

**Scope and Methods of Political Science**  
Political Science 790  
Winter 2010

Alexander Wendt  
Office: 204C Mershon Center  
Email: [Wendt.23@polisci.osu.edu](mailto:Wendt.23@polisci.osu.edu)  
Phone: 292-92919  
Office Hours: Flexible, by appointment.

Course Description

What difference does, or should, consciousness make to social science? Unlike the objects of the physical sciences, the objects of the social sciences are also subjects, in the sense that they have consciousness and engage in meaningful behavior. This seemingly essential difference in subject matter has underpinned a long debate among and between “positivists” and “interpretivists” about whether social inquiry needs an epistemology and methodology essentially different than that of the physical sciences, and if so what that should look like. This course is an introduction to this debate.

Requirements

There are three requirements for this course.

- 1) Come to class prepared to discuss the readings in an informed and thoughtful fashion. The success of this class will depend on the quality of student participation, which will accordingly be worth 25% of your grade.
- 2) Write three 2 page “reaction memos” to class readings (at least one each for Parts II and III below), due the night before the sessions for which they are written. Together they will be worth 25% of your final grade.
- 3) Write a 10 page final exam, worth 50% of your grade. I am open to substituting a paper for the final in individual cases.

Readings

Unless otherwise noted all readings on this syllabus are required. In addition to various articles and chapters on Carmen, there is one required book:

King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba (1994) – Designing Social Inquiry, Princeton University Press (henceforth “KKV”)

## **Part I: INTRODUCTION**

### **Jan 4: Course Overview**

Shapiro, Ian (2002) – “Problems, methods, and theories in the study of politics, or: what’s wrong with political science and what to do about it,” Political Theory, 30(4), 596-619.

### **Jan 11: Social Ontology**

#### A. On Social Facts

Searle, John (1995) – The Construction of Social Reality, Free Press, chapters 1-3, pp. 1-78.

#### B. Perspectives on the Fact/Value Distinction.

Weber, Max (1949/1994) – “Objectivity in social science and social policy” (abridged), in M. Martin and L. McIntyre, eds., Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science, Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 535-545.

Taylor, Charles (1969) – “Neutrality in political science,” in P. Laslett and W. Runciman, eds., Philosophy, Politics, and Society, Blackwell, pp. 25-57.

Price, Richard (2008) – “Moral limit and possibility in world politics,” International Organization, 62(1), 191-220.

### **Jan 18: Martin Luther King Day, No Class**

## **Part II: POSITIVISM**

### **Jan 25: Defining the Science in Political Science**

#### A. Political Science and its Progress

KKV, chapter 1, pp. 3-33.

Ball, Terence (1976) – “From paradigms to research programs: toward a post-Kuhnian political science,” American Journal of Political Science, 20, 151-177.

Dryzek, John (1986) – “The progress of political science,” Journal of Politics, 48(2), 301-320.

## B. Laws and the Unity of Science

Hempel, Carl (1966) – “Laws and their role in scientific explanation,” chapter 5 in Hempel, Philosophy of Natural Science, Prentice-Hall, pp. 47-69.

Almond, Gabriel with Stephen Genco (1977) – “Clouds, clocks, and the study of politics,” World Politics, 29(4), 489-522.

Oren, Ido (2006) – “Can political science emulate the natural sciences? The problem of self-disconfirming analysis,” Polity, 38(1), 72-100.

## Feb 1: Getting Started

### A. Descriptive Inference

KKV, chapter 2, pp. 34-74.

Richardson, Glenn (2001) – “Looking for meaning in all the wrong places: Why negative advertising is a suspect category,” Journal of Communication, 51(4), 775-800.

Sanders, Lynn (1999) – “Democratic politics and survey research,” Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 29(2), 248-80.

### B. Problems of Concept Formation

Sartori, Giovanni (1970) – “Concept misformation in comparative politics,” American Political Science Review, 64(4), 1033-1053.

Collier, David, Fernando Daniel Hidalgo and Andra Olivia Maciueanu (2006) – “Essentially contested concepts: Debates and applications,” Journal of Political Ideologies, 11(3), 211-246.

Bevir, Mark and Asaf Kedar (2008) – “Concept formation in political science: An anti-naturalist critique of qualitative methodology,” Perspectives on Politics, 6(3), 503-517.

## Feb 8: Building Theory

### A. From Concepts to Formal Theory?

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce (1985) – “Toward a scientific understanding of international conflict: A personal view,” International Studies Quarterly, 29(2), 121-136.

Chick, Victoria (1998) – “On knowing one’s place: the role of formalism in economics,” The Economic Journal, 108, 1859-1869.

