

## **Creativity and Method in Comparative Research: Political Science 514a**

Instructors: James C. Scott and Arun Agrawal

Class Meeting times: Tuesday, 10:00 AM to 12 :00 noon

### Office Hours

James C. Scott

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Tuesday: 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

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### Course Description:

#### Assignments and Course Grade

1. Research Proposal: (See session 1)
2. Ethnography: What is the relation between what people say and political actions. (see session 4)
3. Short writeup and presentation on observing political life (see session 5) OR Debate (see session 10)
4. Translation of Baumann into rational choice terms (see session 7)
5. Extract three or more propositions about political life from Tolstoy. For any two of them, outline how you would inquire into their validity (see session 9)

#### Readings to be purchased:

(Available at Book Haven on York Street; also placed on reserve in the Social Science Library).

1. Karl Polanyi. 1957. *The Great Transformation*.
2. Barrington Moore, Jr. 1993. *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*.
3. John Gaventa. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness in an Appalachian Valley*.
4. Ian Hacking. 1999. *The Social Construction of What?*
5. Zygmunt Bauman. 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*.
6. Adam Przeworski. 1991. *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*.
7. Leo Tolstoy. *War and Peace*.
8. Michel Foucault. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.
9. Benedict R. O'G Anderson. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*.
10. Rachel Carson. 1962. *Silent Spring*.
11. Coursepak (Readings included in the coursepak are indicated by an asterisk).

## Course Outline

### Session 1: Looking Back

How would someone like Polanyi have gone about producing his great social and political history of the emergence of market economy and laboring peoples? His work constituted a novel account of change in human societies? Imagine yourself, as Polanyi, writing a proposal to produce *The Great Transformation*. What would your research proposal look like? This assignment will be due .....

1. Karl Polanyi. 1957. *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press.

### Session 2: Another Way to Ask and Answer Large Questions

Moore describes a number of different routes to the modern world. What are the major causal relationships in his comparative account? What kinds of additional comparisons would make his history of the modern world even more compelling? Additional readings, listed at the end of the syllabus, in section A may be helpful.

1. Barrington Moore, Jr. 1993. *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston; Beacon Press, 1993)
- \*2. Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers. 1980. The uses of comparative history in macrosocial inquiry. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 12: 174-97.

### Session 3: A History of Numbers and Statistics in Social Representations

Numbers have become a favorite instrument through which to understand, represent, analyze, and explain the world. What explains them? Is there a politics of numbers? If there is a politics of numbers, can numbers measure politics? What does the relatively young field of the history of statistics and probability tell us about the illusions of safety that numbers give us? See also section B of additional readings.

- \*1. Theodore Porter. 1995. *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. Introduction and Chapters 1-4, 8.
- \*2. Paul Starr. 1987. The sociology of official statistics. In *The Politics of Numbers*. Edited by William Alonso and Paul Starr. Pp. 7-57. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- \*3. Nikolas Rose. 1999. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp197-232.
- \*4. Ian Hacking. 1990. *The Taming of Chance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters ????

### Session 4: Ethnography

If numbers and statistics have a history and politics, so do ethnography and close observation. No other discipline obsesses as much about its central principle of method as does anthropology. There is a truly vast literature on ethnography: the approach and corollary methods, critiques, future visions... For a beginning, see section C of additional readings.

1. John Gaventa. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press (There may also be a cheaper Oxford Univ. Press, 1980)

\*2. John Dunn. 1979. Practising History and Social Science on 'Realist' Assumptions. In *Action and Interpretation: Studies in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*. ed., C. Hookway and P. Pettit (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 145-175

\*3. James Clifford. 1988. On ethnographic authority. In *The Predicament of Culture* by James Clifford. pp. 21-54. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

#### Session 5: Observing Political Life

It is all very well to talk about ethnography. How about doing it? We have arranged for you to observe the flow of political interactions in three locations: Pick any one of them, and tell us what you saw? Supplement your direct observations with additional research on the major actors and institutions that played a role in the discussions that you observed. Your written observations are due on .....

#### Session 6: Does Interpretation Happen Before or After Observation?

See Section D of additional readings as well.

1. Ian Hacking. 1999. *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

\*2. Clifford Geertz. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. Selections:  
A. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" pp. 3-32;  
B. "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man" pp.33-54;  
C. "Ideology as a Cultural System" pp. 193-233;  
D. "Deep Play: The Balinese Cockfight" pp. 412-453.

#### Session 7: Rational Choice?

From where do rational choice accounts of social and political life derive their power? What is the explanatory structure of Modernity and Holocaust? How would a rational choice theorist present the arguments and explanations in this book? For an introduction to some of the conundrums of method and approach, see readings listed in section E at the end of the syllabus.

1. Zygmunt Bauman. 1989. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

\*2. Debra Satz and John Ferejohn. 1994. Rational choice and social theory. *Journal of Philosophy*. 71-87.

#### Session 8: And Rational Choice Explanations

1. Adam Przeworski. 1991. *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge University Press.

\*2. Herbert Kitschelt. 1993. Comparative historical research and rational choice theory: The case of transitions to democracy. *Theory and Society* 22: 413-27.

