

Political Science 380/480: Scope of Political Science
Fall Semester 2004 * Instructor: James Johnson
Office: 312 Harkness Hall * 275-0622 * jjsn@troi.cc.rochester.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 9:30-11:00 & 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 5 and 14. Each will require that you write roughly ten to fifteen typed pages in response to one or more questions that I will pose in class on the immediately preceding Wednesday. I will provide more specific instructions when I distribute the questions. Each of these assignments will account for 25% of your grade.

Class Organization: In *Monty Python & the Holy Grail* there is a terrific scene where Lancelot engages in heated debate over the notion of sovereignty with a very contentious, very muddy peasant. The peasant claims that he and his fellows consider themselves a “self-governing anarcho-syndicalist collective” and so have little regard for the pretenses of centralized monarchical authority. I treat this course as just such a collective. Each week one of you will be chosen (by some method of your own devising) to insure the availability for the following week of any of the relevant reading materials (see below) not available on the internet. This will require that he or she 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 available in the department lounge for copying by the rest of the class.

Class Format: The course largely will be run 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 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 available for photocopy in the Political Science Department. Please be considerate of one another - do not abscond with the readings for extended periods of time.

☞ *** NOTE: NO CLASS ON SEPTEMBER 2nd ***

Week One - Scientific Explanation (September 9)

- * 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 Causality (September 16)

- * Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Chapter 2.
- * Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton.
- Daniel Little. 1998. "The Scope and Limits of Generalization in Social Science" In *Microfoundations, Method, and Causation*. Transaction.
- Henry Brady. 1995. "Doing Good and Doing Better," *The Political Methodologist*. 6:11-19.
- James Fearon. 1991. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science," *World Politics* 43:169-85.
- John Goldthorpe. 2001. "Causation, Statistics & Sociology," *European Sociological Review* 17:1-20

Week Three - Experiments (September 23)

- * Shanto Iyengar & Donald Kinder. 1989. *News That Matters*. Chicago.
- Rose McDermott, Rose. 2002. "Experimental Methodology in Political Science," *Political Analysis* 10: 325-342.
- Donald Green and Alan Gerber. 2003. "The Underprovision of Experiments in Political Science," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 589 : 94 - 112.
- Alan Gerber and Donald Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: a Field Experiment," *American Political Science Review* 94: 653-663.

Week Four - Rational Choice I (September 30)

First Assignment Distributed

- * 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.
- Daniel Hausman. 2000. "Revealed Preference, Belief, and Game Theory," *Economics and Philosophy* 16:99-115.

Week Five - Interpretation (October 7)

☞ First Assignment Due

- * 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 14)

- * Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Ch. 5.
- * 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.
- Arthur Stinchcombe. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Harcourt. pp. 80-101.
- 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 21)

- * Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Chapter 8.
- * William Berry and Mitchell Sanders. 2000. *Understanding Multivariate Research*. Westview.
- Robert Barro. 1997. *Determinants of Economic Growth*. MIT Press. Ch. 2.
- 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 - Democracy and Development (October 28)

- * Adam Przeworski, et al. 2000. *Democracy and Development*. Cambridge.
- David Collier and Robert Adcock 1999. "Democracy and Dichotomies" *Annual Review of Political Science* 2:537-565.

Week Eight - Structural Explanations (October 29)

- * 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 (November 4)

- * 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.
- Robert Gibbons. 1997. "An Introduction to Applicable Game Theory," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 11:127-49.
- Ariel Rubinstein. 1991. "Comments on the Interpretation of Game Theory," *Econometrica* 59:909-24.

Week Ten - Pathological Debates (November 11)

- * 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.
- 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 18)

- * 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.

☞ **NO CLASS THURSDAY NOVEMBER 25 - Thanksgiving**

Week Twelve - Power (December 2)

* 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.
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.

Week Thirteen - Social Constructionism (December 9)

* 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.
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. 1998. “Constitution and Causation in International Relations,” *Review of International Studies* 24:101-17.

Week Fourteen (December 16)

☞ Second Assignment Due