

Soc 131: Social Science Inquiry (Autumn Quarter) 409 Cobb Hall

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3.

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How do we make the social world intelligible? In the fall quarter, we will answer this question by looking at prominent approaches from the major social science disciplines. After a brief exploration of the philosophy of social science, we will sample from a variety of “positivist” (i.e., scientific) methods that researchers use to understand human behavior and social systems. These include: deductive theories from economics, experiments from psychology, surveys and demographic analysis from sociology and political science, and ethnographies from sociology and anthropology. Although we will survey from a wide range of subjects, one central theme unifying this quarter’s readings is on the relationship between social class and democratic governance. In particular, what can social science tell us about the interplay between the dynamics of a capitalist economy and the practices of popular self-rule?

Students will write four short papers (2 pages each) and one longer paper (5 pages) during the quarter. Hard copies of papers are due in class on the assigned dates. Late papers (without prior permission for extensions) will be penalized one third a grade per day late. Class grades will be based on the papers (15 percent each) as well as class participation (25 percent). The class participation grade will be based on active participation in class discussion and evidence of having completed the assigned readings for each session.

There is one book for the class, Anne Fadiman’s, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. All other assignments are available either through google scholar or on the course canvas site.

Section 1: Philosophies of Science and Social Science

Class 1: Introduction

Please read for first class:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cdev.12930/full>

Class 2: Science versus other ways of knowing the social world

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkvjDZseD4k>

Jerry Coyne. 2015. *Faith vs. Fact*. pp. 26-63.

Class 3: What Makes a Good Social Science Theory? The Example of Marx

Marx, Karl. 1868. *The German Ideology, Part I*. (http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_The_German_Ideology.pdf) pp 4-15.

I highly recommend these two videos as quick primers on Marx and Marx's ideas of historical materialism:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSQgCy_iIcc

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Exxr3QzGFg

Van Evera, Steven. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Chapter 2.

Class 4: Can We Study Power Scientifically?

Gaventa, John (1991) *Power and Powerlessness*. University of Illinois Press. Pp. 1-29.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyN2RhbhiEU>

****** PAPER 1 DUE IN CLASS *****

Section 2: Deductive Methods

Class 5: Introduction to Deductive Social Science

Green, Donald and Ian Shapiro. 1994. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*. Chapter 2 "The Nature of Rational Choice Theory."

Harris, Marvin. 1974. "Mother Cow" from *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches* (I also recommend the rest of this great book).

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/managing-human-resources/lecture/MnvXH/video-labor-supply-and-demand>

Class 6: Social Choice Theory: Ideas of Collective Rationality

Schelling, T. (1978). “Thermostats, Lemons, and Other Familiar Models” from *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*, Chapter 3.

Downs, A. (1964) *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Chapter 8.

Class 7: Game Theory: Rational Individuals Competing and Cooperating

Fisher, Len (2008) *Rock, Paper, Scissors: Game Theory in Everyday Life*. Chapters 1,3.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHS-htjGgSY>

See also: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0qjK3TWZE8>

Class 8: Decision Theory: How “Rational” Individuals Actually Make Choices

Oliver, J. Eric and Thomas Wood. (2018). *Enchanted America*, Chapter 2.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiyTYGY5X3Y> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_wBt5aSRYY

For the ambitious: Tversky, A. and Khaneman, D. (1974) “Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases” *Science*.

***** PAPER TWO DUE IN CLASS ******

Section 3: Experimental Methods:

Class 9: What Makes A Good Experiment?

McDermott, R. 2002. “Experimental Methods in Political Science” *Annual Review of Political Science*.

For class discussion: is this a good experiment or a bad one?

Bem, Daryl. 2011. “Feeling the Future: Experimental Evidence for Anomalous Retroactive Influences on Cognition and Affect.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 100: 407-425.

For some hints check out: <http://www.talyarkoni.org/blog/2011/01/10/the-psychology-of-parapsychology-or-why-good-researchers-publishing-good-articles-in-good-journals-can-still-get-it-totally-wrong/>

Class 10: Classic Controlled Experiments

Asch, S. (1955) "Opinions and Social Pressure." *Scientific America* 193: 31-35.

Zimbardo, Philip. (1992) "Quiet Rage: the Stanford Prison Experiment" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=760lwYmpXbc>

Milgram, S. (1963). "Behavioral Study of Obedience." *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*.

(see also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOYLCy5PVgM>)

Class 11: Field and Natural Experiments

Rosenthal R and Jacobson (1966) "Teachers Expectancies: Determinants of Pupils' IQ gains." *Psychological Reports*, 19: 115-18.

Rosenhan, D. (1973) "On Being Sane in Insane Places" *Science*, 179:250-58.

Kearney, M and P Levine (2014). "Media Influences on Social Outcomes: The Impact of MTV's 16 and Pregnant on Teen Childbearing." NBER Working Paper.

***** PAPER THREE DUE IN CLASS ******

Section 4: Inductive Methods - Quantitative

Class 12: The Promise and Pitfalls of Quantitative Inquiry

King, Gary, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba. (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry*, pages. 12-34.

Stepan, Alfred and Juan Linz. (2011). "Comparative Perspectives on Inequality and the Quality of Democracy in the United States." *Perspectives on Politics*.

Class 13: Conceptualization and Variable Scaling

Oliver, J. Eric and Thomas Wood (2018). *Enchanted America*, Chapter 3.

Oliver, J. Eric. (2006). *Fat Politics: The Real Story Behind America's Obesity Epidemic*. Chapter 1.

Class 14: Measurement, Omitted Variables, and Selection Bias

Abramowitz, Alan and Kyle Saunders. (2008). "Is Polarization a Myth?" *Journal of Politics*.

Fiorina, Morris (2011). *Culture War? The Myth of Polarized America, 3rd Edition*. Chapter 2.

Class 15: Hypothesis Formation and Testing

Oliver, Eric, Thomas Wood, and Alexandra Bass (2015). *Liberellas versus Konservateeves: Ideology, Status, and Baby Names*. Political Behavior

Class 16: Correlation versus Causation

Levitt, Steven D. "Understanding why crime fell in the 1990s: Four factors that explain the decline and six that do not." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, no. 1 (2004): 163-190.

Achen, Christopher H., and Larry M. Bartels. "Blind retrospection: Why shark attacks are bad for democracy." Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Vanderbilt University. Working Paper (2012).

***** PAPER FOUR DUE IN CLASS ******

Weeks 9-10: Inductive Methods -- Qualitative

Class 17: Ethnographic Methods

Malinowski, B. (1922). *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Introduction.

Geertz, C. (1973). "Thick Description" from *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

Class 18:

Fadiman, Anne (2012). *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*.