

**Political Science 480/380: Scope of Political Science**  
**Fall Semester 2015 \* Tuesday 5:00-8:00 \* Instructor: James Johnson**

**Office: 312 Harkness Hall \* 275-0622 \* [jd.johnson@rochester.edu](mailto:jd.johnson@rochester.edu)**  
**Office Hours: Thursday 3:30-5:00 & by Appointment**

**Teaching Assistant: Barbara Piotroska \* 305 Harkness Hall**  
**[bpiotro3@ur.rochester.edu](mailto:bpiotro3@ur.rochester.edu) \* Office Hours: TBA**

This course is required of all first year students in the Ph.D. program. Any other students must have my permission to register. The course aims to provide a general road map of the discipline of political science and an interpretation of its aims. Since there is no hope of being comprehensive I make no pretension to being so. This course is decidedly *not* neutral - it aims to establish the central role of causal explanation in political science and it offers a specific interpretation of that enterprise. In particular I hope to persuade you that substantive research - whether it involves experiments, empirical observation, ethnographic inquiry, quantitative analysis, or mathematical modeling - remains incomplete unless it is conceptually well founded and theoretically informed. Toward this end we will examine a range of prominent examples of different “varieties” of social explanation from the perspective of the philosophy of science. And we will see that this is an area of enduring and intense controversy. I hope the course will provide some of the background that you need to reach defensible views on matters of explanation, methods, and theory in political science.

***Grading:***

Participation: The course will be run primarily as a seminar. Given the nature of the undertaking it is imperative that students be *active* participants in class. That means that I expect students not only to keep up with the reading, but also to read with care and to demonstrate this in class discussions. I encourage this effort in the following way. Each week, at the start of class, I ask one student (selected at random) to initiate and help direct the discussion for that day. This will require that she or he be able to summarize and raise critical questions about the major points of the assigned readings. Each student should anticipate being asked to do this more than once during the course of the semester but, as should be clear, you will receive no forewarning of when that will be.

The point of this scheme is that I expect *all* students to be active participants. I expect students to come to class prepared. That means that you should not only have done the assigned reading, you also should have thought about it, and have comments, criticisms, and so forth. Participation is important! The regularity of your participation and especially your willingness to stick your neck out in seminar discussion will constitute 10% of your grade for the course.

**Please Note:** My policy on electronic devices in class (meaning *any* screen connected to silicon chips) is restrictive. *No cell phones, laptops or tablets in class!* This will eliminate the temptation to do things other than contribute to discussion. If you have readings, notes etc on your device, download them for reference prior to class.

Three Take-Home Writing Assignments: The first two will be due in class on Weeks 8 and 12. The third is due on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Each will require that you write roughly ten to fifteen typed pages in response to one or more questions that I will distribute at the end of class on the preceding Tuesday. I will provide more specific instructions when I distribute the questions. Each of these assignments will account for 30% of your grade.

**Please Note:** I frown upon late assignments – and hence will penalize them at a rate of one third of a letter grade per day. (That means if you would normally have made a B+, one day late makes that a B, two days a B-, and so forth.) Fair warning.

**Please Note:** I actively discourage your using LaTeX for these assignments – your time is better spent learning how to think analytically and figuring out how to write coherently than wrestling with fancy typesetting. Among the things you don't want to have said of you: “All fur coat, no knickers.”

**Academic Honesty:** You should be familiar with the College Policies on Academic Honesty. If you are not, the burden is on you to familiarize yourself with those policies. You can find relevant links on line here: <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/>. Ignorance of the law is no excuse.

Over the past several years I have detected at least one student engaged in more or less egregious academic dishonesty in nearly every one of my courses. This is frustrating: such actions are unfair to other students in the class, and they demonstrate incredible disrespect for me as a teacher. Consequently, I have now a zero tolerance policy on cheating and plagiarism. If I suspect you have engaged in plagiarism or any other form of cheating I will immediately document my suspicion and report the matter to the Dean's office. I have no interest in listening to any rationalizations (or worse) that you might offer. I will leave the matter up to the relevant deciders. The only thing worse than enduring disrespect is being asked to clean up the resulting mess. So the best way for you to avoid true unpleasantness on this score is to comply with the relevant policies and to do so scrupulously. If you have any question as to whether something is “allowed” while doing an assignment let your default rule be to *ask* Barbara or myself.

## Required Reading

A list of assigned readings follows on subsequent pages. You will note that the reading load is quite (probably *unreasonably*) heavy. With one exception it does not take the form of pre-digested textbook presentations. I have *not* ordered books (marked \*) through the University Bookstore since most students prefer to buy from one or another e-purveyor. (You ought to be able to find used copies of nearly all of these books on line.) Barbara and I will arrange to have the other readings available on Blackboard.

