

Methodology and Research Methods

Coordinator: Dr. Baogang He

1. Introduction

What is political science? What is methodology? Is methodology the same as methods? What is ontology? What is epistemology? What is a thesis? What is a research design? What is the role of a research supervisor? Most undergraduate students are not exposed to such questions in any rigorous way. However, to be able to understand the nature of political science as a discipline and to be able to do research and write a thesis, some understanding of the questions raised above is important.

This unit is designed to help graduate students understand the key conceptual and methodological issues in doing research in the discipline of political science. Attention is given not only to the way we 'view' the study of politics and government, but also to various approaches to methodology, methods and research design. In addition to demonstrating a grasp of these issues, students are expected to be able to apply them in developing a research plan for their thesis. As indicated below, this is one of the assessment items for this unit.

In particular, this unit will take methodological consideration on village elections studies, discussing structure versus process, the political economy of Chinese

model of village democracy, the state versus society approach, and normative approach on village democracy.

Objectives:

Develop the capacity to identify some of the main disciplinary approaches to the study of politics.

Develop an understanding of how political research is carried out.

Be able to identify the theory and methodology that guides your thesis.

Develop an understanding of the main methods used in political research

Assessment:

1. 1,500 word essay either critically evaluating two or more studies in political science from a methodological perspective, or reviewing and examining the development of a specifically methodological issue.
2. 1,500 word essay which presents a research proposal for your proposed thesis. This should contain a statement about the aims of the project, a discussion of the ontological and epistemological aspects of the research, as well as a discussion of your proposed research design and methods.

Seminar Topics:

1. Introduction to the unit and to the requirements of the thesis, a historical introduction to methodology and political thinkers

2. Ontology, Epistemology and Theory and their Relevance to Research
3. Conceptual Analysis: Conceptualization in Research
4. Causal Analysis: Causality, Correlation and Counterfactual Hypothesis
5. Value Analysis: Normative Theory
6. Approaches to Politics I: Culturalism and Institutionalism
7. Approaches to Politics II: Structure versus Process
8. Comparative, Historical and Case Study Methods
9. Problem Formulation and Research Design

Text:

Marsh, D. and Stoker, G. (1995), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, Macmillan, London.

General Readings:

Blakie, N. (1993), *Approaches to Social Enquiry*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Isaak, A. (1985), *Scope and Methods in Political Science*, Brooks/Cole, Pacific Grove.

Shively, W.P. (1990), *The Craft of Political Research*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs.

Nachmias, C. and Nachmias, D. (1996) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, London, Arnold.

Seminar 1

Introduction

This seminar will introduce the unit and discuss the nature of the thesis and other issues.

Seminar 2

Theory, Ontology, Epistemology and their Relevance to Research

What is methodology? What is theory? This seminar will discuss the nature of theory and methodology in the social sciences and explain the differing epistemologies and ontologies that researchers bring to their work.

Marsh, D. and Stoker, G. (1995), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, Macmillan, London, Introduction.

Marsh, D. and Stoker, G. (1995), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, Macmillan, London, ch 10, 'The Structure Agency Debate'.

Seminar 3: Conceptual Analysis: Conceptualization in Research

This lecture will examine the ways in which we can effectively grasp concepts in social research.

Giovanni Sartori, 'Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. LXIV, No. 4, 1970, pp. 1033-1053.

David Collier and James E. Mahon, 'Conceptual "Stretching" Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 4, 1993, pp. 845-855.

Terence Ball, James Farr, and Russell Hanson, eds., *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Terence Ball, *Transforming Political Discourse: Political Theory and Critical Conceptual History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

Seminar 4

Causal Analysis: Causality, Correlation and Counterfactual Hypothesis

The seminar examines some of fundamental problems of causal analysis.

John Stuart Mill, *The Logic of the Moral Sciences*, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1988, chap. 2: Of Liberty and Necessity.

James D. Fearon, 'Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science', *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 1990, pp. 169-195.

James Gregor, 'Theory, Metatheory, and Comparative Politics', *Comparative Politics*, July 1971, pp. 575-585.

