

Revised 01-22-2015

PLSC 630/332; EP&E 473
Philosophy of Science for the Study of Politics
Spring 2015
Ian Shapiro

Class meetings: Tuesdays 3:30 – 5:20 PM,
102 Rosencrantz Hall, 115 Prospect
Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:30-11:00, 110 Luce Hall
or by appointment with Lourdes.hanes@yale.edu

We will explore debates in the philosophy of science from the perspective of the systematic study of politics. Topics discussed will include causation; deduction, induction, and prediction; description, explanation, and interpretation; and the differences between the natural and human sciences. We will consider contending views about these topics with an eye to their implications for central preoccupations in political science: the role of rational choice and other models of political behavior, observational versus experimental methods, the connections between empirical research and normative concerns; and the relations between science and democracy.

Unless indicated otherwise, required texts on the syllabus will be available at the Yale University Bookstore.

Requirements: Either take-home midterm and in-class final or 20 page paper due May 6. For students opting for the paper, 1-2 page prospectus must be submitted no later than March 1 for approval before spring break. All students are expected to submit reading discussion questions at least three times during the semester.

Course Materials

Axelrod, Robert. 2006 [1984]. *The Evolution of Cooperation*. New York: Basic Books.

Bhaskar, Roy. 1998. *The Possibility of Naturalism*. New York: Routledge. [Not at Yale University Bookstore; used copies available for purchase online]

Green, Donald P. and Ian Shapiro. 1994. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science*. New Haven: Yale.

Friedman, Jeffrey (ed). 1996. *The Rational Choice Controversy*. New Haven: Yale.

Kahneman, Daniel. 2011. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Kuhn, Thomas. 1996. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Polanyi, Michael. 1966. *The Tacit Dimension*. New York: Doubleday.

Teele, Dawn (ed). 2014. *Field Experiments and Their Critics: Essays on the Uses and Abuses of Experimentation in the Social Sciences*. New Haven: Yale. [Not at Yale University Bookstore; used copies available for purchase online]

Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Generally Useful Materials

Barberousse, Anouk and Max Kistler (ed.s). Forthcoming. *Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Science*. Oxford: Oxford.

Harold Kincaid, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Philosophy of Social Science* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Bhaskar, Roy. 1978. *A Realist Theory of Science*. New York: Harvester.

Elster, Jon. 2007. *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge.

_____. 1989. *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge.

Harré, Rom. 1975. *The Principles of Scientific Thinking*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Kistler, Max. 2010. *Causation and Laws of Nature*. New York: Routledge.

Miller, Richard. 1988, *Fact and Method: Explanation, Confirmation, and Reality in the Natural and Social Sciences*. Princeton: Princeton.

Monroe, Kristin. 1997. *Contemporary Empirical Political Theory*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Popper, Karl. 1959. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. London: Hutchinson.

Popper, Karl. 2013 [1945]. *The Open Society and its Enemies*. Princeton: Princeton.

Ricci, David. 1987. *The Tragedy of Political Science*. New Haven: Yale.

Shapiro, Ian. 2005. *The Flight From Reality in the Human Sciences*. Princeton: Princeton.

Course Syllabus and Schedule of Classes

Week 1: Introduction
(January 13)

Week 2: Rationalism, Empiricism, and the Rise of Modern Social Science
(January 20)

Required:

- Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation”

Week 3: Three Views of Truth
(January 27)

Required:

- A. J. Ayer, “The Elimination of Metaphysics”
- Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Part I, “Introduction to the Logic of Science”
 - Chapter 1: “A Survey of Some Fundamental Problems”
 - Chapter 2: “On the Problem of a Theory of Scientific Method”
- Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, “Science as Falsification”
- W. V. O. Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”
- John Dewey, *The Political Writings*
 - “The Problem of Truth”
 - “Philosophy and Democracy”
 - “Science and Free Culture”

Suggested

- Charles E. Lindblom, “The Science of ‘Muddling Through’”
- John Dewey, *The Political Writings*
 - “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy”
 - “Individuality in Our Day”

Week 4: Three Views of Explanation
(February 3)

Required:

- Friedman, “The Methodology of Positive Economics”
- Carl G. Hempel, “Deductive-Nomological vs. Statistical Explanation”
- Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, chapter 4, “Falsifiability”

Week 5: Paradigm Shifts
(February 10)

Required:

- Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, chapters 2, 3-7, 9-10, 13

- Imre Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programs”

Week 6: The Interpretive Tradition

(February 17)

Required:

- Clifford Gertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*
 - Chapter 1: “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”
 - Chapter 8: “Ideology as a Cultural System”
- Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1
 - Chapter 4: “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas”
- Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism*, Chapters 1 & 2..

