

Prof. Robert Adcock
Email: adcockr@gwu.edu
Office: 416 Monroe Hall of Government

PSc 8109, Fall 2014
Seminar Location: Sigelman Room
Office Hours: Tuesday 2.30-4.30pm

Political Science 8109: Systematic Inquiry / Research Design

Course Overview

This seminar introduces graduate students to classic issues and contemporary debates in the logic and design of empirical social science. The course aims to help you recognize and navigate some of the varied methods of empirical research and the at times contentious exchanges about them. By the end of this course, you should become both: 1) a more methodologically acute consumer of empirical research, and 2) a more sophisticated potential producer of research—i.e. better able to clearly formulate a research question, develop an empirical strategy to address it, and explain your research choices and results to academic audiences with varied methodological orientations.

There are four parts to the class. After our introductory session we devote Part One to a selective survey of issues in the philosophy of science. Part Two focuses more specifically on alternative views of causation and their implications for modes and practices of empirical social science. The longest part of the class, Part Three, examines research design choices about concepts and measures, variables and case selection, and combining methods, and closes with a sampling of some of the most recent foci of methodological debate. Part Four devotes our last two meetings to discussing research proposals by seminar participants.

Required Texts for Purchase and Other Readings

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP. ISBN: 0691034710
Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. 2012. *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP. ISBN: 9780691149714
Beach, Derek, and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. 2013. *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. ISBN: 9780472051892

All other readings will be made available electronically via Blackboard.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

- Recognize scholars, concepts, and positions within the philosophy of science that have become part of the conversation of political scientists
- Distinguish alternative views of causation and identify their differential implications for research styles and standards
- Apply research design standards—about concepts and methods, cases and variables, and combining methods—to evaluate the research of others and to explicate choices in their own research
- Formulate research questions, articulate alternative answers to those questions, and begin to develop a strategy of empirical research to adjudicate between those answers

Course Requirements and Grading

Readings and Discussion: The reading load for this course includes up to 150 pages a week of often demanding assigned readings. In order for you and your fellow seminar participants to get the most out of our discussions you must make time to read the assigned material carefully and completely. Effective and informed oral participation in seminar will improve your grade, but neither the frequency nor the stridency of interventions are good measures of such participation.

Exercises: You will be assigned five short exercises during the course. You are to complete each exercise before the meeting it is assigned for and e-mail your response to me by noon on the day (i.e. Wednesday) before class. Your response should be a minimum of 1/2 and a maximum of 2 double-spaced pages in length. The exercises involve both analyzing a recent dissertation in your research area and steps in developing your own research proposal.

Research Proposal: Your principal writing assignment is to prepare a research proposal. Your proposal is to be distributed by email to all seminar participants by 4pm two days before your scheduled discussion date. Most proposals will probably be around 6,000-7,500 words in length, but all should be at least 5,000, and no longer than 10,000 words.

Grading: Your productive participation in seminar discussion of assigned readings will count for 10% of your grade, your five short exercises for 15%, and constructive in-class feedback on your fellow students' proposals for a further 10%. Your research proposal will count for 65%.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Aug. 28 Course Introduction

- Crawford, Kerry. 2011. "Punctuated Silence: Variation in the United Nations' Response to Wartime Sexual Abuse." GWU Department of Political Science Dissertation Proposal.
- Vergheese, Ajay. 2009. "The Dual Legacies of the British Raj: Colonialism and Contemporary Governance in India." GWU Department of Political Science Dissertation Proposal.
- Vergheese, Ajay. 2012. "Multi-Method Fieldwork in Practice: Colonial Legacies and Ethnic Conflict in India." *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research* 10, no. 2: 41-44.
- Vergheese, Ajay. 2014. *The Colonial Origins of Ethnic Violence in India*. Introduction of book manuscript.

PART ONE: SELECTED ISSUES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Sept. 4 A "Science" of Politics?

- Weber, Max. 2004. "Science as a Vocation." From *The Vocation Lectures*, eds. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
- Bond, Jon R. 2007. "The Scientification of the Study of Politics: Some Observations on the Behavioral Evolution in Political Science." *Journal of Politics* 69, no. 4: 897-907.
- King, Keohane, and Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Chap 1 (only 1.1)
- Keohane, Robert. 2009. "Political Science as a Vocation." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42, no. 2: 359-63.
- Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus. 2011. "Playing with Fire." Chap. 1 of *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations* (New York: Routledge).

EXERCISE 1

Sept. 11 Inference, Theory, and Testing

- Popper, Karl. 1962. Selections from "Science: Conjectures and Refutations." Chap. 1 of *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York: Basic Books).
- Friedman, Milton. 1968. "The Methodology of Positive Economics." In May Brodbeck ed., *Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan), 508-28.
- King, Keohane, and Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Chaps. 1 (1.2-1.3), 2 (2.1-2.6), 3 (only 3.5)
- Caporaso, James A. 1995. "Research Design, Falsification, and the Qualitative-Quantitative Divide." *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 2: 457-60.
- Rogowski, Ronald. 1995. "The Role of Theory and Anomaly in Social-Scientific Inference." *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 2: 467-70.
- Mearsheimer, John J., and Stephen M. Walt. 2013. "Leaving theory behind: Why simplistic hypothesis testing is bad for International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3: 427-57.

