

POLI 701 THEORIES OF POLITICAL INQUIRY

Fall 2004: Mon 6:10 - 8:40 P.M.

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Office Hours
M TH 9:30_11:30
T 10:00_11:00

Background:

This is a required seminar that is part of the core curriculum for all Ph.D. students in Political Science, regardless of their subfield specialization. It is generally taken by students during their first semester in the Ph.D. program. The course is generally not recommended for students in the MA program. Students enrolled in Ph.D. courses in other disciplines should consult with the instructor about whether this course is appropriate for your academic program. There are no formal pre-requisites for this course, but all students are expected to have a sufficient background for Ph.D. work in Political Science.

Orientation and Goals

The goal for this semester is to provide students with a comprehensive introduction to the methodology of political research. The principal focus will be on neo-positivism (or the "naturalist" or "scientific" approach to the study of politics), though we will briefly consider some alternative approaches. We will consider basic assumptions and theoretical perspectives about empirical research, and in addition, explore some of the nuts and bolts of how to do research in political science. In particular, we will consider how to design the sort of research that you will be expected to carry out for future seminars in the Ph.D. program and ultimately for your Ph.D. dissertation.

In order to accomplish these goals, students will be expected to:

1. Critique the oral and written work of the other students in the class.
2. Come to each class prepared to discuss and critically analyze the assigned reading for the class. Each student's preparation for each class should be based on the assumption that they will be responsible for leading and stimulating the class discussion of the most significant and interesting topics from the assigned reading. Every student will be expected to participate in discussion every class.
3. Write a formal research design for a piece of original empirical research on some significant topic in Political Science.
4. Pass a midterm examination.
5. Participate in relevant professional activities of the department.
6. Write a series of three short (about 2 pages each) papers on the week's assigned reading. Each paper will be due at least 25 hours before the class at which the readings will be discussed. Each paper should provide a synthesis (NOT a SUMMARY) of the week's reading (including, for example, how all or part of the readings fit together or complement a previous week's reading), a critical review of the shortcomings of the readings - especially methodological problems, thoughts on interesting gaps in the readings - interesting questions not adequately addressed, etc, and interesting

hypotheses or ideas for future research.

7. Present a critique to the class of a journal article or other study relevant to your Research Design project and lead a class discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of the methods used in that study.

Basic Texts: Available in Bookstores

Earl Babbie, The Practice of Social Research
Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research.
D.C. Phillips, The Expanded Social Scientist's Bestiary.
Elinor Ostrom, Roy Gardner & James Walker, Rules, Games, & Common-Pool Resources

Reading Available on Blackboard

Richard L. Cole, Introduction to Political Science and Policy Research
Thomas D. Cook & Donald T. Campbell, Quasi-Experimentation: Design & Analysis Issues for field Settings
Kathleen Eisenhardt, "Building Theories from Case Study Research"
In Huberman & Miles, The qualitative Researcher's Companion, ch.1
Stephen Hawking, A Brief History of Time.
Janet Johnson, Richard Joslyn, and H.T. Reynolds, Political Science Research Methods
Charles Lave & James March, An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences.
Joseph Maxwell, "Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research"
In Huberman & Miles, The qualitative Researcher's Companion, ch. 2
Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, et.al. "Political Survival and International Conflict" in Maoz & Gat, War in a Changing World
James Morrow, Game theory for Political Scientists.
Carl Sagan, The Demon-Haunted World
Donald Songer, Martha Humphries Ginn, and Tammy A. Sarver, "Do Judges Follow the Law When there is No Fear of Reversal ?"
Donald Songer, "Issue, Ideology and the nature of Electoral Choice"

Assignments and Grading:

Your grade will be composed of the following components:

1) class and professional participation	30%
2) major Research Design	50%
3) midterm examination	20%

All written work should be produced using MS Word or Wordperfect or some other appropriate word processing program.