Seminar 5: Value Analysis: Normative Theory, John Rawls' Theory of Justice and his Methodology

What are the notions of the original position and veil of ignorance? What sort of society would you choose if you knew nothing of your position in it? How does John Rawls develop the social contract traditions of Locke, Rousseau and Kant into a higher level of abstraction? How does Rawls use intellectual devices such as the idea of original position arguing for two just principles? How do other theorists criticise such devices?

John Rawls. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press. pp. 3-22; 136-142.

Chandran Kukathas and Philip Pettit, *Rawls: A Theory of Justice and its Critics*. Polity Press, 1990, pp. 18-26.

Chandran Kukathas and Philip Pettit. 1990. *Rawls: A Theory of Justice and its Critics*. Polity Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

John Rawls. 1994. *Political Liberalism*.

John Rawls. 1985. "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical". *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 14, pp. 223-51.

Brian Barry, *Justice as Impartiality*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1995.

Dworkin, Ronald. 1977, *Taking Rights Seriously*. London: Duckworth.

Charles R. Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Susan Moller Okin, "Justice as Fairness: For Whom?", in Milton Fish, ed., *Justice*, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993.

Daryl Glaser, 'Normative Theory', in Marsh, D. and Stoker, G. (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, Macmillan, London.

Seminar 6: Approaches to Politics I: Culturalism and Institutionalism

This seminar looks at culturalism and institutionalism and variants of 'new institutionalism' in political science.

Almond, Gabriel A. & Verba, Sidney (1980) *The Civic Culture Revisited* (Little, Brown & Company).

Johnson, Nevil (1975) 'The Place of Institutions in the Study of Politics', *Political Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2&3, 271-83.

Apter, David E. (1977) *Introduction to Political Analysis* (Massachusetts: Winthrop Publishers).

March, James G. & Olsen, Johan P. (1984) 'The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, pp. 734-49.

Pye, Lucian W. (1972), 'Culture and Political Science: Problems in the Evaluation of the Concept of Political Culture', *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 2, pp. 285-96.

Pye, Lucian W. (1985), *Asian Power and Politics : The Cultural Dimensions of Authority* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press).

Pye, Lucian W. (1988) *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Cultures* (Michigan: The University of Michigan).

Rhoades, R.A.W (1995), 'The Institutional Approach', in Marsh, D. and Stoker, G. (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, Macmillan, London.

Shepsle, Kenneth A. (1989) 'Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 131-47.

Seminar 7

Approaches to Politics II: Structure versus Process.

Bermeo, Nancy. 1992. "Democracy and the Lessons of Dictatorship". *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 273-91.

Diamond, Larry. 1989. "Beyond Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism: Strategies for Democratization." *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter:141-63.

Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions*, Berkely: University of California Press, 1990.

Seminar 8

Comparative, Historical and Case Study Methods

In this seminar the nature of comparative, historical and case study methods will be surveyed. The relationships between these methods and theory will be examined. Their utility, limitations and special problems will also be discussed.

George, A.L. (1979) "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," in *Diplomacy* P.G. Lauren ed (New York: the Free Press).

Roberts, G.K. (1978) "The Explanation of Politics: Comparison, Strategy and Theory," in P.G. Lewis, D.C. Potter and F.G. Castles eds, *The Practice of Comparative Politics: A Reader* London: Longman.

Mackie, T. and Marsh, D. (1995) "The Comparative Method," in *Theory and Methods in Political Science* D. Marsh and S. Stoker eds, London: Macmillan.

Additional Reading

Carr, E.H. (1964) *What is History?*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Eckstein, H. (1975) "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in F.I. Greenstein and N.W. Polsby eds. *Handbook of Political Science Reading*, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, Volume VII: pp 79-138.

Hecl, H.H. (1972) "Review Article: Policy Analysis", *British Journal of Political Science* 2 January, pp 83-108.

Seminar 9

Problem Formulation and Research Design

Issues about how we should we go about formulating a workable research program and establish an appropriate research design are the questions central to this seminar.

Babbie, E. (1992) *The Practice of Social Research*, 6th edition, Belmont, Wadsworth, Part II, especially ch 4.

Nachmias C. and Nachmias D. (1996) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, London, Arnold, Part II.

Bouma G. (1996) *The Research Process*, 3rd edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press.