

**SOAS, University of London**  
**Department of Politics and International Studies**

**METHODOLOGY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Course Code: 15PPOH060

**2023-2024 Term 1**

**Lectures:** Tuesday, 10-11 am

**Location:** Khalili Lecture Theatre (KLT - Main Building)

Lectures will be delivered in-person and will also be recorded uploaded to the BLE, along with the slides used in the lecture.

**Lecturer:** Dr. Karabekir Akkoyunlu (convenor) & guest lecturers

Email: [ka54@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ka54@soas.ac.uk)

Room: P262

Academic support hours: Wed 10-11am online. Thurs 11:30am-12:30pm in-person.

To book an appointment, please [click here](#).

**Tutorials:** Tutorials will be delivered on campus. Please check the timetable for the date and time of your tutorial.

**Tutors:** Barbara Schenkel

Email: [bs51@soas.ac.uk](mailto:bs51@soas.ac.uk)

Dr. Benjamin Lawrence

Email: [bl33@soas.ac.uk](mailto:bl33@soas.ac.uk)

Jennifer Ayoade

Email: [ja85@soas.ac.uk](mailto:ja85@soas.ac.uk)

### **Module Format and Objective**

This is a required module for all MSc students in the Department of Politics and International Studies (optional for those enrolled in the MSc Political Thought). Its objective is to introduce students to a broad range of approaches and methods employed in political science and to learn theoretical and practical skills they need for doing their own research. Students are asked to engage with basic questions and debates in the philosophy of social science, components of the research process, causation, logic of comparison and case selection, and qualitative and quantitative methods. They also will read and discuss practical examples of research to gain a better understanding of how the methods covered in the module can be put to 'work'. By the end of the module, students will have acquired basic knowledge of these methods, which will allow them to critically evaluate these methods and to decide which methods to use in their own dissertations.

The module is taught by means of a one-hour lecture followed by a one-hour tutorial where students have the opportunity to discuss the material in small groups.

NOTE: This module is complemented by *Dissertation in Politics and International Studies* (15PPOC999) in Term 3, which will focus on skills and practical issues to help with the writing of the dissertation such as project planning, literature review, and research ethics.

## Module Structure

### Term 1

- 1) Philosophy of Social Science
- 2) The Research Process: Asking and Answering a Research Question
- 3) Interpretivist Approaches
- 4) Critical Approaches
- 5) Theories and Concepts
- 6) *Reading Week*
- 7) Discourse Analysis
- 8) Interviews and Surveys
- 9) Comparative Research
- 10) Measurement and Datasets in Quantitative Research
- 11) Describing and Visualizing Data

### Assessment

The course has two assignments distributed through the term, which together count for 100% of the final mark. Assignments must be submitted online by midnight (23:59) on the date shown below. Late submissions will be penalized at two percentage points per day as per SOAS regulations. The deadline will only be extended under exceptional circumstances and applications will need to be made in writing with supporting material through the Faculty Office. The due dates and the topics of the assignments are as follows:

#### **Assignment 1 (Due Friday, 3 November 2023, counts for 30% of the final mark):**

Essay (1500 words): Start from a topic of interest, and formulate a research question motivated by your interest.

#### **Assignment 2 (Due Friday, 15 December 2023, counts for 70% of the final mark):**

Essay (2500 words): How would you answer your research question, using one of the methods we covered in the module?

Information on assignment format and expectations will be given in the lectures and tutorials. For further advice on essay writing, students should refer to the Department's Undergraduate Handbook and the School's Learning and Teaching Unit (Academic Development Directorate). *Students are reminded that plagiarism, the unacknowledged and non-attributed copying of the work and/or ideas of another author, is an examination offence and all cases will be submitted to the Registry.*

## Readings

There is no required textbook for this course. However, we will read several chapters from the following book:

Halperin, Sandra and Oliver Heath. 2012. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. FIRST EDITION [referred to as **HH** below in the reading list]

There are copies of this book available at SOAS Library. There are also copies of the second edition of this book at SOAS Library. I highly recommend buying this book as a reference for research methods in political science.

The rest of the required readings will be available on-line at BLE. Students seeking additional material on a topic are encouraged to ask the course convenor.

