

Texas A&M University
 Department of Political Science
 POLS 604—CONCEPTUALIZATION AND THEORY IN
 POLITICAL ANALYSIS

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Summer 2006
 TR 2-4 p.m.
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 Hours: TR 1-2 and by app't

For more than two thousand years, political “science” (in the sense of the systematic study of political phenomena) was wholly constituted by what we today call “political theory.” But as the modern scientific paradigm was extended to the study of human beings and societies, political science has taken on new dimensions in addition to its normative aspect. This course examines the philosophical issues implicit in the transformations in political science during the last half-century or so. In the first instance, we shall examine what is meant by “science” itself in a naturalistic framework, focusing on the important movements and arguments concerning the logic of inquiry and the methodological assumptions of scientific investigation. Thereafter, the class considers the possible meanings of “science” in the context of the study of human phenomena such as politics. Attention will be directed to problems arising from the nature of causality and explanation, the relationship between facts and values, the foundations of theory construction, and related topics. A central goal of the course will be the appreciation of the range of approaches associated with science and of the assumptions underpinning each of them.

FORMAT The course is designed as a seminar. There will be no formal lectures, but rather the primary classroom work will be discussion of the assigned reading for the week. The professor will facilitate and direct discussion, and occasionally offer relevant background or conceptual information. Each student will be expected to contribute on a weekly basis to the debate and interchange within the class.

READING Students are expected to be current with the reading assignments. The assigned reading will be drawn from the books listed below (which are available in paperback editions and have been ordered from the bookstore, **except in the case of Martin and McIntyre, a copy of which will be provided gratis to each student**). You must be sure to use the specified edition:

Karl Popper and David W. Miller, *Popper Selections* (Princeton)
 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago)
 Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*, 3rd ed. (Verso)
 Michael Martin and Lee McIntyre, eds., *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science* (MIT) [DO NOT PURCHASE]

In addition, selected articles and chapters will be made available (probably in electronic form as PDF files) by the professor for some class assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS The grade for the course will be assigned on the basis of a combination of oral and written tasks. There will be two required essays. The first essay should be roughly 2000 words in length; it will be worth 30% of the grade and will be due on June 22 in class. No exceptions will be made to this deadline. The essay topics will concern the analysis of some basic problems of scientific inquiry; topics will be distributed by the professor about 2 weeks in advance. The second essay, worth 50%, is expected to be about 2500 words in length and must be submitted by August 10. No exceptions will be made to this deadline. The essay topic will be determined by the individual student on the basis of his/her interests in connection with issues arising from the philosophy of the social sciences and the logic of scientific inquiry. A final 20% will be assigned for discussion contributions and participation. **THERE WILL NOT BE A FINAL EXAMINATION.**

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities must be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student life, Services for Students with Disabilities, in Room B118 Cain Hall, or call 845-1637.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY It is a sign of the times that the professor feels the need to warn students regarding plagiarism. Plagiarism is understood to be the representation of the words or ideas of another person as one's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, research report, project or assignment submitted in a course or program of study, or the representation as one's own of an entire essay or work of another, whether the material so represented constitutes a part or the entirety of the work submitted. In short, plagiarism is copying from any source whatsoever without proper acknowledgment or reference. Penalties for plagiarism are severe, so if you have any doubt whatsoever whether you have (even inadvertently) plagiarized, consult the professor prior to submitting your assignment.

COURSE MATERIALS/COPYRIGHT STATEMENTS The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By "handouts," I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

Lecture/Reading Schedule

POLS 604 Summer 2006

May 30—Why “Science” in Political Science?

Reading: Theodoulou and O’Brien, “Where We Stand Today”; O’Brien, “Normative versus Empirical Theory and Method”; Ethridge, “Scientific Principles in Empirical Study”; Hill, “Myths about the Physical Sciences and Their Implications for Teaching Political Science” (along with comments by Oren, Ozminkowski, and Strakes, and a reply by Hill)

June 1—Philosophy of Science: Basic Issues

Reading: Nagel, “The Nature and Aim of Science”; Suppes, “What is a Scientific Theory?”; Goodman, “Science and Simplicity”; Hempel, “Scientific Explanation”; Hanson, “Observation and Interpretation”; Black, “The Justification of Induction”

June 6—Beyond Positivism? Popper and Falsifiability

Reading: Popper and Miller, *Popper Selections*, pp. 25-77, 118-206

June 8—Science in Practice: Normal Science and Scientific Revolutions

Reading: Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chapters I-XIII

June 13— Science in Practice: Kuhn and His Critics

Reading: Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Postscript; Kuhn, “Logic of Discovery or Psychology of Research?”; K.R. Popper, “Normal Science and Its Dangers”; Margaret Masterman, “The Nature of a Paradigm”; Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programs”; Kuhn, “Reflections on My Critics”

June 15—Methodological Anarchism

Reading: Feyerabend, *Against Method*, pp. 9-158, 164-208, 214-267

June 20—Writing Day, No Class

June 22—What Does it Mean for Social Science to be Scientific?

Reading: Martin and McIntyre, eds., *Readings [in the Philosophy of Social Science]*, Chapters 1, 2; MacIntyre, “Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible?”; Ball, “Is There Progress in Political Science?”

FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS

June 27—Nomological Explanation in the Social Sciences

Reading: Martin and McIntyre, eds., *Readings*, Chapters 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10

June 29—Functionalism and Social Scientific Explanation

Reading: Martin and McIntyre, eds., *Readings*, Chapters 22, 23, 24, 25, 26

July 4—Independence Day NO CLASS

July 6—Holism and Methodological Individualism

Reading: Martin and McIntyre, eds., *Readings*, Chapters 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32

July 11—Can Social Science be Objective? Can the Social Scientist?

Reading: Martin and McIntyre, eds., *Readings*, Chapters 34, 35, 36

July 13—The Interpretivist Alternative

Reading: Martin and McIntyre, eds., *Readings*, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

July 18—The Critical Alternative

Reading: Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, Chapters 2, 3; Fay, *Critical Social Science*, Chapters 2, 3, 4

July 20—The Feminist Alternative

Reading: Nelson, *Who Knows?*, Chapters 1, 2; Carroll and Zerilli, “Feminist Challenges to Political Science”; McClure, “The Issue of Foundations”; Walker, “Gender and Critique in the Theory of International Relations”

July 25-August 3—Research and Writing Period for Final Essay

FINAL ESSAY DUE ON AUGUST 10