

Political Science 684: Scope and Methods of Social Science Research
Autumn 2005

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Mondays, 3:30-6:18PM

Course Description

This course is designed as a very broad introduction to Political Science, and to the philosophical and epistemological disputes that surround its practice. As such, it will have a strongly theoretical and philosophical orientation. It will not be a class designed to tell you “how to” do Political Science, but rather it should help to equip you to think critically about that issue. It should also equip you to understand and reflect upon the assumptions that are implicit (but rarely explicit) in social scientific work of all stripes.

Responsibilities

This class meets once a week for three hours, which gives us sufficient time to *read and think* about the issues at hand. Vigorous classroom participation will be essential to making the course a success, as will timely completion of the readings. *The class will emphatically not be a lecture.* Always bring the readings to class. We will make frequent reference to them.

Requirements

There are three principal requirements for this course:

- (1) Each student must read and reflect on each set of readings. Class discussion is absolutely essential to the success of a seminar, and active participation is an important component of your overall evaluation.
- (2) Four times over the course students will submit 2-3 page (single spaced) “reaction” essays to the class readings. They should be discussions of interesting points, arguments and criticisms, or elaborations on what you feel are important points. They should NOT be summaries. These will be distributed via email to the entirety of the class by 5:00pm the night before. We will assign these papers on the first class session. The issues pointed out by these essays will help to shape the seminar discussion.
- (3) On the last day of class, everyone will turn in a final essay that will be the principal written assignment for this course. The topic will be assigned later on in the course, but expect an essay on the order of 15-20 pages. The final essay will not be a research paper, but rather an argumentative essay based on the readings from the course.

Grades will be assigned on the following basis: class participation/reaction papers (50%); argumentative essay (50%).

A small warning: some class sessions have quite a lot of reading, so it would be very advisable that one not get behind. That said, I am happy to help out, and strongly encourage students to get in touch with me for help if they have any trouble – in person, by email, or by telephone. Do not let problems grow until they are unmanageable!

Books and other Readings

There are four required books for this course. They can be purchased at any of the local bookstores or through online retailers.

1. Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press). ISBN. 0691034710.
2. Henry Brady and David Collier. 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield). ISBN. 074251126X.
3. Bent Flyvbjerg. 2004. *Making Social Science Matter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). ISBN. 052177568X.
4. Peter Winch. 1958/1995. *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*, Routledge, 2nd Edition. ISBN. 0415054311.

Most journal article readings are available full-text online through the OSU library (search the electronic collection). The remainder of the readings will be available in the departmental reading room roughly a week prior to the scheduled class session. You will be able to check them out briefly in order to make copies.

Special Needs

Please inform me promptly if you have any special needs – we will make every effort to accommodate them appropriately.

Deadlines

All deadlines for the course are firm. Unless special exceptions are granted (typically in advance, and for good cause), assignments should not be turned in late.

Schedule of Readings

I. Introduction: September 26, 2005.

Part I: The Discipline and Its History

II. October 3, 2005: Science and Political Science?

King, Gary, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba (1994) – “The science in social science,” chapter 1 in *Designing Social Inquiry*, Princeton University Press, pp. 3-33.

Kramer, Gerald (1986) – “Political science as science,” in H. Weisberg, ed., *Political Science: The Science of Politics*, Agathon Press, pp. 11-23. (IA)

Ball, Terence (1976) – “From paradigms to research programs: toward a post-Kuhnian political science,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 20, 151-77.

Farr, James (1988) – “The history of political science,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 32(4), 1175-1195.

Wolin, Sheldon (1969) – “Political theory as a vocation,” *American Political Science Review*, 63(4), 1062-82.

Taylor, Charles (1969) – “Neutrality in political science,” in P. Laslett and W. Runciman, eds., *Philosophy, Politics, and Society*, Blackwell, pp. 25-57. (IB)

Recommended:

Weber, Max (2003) – “The ‘objectivity’ of knowledge in social science and social policy,” in S. Whimster, ed., *The Essential Weber*, Routledge, pp. 359-404.

Tetlock, Philip (1994) – “Political psychology or politicized psychology: Is the road to scientific hell paved with good moral intentions?,” *Political Psychology*, 15(3), 509-29.

III. October 10, 2005: Political Science as a *Social Science*: Approaches in Conflict?

On Political Science as ‘Social’ Science:

Searle, John (1995) – *The Construction of Social Reality*, Free Press, chapters 1-3, pp. 1-78. (IIA)

Riker, William H. 1973. “The Assumption of Rationality,” Chapter 2, pp.8-16 *An Introduction to Positive Political Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall). (IIB)

Bates, Robert, et al. (1998) – “The politics of interpretation: Rationality, culture, and transition,” *Politics & Society*, 26, 603-42.

Gary Cox. 2004. “Lies, Damned Lies, and Rational Choice Theory” in Ian Shapiro, Rogers M. Smith, and Tarek E. Masoud, eds., *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). (IIC)

Ruggie, John (1998) – “What makes the world hang together? Neo-utilitarianism and the social constructivist challenge,” *International Organization*, 52(4), 855-886.

Johnson, James (2002) – “How conceptual problems migrate: Rational choice, interpretation, and the hazards of pluralism,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 5, 223-48.

