

PS 671: Strategies of Inquiry in Political Science

Fall 2005
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Wednesday CB 235 3:00-5:30
Office: POT 1631
Office Hours: Wed. 11:00-12:00
Thurs. 1:00-2:30

Purpose of the Course

The purpose of this course is to introduce new Ph.D. students to the epistemology, methodology, and substance of mainstream political science research. While the course will address some non-traditional approaches to political science, the primary focus of the course is on the philosophy of science and its implications for and applications in political science research.

The course is divided into two parts. After a brief description of the history of political science as a discipline, we begin by examining the nature of scientific knowledge and scientific progress. We will then consider whether and how scientific principles of defining, evaluating, and developing knowledge can be applied to understanding political phenomena. In the second part of the course, we will focus on research design and problems of inference. In both parts of the course, we will examine these issues in several specific examples of research in political science.

Course Requirements

This is a seminar course, which means that student participation is mandatory. In addition, students must complete two papers, two take-home exams, and a research design. Each student will select an article, published since January 1998, in the *American Political Science Review* or other top journal. This article will serve as the basis for the two papers and the research design. The first paper (1500 words) will evaluate the article according to the course material on the philosophy of science. The second paper (1500 words) will evaluate the article according to the course material on research design.

In addition, for most weeks students will turn in a written assignment related to the readings. These assignments come in different flavors. Sometimes I will assign a research design puzzle. I may also ask you to evaluate an argument presented in an article or in the press. Other times I will request a *précis* that succinctly reports the main argument of the reading(s) for that week.

The weighting in the final grade of these requirements is the following:

essays/participation:	10%
each of the two exams:	20%
each of the two papers:	15%
research design:	20%

A note on grading:

All written assignments will be graded for the quality of writing as well as the content. In other words, I expect appropriate grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence/paragraph structure. In particular, please note that I will grade each paper until either I have found five writing errors or I have finished the paper, whichever comes first. Please be sure to proofread your work.

Readings available in bookstore:

Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*

Fisher, *The Logic of Real Arguments*.

King, Keohane, and Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry*.

Putnam, *Bowling Alone*

Lott, John. *More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun-Control Laws*

Vreeland, James. *The IMF and Economic Development*

Other Readings:

Some weekly reading material consists of articles and book chapters. One or two copies of these texts will be available in the graduate student lounge and, where possible, through JSTOR.

Tentative Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignment/Reading
Section I: Science and Political Science		
August 24	Introduction	Choose article
August 31	Science and Scientific Progress	Miller, ch. 1 Hempel, chs. 1-6
September 7	Continued	Kuhn; Tetlock
September 14	Continued	Lakatos, "Falsification..." Ball
September 21	Explanation in Social Science	Miller, ch. 2 Taylor Geertz
September 28	Evaluating explanations	Miller, chs.3-4
October 5	Example 1: Legislative Organization	Krehbiel; Huber and Dion
Section II: Inference		
October 12	Logical Inference	Fisher <i>1st Exam Due</i>
October 19	Continued	Fisher
October 26	Empirical Inference	KKV., chs. 1-3 <i>1st Paper Due</i>
November 2	Continued	KKV, chs. 1-3; Collier
November 9	Example 2: Bowling Alone	Putnam
November 16	Causal Inference	KKV, chs. 4-6
November 23	Continued	KKV, chs. 4-6
November 30	Example 3: Concealed Gun Laws and Gun Violence	Lott
December 7	Example 4: The IMF and Economic	Vreeland

Development

December 14 *2nd Exam, 2nd Paper, and Research Design Due*