philosophy of history and historiography.

**Academic context**

The Oulu Centre of Theoretical and Philosophical Studies of History is located in the University of Oulu in Finland. The University of Oulu has the only degree programme for History of Science and Ideas in Finland. Philosophy is part of the programme. Because History of Science and Ideas crosses the border between the historical research of natural sciences and humanities, it provides an extremely congenial academic setting for the Centre. In close proximity there is also Eudaimonia Research Center, which is dedicated to facilitate high-quality research and professional networking in human sciences.