There is one book on the syllabus – Daniel Little's *Varieties of Social Explanation* (Westview 1991) that we read part of nearly every week.

You should also have a look at Dan's blog *Understanding Society*, on which he updates many of the topics discussed in the book. If you are interested in such matters, it is very, very good: <http://understandingsociety.blogspot.com/>.

**Background Reading - Recommendations:** Most of you will have little or no background in philosophy of science. A very smart recent and *brief* introduction to the field is:

Gillian Barker & Phillip Kitcher. 2013. *Philosophy of Science*. Oxford University Press.

On philosophy of *social* science more specifically see:

Nancy Cartwright & Eleanora Montuschi eds. 2015. *Philosophy of Social Science: A New Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

### **Week One ~ Introductions ( September 1st)**

### **Week Two ~ What is Scientific Explanation? (September 8<sup>th</sup>)**

- \* Daniel Little. 1991. *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Westview Press. Chapters 1, 11.
- Larry Laudan. 1981. "A Problem Solving Approach to Scientific Progress." In *Scientific Revolutions*. Ed. I. Hacking. Oxford.
- Daniel Little. 1998. "The Scope and Limits of Generalization in Social Science." In *Microfoundations, Method, and Causation*. Transaction.
- Daniel Hausman. 1992. *The Inexact and Separate Science of Economics*. Cambridge. "Appendix: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science" pp. 281-329.
- Peter Machamer. 2002. "A Brief Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Science." In *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Science*. Eds. P. Machamer & M. Silberstein. Blackwell. Pp. 1-17.
- Phillip Kitcher. 2013. "Toward a Pragmatist Philosophy of Science," *Theoria* 28:185-231.

### **Week Three ~ Understanding & Misunderstanding Causality (September 15<sup>th</sup>)**

- Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Chapter 2.
- Henry Brady. 2008. "Causation & Explanation in Social Science." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Ed. Janet Box-Steffensmeier, et. al. Oxford University Press pp. 217-270.
- Daniel Little. 2011. "Causal Mechanisms in the Social Realm." In *Causality in the Sciences*. Edited by P.K. Illari, et. al.. Oxford University Press.
- \*Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton.
- James Johnson. 2006. "Consequences of Positivism: A Pragmatist Assessment," *Comparative Political Studies* 39:224-52.
- Nancy Cartwright. 2015. "Causal Inference." In *Philosophy of Social Science: A New Introduction*. Edited by Nancy Cartwright & Eleanora Montuschi. Oxford University Press.

### **Week Four ~ Rational Choice I (September 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

- Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Chapter 3.

- \* David Kreps. 1990. *Game Theory and Economic Modelling*. Oxford.
- Robert Gibbons. 1997. "An Introduction to Applicable Game Theory," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 11:127-49.
- \* Thomas Schelling. 1978. *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*. Norton. Chs. 1-3.
- Austen-Smith, David and Jeffrey Banks. 1998. "Social Choice Theory, Game Theory, and Positive Political Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 1:259-87.
- Donald Davidson. 1980 [1963]. "Actions, Reasons & Causes." In *Essays on Actions & Events*. Oxford University Press.
- Jon Elster. 1986. "The Nature and Scope of Rational Choice Explanation." In *Actions and Events*. Ed. E. Lepore and B. McLaughlin. Blackwell.
- Debra Satz and John Ferejohn. 1994. "Rational Choice and Social Theory," *Journal of Philosophy* 91:71-87.
- Daniel Hausman. 1995. "Rational Choice and Social Theory: A Comment," *Journal of Philosophy* 92:96-102.
- Daniel Hausman. 2000. "Revealed Preference, Belief, and Game Theory," *Economics and Philosophy* 16:99-115.

### **Week Five ~ Interpretation & Ethnography (September 29<sup>th</sup>)**

- Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Chapter 4.
- \* James Scott. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak*. Yale.
- Richard Fenno. 1986. "Observation, Context, and Sequence," *American Political Science Review* 80:3-16.
- Lisa Wedeen. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science* 13:255-72.
- Charles Taylor. 1985. *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge. Ch. 1
- Clifford Geertz. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books. Ch. 1.
- Robert Bates, et. al., 1998. "The Politics of Interpretation," *Politics & Society* 26:603-42.
- James Johnson. 2002. "How Conceptual Problems Migrate," *Annual Review of Political Science* 5:223-48.
- Ian Hampshire-Monk & Andrew Hindmoor. 2010. "Rational Choice and Interpretive Evidence: Caught between a Rock and a Hard Place?" *Political Studies* 58:47-65.