There are an additional number of textbooks offering a variety of approaches to the subject. Colin Hay's *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Palgrave Macmillan) offers a substantial and distinct discussion of key themes of political analysis. Paul M. Kellstedt and Guy D. Whitten's *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research* (Cambridge University Press) is a great introduction to quantitative research methods.

Other books are more advanced in engaging issues in the philosophy of social sciences and laying out different types of methods. Among them, John Gerring *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework* (Cambridge University Press) exemplifies the 'scientific' approach, while the collection by Dvorah Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (*Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn* (New York: ME Sharpe) puts the emphasis on 'interpretive' approaches.

Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating's *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge University Press) gives a very good overview across the spectrum. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* by Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba (1994) is a highly influential book that considers quantitative and qualitative methods to be motivated by the same scientific goal of inference. If you are interested in experiments, Alan S. Gerber and Donald P. Green's *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis and Interpretation* (2012) is a very good introduction to issues in experimental research design. The classic textbooks on methods of causal inference with observational data are Morgan, Stephen L., and Christopher Winship. *Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research*. Cambridge University Press, 2007, and Angrist, Joshua D., and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. *Mastering Metrics: The Path from Cause to Effect*. Princeton University Press. 2014.

## SCHEDULE AND READING LIST

### Week 1 (3 October 2023): Introduction, Course Overview, Philosophy of Social Science

*What makes research scientific? Is it possible to study politics scientifically? What forms of knowledge should be the goal of political research? Can social science be value-free? To what extent do a researcher's own values intrude into research?*

*Required:*

HH, Chapters 2-3.

'Saskia Sassen on "Before Method"'. 2014. Social Science Bites Podcast:  
<https://methods.sagepub.com/podcast/saskia-sassen-on-before-method>

*Recommended:*

Hay, Colin (2002) *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Palgrave), Chapter 2

Almond, Gabriel A. (1988) 'Separate Tables: Schools and Sects in Political Science' *PS: Political Science and Politics* 21(4): 828-824

Bernstein, Steven et al. (2000) 'God Gave Physics the Easy Problems: Adapting Social Science to an Unpredictable World' *European Journal of International Relations* 6(1): 43-76

Brass, Paul R. (2000) 'Foucault Steals Political Science', *Annual Review of Political Science* 3: 305-330.

Gerring, John (2002) *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, second edition (Cambridge University Press), Chapter 3

Hall, Rodney Bruce and F. Kratochwil (1993) 'Medieval Tales: Neorealist 'Science' and the Abuse of History', *International Organization*, 47(3): 479-491.

Hawkesworth, Mary (2014) 'Contending Conceptions of Science and Politics' in D. Yanow and P. Schwartz-Shea, *Interpretation and Method* (New York: M. E. Sharpe), Chapter 2

Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus (2011), *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations* (Routledge), Chapter 1

Tickner, J. Ann (2005) 'What Is Your Research Program? Some Feminist Answers to International Relations Methodological Questions', *International Studies Quarterly* 49: 1-21

*Classics:*

Foucault, Michel (2001 [1966]) *The Order of Things: Archeology of the Human Sciences* (Routledge Classics)

Hempel, Carl G (1942) 'The Function of General Laws in History', *The Journal of Philosophy* 39(2): 35-48.

Kuhn, Thomas S (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago University Press).

Nagel, Ernest (1961) *The Structure of Science* (New York: Harcourt)

Popper, Karl (1992) *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (Routledge)

## **Week 2 (10 October 2023): The Research Process: Asking and Answering a Research Question**

*What is a research question? How can you develop a research question from the existing literature relating to your area of interest? What form does a good research question take? What are the components of an answer to a research question?*

*Required:*

HH, Chapters 5-6 (Second edition: Chapters 4-5)

*Recommended:*

Bernard Grofman. 2001. "Introduction: The Joy of Puzzle Solving". in Bernard Grofman ed. *Political Science as Puzzle Solving*. University of Michigan Press. pp. 1-11.

Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. 2014. *Principles of International Politics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. Chapter 2.

Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2008. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

## **Week 3 (17 October 2023): Interpretivist Approaches**

*What does "interpretation" in social sciences mean? Is interpretation a method? What are the arguments for and against interpretative approaches? What is the added value of ethnography and participant observation in political science research? What are its potential weaknesses?*

*Required:*

Taylor, Charles. 1971. "Interpretations and the Sciences of Man," *Review of Metaphysics* 25, 1: 3-51 <http://www.jstor.com/stable/20125928>

Bevir, Mark and R. A. W. Rhodes. 2006. "Interpretation and its Others," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 40, 2: 169-187 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10361140500129974>

Shatz, E. 2009. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. Introduction, pp. 1-22.

James Scott. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Ch. 1 and Ch. 5.

*Recommended:*

HH. Ch. 12. (Second edition, Ch. 13)

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Yanow, Dvora, and Peregrine Shwartz Shea, eds. 2015. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Routledge.

Michael Martin. 2001. 'Taylor on Interpretations and the Sciences of Man' in Michael Martin and Lee C McIntyre, eds. *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Sciences*. London, MIT Press.

Baiocchi, Gianpaolo and Brian T. Connor. 2008. "The Ethnos in the Polis: Political Ethnography as a Mode of Inquiry". *Sociology Compass* 2(1): 139–155.

Bayard De Volo, Lorraine and Edward Schatz. 2004. "From the Inside Out: Ethnographic Methods in Political Research". *Political Studies Online*, 267-271.

Schwartz, Edward, ed. 2009. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Tilly, Charles. 2006. "Afterword: Political Ethnography as Art and Science". *Qualitative Sociology* 29: 409-412.

**Week 4 (24 October 2023): Critical Approaches [Guest Lecture by Dr. Mark Laffey]**

*What are the limitations of the scientific approach to political analysis? How does the critical approach differ from the scientific approach?*

*Required:*

Mark Laffey and Suthaharan Nadarajah, "Postcolonialism," in Alan Collins (ed.) *Contemporary Security Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2018)

Jutta Weldes et al. "Introduction: Constructing Insecurity," in Weldes et al (eds.) *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

*Recommended:*

Sayer, Andrew. 2009. "Who's afraid of critical social science?" *Current Sociology* 57(6): 767-786  
Fay, Brian. 1975. *Social Theory and Political Practice*, 'chap 3.' Criticisms of the positivist view of social science' excerpt, pp. 49-60.

## **Week 5 (31 October 2023): Theories and Concepts**

*What is a theory? What are the criteria to distinguish between theories? What are basic concepts? Do concepts reflect reality or do they make reality?*

*Required:*

Berenskoetter, Felix. 2018. Deep Theorizing in International Relations. *European Journal of International Relations*, 24 (4): 814-840.

Wedeen, Lisa (2004) 'Concepts and commitments in the study of democracy' in Ian Shapiro et al. (eds) *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics* (Cambridge University Press), pp. 274-306

*Recommended:*

On Theories:

Cox, Robert W. (1981) 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 10(2): 126-55.

Humphreys, Adam R. 2011. The heuristic application of explanatory theories in International Relations. *European Journal of International Relations*, 17 (2): 257-277.

Lake, David A. (2011) 'Why "Isms" are evil: Theory, epistemology, and academic sects as impediments to understanding and progress', *International Studies Quarterly* 55(2): 465-480, and the responses by Sil/Katzenstein and Nau in the same issue.

Sabaratnam, Meera (2020) 'Is IR Theory White? Racialised Subject-Positioning in Three Canonical Texts', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (forthcoming)

Smith, Steve, Ken Booth and Maraysia Zalewski (eds.) (1996) *International Theory: Positivism and beyond* (Cambridge University Press). A new/revised edition appeared in 2016.

'Symposium: History and Theory', *International Security*, 22(1) (1997)

'The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium', *World Politics*, 48 (1995): 1-49

'The End of International Relations Theory?' *European Journal of International Relations*, Special Issue (2013)

'Critical International Relations Theory after 25 years', *Review of International Studies*, Special Issue (2007)

Ayoob, Mohammed (2002) 'Inequality and Theorizing in International Relations: The Case for Subaltern Realism', *International Studies Review* 4(3): 27-48

Berenskoetter, Felix (2018) 'E Pluribus Unum? How Textbooks Cover Theories'. In: Gofas, Andreas and Hamati-Ataya, Inanna and Onuf, Nicholas G., (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of the History, Philosophy and Sociology of International Relations*. London: SAGE, pp 446-468.