Participation requirement: In addition to vigorously participation in the discussion of course readings, you will be expected to:

1. Attend & participate in department colloquia- as a minimum you should participate in all colloquia related to your primary field of study (e.g., if your area is IR, you should attend all of the PSRW sessions when the paper presented is on some aspect of international relations).
2. Attend presentations of graduate students preparing to go to job interviews.
3. Participate in recruitment activities for faculty hires.

Research Design Assignment

A principal requirement of this course is the development of a formal research design. This assignment integrates in a very practical way the various elements of the course. It provides an opportunity to apply the abstract theoretical lessons of the course to the design of a research project that seeks to address an important, unanswered question in political science.

The research design must be typed and may not exceed twenty pages, double spaced, with margins (top, bottom, left and right) of at least one inch, and a font no smaller than Times Roman 10. The design must be stapled (not paper-clipped or placed in a binder) in the upper left corner.

What is a research design? A substantial part of this course is devoted to answering this question. Indeed, the structure of the course generally follows the structure of a good research design with each week's readings focusing in depth on an important aspect of the research process. Briefly summarized, however, a research design is an intellectual blueprint. It describes and defends a plan of research intended to answer an interesting or important question. A research design does NOT include the execution of the design. Rather, it provides a detailed blueprint of a research project to be conducted in the future.

Although the specific elements of a research design will vary with different topics, there are two fundamental aspects to all designs. First you must identify clearly and precisely the research question you want to answer and justify its importance. Second you must describe in detail how you intend to answer the question you have identified and to justify your choice of strategies. Key to both parts of the process is to be certain that your research is closely tied to existing theory (or theories) and is embedded in the relevant literature (i.e. previous research) on the subject.

More specifically, a good research design should include all of the following elements:

1) **A statement of the research question.** A good research question is one that contributes to theory or fundamental knowledge. Good questions are grounded in the existing literature. Frequently they seek to resolve an anomaly in a theory -- to reconcile a theory with an observation that doesn't seem to fit -- or to reconcile competing theories, or to fill in a missing piece or close a gap in existing theory or in the literature. Good research questions frequently begin with the question, "Why ...?" They seek explanations for political actions or events and not simply descriptions of them (although description often is an important step in the process of explanation).

2) **A review of the literature.** Good research questions frequently emerge from a review of the literature/existing research on a topic. In reading about a subject you find that you are not convinced by the explanation the author offers because, for example:

- a. you think the author's research methods are flawed, inadequate, or inappropriate to the subject (e.g. the author draws conclusions about adult voters from a study of high school students);
- b. you believe the authors failed to consider plausible alternative explanations (e.g. in explaining political violence you think the authors made a mistake by failing to consider poverty as a possible cause;
- c. you think that the author's results are limited by time or space (the author's explanation for political participation in the United States may not be appropriate in your experience for explaining political participation in non-industrialized societies or that the results of a study of voting in 1950 may not be relevant in 1990 when parties are much weaker and campaign spending much greater); or
- d. there is a "gap" in the literature in that there just does not appear to be any research on what appears to you to be an important question.

Even if you have a research question in mind before you start a project, the first step in developing a research design is to review prior research on the topic. This review should summarize, synthesize, and critically evaluate the literature as a whole. (CAUTION: The focus here, should be on the literature as a whole. A literature review is NOT a series of article and book

reviews stuck together one after another. Rather, the focus should be on types of research and their strengths and weaknesses. The idea is to concentrate on the forest and not allow yourself to become preoccupied with individual trees in the forest.) Your discussion of the literature should emphasize the strengths and weaknesses-- both theoretical and methodological-- of existing work. Presumably, the research you propose will attempt to build on these strengths while improving upon the weaknesses. Indeed, the proposed improvements to the literature are what make your work interesting.

3) A statement of theory and/or hypotheses. This section should identify the specific propositions and research hypotheses to be "tested" in your research. It also should discuss how these propositions were derived -- a process that typically takes you back to theory and the extant literature. At the very least you should evoke a theory (a set of explicitly stated and logically related ideas about the relationships among the phenomena under consideration). As we will see in the course, research that explicitly considers multiple hypotheses or competing theories usually produces the richest results. Designs that focus on a single theory or seek to test a single, isolated hypothesis generally are less interesting, though they still can be useful.

