

Political Science 380/480: Scope of Political Science
Fall Semester 2008 * Instructor: James Johnson
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Office Hours: Thursday 9:00-10:30 & By Appointment

This course is required of all first year students in the Ph.D. program. Other students must have my permission to register. The course aims to provide a general road map of the discipline 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 particular interpretation of that enterprise. In particular I hope to persuade you that substantive research - whether it involves empirical observation, 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 the 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: The course combines some lecture with seminar discussion. I prefer to lecture less and argue more. 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. I will describe my plan for inducing something like equilibrium levels of preparation in class on the first day. Participation is important! The regularity of your participation and especially your willingness to stick your neck out in seminar discussion will constitute 20% of your grade for the course.

The remainder of your grade will reflect your performance on a series of written assignments. These will be of two sorts:

Regular Short Papers: Over the course of the term each student must submit 5 short papers that address in a critical way some aspect of or problem with the assigned reading. These papers are due in class on the day that the relevant reading has been assigned and *I will not accept them at any other time*. They may be no more than three typed pages long. Your performance on these papers will account for 30% of your grade for the course. You can write on whichever topics you like (or that interfere least with your other commitments) but should scatter these papers over the course of the term - **do not** wait until the last five weeks of the course!

Two Longer Assignments: These will be due in class on Weeks 6 and 15. Each will require that you write roughly ten to fifteen typed pages in response to one or more questions that I will distribute in class on the preceding Wednesday. I will provide more specific instructions when I distribute the questions. Each of these assignments will account for 25% of your grade. I frown upon late assignments. Fair warning.

Class Organization: In *Monty Python & the Holy Grail* there is a famous scene where King Arthur engages in heated debate over the notion of sovereignty with very contentious, muddy peasants. The peasants announce that they belong to an “autonomous collective,” a “self-governing anarcho-syndicalist commune” and so have little regard for the pretenses of centralized monarchical authority. (See: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Xd_zkMEgkI if you are unfamiliar with this canonical argument.) This course will operate as just such a collective. Each week you students will “take it in turns” (by some method of your own devising) to insure the availability for the following week of any of the relevant reading materials not available through the library via e-journals. This will require that the chosen ones ascertain which readings are not easily available on the web, obtain those readings from me, copy them (at my expense), and make sure that they are placed on electronic reserve at Rush Rhees Library.

Class Format: 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 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.

Required Reading

A list assigned readings follows on this and subsequent pages. You will note that the reading load is quite 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.) Note that many of the journal articles may be available online from the library (via e.g., JSTOR, etc). Those that are not will be made available via the process I described above.

Week One - Scientific Explanation (September 3)

* 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 Hausman. 1992. *The Inexact and Separate Science of Economics*. Cambridge. “Appendix: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science” pp.281-329.

Week Two - Understanding & Misunderstanding Causality (September 10)

Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Chapter 2.

- * 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.
- John Gerring. 2008. "The Mechanismic Worldview: Thinking Inside the Box," *British Journal of Political Science* 38:161 - 179.
- Daniel Little. 1998. "The Scope and Limits of Generalization in Social Science" In *Microfoundations, Method, and Causation*. Transaction.
- James Fearon. 1991. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science," *World Politics* 43:169-85.

Week Three - Experiments (September 17)

- * Shanto Iyengar & Donald Kinder. 1989. *News That Matters*. Chicago.
- 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, Rose. 2002. "Experimental Methods in Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science* 5:31-61.
- Donald Green and Alan Gerber. 2003. "Underprovision of Experiments in Political Science," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 589:94 - 112.
- James N. Druckman, et. al. 2006. "The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 100:627-635

Week Four - Rational Choice I (September 24)

- Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Chapter 3.
- * David Kreps. 1990. *Game Theory and Economic Modelling*. Oxford.
- Thomas Schelling. 1978. *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*. Norton. Chs. 1,3.
- 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.
- Robert Gibbons. 1997. "An Introduction to Applicable Game Theory," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 11:127-49.
- Daniel Hausman. 2000. "Revealed Preference, Belief, and Game Theory," *Economics and Philosophy* 16:99-115.

Week Five - Interpretation (October 1)

First Assignment Distributed

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.
- 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.

Week Six - Functionalism (October 8)

First Assignment Due

- Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Ch. 5.
- Arthur Stinchcombe. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Harcourt. pp. 80-101.
- * Robert Putnam. 1993. *Making Democracy Work*. Princeton.
- Sidney Verba. 1965. "Comparative Political Culture." In *Political Culture and Political Development*. Ed. L. Pye and S. Verba. Princeton University Press.
- Harry Eckstein. 1988. "A Culturalist Theory of Political Change," *American Political Science Review* 82:789-804.
- Ronald Inglehart. 1988. "The Renaissance of Political Culture," *American Political Science Review* 82:1203-1230.
- James Johnson. 2003. "Conceptual Problems as Obstacles to Theoretical Progress in Political Science" *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15:87-115.

Week Seven Statistical Explanation (October 15)

- 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.
- Robert Barro. 1997. *Determinants of Economic Growth*. MIT Press. Ch. 2.
- David Collier and Robert Adcock 1999. "Democracy and Dichotomies" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2:537-565.
- 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.

Week Eight - Structural Explanations (October 22)

- Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Chapter 9.
- * Theda Skocpol. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions*. Cambridge.
- Taylor, Michael. 1988. "Rationality and Revolutionary Collective Action." In *Rationality and Revolution*. Ed. M. Taylor. Cambridge University Press.

Laitin, David and Carolyn Warner. 1992. "Structure and Irony in Social Revolutions," *Political Theory* 20:147-51.

Week Nine - Rational Choice II (October 29)

Austen-Smith, David and Jeffrey Banks. 1998. "Social Choice Theory, Game Theory, and Positive Political Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 1:259-87.

* Thomas Schelling. 1960. *The Strategy of Conflict*. Harvard.

* 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.

Ariel Rubinstein. 1991. "Comments on the Interpretation of Game Theory," *Econometrica* 59:909-24.

James Johnson. 2008. "What Rationality Assumption? Or, How "Positive Political Theory" Rests on a Mistake," *Political Studies* (forthcoming).

Week Ten - Pathological Debates (November 5)

* 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.

James Johnson. 1996. "How Not To Criticize Rational Choice Theory: The Pathologies of Commonsense," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 26:77-91.

Clarke, Kevin and David Primo. 2007. "Modernizing Political Science: A Model-Based Approach," *Perspectives on Politics* 5:741-53.

Daniel Little. 1998. "Evidence and Objectivity in the Social Sciences." In *Microfoundations, Method, and Causation*. Transaction.

Curtis Signorino 1999. "Strategic Interaction and the Statistical Analysis of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 93:279-98.

Week Eleven - Theories of Institutions and How We Assess Them (November 12)

* 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 Twelve - Power (November 19)

* 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.
Amelie Rorty. 1983. "Imagination and Power," *Social Science Information* 22:801-16.
Nicholas Rescher. 1979. "The Ontology of the Possible." In *The Possible and the Actual*. Ed M. Loux. Cornell University Press.

☞ **NO CLASS WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 26 - Thanksgiving**

Week Thirteen - Social Constructionism (December 3)

* Ian Hacking. 1999. *The Social Construction of What?* Harvard.
Alexander Wendt. 1992. "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization*. 46:391-425.
Alexander Wendt. 1998. "Constitution and Causation in International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 24:101-17.
Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink 2001. "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science*. 4:391-416.

Week Fourteen (December 10)

Make up, if necessary *and*

☞ Second Assignment Distributed.

Week Fifteen (December 17)

☞ Second Assignment Due