Suggested:

- Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (Routledge, 2008 [1958]), esp. chs 2 & 3.
- Clifford Geertz, *Interpretive Tradition*, Chapter 15, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”
- Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1
 - Chapter 5: “Motives, Intentions, and Interpretation”
 - Chapter 6: “Interpretation and the Understanding of Speech Acts”
 - Chapter 7: “‘Social Meaning’ and the Explanation of Social Action”
- Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. III
 - Chapter 10: “Conquest and Consent: Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy”
 - Chapter 11: “Hobbes and His Disciples in France and England”
- Max Weber, “Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy”
- Ian Shapiro, *The Flight from Reality in the Human Sciences*
 - “Introduction: Fear of Not Flying” (pp. 1-18)

Week 7: Realism

(February 24)

Required:

- Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, Chapters 1 & 3
- Ian Shapiro and Alexander Wendt, “The Difference that Realism Makes: Social Science and the Politics of Consent”

Suggested:

- Alexander Wendt and Ian Shapiro “The Misunderstood Promise of Realist Social Theory,” in Kristen Monroe, *Empirical Political Theory*, 166-87
- Rom Harré, *The Principles of Scientific Thinking*
- Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*
- Richard Miller, *Fact and Method*

Week 8: Rationality I

(March 3)

Required

- Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science*, chapters 1-5 and 8.
- Jeffrey Friedman, *The Rational Choice Controversy Reconsidered*
 - Susanne Lohmann, “The Poverty of Green and Shapiro”
 - Norman Schofield, “Rational Choice and Political Economy”
- Dennis C. Mueller, “Has Public Choice Contributed Anything to the Study of Politics?” from *Public Choice III*.

Suggested

- Hélène Landemore, “Politics and the Economist-King: Is Rational Choice Theory the Science of Choice?” *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 1.2 (2004): 185-207.

Spring Recess

Week 9: Rationality II

(March 24)

Required

- Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, pp. 199-300
- Appendix A, “Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases,” 418-432

Week 10: Rationality III

(March 31)

Required

- Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Chapters 1, 2, 4.
- Jianzhong Wu and Robert Axelrod, “How to Cope with Noise in the Iterated Prisoner’s Dilemma”

Suggested

- Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Chapter 5

Week 11: Field Experiments

(April 7)

Required:

- Dawn Teele, *Field Experiments and Their Critics*, Chps 1, 2, 4, 6

Suggested:

- Donald Green and Alan Gerber. 2003. “The Underprovision of Experiments in Political Science.” *ANNALS*.

Week 12: Functionalism and Evolution
(April 14)

Required:

- Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, Chapters 2 and 16
- Russel Hardin, "Rationality, Irrationality and Functionalist Explanation"
- Kenneth Shepsle and Barry Weingast, "Structure-induced equilibrium and legislative choice"
- Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, "Why Do Humans Reason? Arguments for An Argumentative Theory of Reasoning"

Suggested:

- Larry Laudan, "Theory-Ladenness and Underdetermination"

Week 13: Reductionism, For and Against
(April 21)

Required:

- Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, Chapter 2, "Emergence"
- John Ferejohn, "Rationality and Interpretation: Parliamentary Elections in Early Stuart England." Ch 11 in Monroe, *The Economic Approach to Politics*
- Ian Shapiro, "What's Wrong with Political Science" *The Flight from Reality in the Human Sciences* (pp. 178-203)

Suggested:

- Jon Elster, *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, Chapters 1, 2, 16, and Conclusion
- Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, Chapter 2
- Peter Hedström and Petri Ylikoski "Causal Mechanisms in the Social Sciences"