

Department of Sociology

**Wednesday**  
**March 2nd**  
**1:00-3:00pm**

Social Science Building  
Room 101

Reception to follow

Professor Cartwright conducts research in the philosophy of the natural, social and policy sciences where she has specialized in physics and economics. She is working now on questions of causality, objectivity in science, and evidence, especially for evidence-based policy




**Joseph and Irma Gusfield  
Lecture Series**

2010-2011

*The long road from “It works  
somewhere” to “It will work for us”*

**Professor Nancy Cartwright**  
**London School of Economics**  
**UCSD Department of Philosophy**

RCTs are touted as gold standard for evidence-based social policy. This is the case despite the fact that there are a great many other valid methods for inferring causal claims in the social sciences, from ethnography to econometrics, including qualitative comparative analysis. RCTs are special because, it seems, it takes little substantive knowledge to secure valid causal conclusions from them. But we must be careful what these causal conclusions are. RCTs can with high credibility show that a policy works somewhere. But for policy deliberation we want to know whether the policy will work for us. This talk will explore what kinds of knowledge – well beyond the scope of what RCTs can teach – is required to build a secure inference from ‘It works somewhere’, no matter whether this is established by RCTs or in one of the many other valid ways, to ‘It will work for us’. It will also explain why ‘external validity’ mislabels this problem and can divert us from solving it.



The Gusfield Lectures in the Humanities and Social Studies is presented annually by the UCSD Department of Sociology made possible by Irma Gusfield and Joseph Gusfield, Distinguished Professor Emeritus and founding Chair of the Sociology Department.