

# POLI SCI 1AA3 LECTURE 1

## **What is Politics?**

Question of the lecture: What does it include and what does it exclude?

Politics includes the actions of Government

But government is only part of the domain of politics

So what is government?

According to one textbook (Dickerson and Flanagan), “Government...has to do with compulsion, not voluntary decision making. Government is a specialized activity of those individuals that make and enforce public decisions that are binding upon the whole community (p4)”

Government, then, is the institutional apparatus that makes and enforces rules on society

But note the bolded terms: Government seems very top-down according to this definition

This raises a question: Is governmental hierarchy necessary for social life? Do we need government?

One (possible) way of answering this question is by applying Game Theory, particularly the Prisoners Dilemma

Game theory is a way of modelling and predicting how human beings will interact given specific circumstances and assumptions

Prisoners Dilemma (one type of game scenario) asks the question of how individuals are likely to act (assuming that they are rational utility maximizers)

In an environment where there is no authority in place to enforce agreements

The result of the game: people behaving rationally on an individual level can generate outcomes that are irrational

The implication of the game is that achieving spontaneous and advantageous social cooperation is difficult

And hence the need for an organization (a government of some sort) that can enforce agreements and punish those who break the rules

Of course not every theorist accepts the view that society needs a hierarchical government

This model of why we need hierarchy is, for some (like anarchists), a rationalization for a top-down political order that is not, in fact, optimal

## **Politics**

Politics is broader than government

According to one definition, “[P]olitics is about power; about the forces which influence and reflect its distribution and use; and about the effect of this on resource use and distribution...it is not about Government or government alone (Held and Leftwich, 1984, p144)”

Political science is the study of power

How it is used, by whom, and towards what ends

Wherever values, resources, and opportunities are distributed, there is politics, even if unintentional, at play

There are several types of political power – systems of rule are buttressed by different apparatuses of power:

Coercion - force

Influence - persuasion

Authority - right

## POLITICAL SCIENCE LECTURE 2 CONSTRUCTING A SCIENCE OF POLITICS

Before we look at politics through a political lens, we need to ask can we study politics be scientific?

In chemistry math science etc. x is y and variables are present this outcome will occur. Can the study of a political thing be scientific?

Is the social world analogous to the natural world? Are the actions of human beings predictable in the same way as the motions of planets, rocks, and apples?

Natural world has the same response to the same stimulus and with certain variables, but the social world and the social variables, ie poverty conflict alienation, will they always react in the same way?

Come to the question of agency and does human agency make a difference?

Much of policy is based on the idea that we figure out how the social world works and give the policies that help produce outcomes.

^^^Best way to start this is to look at the natural world. Scientific method is form a hypothesis, test the hypothesis, if x then y.

The scientific method in the social sciences. You can form a hypothesis but it is way more complicated to test it out. Ie proportional representation will lead to more people in government.

Ie Research question: Why are women elected in greater numbers in some states than others.

Hypothesis: More women are elected to office where Proportional representation rather than single member plurality is used as the electoral system

How do you test this^^^?

You can't just put the system in, in a voting system there is level of income, religion, cultural systems, etc. Our research variable is merely one of the many variables that will determine the result of the election.

The many variables make it difficult, but not impossible, to determine variables and their influences.

Where to find hypothesis? Two places, look at existing literature what have they said explained it you can get hypothesis from existing literature, you can also look at an event so new no one wrote case study perform on it

^finding hypothesis doesn't solve the question, not sufficient to prove hypothesis but good place to start.

One method is the comparative method.

Also must test your hypothesis, ^^ you compare states etc.

Ie Sweden, Norway, Finland all have lots of women in parliament, they all have proportional representation (this is not sufficient however, they all share the same variables and very different to other places for examples Saudi and USA)

There are ways we can do this for better.

Most similar systems study....

^^going to compare states that are as similar as possible except for one thing, the independent variable that you think matters. If all variables are the same but your independent variable and if your hypothesis turns out true than you're on to something

ie Sweden and UK, all developed high economic system except UK does not have high % of women. Economic development is the same, education level is the same, welfare state same, only thing different is proportional representation can be confidently inferred that it will lead to women.

^^NOT PERFECT solution, biggest problem there are always going to be multiple differences on the states that we compare and we can be missing other variables.

Second possible comparative method is most different systems study

States that we compare are states that are the most different possible, level of education, political freedom, level of income, the states are all different EXCEPT for the independent variable Proportional representation system.

Ie compare Sweden and Indonesia, low to high income, low to high education, welfare state to other etc. Both have proportional representation. Indonesia does NOT have high levels of women in parliament, proportional representation itself is not the only factor that matters.

NOT a perfect solution but is a way of thinking how we construct a research process if we are trying to establish a law

Some options using single cases, most likely case study

^^^used to refute theories and hypothesis, not to prove their point of view. Have to find a case where the independent variable is present and the dependent variable is present. If the dependent variable is not what it should be, as said by the hypothesis than you prove it is not true.

Ie international monetary fund (lends money to developing countries conditions ie open borders, capitalism, multi national corporations slash public spending our theory says it works)

^^^ the conditions are a theory that may or may not work, if you use the most likely case and try to refute an IMF example

Second case study is the least likely case study

^^^used to confirm that a hypothesis or theory is true. Ie elite theory Robert Michaels hypothesis that all organizations become hierarchical over the course of time they will be controlled by fewer and fewer people, he cannot look at everyone, he looked at organizations that have the least likely place ie socialist parties least likely organization where hierarchy will be present, if it happens here it will likely happen anywhere.

Theory of nuclear deterrents that the possession of nuclear weapons makes war less likely, spreading nuclear weapons across the globe will bring peace. How to test if that hypothesis is true? Theory of deterrents relies on certain assumptions. Ie poor states, rich states etc. If this theory will work it will be between developed states, find states that have nuclear weapons and see how it developed ie india and Pakistan did their nuclear weapons acquiring help? Two places that hate eachother and least likely to have peace, did it work?

## **Paper Proposal Political Science**

First step starts with a research topic (Any topic you choose provided that it is someway linked up with international relations and topics)

Start off with research question, first assignment is a proposal, how will I answer my question.

Proposal is how I will do my research, this is what I will look at, the process I will follow, and how I will answer my question.

Talk the importance of the topic, who cares, why should you care, provide background.

Proposal should have hypothesis, what I think I will find, what I think the argument will look like, outcome will come from preliminary research.

Question and hypothesis and how will I test my hypothesis.