Sept. 18 No class (department qualifying exams on September 19)

Sept. 25 Explanation

- Hempel, Carl G. 1942. "The Function of General Laws in History." *Journal of Philosophy* 39, no. 2: 35-48.
- Elster, Jon. 2007. *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press). Introduction, Chap. 1 and 3.
- Weber, Max. 2004/1921. "Basic Sociological Concepts: Methodological Foundations." Pp. 311-327 of Sam Whimster, ed., *The Essential Weber* (New York: Routledge).
- Bevir, Mark. 2006. "How Narratives Explain." In Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds. *Interpretation and Method* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe).

EXERCISE 2

PART TWO: CAUSATION

Oct. 2 Alternative Conceptions of Causation: The Search for a Common Standard

- King, Keohane, and Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Chap. 3 (up through 3.3).
- Goldthorpe, John H. 2001. "Causation, Statistics, and Sociology." *European Sociological Review* 17, no. 1: 1-20.
- Brady, Henry E. 2008. "Causation and Explanation in Social Sciences." In Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, 756-76.

EXERCISE 3 (RESEARCH QUESTIONS GROUP 1)

Oct. 9 Alternative Conceptions: Two Cultures

Goertz and Mahoney. *A Tale of Two Cultures*. Chap. 1-9, 17, Appendix.

EXERCISE 3 (RESEARCH QUESTIONS GROUP 2)

Oct. 16 Process Tracing, Causal Mechanisms, and Bayesianism

Beach and Pedersen. *Process-Tracing Methods*. Chaps. 1-7.

EXERCISE 3 (RESEARCH QUESTIONS GROUP 3)

PART THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN CHOICES

Oct. 23 Concepts, Types, and Measures

King, Keohane, and Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Chap. 2.7, 5.1 .

Adcock, Robert and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95, no. 3: 529-46

Goertz and Mahoney. *A Tale of Two Cultures*. Chap. 10-13.

Elkins, Zachary. "Measuring Partial Membership in Categories: Alternative Tools." *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research* 12, no. 1: 33-41.

EXERCISE 4

Oct. 30 Choosing Variables and Cases: *DSI* and Responses

King, Keohane, and Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Chaps. 3.4, 4, 5.2-5.7, 6.

Seawright, Jason. 2010. "Regression-Based Inference: A Case Study in Failed Causal Assessment." Chap. 13 in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield).

Goertz and Mahoney. *A Tale of Two Cultures*. Chap. 14-15.

Nov. 6 Situating Cases Relative to Populations: Alternative Approaches

Adcock, Robert. 2006. "Generalization in Comparative and Historical Social Science: The Difference that Interpretivism Makes." Pp. 50-66 in Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds., *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe).

Goertz and Mahoney. *A Tale of Two Cultures*. Chap. 16.

Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz. 2004. "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4: 653-69

Seawright, Jason, and John Gerring. 2008. "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2: 294-308.

EXERCISE 5 (QUALITATIVE)

Nov. 13 Multi-Method Research

Lieberman, Evan. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 3: 435-52.

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2008. "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods." In Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, 756-76.

Kauffman, Craig M. 2012. "More than the Sum of the Parts: Nested Analysis in Action." *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research* 10, no. 2: 26-31.

Rebolledo, Juan. 2012. "Using Formal Theory in Multi-Method Research: National Democratic Support for Subnational Authoritarianism." *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research* 10, no. 2: 36-40.

Beach and Pedersen. 2012. *Process-Tracing Methods*. Chap. 8.

EXERCISE 5 (QUANTITATIVE OR MULTI-METHOD)

Nov. 20 Where next for methods?

- Dunning, Thad. 2010. "Design-Based Inference: Beyond the Pitfalls of Regression Analysis?" Chap. 14 in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield).
- Sekhon, Jasjeet S. and Rocio Titiunik. 2012. "When Natural Experiments Are Neither Natural nor Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 1: 35-57.
- Ahmed, Amel and Rudra Sil. 2013. "When Multi-Method Research Subverts Methodological Pluralism—or, Why We Still Need Single-Method Research." *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 4: 935-53.
- Slater, Dan and Daniel Ziblatt. 2013. "The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison." *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 10: 1301-27.
- Beach, Derek, and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. Forthcoming. *Causal Case Studies: Comparing, Matching, and Tracing*. Selection from draft manuscript.

Nov. 27 No class -- Thanksgiving

PART FOUR: RESEARCH PROPOSAL DISCUSSION

Our last two meetings (Dec. 4 and TBD – Dec. 2?) will be devoted to peer discussion of student research proposals. You will be assigned to complete and circulate your proposal for one of the meetings, and for the other to read proposals circulated for that meeting, prepare feedback, and come to class ready to share your feedback verbally.