

PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

(Advanced undergraduate)

Course Description

In the social sciences, the quest for sound research has, at times, led to attempts to mimic the natural sciences, often leading to an elevation of large-n quantitative research above “qualitative” research. Others claim that sound research can be based on different ontological and epistemological assumptions than those of quantitative research and therefore stand on its own merits. Throughout the term, students will be familiarized with the key philosophical debates within the social sciences, and gain mastery of a range of research approaches used in the social sciences. Throughout the term, students will gain hands-on experience in constructing research designs. Though the course puts methodological debates in conversation with substantive questions arising from international relations, the skills students will learn are applicable to the study of American politics, comparative politics, history, anthropology, sociology, and economics.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This course will improve understanding of the philosophical justifications for various social scientific research approaches, explore similarities, differences, and tradeoffs among social scientific research approaches, encourage reflective and systematic scholarship, and provide opportunities to apply certain methodological approaches to personal research interests. Upon completing this course, students will be able to create and assess sophisticated research designs motivated by a variety ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Diversity and Inclusion

This course is geared to serve all students, no matter their backgrounds, experiences, and identities. As a result, the class is a safe space in which to respectfully exchange ideas about the substantive and methodological merits of the arguments presented in the course materials. The things we have each gone through undoubtedly informs how we analytically assess the world. Scholars’ perspectives are also informed by their own backgrounds, experiences, and identities. With respect to scholars, we must try to understand the historical and biographical contexts from which they write. With respect to one another, we must be generous and kind in how we frame our critiques, especially when we strongly disagree with one another’s arguments. The diversity students bring to this course is a resource through which we all gain a better understanding of the materials at hand and, more importantly, one another and ourselves.

As part of an effort to protect and cultivate the diversity students bring to the classroom and given the sensitive nature of some of the topics we cover, it is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and safety in the classroom. Some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions, please be respectful of others' emotions and be mindful of your own. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of differences of gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, race, culture, nationality, linguistic background, and immigration status. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. Please also let me know if you have concerns about course accessibility. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we

can make arrangements for you. Lastly, class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name; I will gladly honor your request to address you by a different name or gender pronoun than the one listed there. Please advise me early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Required Course Readings

1. Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, Routledge, 2010.
2. Sandra Harding, *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies*, U. Indiana Press, 1998.
3. Alexander George & Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies & Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, MIT Press, 2005.
4. Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis & the Bosnian War*, Routledge, 2006.

All other readings will be online or distributed in class.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation (10%)

Regular attendance and active participation are required, and you should come to each course meeting prepared to discuss the assigned readings in detail. Mastery of the assigned material will be demonstrated through participation in seminar discussions. As such, active participation entails more than just answering questions on the assigned material, and much more than simply "saying something." Earning a superior participation grade requires that you demonstrate critical thinking on the subjects at hand by connecting concepts across sections of the course, engaging me and fellow classmates in discussion, being an attentive listener to others, and applying concepts to real world situations. In plain language, showing up for each meeting and occasionally making a comment is average (C-range) participation at best. To participate effectively, remember that quality is even more important than quantity!

Research Question Memo (10%)

The research question memo should outline a 'puzzle' that you would be interested in researching in more detail (e.g. for a capstone paper or thesis). Your 'puzzle' is simply an interesting issue that remains unexplained – something that you intend to explore and explain. You should state the research question in the form of an explicit question (e.g. "What explains...?"), provide a brief background statement on the topic with selected literature references, and formulate a tentative hypothesis *or* initial guess to guide your investigation. Avoid research questions that can be answered with yes, no, or maybe – you want to pose an *analytical* question that steers you towards explanation. Ideally, the topic discussed in the memo will be the one that you develop into the research design for this course. Your memo should be 2-3 double-spaced pages (500-750 words) in length.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS DUE IN CLASS AT THE END OF WEEK TWO.

Literature Review (10%)

The literature review should describe the main debates other scholars are having about the question you are asking in your research question memo. What are the key substantive and methodological differences among such works? Can they be grouped into theoretical camps? What are the analytical strengths of particular ways of addressing certain questions, and what questions remain unanswered? A good lit review acknowledges the contributions of others while suggesting a future research agenda that such work, taken together, leaves for future scholars (in this case, you!). The lit review should be 3-5 double-spaced pages (750-1250 words) in length.

LIT REVIEW DUE IN CLASS AT THE BEGINNING OF WEEK FOUR.

