

Welcome and First Lecture

Department of Government
London School of Economics and Political Science

Claims

- Politics is full of claims
- The credibility of claims depends on the strength of evidence and argument
- This class aims to give you tools to:
 - make credible claims, *and*
 - evaluate claims made by others

An Example

The Telegraph

Home Video News World Sport **Finance** Comment Culture Travel Life Women Fa
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Living wage will lead to sharp job losses in North East

Employment in the region is set to suffer "sharper falls" than in other parts of Britain as a result of higher mandatory wages being brought in by the Government

Source: Peter Spence, *The Telegraph*, Sep. 18, 2015

Definitions

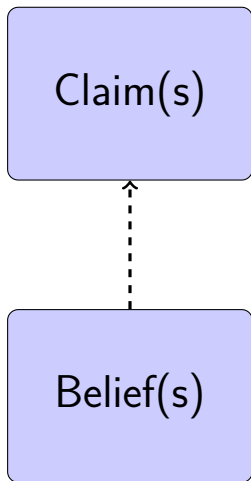
- Inference: “a belief based on evidence *and* rules for processing that evidence”
- Methodology: “tools for gathering and analyzing data to try to make valid inferences”

Drawing Inferences

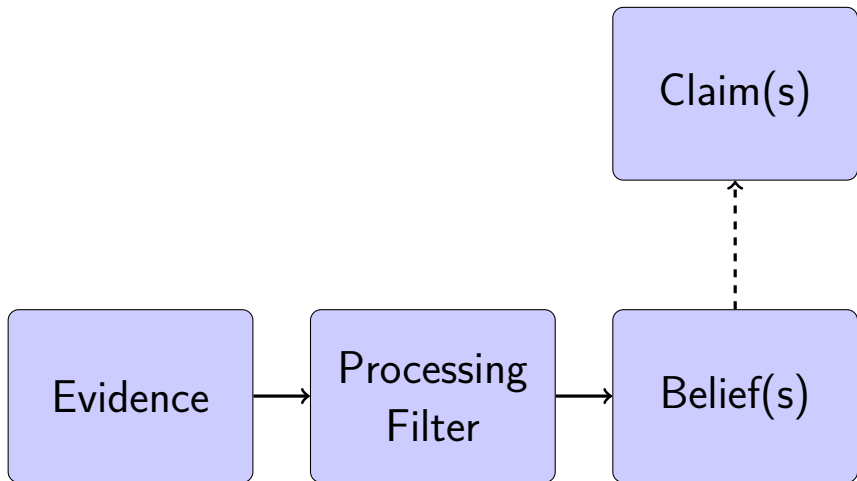


Claim(s)

Drawing Inferences

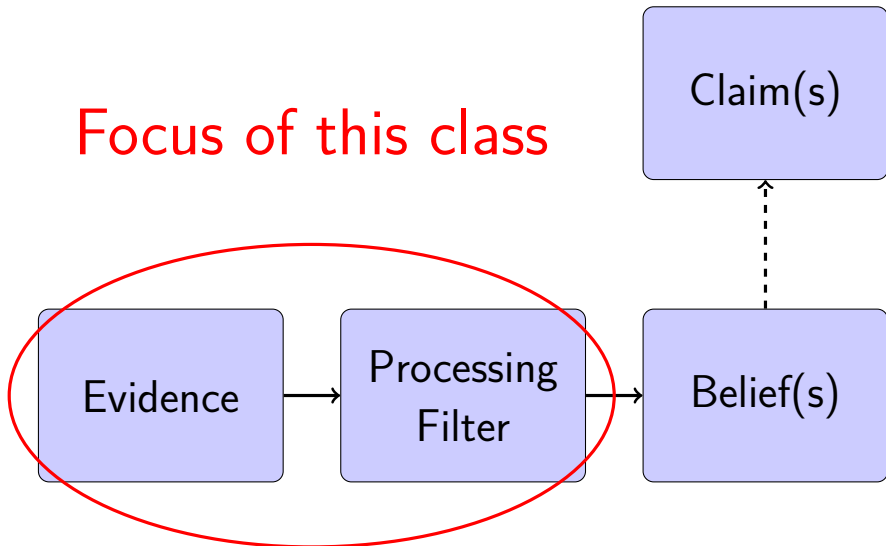


Drawing Inferences



Drawing Inferences

Focus of this class



Question for you

How might we draw an inference about the effect of a minimum wage change on the level of unemployment?

Two Categories of Inference

1 Descriptive Inference

- What are the facts?

2 Causal Inference

- Why does something occur?

Descriptive Inference

- Sometimes seen as the lesser type of inference
- Still often very interesting
- Examples
 - Is the climate changing?
 - Is the United States politically polarized?
 - Is global terrorism increasing?
 - Is Azerbaijan a democracy?

Causal Inference I

- Typically what we are interested in
- Questions about “why?”
- Examples
 - *Why* is the climate changing?
 - *Why* is the United States politically polarized?
 - *Why* is (or is not) global terrorism increasing?
 - *Why* is (or is not) Azerbaijan a democracy?