4) A discussion of concepts. Having identified one or more hypotheses, you need to identify, define and operationalize the central concepts in the hypotheses. Your central task here is to indicate as clearly as possible what your concepts mean and how you will recognize them when you observe them in your research.

5) An observation and measurement strategy. Here, you should discuss how you intend to observe the concepts that are the foci of your hypotheses, how you will operationalize and measure key concepts, and how you plan to collect the data. Justify your choices.

6) A testing strategy. How will you measure the relationships between the concepts in your hypotheses? What will convince you that the hypothesized relationships exist or do not exist? What will convince you that the theory/hypotheses you are testing are "right" or "wrong"?

7) A consideration of "threats to validity". There is no perfect research design. All research strategies have inherent limitations and you cannot, as a practical matter, control for everything. In this section you summarize these limitations and discuss their likely consequences for the research you propose.

Schedule of Work on Research Design Paper

For the major Research Design paper, you will be expected to proceed through several discrete stages. Early in the semester (i.e., Sept. 20), you will be expected to turn in a proposal of not more than 2 pages which clearly states the research question, provides a partial summary of how it builds on the leading published work in the field (i.e., I expect that you will have started reading for your literature review, but don't expect that you will have yet read all of the relevant literature), and indicates your initial ideas of how you will obtain and analyze your data. This proposal should be in the form of a letter to the section chair for the Southern Political Science Convention proposing to present a paper at the 2004 convention. Next, you will turn in a draft of your literature review (by Oct. 15). Third, you will write a draft of your paper and be prepared to present and defend your proposal at one of the last four class sessions. You will receive feedback from me on each of these stages before proceeding to the next stage. Finally, you will turn in a completed, formal research prospectus, describing a research project that would produce a paper suitable for submission to a professional social science journal or research that could lead to a Ph.D. dissertation.

CLASS PRESENTATION REQUIREMENT

During the second half of the course, each student will pick one journal article or other significant study from the literature review they plan to include in their major research design project. They will make that article available to the class and then during class make a presentation and lead a class discussion that critically analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods used in the study. Students may pick either a particularly good or a particularly bad example of research methods. Each student should consult with the professor in advance about the article they intend to use.

MIDTERM EXAMINATION

On Oct. 18, at the end of class you will be given one or two manuscripts to evaluate. You will be expected to write a critical essay that discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods used in the studies. Exams must be your own work, produced without the assistance of any other person. A copy of your exam must be provided to the instructor by NOON on TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26. By noon on Tuesday, you must provide the instructor with a hard copy of your exam answer (printed, double spaced) along with an electronic file in MS Word or Wordperfect format. Selections from electronic versions of some of these answers will be posted (without identifying the author) on Blackboard. Students should come to class on Nov. 1 prepared to discuss these analyses.

Class Schedule

ABBREVIATIONS USED BELOW:

AJPS = *American Journal of Political Science*

APSR = *American Political Science Review*

JOP = *Journal of Politics*

- 1) Aug 23 **THINKING ABOUT SCIENCE**
Hawkins, ch. 1-4
Sagan, Preface & ch2, 2 & 4
Babbie, ch. 1
King, ch.1
Johnson, Joslyn & Reynolds, ch. 2

SUPPLEMENTAL

Ira Katznelson & Helen V. Milner, Political Science: the State of the Discipline

- 2) Aug 30 **BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THEORY AND EVIDENCE**
Babbie, ch. 2
Lave & March, ch. 2 & 3
King ch. 2

SUPPLEMENTAL

Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

[SEPTEMBER 6 - APSA & LABOR DAY HOLIDAY - NO CLASS]

- 3) Sept 13 **ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTIONS OF INQUIRY**
Phillips - ALL
Morton & Knopff, "Judges and the Charter Revolution" in The Charter Revolution and the Court Party (Broadview Press, 2000)
Songer & Tantas, "The Institutional Bases of the Attitudinal Model: Canada as a Test Case"