Fieldwork Exercise and Essay (20%)

Each student will carry out a fieldwork exercise. This exercise will consist of taking ethnographic fieldnotes in a context of the student's choosing. First, the student will identify a 'unique and beautiful problem' or – perhaps more accurately – interesting issue to explore. For the purpose of this exercise, the issue does not have to be all that groundbreaking but could be a matter of exploring the staff-customer relations in a café, intra- office politics, or the labors of tourists trying to navigate a new area. Interesting observations can be drawn from just about any mundane situation. This exercise offers students an opportunity to be creative with the problem and context they decide to explore. It is important to remember that the purpose of ethnographic research is to get at *shared social meaning* – the actions you are observing are simply entry points to this shared social meaning (sporting events are replete with ritualistic symbolic action, public bathrooms are heavily regulated social spaces etc.). Consequently, you are using behavior and action to get at *meaning* – what certain behavior and action *means* to the individuals involved. Note that this is not meant as rigorous data collection for an actual research project (although you are welcome to use it as such), but rather a small exercise in how to take ethnographic fieldnotes and create a worthwhile narrative from the raw data. As such, this taste of 'in the field' action need not be a time consuming effort – it could be a few hours in a café, library, or a workplace, describing in detail what happens, who are the main actors, and what interesting observations can be made about the environment at that particular point in time. The challenge in this exercise is to construct a compelling story from raw data and identify significant facts regarding the chosen issue. Accordingly, these fieldnotes will be used as basis for a short essay (approx. 3,000 words) which, in addition to telling the narrative, describes the experience as a researcher, reflects on what would have been different if this had been taking place in a non-US setting (particularly reflections on language issues, access to individuals, role as a conspicuous outsider, cultural semiotics etc.), and considers whether using other techniques would have resulted in a different narrative and, if so, how it would differ.

FIELDWORK ESSAYS DUE IN CLASS AT THE END OF WEEK EIGHT.

Research Design Paper (35%)

Each student will submit a research design paper. Ideally, this exercise will be based on the Research Question Memo submitted earlier in the term and will serve as the foundation for a 'real' research project that the student intends to carry out throughout the course of their study. An important part of the exercise is for the student to find the approach that will best suit the issue they intend to explore. In other words, students have a great degree of freedom in choosing their approach. Students must, however, meet certain key requirements of research designs, as will be discussed throughout the class. These include: 1) specification of the research problem and the research objectives, including a discussion of the relevant literature and alternative explanations; 2) discussion of the proposed research method, including the relevant literature and "state of the field"; 3) specification of the variables, or alternative conceptualization, as appropriate; 4) selection of one or more historical case(s) to illustrate the first two tasks, including

a justification for the case selection; 5) discussion of how variance in the variables can be described, measured, tested, and/or refined vis-à-vis current theories; 6) specification of the data requirements for the actual research. Research design papers should be approximately 12 double-spaced pages (3,000 words) in length, not including bibliography, data tables, appendices, etc.

RESEARCH DESIGNS DUE IN CLASS AT THE END OF WEEK NINE.

Research Design Critique (15%)

Each student is required to prepare a short written (3 double-spaced pages, or about 750 words) critique of one of the research design papers. The critiques should be based on the research design criteria discussed above, and should be *constructively* critical, proposing solutions to the research or methodological dilemmas. Keep in mind that your critique will be shared with the author of the paper!

RESEARCH DESIGN ASSESSMENT DUE IN CLASS AT THE END OF WEEK TEN.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1 – Science

Class 1 – What is science?

Chapter 1 (pp.1-23), Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*

Chapters 1 (pp. 3-21), Charles Alan Taylor, *Defining Science: A Rhetoric of Demarcation*

Article (pp. 175–186), Jonathan Grix, “Introducing Students to the Generic Terminology of Social Research”

Class 2 – What is *philosophy* of science?

Chapter 2 (pp. 23-51), Colin Wight, “Philosophy of Social Science and International Relations,” in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons, *Handbook of International Relations*

Chapter 2 (pp. 24-40), Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*

Chapter 2 (pp. 41-79), Andrew Abbott, *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*

Chapter 1 (pp. 3-33), Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sydney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*

Week 2 – Puzzles & Paradigms

Class 3 – Puzzles

Chapter 2 (pp. 19-41), J. Ann Tickner, “Feminism Meets International Relations: Some Methodological Issues,” in Brooke A. Ackerly, Maria Stern, and Jacqui True, *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*

Chapter 1 (pp. 3-23), Audie Klotz and Cecelia Lynch, *Strategies for Research in Constructivist IR*

Class 4 – Paradigms (**RESEARCH QUESTION DUE IN CLASS**)

Chapters 1-5 (pp. 1-51), Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*

Week 3 –Theory Building & Testing

Class 5 – Testability & Objectivity

Chapter 13 (pp. 205-259), Imre Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes,” in Sandra Harding, *Can Theories Be Refuted?*
Chapter 3-4 (pp. 37-73), Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*

Class 6 – (Neo-)Positivism

Chapter 3 (pp. 41-71), Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*
Chapter 2 (pp. 3-36), Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*
Article (pp. 525-548), Molly Cochran "Deweyan Pragmatism and Post-Positivist Social Science in IR"

Week 4 – Process Tracing & Case Studies

Class 7 – Process Tracing (**LIT REVIEW DUE IN CLASS**)

