

Social Science Logics and Methods

Spring 2001

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Location: Seminar Room in Political Science – Merg. 366

Class Meets: Tuesday 3-5pm.

Office Hours: by appointment

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This class is intended to give graduate students across fields a thorough grounding in the different logics of social scientific research. The class stresses logics (and the fact that there are multiple ones) over

particular methods insofar as varying theoretical stances (for example, historical institutionalism) tend to 'carry' accompanying methodological baggage – that is, a particular method of investigation – within them. Thus, rather than focus on different methods of research we shall attempt to uncover the different logics and strategies of argument and evidence encountered in political science. In order to do so the class is divided into three sections covering what might be called the macro, meso, and micro, of asking questions and getting answers.

The first section, the macro, focuses on the objects (and subjects) of investigation and has the issues of epistemology and ontology very much in the foreground. Here we shall tread wearily upon spaces traditionally occupied by philosophers of science. Here we shall introduce different – and somewhat stereotypical – models of what science (with a capital S) is and is not. In particular, the positions of positivism, realism, hermeneutics, and critical theory will be investigated to give us a macro level 'map' of what it means to ask "meaningful" questions, and what counts as "adequate" explanations within such frameworks.

The next level down – unimaginatively called the meso – examines different perspectives on what our peers tell us we should be doing. In this section we examine the debates around the 'orthodoxy' of the Keohane King and Verba volume and follow this with other 'classic' pieces on the logic and methods of political investigation from both supporters of orthodoxy (in its various guises) and its critics.

Finally, on the micro level we examine discreet examples of these explanatory projects drawn from IR, American, and Comparative Politics. Specifically, rational choice, new institutionalisms, realism, and constructivism will in turn be examined. Here the point is not to critique these works on their own terms, as we usually do, but to examine them in the terms set out in the first part of the course.

There are two pieces of work for class credit and both are due at the end of term.

The point of structuring the coursework in this way is three fold. First, I'm no philosopher – so I don't want to grade on it – and that rules out all of us writing on subjects we really don't know all that well at the start of the class. Second, I suspect that most of us will only really have much of substance to say on this topic once we have read a bit – so why rush it? Third, the two pieces I have in mind compliment each other and should perhaps be done concurrently – though I leave that choice to you.

The first piece of work is a short eight to ten page essay any one of the final part of the course. In short, pick a topic and really dive into it. For example, if you are doing IR you may want to take the week on constructivism (and realism) and go into depth on what the logical, analytic, and explanatory issues in constructivism actually are. Personally, the choice is yours – but the essay must integrate the concerns of the first half of the course with an in-depth reading of the substance of the second half.

The second piece of work is a research design. Borrowing from Mimi Keck's syllabi – she notes that “[A] research design should be a credible proposal to do a piece of research that sets out and situates a problem, the approach, the strategy for collecting information, and the expected contribution of the work. This may be a trial run for a draft dissertation prospectus, or it may not. Although the assignment does not suppose you have actually

done the research in question, it does assume that you've done enough background work to set it up. We will discuss research design throughout the course, and I would encourage each of you to meet with

me individually on this.” And this is exactly what we will do beginning week seven with an open discussion of topics (which you should have prepared by then) and in week twelve when you will present them. The presented research design should be no longer than 5000 words and will conform to the SSRC dissertation fellowship guidelines (which we will discuss in class nearer the time.)

Books and Articles:

Almost everything is in the library and copies of all articles and individual book chapters (for photocopying only) are in the departmental office on a sign-out basis (such readings are marked*). In terms of buying books we will use a lot of the following so I will order the following (though some may be out of print.)

Robert H. Bates et al., *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro *Pathologies of Rational Choice: A Critique of Applications in Political Science*. (New Haven: Yale University Press 1994).

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993.)

Thomas S. Kuhn *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Second Edition, Enlarged* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1970)

Richard W. Miller *Fact and Method: Explanation, Confirmation and Reality in the Natural and Social Sciences*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1987).

Douglass North Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990).

Stephen Toulmin The Uses of Argument. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1958).

Kenneth Waltz The Theory of International Politics (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co. 1979)

Alexander Wendt The Social Theory of International Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998)

Part One: Macro-Level Issues: What Is It We Are Meant To Be Doing?

Class One: Tuesday Jan 30th

Introduction: No readings

Class Two: Tuesday Feb 6th.

Is the Study of Capital 'S' Science relevant for the study of politics?

Reading:

* William Outhwaite: *The New Philosophies of Social Science: Realism, Hermeneutics and Critical Theory* (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1987)* Photocopy (All)

Thomas S. Kuhn *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Second Edition, Enlarged* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1970) (All)

Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programs," in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave, (eds.) *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1970.) (or Photocopied selections.)

Class Three: Tuesday Feb 13th

What is an Argument, and what Counts as an Explanation?

Reading:

Richard W. Miller Fact and Method: Explanation, Confirmation and Reality in the Natural and Social Sciences.(Princeton: Princeton University Press) (1987). Chapters 1-3.

Stephen Toulmin The Uses of Argument. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1958). (All)

Distribution and discussion of SSRC grant application forms

Part Two: Meso Level Issues: What is it we Think that we are doing?

Class Four: Tuesday Feb 20th

So what do our peers tell us we should be doing? The New Orthodoxy

Reading:

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993.)