Causal Inference II

Typically start with either:

1 an outcome (dependent variable)

or

2 a cause (independent variable)

Causal Inference: 2 Types

Reverse

If what, then Y?
What causes Y?

Associated with a
search for causes

ex. What causes
climate change?

Forward

If X, then what?
What happens if X?

Associated with
“Experimentation”

ex. What happens if
we release
greenhouse gases
into the air?

Which of these is a causal research question?

- 1 Will Labour win the next UK general election?
- 2 What had to have happened for Labour to win the last UK general election?
- 3 How has Labour's electoral performance changed over the last three decades?
- 4 What was the result of the last UK general election?
- 5 What role did the economy have on the last UK general election?

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Good research questions

- Start from political problem or puzzle
- Builds on an existing research literature
- Non-obvious¹

¹Note: evolving standard

Which is a better RQ?

Why was Germany allocated 96 seats in the European Parliament during the 2014 elections?

Why was “degressive proportionality” chosen as the method of allocating seats in the EP?

Which is a better RQ?

Given what we know from Skocpol about the causes of social revolutions, why haven't such revolutions occurred in several post-Soviet states in Central Asia?

Given my conversations with taxi drivers during my weekend holiday in Tashkent, why hasn't Uzbekistan become a full-fledged democracy?

Which is a better RQ?

How do social media facilitate Britons' decisions about where to take a summer holiday?

How did social media use shape the development of "Arab Spring" protests in Egypt?

Other ways to generate research questions

- 1 Puzzle-driven
- 2 Theory-driven
- 3 Data-driven
- 4 Method-driven

Scientific method

- 1 Research question(s)
- 2 Clarify the core concepts
- 3 Develop theory
- 4 Derive specific, testable hypotheses
- 5 Plan data collection
- 6 Gather data/evidence
- 7 Analyze data
- 8 Draw inferences

Questions?

Who am I?

- Thomas Leeper
- Assistant Professor in Political Behaviour
- Originally from Minnesota (USA); worked in Denmark for past 2.5 years
- Interested in public opinion and political psychology
- Office hours:
Tuesday 9–11 CON 3.21
Sign-up on LSE for You
Otherwise, email: t.leeper@lse.ac.uk

Who is your GTA?

- Bernardo Rangoni
- PhD candidate at LSE
- Previous degrees from Università di Bologna, LUISS Guido Carli (Rome), and LSE
- Interested in policymaking at the European Commission

Who are you?

- Introduce yourself to a neighbour
- Where are you from?
- What interests you about government or politics?
- What do you hope to learn from the course?

Course Resources

- Moodle

- Reading list:

<http://readinglists.lse.ac.uk/lists/B821602E-0B75-9923-D8C5-457373E1789E.html>

- Gerring
- Kellstedt and Whitten

Schedule: Michaelmas Term

- 1 Introduction (Sep. 28)
- 2 Causality: Explanation versus Prediction (Oct. 6)
- 3 Concepts: "I'll know it when I see it" (Oct. 13)
- 4 Measurement: Concepts in Practice (Oct. 20)
- 5 Building and Testing Political Science Theories (Oct. 27)
- 6 Deriving Hypotheses from Theory (Nov. 3)
- 7 Case Studies (Nov. 10)
- 8 Case Comparisons (Nov. 17)
- 9 Causal Mechanisms and Process-Tracing (Nov. 24)
- 10 Texts into Interpretations and Analysis (Dec. 1)

Schedule: Lent Term

- 11 Interviewing, Structured and Unstructured (Jan. 12)
- 12 Participant Observation (Jan. 19)
- 13 Tabulation and Visualization (Jan. 26)
- 14 Sampling and Representativeness (Feb. 2)
- 15 Statistical Inference (Feb. 9)
- 16 Regression Analysis (Feb. 23)
- 17 Matching and Regression (Mar. 1)
- 18 Experimental Design and Quasi-Experiments (Mar. 8)
- 19 Ethics and Research Integrity (Mar. 15)
- 20 Conclusion and Synthesis (Mar. 22)

Learning Outcomes

- 1 Identify interesting political science research questions and formulate theories and hypotheses that answer them
- 2 Describe and operationalize concepts from political science theories
- 3 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to empirical research
- 4 Apply political science theories to the design of original research

Summative Assessment

- 1 Breadth: 2-hour written exam (Summer Term)
- 2 Depth: 3000-word research design proposal

Research Design Proposal

- Research question
- Theoretical contribution
- Testable hypotheses
- Description of the proposed data collection and analysis
- **Due Date: Tuesday Mar. 22**

Problem Sets

Assignment	Due Date
Concepts and measurement	Tuesday Oct. 27
Theory and hypothesis generation	Tuesday Nov. 10
Case selection	Tuesday Nov. 24
Text analysis	Tuesday Dec. 15
Interviewing	Tuesday Jan. 26
Basic Statistics	Tuesday Feb. 23
Regression analysis	Tuesday Mar. 8
Experimentation	Tuesday Mar. 17

Questions?