Chapter 8 (pp. 114-130), Jeffrey T. Checkel, “Process Tracing,” in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash, *Qualitative Methods in International Relations*
Article (pp. 219-227), Nina Tannewald, “Process Tracing and Security Studies”
Chapters 1 & 9 (pp. 3-38 & 237-259), Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices,” and Vincent Pouliot, “Practice Tracing,” in Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Process Tracing*

Class 8 – Case Studies

Article (pp. 169-195), James D. Fearon, “Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science”
Article (pp. 131-150), Barbara Geddes, “How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get”
Chapters 3-7 (pp. 67-150), Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*

Week 5 – Experiments & Critical Realism

Class 9 – Experiments

Article (pp. 72-84), Susan D. Hyde, “The Future of Field Experiments in International Relations”
Article (pp. 341-357), Mary S. Morgan, “Nature’s Experiments and Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences”
Article (pp. 282-293), Thad Dunning, “Improving Causal Inference: Strengths and Limitations of Natural Experiments”

Class 10 – Critical Realism

Chapter 4 (pp. 72-111), Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*
Chapter 4 (pp. 99-122), Heikki Patomäki, *After International Relations: Critical Realism and the (Re)Construction of World Politics*

Week 6 – Reflexivity & Constitution

Class 11 – Reflexivity

Chapter 6 (pp. 156-187), Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*

Chapters 1-2 & 6-7 (pp. 1-39 & 89-123), Sandra Harding, *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies*

Article (pp. 574-599), Mustafa Emirbayer and Matthew Desmond, “Race and Reflexivity”

Chapter 4 (pp. 84-93), Robert Cox, “The Point Is Not Just to Explain the World but to Change It,” in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*

Class 12 – Constitution

Article (pp. 605-649), Margaret R. Somers, “The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach”

Chapter 4 (pp. 65-85), Audie Klotz and Cecelia Lynch, *Strategies for Research in Constructivist IR*

Article (pp. 101-117), Alexander Wendt, “On Constitution and Causation in International Relations.”

Week 7 – Ethnography & Fieldwork

Class 13 – Describing Culture

Chapter 1 (pp. 55-75), Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in Robert M. Emerson, *Contemporary Field Research*

Article (pp. 713-728), Lisa Wedeen, “Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science”

Chapter 3 (pp. 28-41), Helen Jones, “Being Really There and Really Aware: Ethics, Politics, and Representation,” in Julie Scott Jones and Sal Watt, *Ethnography in Social Science Practice*

Class 14 – Fieldwork

Chapters 5, 8-9 & 11 (pp. 153-158, 188-223 & 239-259), Erving Goffman, “On Fieldwork,” Dorinne K. Kondo, “How the Problem of ‘Crafting Selves’ Emerged,” Carol A. B. Warren, “Gender and Fieldwork Relations,” & Robert M. Emerson and Melvin Pollner “Constructing Participant/Observation Relations,” in Robert M. Emerson, *Contemporary Field Research*

Chapter 6 (pp. 171-200), Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*

Week 8 – Discourse & Language

Class 15 – Discourse Analysis I (**FIELDWORK ESSAY DUE IN CLASS**)

War **Chapters 1-5 (pp. 1-92)**, Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*

Chapter 6 (pp. 108-128), Annica Kronsell, “Methods for Studying Silence: Gender Analysis in Institutions of Hegemonic Masculinity,” in Brooke A. Ackerly, Maria Stern, and Jacqui True, *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*

Class 16 – Discourse Analysis II

Article (pp. 303-326), Vivien A. Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse”

Chapters 1, 5 & 8 (pp. 1-24, 89-116 & 167-184), Charlotte Epstein, *The Power of Words in International Relations: Birth of an Anti-Whaling Discourse*

Week 9 – Ideal-Types & Debating Individualism

Class 17 – Ideal Types

Relations **Chapter 5 (pp. 112-155)**, Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*

Article (pp. 290-308), Adam R. C. Humphreys, “Applying Jackson’s Methodological Ideal-Types: Problems of Differentiation and Classification”

Class 18 – Individualism (**RESEARCH DESIGN PAPER DUE IN CLASS**)

Chapters 29-30 (pp. 451-478), Steven Lukes, “Methodological Individualism Reconsidered,” Richard W. Miller, “Methodological Individualism and Social Explanation,” in Michael Martin and Lee C. McIntyre, *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*

Introduction & Chapters 1-2 (pp. 1-30), Naeem Inayatullah, *Autobiographical International Relations*

Week 10 – Methodological Power

Class 19 – Shared Standards and Pluralism

Chapter 2 (pp. 33-64), David Collier, Jason Seawright, and Gerardo L. Munck, “The Quest for Standards: King, Keohane, and Verba’s Designing Social Inquiry,” in Henry E. Brady and David Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*

Relations **Chapter 7 (pp. 188-212)**, Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*

Class 20 – Power & Methodology (**RESEARCH DESIGN ASSESSMENT DUE IN CLASS**)

Excerpt (pp. 94-96), Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*

Chapter 1 (pp. 3-32), John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence & Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*
Article (pp. 57-85), Roland Bleiker, “Forget IR Theory”