

Political Science Scope and Methods

Models and Theories in Political Science

Models and Methods

- History of Political Science
 - How should we conduct research?
- Specific Research Programs
 - Duverger's Law (Riker)
 - Realignment literature (Mayhew)

Theories and Evidence

- Inductive vs. Deductive Theorizing
 - **Induction:** General conclusions are drawn from particular facts. Look for patterns in facts; build theories from them.
 - **Deduction:** Here you reason from the general to the particular. Start with general theories; build to specific predictions about the world

Philosophy of Science

- Popper
 - Falsification
 - "Critical tests"
- Kuhn
 - Normal Science
 - Paradigm shifts

Clocks and Clouds

- Politics as Clocks
 - Emphasis on discovering regularities in political science
 - Concern with generalization of regularities through "covering laws"
 - Focus on causality as an explanatory concept.

Deductive? Inductive?

More on Clocks and Clouds

- Statistical methods and Rational Choice theory
 - One and the same?
 - Battle between quantoids and non-quantoids

"Some may question the coupling of deductive theory and quantitative research under the one rubric of "hard science." Quantitative researchers do at least schematically empirical work, whereas most deductive theorists use empirical data only for anecdotal illustration. But it was radical quantifiers, those who analyze all questions with statistics, who first deformed the discipline in the name of hard science. It was they who popularized the study of politics outside of its historical and cultural setting, who made methodology into the core of graduate education while degrading political philosophy and foreign language study, and who spawned the trend toward method-driven rather than problem-driven research."

Gregory Kaska (2001)

Politics as Clouds

- Political behavior as a "cloud"
- Lack of predictability
- Need to delve deep and come up with a complex understanding of the political world.

Dimensions to Consider

- Clocks vs. Clouds (degrees of "scientification")
- Inductive vs. Deductive theories.
- Iterative theorizing (Shively)

Realignment and Duverger's Law

- Inductive vs. Deductive theorizing
- Are these appropriate empirical approaches
- Does knowledge cumulate?
- What is political science? What should it be?

Where does this leave us?

Shively's "Elegant Theory"

- Simplicity
 - Predictive accuracy
 - Importance
- A scientific ideal
- Multiple methods
 - Good research design
 - Fair collection and presentation of evidence
 - Logical inferences drawn from that evidence

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