SUPPLEMENTAL

Charles Ragin, Fuzzy-Set Social Science

- 4) Sept 20 **LOGIC OF SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY**
**** Research design - Topic *proposal due*

Babbie, ch. 3-4
Bueno De Mesquita, "Political Survival & International Conflict"
Songer, "Issue, Ideology and the nature of Electoral Choice"
FACULTY PRESENTATION - TBA

SUPPLEMENTAL

Kenneth A. Shepsle & Mark S. Bonchek, Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions

- 5) Sept 27 **CONCEPTS AND MEASUREMENT**
Babbie, ch 5-7

- Jones, "Doing Before Knowing: Concept Development in Political Science"
AJPS 18:215-228 (1974)
- Segal & Cover, "Ideological Values and the Votes of U.S. Supreme Court Justices" APSR 83: 557-65 (1989).
- Songer & Haire, "Integrating Alternative Approaches to the Study of Judicial Voting: Obscenity Cases in the U.S. Courts of Appeals"
AJPS 36: 963-82 (1992)
- Songer, Ginn, and Sarver, "Do Judges Follow the Law When there is No Fear of Reversal?"

FACULTY PRESENTATION - Zaryab Iqbal

SUPPLEMENTAL

W. Phillips Shively, The Craft of Political Research

- 6) Oct. 4 **OBSERVATION & UNITS OF ANALYSIS**
Babbie, ch. 8-10
Allison, "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis"
APSR 63: 689-718 (1969)
Tuftte, "Determinants of Outcomes of Midterm Congressional Elections"
APSR 69:812-826 (1975)
Gomez & Wilson. "Political Sophistication & Economic Voting in the American Electorate: a Theory of Heterogeneous Attribution" AJPS 45:899-914 (2001)

SUPPLEMENTAL

Graham Allison, Essence of Decision

- 7) Oct. 11 **CASE STUDIES & FIELD RESEARCH**
Babbie, ch. 11-13
Ostrom, Gardener & Walker, Rules, Games & Common-Pool Resources
ch. 1-5, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15
Lijphart, "The Comparable Cases Strategy in Comparative Research"
Comparative Political Studies 8: 158-77 (1975)
Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and Comparative method"
APSR 65: 682-693 (1971)
Eisenhardt, "Building Theories from Case Study Research"

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS - TBA

SUPPLEMENTAL

A. Michael Huberman & Matthew B. Miles, The Qualitative Researcher's Companion
Richard Fenno, Home Style: House Members in their Districts

- 8) Oct 18 **CASUAL INFERENCE & CONTROL**
**** *literature review due*
King ch. 3-4
Cook & Campbell, ch. 1
Miller & Stokes, "Constituency Influence in Congress"

APSR vol 57: 45-56, (1963).
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS - TBA

9) Oct 25
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS - TBA

MIDTERM EXAMINATION - Papers Due Noon, Tuesday October 26

10) Nov. 1 **THREATS TO VALID INFERENCES**
King ch.5-6
Cook & Campbell, ch. 2
Maxwell, "Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research"
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS - TBA

11) Nov. 8 **APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS**
Babbie, ch. 14-17
Cook & Campbell, ch. 3, 5
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS - TBA

12) Nov. 15 **FORMAL MODELS**
Morrow, ch. 1-4
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS - TBA

SUPPLEMENTAL

David Kreps, Game Theory and Economic Modelling

13) Nov 22 **MECHANICS OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS**
Johnson, Joslyn & Reynolds, ch. 6, 9, 10
Cole, ch. 11
Babbie, ch. 17
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF THEIR FORMAL RESEARCH DESIGNS

14) Nov. 29 **STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF THEIR FORMAL RESEARCH DESIGNS**

Dec. 8 (Wednesday)

FINAL DRAFT OF RESEARCH DESIGN PAPER DUE