#### Session 9: Political Lessons from Non-Political Science

1. Leo Tolstoy. *War and Peace*. New York: Modern Library, 1967.

## Session 10: Critical Junctures and the Longue Duree, Or What is the Role of Time in Political Explanations?

Debate:

- \*1. Charles Tilly. 1990. *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*. Cambridge MA and Oxford: Blackwell. Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-95.
- \*2. Aristide Zolberg. Moments of Madness. in *Politics and Society* 2 (2): 183-207.
- \*3. Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier. 1991. *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America*. Princeton. N.J.: Princeton University Press. Introduction.
- \*4. Fernand Braudel. 1980. *On History* (trans. Sarah Matthews). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. pp. 3-22.

## Session 11: Power and Governmentality

What is the imaginative leap that lands Foucault on connections between his conception of the subject and macro-social processes related to capitalist development and liberal government? Government shapes conduct – the conduct of conduct. Does it make sense to talk about the conduct of conduct without the state? What would such erosion of categories do to the idea of political science? The lone lecture on governmentality that Foucault gave in 1979 has by now inspired more than 200 articles and books. For an illustrative list, see section F of Additional readings.

1. Michel Foucault. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Vintage.
2. Michel Foucault. [1979] 1991. Governmentality. In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller. Pp. 87-104. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
3. Graham Burchell. 1993. Liberal government and techniques of the self. *Economy and Society* 22(3): 267-82.
4. Nikolas Rose. 1993. Government, authority, and expertise in advanced liberalism. *Economy and Society* 22(3): 283-99.

## Session 12: Accounting for the Rise of Nationalism

1. Benedict R. O'G Anderson. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised and Extended edition (New York: Verso, 1991).

## Session 13: The Uses of Rhetoric in Comparative Research

Do political scientists write only for other political scientists? When and how can political scientists (safely) step out of the confines of disciplinary boundaries? What role does rhetoric play in persuading readers of the veracity of an argument?

1. Rachel Carson. 1962. *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- \*2. Philip Mirowski. 1989. *More Heat Than Light: Economics as Social Physics: Physics as Nature's Economics*. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 1-10, 354-95.
- \*3. Larry Lohmann. CornerHouse Briefings.

- A). #5 The Myth of the Minimalist State: Free Market Ambiguities;
- B) #10 Food?, Health?, Hope? : Genetic Engineering and World Hunger;
- C) #12 Internal Conflict: Adaptation and Reaction to Globalisation;
- D) #20 The Malthus Factor: Poverty, Politics, and Population in Capitalist Development

4. Liana Vardi.

\*5. Donald N. McCloskey. 1990. *If You're So Smart: The Narrative of Economic Expertise*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 1-83

### **Additional Readings**

#### Section A: Comparative Research

Collier, David and James Mahoney. 1996. Insights and pitfalls: Selection bias in qualitative research. *World Politics* 49: 56-91.

DeFelice, E. Gene. 1986. Causal inference and comparative methods. *Comparative Political Studies* 19(3): 415-37

Dion, Douglas. 1998. Evidence and inference in the comparative case study. *Comparative Politics*. 30: 127-45.

Fearon, James. 1991. Counterfactuals and hypotheses testing in political science. *World Politics* 43: 169-95.

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics. *Political Analysis* 2: 131-50.

Little, Daniel. 1993. On the scope and limits of generalizations in the social sciences. *Synthese* 97: 183-207.

Mahoney, James. 2000. Path dependence in historical sociology. *Theory and Society* 29: 507-48.

Mill, John Stuart. 1970. Types of theorizing. In *Comparative Perspectives: Theories and Methods*. Pp. 205-213. Boston: Little Brown.

Ragin, Charles. 1981. Comparative sociology and the comparative method. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 22(1-2): 102-20.

Tilly, Charles. Means and ends of comparison in macrosociology. *Comparative Social Research*. 16: 43-53.

#### Section B: Numbers and Statistics

Cohn, Bernard. 1987. The census, social structure, and objectification in south Asia. In *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*. pp. 224-54. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Frängsmyr, Tore , J. L. Heilbron, and Robin E. Rider. (eds) 1990. *The Quantifying Spirit in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*. Edited by Tore Frängsmyr, J. L. Heilbron, and Robin E. Rider. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Glass, D. V. 1973. *Numbering the People: The Eighteenth Century Population Controversy and the Development of Census and Vital Statistics in Britain*. London: Gordon and Cremonesi.

Hacking, Ian. [1981] 1991. How should we do the history of statistics? In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller. pp. 181-96. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kula, Witold. 1986. *Measures and Men*. Tr. R. Szerter. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Little, Daniel. 1996. *Varieties of Social Explanations: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science*. Boulder CO: Westview. Pp. 159-79.

Patriarca, Silvana. 1996. *Numbers and Nationhood: Writing Statistics in Nineteenth-Century Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Porter, Theodore. 1986. *The Rise of Statistical Thinking, 1820-1900*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

#### Section C: The Ethnographic Method and its Uncertainties

#### Section D: Interpretation and Positivism

Taylor, Charles. 1987. Interpretation and the sciences of man. In *Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look*. Eds. Paul Rabinow and William H. Sullivan. Pp. 33-81. Berkeley: University of California Press.

#### Section E: The Methods of Rational Choice

Bates, Robert H. Avner Greif, Margaret Levi, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, and Barry Weingast. 1998. *Analytic Narratives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bates et al. 2000. The analytic narrative project. *American Political Science Review* 94(3): 696-702.

Elster, Jon. 2000. Rational choice history: A case of excessive ambition. *American Political Science Review* 94(3): 685-95.

Sen, Amartya. 1977. Rational fools: A critique of the behavioral foundations of economic theory. *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 6: 317-44.

#### Section F: Governmentality, Or the Conduct of Political Life