

POSC 816-010: PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Department of Political Science and International Relations

University of Delaware

Fall 2015

INSTRUCTOR: Julio F. Carrión
TIME: Thursday 3:30-6:30pm
ROOM: Smith 348
OFFICE HOURS: Monday 12:00-1:00pm, Tuesday 2:00- 3:00 or by appointment
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This seminar is designed to offer graduate students in political science an opportunity to learn the skills necessary to write a research design and conduct advanced social research using primarily qualitative data. The overarching goal is to make students self-conscious about their methodological choices when conducting empirical research. The seminar begins with a discussion of issues related to the philosophy of the social sciences and then moves to the study of conceptual themes associated with research design and the use of qualitative methods. A major objective of the seminar is to write a research design that could be a first draft of the dissertation proposal.

More specifically, the following topics will be addressed:

- Research design and causal inference in the social sciences using qualitative data
- Concept formation, case selection, and concept measurement
- Working with hypotheses and theories
- Methodological issues associated with case studies and small-N analysis

- Mechanisms and models of explanation in the social sciences
- Mixed- and Multi-Method research

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013.
2. Gary Goertz, *Social Science Concepts*. Princeton University Press, 2006.
3. Martin Hollis. *The Philosophy of Social Science: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
4. John Gerring, *Case Study Research*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
5. John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
6. Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel (editors), *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Cambridge University Press. 2015.
7. Richard Swedberg, *The Art of Social Theory*, Princeton University Press. 2015.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be required to write four short reaction papers, two oral presentations and a research design paper.

The reaction papers must be e-mailed to the instructor one day before the scheduled class discussion (but no later than Monday 6pm). The reaction paper should, as the name implies, offer your thoughts vis-à-vis the week's readings. The reaction paper is not to be a summary of the readings. Instead, it should, at least, **a**) offer constructive criticism of the material (what you like and what you don't, and why), **b**) identify issues or concepts that you do not fully

understand and may need further discussion in class. *The maximum length for each reaction paper is two pages.*

The presentations will be a maximum of 20 minutes long, and will highlight the themes and pertinent issues raised by the selected readings for each week. The presentation should NOT be a summary of each article, but rather a synthesis that illustrates ways in which the readings speak to each other, as well as questions that can help guide discussion for the seminar. The presentation is an opportunity for students to play a leadership role in guiding the discussion for the seminar based on their analysis of the readings.

The seminar paper consists of a research design written to highland the concepts and techniques learned in the seminar. Students will turn in a draft around mid semester and the final, revised version at the end of the seminar. Details about the research design paper will be given later in the seminar.

DUE DATE FOR DRAFT OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN PAPER: OCTOBER 15TH, DURING CLASS.

DUE DATE FOR THE REVISED PAPER: DECEMBER 17TH, 4PM.

Grading will be based on class participation, reaction papers, presentations, and term paper.

CLASS TOPICS

September 3. Introduction to the seminar. Manifesto: For A Non-Bullshit Political Science

Readings

- Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- G. A. Cohen “Deeper into Bullshit”, In S. Ross an L. Overton (eds.), *Contours of Agency: Essays on Themes from Harry Frankfurt*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 321-339.

- O. Gjelsvik, “Bullshit Illuminated”, in J. Elster, O. Gjelsvik, A. Hylland and K. O. Moene (eds.), *Understanding Choice, Explaining Behaviour*. Oslo: Oslo Academic Press, 2006, pp. 101-109.
- Jon Elster, “Hard and Soft Obscurantism in the Humanities and Social Sciences”, *Diogenes*, 58(1-2) 159-170, 2011.
- Martha Nussbaum, “The Professor of Parody.” *The New Republic online* 28 November 2000.
- Jon Elster, “Tool-box or Toy-Box? Hard Obscurantism in Economic Modeling.” *Synthese* (Published online 28 July 2015)

September 10. Philosophy of the Social Sciences: Ants, Spiders, and Bees.

- Martin Hollis. *The Philosophy of Social Science: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 1994

September 17. Critical Realism, Analytic Pluralism, and Analytic Eclecticism

- William Outhwaite. *New Philosophies of Social Science: Realism, Hermeneutics, and Critical Theory*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987. (Chapters 1, 2, 3)
- Patrick Thaddeus Jackson. *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics*. Routledge, 2011. (Chapter 4)
- Daniel Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Westview Press, 2001. Chapters 10 and 11.
- Patrick Thaddeus Jackson. *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics*. Routledge, 2011. (Chapter 7)

- Rudra Sil and Peter Katzenstein, *Beyond Paradigms: Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics*. Palgrave-MacMillan, 2010. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Rudra Sil, “Problems Chasing Methods or Methods Chasing Problems: Research Communities, Constrained Pluralism, and the Role of Eclecticism”, in Ian Shapiro, Rogers Smith and Tarek Masoud (editors), *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

September 24: Methodological Individualism, Causal Mechanisms, and Causal Explanations.

Readings:

- Jon Elster, *Explaining Social Behavior: Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, Chapters 1, 2, 3
- Peter Hedström and Richard Swedberg, “Social Mechanisms: An Introductory Essay” in Peter Hedström and Richard Swedberg (editors), *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Jon Elster, “A Plea for Mechanisms”, in Peter Hedström and Richard Swedberg (editors), *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Peter Hedström. *Dissecting the Social: On the Principles of Analytical Sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Chapters 1 and 2
- Peter Hedström and Lars Udehn, “Analytical Sociology and Theories of the Middle Range.” In Peter Hedström and Peter Bearman (editors), *The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 25-47.

- Robert Merton, “On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range.” In Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure. Enlarged 1968 Edition*. New York: The Free Press, pp. 39-72.

October 1. The art of social science: How to theorize?

Readings:

- Richard Swedberg, *The Art of Social Theory*, Princeton University Press. 2015.

October 8: Writing research designs

Readings:

- Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997. Chapters 3, 4, and 5.
- John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*. Cambridge University Press, 2012. (Read all of Part I)

October 15. Concept formation. (Draft of Research Design paper due)

Readings:

- Gary Goertz, *Social Science Concepts*. Princeton University Press, 2006.
- John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*. Cambridge University Press, 2012. (Read Chapter 5)

October 22. Case Study Research

Readings

- John Gerring, *Case Study Research*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. (Chapter 1)

October 29. Measurement, Causal Analysis, Causal Strategies

Readings

- John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*. Cambridge University Press, 2012. (Read Chapters 6 through 12)

November 5. Process Tracing: Foundations

Readings

- Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013.

November 12. Process Tracing: Applications

Readings

- Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel (editors), *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

November 19. Workshop. Individual meetings with instructor

November 26. Thanksgiving Break.

December 3. Mixed-Method Research and Causal Analysis

Readings

- Nicholas Weller and Jeb Barnes, *Finding Pathways. Mixed-Method Research for Studying Causal Mechanisms*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- James Fearon and David Laitin, “Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods.” In Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Henry Brady, and David Collier (editors), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Mario Luis Small, “How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature.” *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol. 37, 2011, pp. 57-86.

December 10. Wrapping Things Up: What have we learned?

Final research design is due DECEMBER 17th at 4pm.