Review Symposium: "The Qualitative-Quantitative Disputation: Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*," *American Political Science Review* 89:2 (June 1995): 454-81.*

Class Five: Tuesday Feb. 27th

So what do our peers tell us we should be doing? The Old Orthodoxy

Reading:

Eckstein, Harry, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science" in Greenstein and Polsby, Handbook of Political Science, Addison-Wesley (Reading, Mass, 1975), Vol 7, pp. 79-137.*

George, Alexander, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The method of Structured, Focussed Comparison", in Diplomacy, New Approaches in History, Theory and Policy, Paul Jordan Lauren (ed.) Free Press, (NY, 1979) pp. 43-68.*

George, Alexander, and T. McKeown, "Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making," Advances in Information Processing in Organizations, vol.2, pp. 21-58.*

Lijphart, Arend, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method" American Political Science Review 65 (September 1971) 682-693.*

David Collier, "The Comparative Method: Two Decades of Change," in Dankwart A. Rustow and Kenneth Paul Erickson, eds., Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives (New York: Harper Collins, 1991): 7-31.*

Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases you Choose Affect the Answers you Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," Journal of Policy Analysis 1990.*

James Fearon "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing." World Politics 1990.*

Class Six: Tuesday March 6th

Does Anyone Have a Problem with any of this?

Part One: Questioning the logics of the orthodoxy

Reading:

Weber, Max. 1949. "Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy,' in Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences, ed. Edward A. Shils and Henry Finch Glencoe, IL: Free Press), pp. 49-112. (Also as shorter photocopy)*

Giovanni Sartori (ed.) Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis, Sage (Beverly Hills, 1984) Selections.*

Charles C. Ragin *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, (California; Berkeley, 1987) pp. 1-84* (Photocopy)

David Marsh and Gary Stoker, (eds.) *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (London: Macmillan, 1995) (Photocopied Selections by Marsh, Hopkin, Blyth)*

Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy, (eds.) *Understanding and Social Inquiry* (Notre Dame, 1977) (Introduction and the article by Taylor)*

Dryzek, John S., "The Progress of Political Science" *Journal of Politics*, 48/2 (May, 1986) 301-320.*

Discussion of Research Proposals (informal)

Class Seven: Tuesday March 13th:

Does Anyone Have a Problem with any of this?

Part Two: Questioning the Payoff from the Orthodoxy in the 'Social Science versus Area Studies' Debates.

Jack Snyder "Science and Sovietology: Bridging the Methods Gap in Soviet Foreign Policy Research" *World Politics* 40 (2) (1988) pp. 169-193.*

Fredrich Kratochwil "The Embarrassment of Changes: Neo-realism as the Science of Realpolitik without Politics" *Review of International Studies* (19) (1993) pp. 63-80*

Robert Bates et al. "Area Studies and the Discipline: A Useful Controversy" *PS Political Science and Politics* (July 1997) pp. 166-179.*

Steven Walt "Rigor or Rigor Mortis? Rational Choice and Security Studies" *International Security* 23 (4)(Spring 1999) pp. 5-48, and the responses to Walt by Martin, Niou and Ordeshook, and Zagare, and Walt's reply, in *International Security* 24 (2) (Fall 1999) pp. 74-130.

NB: March 19th –25th Spring Break: No Class

Class Eight: Tuesday March 27th

No Reading:

First Week of research proposal discussions – in class presentations.

Part Three: Micro Level Issues: What do we actually do?

Class Nine: Tuesday April 3rd:

Rational Choice

Reading:

Margaret Levi "A Model, a Method and a Map: Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis." in Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman (eds.) *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure* (Cambridge University Press 1997) pp. 19-42.*

Milton Friedman, "The Methodology of Positive Economics" in Milton Friedman *Essays in Positive Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1953) pp. 3-43*

John L. Solow "Is it the Thought that Really Counts? Towards a Rational Theory of Christmas" *Rationality and Society* 5 (4) (1993) pp. 506-517.*

Robert H. Bates et al., *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) Chs. 1, 2, 5.

Jon Elster "Analytic Narrative: A Review and a Response" *American Political Science Review* 94 (3) 2000 pp.685-702.*

Donald Green and Ian Shapiro *Pathologies of Rational Choice: A Critique of Applications in Political Science*. (New Haven: Yale University Press 1994). Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 8.

Critical Review (9) 1-2 (1995). Special issue devoted to the Green and Shapiro volume. Pieces by Chong, Ferejohn and Satz, Fiorina, Lane, Lohmann, Ordeshook, and the reply by Green and Shapiro*

NB: Tuesday April 10th: No Class

Class Ten: Tuesday April 17th

The NIE and the other New Institutionalisms

Reading:

Ronald Coase "The Nature of the Firm" *Economica* (Nov 1937), reprinted in *The Firm, the Market, and the Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988): 33-55.*

Ronald Coase "The Problem of Social Cost" Journal of Law and Economics (3) PP.1-44 (1960)*

Kenneth Shepsle "Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach" Journal of Theoretical Politics 1 (2) (1989) pp. 131-147.*

Douglass North Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990) Chs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 11.

Alex Cooley "International Aid to the Former Soviet States: Agent of Change or Guardian of the Status Quo? Problems of Post-Communism 47 (4) (July-August 2000) pp. 34-45.*

Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry" Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol 22, no. 2 (April,1980) pp. 174-197.*

Theda Skocpol et al., (eds.) Bringing the State Back In (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985). Chapter 1.*

Steinmo et al., Structuring Politics: Historical institutionalism in Comparative Analysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University press 1992) Chapter 1.*

Mark Blyth and Robin Varghese, "The State of the Discipline in American Political Science: Be Careful What You Wish For." British Journal of Political Science and International Relations 1 (3) (1999) pp. 345-366.*

Class Eleven: Tuesday April 24th

Realism and Constructivism

Reading:

Kenneth Waltz The Theory of International Politics (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co. 1979)

Alexander Wendt The Social Theory of International Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998)

Class Twelve: Tuesday May 1st

Presentation of Research Designs and paper due.