Sugden, Robert (2009) – “Credible worlds, capacities and mechanisms,” Erkenntnis, 70, 3-27 (skim pp. 10-16).

#### B. Perspectives on Causal Explanation

KKV, chapter 3, pp. 75-114.

Hedstrom, Peter and Richard Swedberg (1996) – “Social mechanisms,” Acta Sociologica, 39, 281-308.

Lane, Ruth (1996) – “Positivism, scientific realism and political science,” Journal of Theoretical Politics, 8(3), 361-82.

### **Feb 15: Testing Theory**

#### A. The Qualitative-Quantitative Debate I

KKV, chapters 4-6, pp. 115-230.

Green, Donald and Alan Gerber (2003) – “The underprovision of experiments in political science,” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 589, 94-112.

#### B. The Qualitative-Quantitative Debate II

McKeown, Timothy (1999) – “Case studies and the statistical worldview,” International Organization, 53(1), 161-190.

Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz (2006) – “A tale of two cultures: Contrasting quantitative and qualitative research,” Political Analysis, 14(3), 227-249.

Johnson, James (2006) – “Consequences of positivism: A pragmatist assessment,” Comparative Political Studies, 39(2), 224-252.

## **Part III: INTERPRETIVISM**

### **Feb 22: Introduction**

#### A. The Epistemology of Understanding

Yanow, Dvora (2006) – “Thinking interpretively: Philosophical presuppositions and the human sciences,” in D. Yanow and P. Schwartz-Shea, eds., Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the

Interpretive Turn, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 5-26.

Kurzman, Charles (2004) – “Can understanding undermine explanation? The confused experience of revolution,” Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 34(3), 328-351.

Wendt, Alexander (1998) – “On constitution and causation in international relations,” Review of International Studies, 24 (special issue), 101-117.

## B. Exemplars: Subjectivity, Inter-Subjectivity, and Beyond

Rudolph, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph (2003) – “Engaging subjective knowledge: How Amar Singh’s diary narratives of and by the Self explain identity formation,” Perspectives on Politics, 1, 681-694.

Schwartz, Joel (1984) – “Participation and multisubjective understanding: An interpretivist approach to the study of political participation,” Journal of Politics, 46, 1117-1141.

Geertz, Clifford (1973) – “Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture,” in Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, Basic Books, pp. 3-32.

## Mar 1: The Politics of Interpretation

### A. Participatory Epistemology and the Problem of Objectivity

Fenno, Richard (1990) – “The political scientist as participant observer,” in Fenno, Watching Politicians: Essays on Participant Observation, Berkeley: IGS Press.

Yanow, Dvora (2006) – “Neither rigorous nor objective? Interrogating criteria for knowledge claims in interpretive science,” in Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, eds., Interpretation and Method, pp. 67-88.

Heikes, Deborah (2004) – “The bias paradox: Why it’s not just for feminists anymore,” Synthese, 138, 315-35.

### B. Debate

Bates, Robert, et al. (1998) – “The politics of interpretation: Rationality, culture, and transition,” Politics and Society, 26, 603-42.

Johnson, James (2002) – “How conceptual problems migrate: Rational choice, interpretation, and the hazards of pluralism,” Annual Review of Political Science, 5, 223-248.

Wedeen, Lisa (2002) – “Conceptualizing culture: Possibilities for political science,” American Political Science Review, 96(4), 713-728.

## **Mar 8: The Productivity of Social Science**

### A. Power/Knowledge

Osborne, Thomas and Nikolas Rose (1999) – “Do the social sciences create phenomena? The example of public opinion research,” British Journal of Sociology, 50, 367-396.

Mackenzie, Donald (2006) – “Is economics performative? Option theory and the construction of derivatives markets,” Journal of the History of Economic Thought, 28(1), 29-55.

Wendt, Alexander and Raymond Duvall (2008) – “Sovereignty and the UFO,” Political Theory, 36(4), 607-633.

### B. A Phronetic Social Science?

Laitin, David (2003) – “The Perestroikan challenge to social science,” Politics and Society, 31, 163-184.

Flyvbjerg, Bent (2004) – “A Perestroikan straw man answers back: David Laitin and phronetic political science,” Politics and Society, 32, 389-416.

Adcock, Robert (2009) – “Making *Making Social Science Matter* matter to us,” Journal of Theoretical Politics, 21(1), 97-112.

## **TBA: Quantum Mind and Social Science (Attendance Optional)**

Wendt, Alexander (2010) – “Preface to a quantum social science,” Chapter One of Quantum Mind and Social Science, unpublished book manuscript.

Pizza will be provided.