Hammond, Michael (2018) 'An interesting paper but not sufficiently theoretical': What does theorising in social research look like?', *Methodological Innovations* 11(2): 1-10.

Ish-Shalom, Piki (2009) 'Theorizing Politics, Politicizing Theory, and the Responsibility that Runs Between', *Perspectives on Politics* 7(2): 303-316.

Jahn, Beate (2017) 'Theorizing the Political Relevance of International Relations Theory', *International Studies Quarterly* 61(1): 64-77

- Jahn, Beate (2021) 'Critical Theory in Crisis? A Reconsideration', *European Journal of International Relations*, online first, 8 October

Tickner, Arlene B. (2013) 'Core, periphery and (neo)imperialist International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations* 19(3): 627-646

- Weber, Cynthia (2015) 'Why is There no Queer International Theory?', *European Journal of International Relations* 21(1): 27-51

On Concepts:

Berenskoetter, Felix (ed) (2016) *Concepts in World Politics* (Sage)

Berenskoetter, Felix. 2016. Approaches to Concept Analysis. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 45 (2): 151-173.

Connolly, William E. (1993) *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Blackwell), esp. chapters 1 and 6

Della Porta, D. and M. Keating (eds) *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge University Press), chapters 5 (Kratochwil) and 10 (Mair)

Deutsch, K. (1967) 'On the Concepts of Politics and Power', *Journal of International Affairs*, 21/2: 232-241

Dow, D. (2015) 'Working with Concepts' in Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (eds) *Interpretation and Method* (ME Sharpe), pp. 64-79

Gallie, W. B. (1956) 'Essentially Contested Concepts', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 56, pp. 167-198

Goertz, Gary (2005) *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide* (Princeton University Press)



Gerring, John (2002) *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, second edition (Cambridge University Press), Chapter 5

Ish-Shalom, Piki (ed) (2021) *Concepts at Work: On the Linguistic Infrastructure of World Politics* (University of Michigan Press)

Koselleck, Reinhart (2002) *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing Concepts, Spacing History*, transl. by Todd Samuel Presner and Others (Stanford University Press)

Ní Mhurchú, A. and Shindo, R. (2016) *Critical Imaginations in International Relations* (Routledge)

Palonen, K. (2006) 'Two concepts of politics: conceptual history and present controversies', *Distinktion* 12: 11-25

Pocock, J. G. A. (1989) *Politics, Language, and Time* (The University of Chicago Press), Chapter 1

Schaffer, F. C. (2015) *Elucidating Social Science Concepts: An Interpretivist Guide* (Routledge)

Schmitt, C. (1996 [1932]) *The Concept of the Political* (The University of Chicago Press)

### ***Week 6: Reading Week***

### **Week 7 (14 November 2023): Discourse Analysis [Guest Lecture by Dr. Ben Whitham]**

*What do we mean by the term 'discourse' and how can analysing discourses help us answer the intellectual puzzles?*

#### *Required:*

Stephanie Taylor (2012) *What is Discourse Analysis?* London: Bloomsbury: Chapters 2 and 3

Cynthia Weber (2006) "An Aesthetics of Fear: The 7/7 London Bombings, the Sublime and wearenotafraid.com" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 34 (3): 683:711

Solman, P. & Henderson, L. L. (2019). Flood disasters in the United Kingdom and India: A critical discourse analysis of media reporting. *Journalism*, 20(12), pp. 1648-1664

#### *Recommended:*

Lene Hansen. 2006. *Security as practice: discourse analysis and the Bosnian War*. London: Routledge. (The introduction and first four chapters of this book are an excellent guide to research design for DA)

Carol Bacchi and Susan Goodwin (2016) *Poststructural Policy Analysis: A Guide to Practice* London: Palgrave

Boréus and Bergstrom 'Analyzing Text and Discourse' (Sage, 2017)