### **Week Six ~ Fall Break: No Class (October 6<sup>th</sup>)**

### **Week Seven Science and its Uses (October 13th)**

#### [First Assignment Distributed](#)

- \* Kitcher, Phillip. 2011. *Science in a Democratic Society*. Prometheus Books.
- James Flory and Philip Kitcher. 2004. "Global Health and the Scientific Research Agenda," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 32:36-65.
- Cartwright, Nancy. 2006. "Well-Ordered Science: Evidence for Use," *Philosophy of Science* 73:981-90.
- Anderson, Elizabeth. 2011. "Democracy, Public Policy, and Lay Assessments Of Scientific Testimony," *Episteme* 8: 144-164.
- Steven Epstein. 2000. "Democracy, Expertise & AIDS Treatment Activism." In

*Science, Technology & Democracy*. Edited by D.L. Kleinman. SUNY Press.  
Lupia, Arthur. 2014. "What Is the Value of Social Science? Challenges for Researchers and Government Funders," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47:1-7.

### **Week Eight ~ Functional & Structural Explanation? (October 20<sup>th</sup>)**

#### **First Assignment Due**

Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*, Ch. 5,9

Arthur Stinchcombe. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Harcourt. pp. 80-101.

Jon Elster. 2007. *Explaining Social Behavior*. Cambridge. pp. 257-98.

\* Robert Putnam. 1993. *Making Democracy Work*. Princeton University Press.

James Johnson. 2003. "Conceptual Problems as Obstacles to Theoretical Progress in Political Science" *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15:87-115. [+ corrections]

\* Theda Skocpol. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions*. Cambridge. [Selections]

Michael Taylor. 1988. "Rationality and Revolutionary Collective Action." In *Rationality and Revolution*. Ed. M. Taylor. Cambridge University Press.

### **Week Nine ~ Statistical 'Explanations' (October 27<sup>th</sup>)**

Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Chapter 8.

\* William Berry and Mitchell Sanders. 2000. *Understanding Multivariate Research*. Westview.

\* Adam Przeworski, et al. 2000. *Democracy and Development*. Cambridge.

Epstein, David, et. al.. 2006. "Democratic Transitions," *American Journal of Political Science*, 50:551-569.

Hoover, Kevin. 1990. "The Logic of Causal Inference," *Economics and Philosophy* 6:207-34.

Christopher Achen. 2002. "Toward a New Political Methodology," *Annual Review of Political Science* 5:423-50.

Phillip Schrodt. 2014. "The Seven Deadly Sins of Contemporary Quantitative Political Analysis," *Journal of Peace Research* 51: 287–300.

### **Week Ten ~ Experiments (November 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

\* Dawn Lagan Teele, ed. 2014. *Field Experiments & Their Critics*. Yale University Press.

Alan Gerber and Donald Green. 2000. "Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: a Field Experiment," *American Political Science Review* 94: 653-663.

Rose McDermott. 2002. "Experimental Methods in Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science* 5:31-61.

James N. Druckman, et. al. 2006. "The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 100:627-635.

Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2009. "Field Experiments and the Political Economy of Development," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 367–378.

### **Week Eleven ~ Data, Measurement, and Conceptualization (November 10<sup>th</sup>)**

#### **Second Assignment Distributed**

\* Geraldo Munck. 2009. *Measuring Democracy*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Nancy Cartwright and Rosa Runhardt. 2015. "Measurement." In *Philosophy of Social Science: A New Introduction*. Edited by Nancy Cartwright & Eleanora Montuschi. Oxford University Press.
- Gary Goertz. 2008. "Concepts, Theories & Numbers." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Ed. Janet Box-Steffensmeier, et. al. Oxford University Press., pp. 97-118.
- David Collier and Robert Adcock 1999. "Democracy and Dichotomies," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2:537-565.
- Michael Coppedge and John Gerring, et. al. 2011. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach," *Perspectives on Politics* 9:247-67.
- Hein Goemans, et. al. 2009. "Introducing Archigos: A Data Set of Political Leaders" *Journal of Peace Research* 46: 269-283.