Part II. The Positivist Approach to Politics

IV. October 17, 2005: Causation and the Fundamental Problem of Causal Inference

Hempel, Carl G. 1966. *Philosophy of Natural Science*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Chs. 1-3. (IIIA)

King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sydney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), pp. 75-114.

Brady, Henry, David Collier, and Jason Seawright. 2004. “Refocusing the Discussion of Methodology” Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), pp. 1-20.

Collier, David, Jason Seawright, and Gerardo Munck. 2004. “The Quest for Standards: King, Keohane, and Verba’s *Designing Social Inquiry*” in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), pp. 21-50.

Timothy McKeown. 2004. “Case Studies and the Limits of the Quantitative Worldview” in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), pp. 139-168.

McMullen, Ernan. 1984. "Two Ideals of Explanation in natural Science" *Midwest Studies in philosophy* 9, edited by P. French et al. Univ. of Minnesota Press, 205-220. (IIIB)

V. October 24, 2005: Measurement, Conceptualization, and Scope: Beginning a Theory

King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sydney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), pp. 34-74.

Richardson, Glenn W., Jr. 2001. "Looking for Meaning in All The Wrong Places: Why Negative Advertising is a Suspect Category" *Journal of Communication* Vol. 51:4, pp. 775-800.

Sanders, Lynn M. 1999. "Democratic Politics and Survey Research" *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* Vol. 29:2, pp. 248-80.

Charles C. Ragin. 2004. "Turning the Tables: How Case-Oriented Research Challenges Variable-Oriented Research" in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), pp. 123-138.

Stanley Lieberson, "Variation, Levels of Analysis, and the Research Question" in *Ibid.*, *Making It Count: The Improvement of Social Research and Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). IIIC

VI. October 31, 2005: Causal Assessment: How Do We Test Theory, How Should We Test Theory?

King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sydney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), pp. 115-230.

Stanley Lieberson, "Small N's and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases" *Social Forces* Vol. 70:2 (Dec. 1991).

Douglas Dion, "Evidence and Inference in the Comparative Case Study" *Comparative Politics* Vol. Vol. 30:2 (January 1998).

Collier, David, Henry Brady, and Jason Seawright. 2004. "Critiques, Responses and Trade-Offs: Drawing Together and Debate" and "Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology" in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), pp. 195-266.

Green, Donald P., and Alan S. Gerber. 2003. "The Underprovision of Experiments in Political Science." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 589 : 94-112.

Sniderman, Paul M., and Douglas B. Grob. 1996. "Innovations in Experimental Design in Attitude Surveys." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22 : 377-99

Part III. The Non-Positivist Challenges

VII. November 7, 2005: Foundations

Winch, Peter (1958) – *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*, Routledge.

Taylor, Charles (1971/1987) – "Interpretation and the sciences of man," in Rabinow and Sullivan, *Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look* (Univ. of California Press) pp. 33-81. (IVA)

Hirschman, Albert (1970/1987) – “The search for paradigms as a hindrance to understanding,” in Rabinow and Sullivan, pp. 177-94. (IVB)

Williams, Malcolm (2000) – “Interpretivism and generalization,” *Sociology*, 34, 209-24.

Farr, James (1982) – “Historical concepts in political science: the case of ‘revolution’,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 26, 688-707.

VIII. November 14, 2005: Interpretive Methods

Interpretive Methods

Geertz, Clifford (1973) – “Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture,” in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, pp. 3-32. (VA)

Schwartz, Joel (1984) – “Participation and multisubjective understanding: An interpretivist approach to the study of political participation,” *Journal of Politics*, 46, 1117-41.

Wedeen, Lisa (2002) – “Conceptualizing culture: Possibilities for political science,” *American Political Science Review*, 96(4), 713-28.

Power/Knowledge

Foucault, Michel (1980) – “Truth and power,” in Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, Pantheon, pp. 109-33. (VB)

Osborne, Thomas and Nikolas Rose (1999) – “Do the social sciences create phenomena? The example of public opinion research,” *British Journal of Sociology*, 50, 367-96.

Hacking, Ian (1999) – “Kind making: the case of child abuse,” chapter # in *The Social Construction of What?*, Harvard University Press, pp. 125-62. (VC)

IX. November 21, 2005: Phronesis and Perestroika: A Debate

Flyvbjerg, Bent (2001) – *Making Social Science Matter*, Cambridge University Press.

Laitin, David (2003) – “The Perestroikan challenge to social science,” *Politics & Society*, 31, 163-84.

Flyvbjerg, Bent (2004) – “A Perestroikan straw man answers back: David Laitin and phronetic political science,” *Politics & Society*, 32, 389-416.

X. November 28, 2005: Conclusions and Beyond AND Nuts and Bolts (IRB, etc.)

Shapiro, Ian (2002) – “Problems, methods, and theories in the study of politics, or: what’s wrong with political science and what to do about it,” *Political Theory*, 30(4), 596-619.

Rudra Sil. 2004. “Problems Chasing Methods or Methods Chasing Problems? Research Communities, Constrained Pluralism, and the Role of Eclecticism” in Ian Shapiro, Rogers M. Smith, and Tarek E. Masoud, eds., *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). (VIA)

Discussion of ethics and pragmatics of research: THE IRB.