Graham, Phil, et al. "A Call to Arms at the End of History: A Discourse–Historical Analysis of George W. Bush's Declaration of War on Terror." *Discourse & Society*, vol. 15, no. 2–3, May 2004, pp. 199–221

Simon Statham 'Critical Discourse Analysis: A Practical Introduction to Power in Language' (Routledge 2022)

Jennifer Milliken. 1999. "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods" *European Journal of International Relations*, 5 (2): 225-254

Michael Shapiro. 2001. "Textualising World Politics." In Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor and Simeon Yates, eds., *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*. London: Sage

Srdjan Vucetic. 2011 "Genealogy as a Research Tool in International Relations." *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 03

Michel Foucault. 1990. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *The Foucault Reader*, Harmondsworth: Penguin

### **Week 8 (21 November 2023): Interviews and Surveys**

*What are the different types of interviews in political science research? How should you plan and conduct an interview to make it most effective? How can interview data be used to confirm or disconfirm an argument? How do we design surveys? How do surveys allow making inferences? What are the common sources of error in survey research?*

#### *Required:*

HH, Ch. 10 and 11 (Second edition, Ch. 11 and 12)

Straus, Scott. 2006. *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pp. 97-103.

Fabbe, Kristin and Sinmazdemir, Tolga. 2018. "Syrian Refugees in Turkey and the Politics of Postconflict Reconciliation" *Review of Middle East Studies*. 52 (2): 249-262.

Soss, Joe. 2006. 'Talking Our Way to Meaningful Explanations: A Practice-Centered View of Interviewing for Interpretive Research' in Yanow, Dvora and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (Eds.) *Interpretation and Method*, New York: ME Sharpe.

#### *Recommended:*

"Symposium on Interview Methods in Political Science". *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 2002. Volume: 35, Issue: 4. pp. 663-688.

HH, Ch. 11 (Second edition, Ch. 12)

## **Week 9 (28 November 2023): Comparative Research**

*What are the different types of comparative methods used in social science research? What are some problems associated with case selection and how can these be mitigated?*

*Required:*

HH. Chapter 9.

Landman, T. 2008. "Economic Development and Democracy" in Landman, T. *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics*. London: Routledge, pp. 99-129 (Chp 6).

*Recommended:*

Caporaso, James A. 2009. "Is there a Quantitative-Qualitative Divide in Comparative Politics? The Case of Process Tracing." Pp. 67-83 in *The SAGE handbook of comparative politics*, ed. T. Landman and N. Robinson. London: Sage.

Geddes, B. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Guy, P. (2011) 'Approaches in Comparative Politics'. In: Daniele Caramani (ed) '*Comparative Politics*'. 2nd edition. London, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp37-49

Landman, T. 2008. *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics*. London: Routledge.

Lijphart, A. 1999. *Patterns of Democracy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Moore, B. 1966. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston, MA: Beacon.

Przeworski, A., M.E. Alvarez, J.A. Cheibub, and F. Limongi. 2000. *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge University Press.

Skocpol, T. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. Cambridge University Press.

Thelen K, Mahoney J. 2015. 'Comparative-historical analysis in contemporary political science'. In *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*, ed. J Mahoney, K Thelen, pp. 3–36.

## **Week 10 (5 December 2023): Measurement and Datasets in Quantitative Research [Guest Lecture by Dr. Tolga Sinmazdemir]**

*What is the difference between a concept and a measure? What are the criteria to distinguish between good and bad measures? What are some of the major data sets in political science?*

*Required:*

Philip H. Pollock III and Barry C. Edwards. 2020. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Sixth edition. Chapter 1.

Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2008. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pages 92-109.

*Recommended:*

Munck, Gerardo L., and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices." *Comparative Political Studies* 35: 5-34.

**Week 11 (12 December 2023): Describing and Visualizing Data [Guest Lecture by Dr. Tolga Sınmazdemir]**

*How can we describe and summarize data? What are the advantages and disadvantages of statistical tools for describing data? What are the visual ways of doing so?*

*Required:*

Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2008. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 109-128.

HH. Chapter 14. (Second edition, Ch. 15)

*Recommended:*

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2.