## **Week Twelve ~ Rational Choice II (November 17<sup>th</sup>)**

### **Second Assignment Due**

- \* Michael Taylor. 1987. *The Possibility of Cooperation*. Cambridge.
- Randall Calvert. 1992. "Leadership and Its Basis in Problems of Social Coordination," *International Political Science Review* 13:7-24.
- \* Thomas Schelling. 1960. *The Strategy of Conflict*. Harvard.
- Robert Sugden & Ignacio Zamarron. 2006. "Finding the Key: The Riddle of Focal Points," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 27:609-21.
- Myerson, Roger. 2009. "Learning from Schelling's Strategy of Conflict." *Journal of Economic Literature* 47:1109-1125.
- Rebecca Morton. 2009. "Formal Modeling & Empirical Analysis in Political Science." In *Methoden der Vergleichenden Politik- und Sozialwissenschaft*. Susanne Pickel, et. al. eds. Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Clarke, Kevin and David Primo. 2007. "Modernizing Political Science: A Model-Based Approach," *Perspectives on Politics* 5:741-53.
- James Johnson. 2014. "Models Among the Political Theorists," *American Journal of Political Science* 58:547-60.
- Ariel Rubinstein. 1991. "Comments on the Interpretation of Game Theory," *Econometrica* 59:909-24.
- Thomas Schelling. 1978. *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*. Norton. Ch. 4,7.
- Robert Sugden. 2000. "Credible Worlds: The Status of Theoretical Models in Economics," *Journal of Economic Methodology* 7:1-31.

## **Week Thirteen ~ Pathological Debates (November 24<sup>th</sup>)**

- \* Donald Green and Ian Shapiro. 1994. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*. Yale.
- Karl Popper. 1968. "The Rationality Assumption." In *Popper Selections*. Ed. David Miller. Princeton.
- Gary Cox. 1999. "The Empirical Content of Rational Choice Theory: A Reply to Green and Shapiro." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 11:147-69.
- Simon Hug, S. 2014. "Further Twenty Years Of Pathologies? Is Rational Choice Better Than It Used To Be?" *Swiss Political Science Review* 20: 486-497.

- James Johnson. 2015. "Simon Hug's Retrospective on *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Dissent*," *Swiss Political Science Review*. 21: 180–187
- Kevin Clarke. 2007. "The Necessity of Being Comparative: Theory Confirmation in Quantitative Political Science." *Comparative Political Studies* 40:7.
- Curtis Signorino. 1999. "Strategic Interaction and the Statistical Analysis of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 93:279-98.
- James Johnson. 2010. "What Rationality Assumption? Or, How "Positive Political Theory" Rests on a Mistake," *Political Studies* 58:282-99.

#### **Week Fourteen ~ Theories of Institutions and How We Assess Them (December 1<sup>st</sup>)**

- \* Jack Knight. 1991. *Institutions and Social Conflict*. Cambridge.
- Kenneth Shepsle. 1989. "Studying Institutions," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1:131-47.
- Douglas North. 1990. "A Transaction Cost Theory of Politics" *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 2:355-67.
- Randall Calvert. 1995. "Rational Actors, Equilibrium and Social Institutions." In *Explaining Social Institutions*. Ed. J. Knight and I. Sened. University of Michigan.
- Jack Knight. 1995. "Models, Interpretations and Theories: Constructing Explanations of Institutional Emergence and Change." In *Explaining Social Institutions*. Ed. J. Knight and I. Sened. University of Michigan.
- Lorene Allio et. al. 1997. "Post-communist Privatization as a Test of Theories of Institutional Change." In *The Political Economy of Property Rights*. Ed. David Weimer. Cambridge.
- Jack Knight and Douglass North. 1997. "Explaining the Complexity of Institutional Change." In *The Political Economy of Property Rights*. Ed. David Weimer. Cambridge.

#### **Week Fifteen ~ Power (December 8<sup>th</sup>)**

##### Third Assignment Distributed

- \* Keith Dowding. 1996. *Power*. Minnesota.
- Adam Przeworski and Michael Wallerstein. 1988. "The Structural Dependence of the State on Capital," *American Political Science Review* 82:11-29.
- Brian Barry, 2002. "Capitalists Rule OK? Some Puzzles about Power," *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 1:155-84.
- Keith Dowding. 2003. "Resources, Power & Systematic Luck," *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 2:305-22.
- Brian Barry. 2003. "Capitalists Rule, OK? A Commentary on Keith Dowding," *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 2:323-41.
- Andrew Hindmoor & Josh McGeechan. 2013. "Luck, Systematic Luck And Business Power: Lucky All The Way Down Or Trying Hard To Get What It Wants Without Trying?" *Political Studies* 61:834-49.

#### **Week Sixteen (December 15<sup>th</sup>) ~ No Class Third Assignment Due – My In Box - 5:00 pm.**