

Political Science 380/480: Scope of Political Science
Spring Semester 2012 * Monday 4:50-7:30 * Instructor: James Johnson

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Office Hours: Wednesday 1:00-2:30 & by Appointment

This course is required of all first year students in the Ph.D. program. All 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: 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. To insure that you **do not** wait until the final weeks of the term I expect each of you to submit *at least* two of these assignments prior to week six.

Two Longer Assignments: These will be due in class on Weeks 7 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 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 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 a handful of 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. I find their arguments persuasive. (See: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Xd_zkMEgkI if you are unfamiliar with this canonical argument.) This course will operate in much the same way as that scene. Think of me as King Arthur; think of yourselves as the contentious peasants. That means you will need to act as a self-governing 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 via e-journals from the library. 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 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.

Required Reading

A list of assigned readings follows on this and 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.) Note: the vast majority of the journal articles are 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 (January 23rd)

- * 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.

Week Two - Understanding & Misunderstanding Causality (January 30th)

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.

* 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.

Week Three - Experiments (February 6th)

* 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. 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 Four - Rational Choice I (February 13th)

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.

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 (February 20th)

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 - Functionalism (February 27th)

First Assignment Distributed

- Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*, Ch. 5.
- Arthur Stinchcombe. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Harcourt. pp. 80-101.
- * Robert Putnam. 1993. *Making Democracy Work*. Princeton University Press.
- 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 - Structural Explanation (March 5th)

First Assignment Due

- Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Chapter 9.
- * Theda Skocpol. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions*. Cambridge.
- Michael Taylor. 1988. "Rationality and Revolutionary Collective Action." In *Rationality and Revolution*. Ed. M. Taylor. Cambridge University Press.
- David Laitin, and Carolyn Warner. 1992. "Structure and Irony in Social Revolutions," *Political Theory* 20:147-51.

Week Eight - Spring Break – No Class (March 12th)

Week Nine – Statistical ‘Explanations’ (March 19th)

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.

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 Ten – Data, Measurement and Conceptualization (March 26th)

* Geraldo Munck. 2009. *Measuring Democracy*. Johns Hopkins 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*.

Hein Goemans, et. al. 2009. "Introducing Archigos: A Data Set of Political Leaders" *Journal of Peace Research* 46: 269-283.

Gretchen Helmke. "Interbranch Conflict in Latin America" (unpublished manuscript).

Week Eleven – Rational Choice II (April 2nd)

* 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.

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

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 Twelve - Pathological Debates (April 9th)

* 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.
- 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 Thirteen - Theories of Institutions and How We Assess Them (April 16th)

- * 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 Fourteen - Power (April 23rd)

- * 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.

Week Fifteen - Social Constructionism (April 30th)

Second Assignment Distributed.

- * 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.

Alexander Wendt & James Fearon. 2002. "Rationalism v. Constructivism: A Skeptical View." In *Handbook of International Relations*. Ed. Walter Carlsnaes, et. al. Sage.

Week Sixteen (May 3rd) – No Class

Second Assignment Due – My Office, 5:00 pm.