

# Doing Political and Social Research



Week 3


# Assessment: Critical review essay





- ▶ A **2000-word** critical review of a journal article that uses one of the methods covered in the module
- ▶ A link to a list of suggested journal articles can be found on Moodle (or your own choice approved by the module convenor)
- ▶ Consider the following in your review:
  - What is the research process: Research question, theory, concepts, measurement, approach to explanation?
  - How appropriate was the method? How well was it implemented? What other methods could have been used?
- ▶ Similar to our weekly seminar discussions


- ▶ Choose one of the articles listed
- ▶ Use the essay coversheet
- ▶ Enter your student ID in the field of Submission Title
- ▶ Submit your work by **Midday, 25 November 2024**

▼ **Submit Paper**

Submission Title  

File to Submit  Maximum file size: 100 MB, maximum number of files: 1

 [Files](#)   



You can drag and drop files here to add them.

**ADD SUBMISSION**

# Strategic reading: The Berkeley style



- ▶ **Preview:** Get as much information about the reading before you actually read it
- ▶ **Annotating:** Read with a pencil and making notes as you read
- ▶ **Analyzing:** Break the reading apart to see how different parts relate to each other
- ▶ **Responding:** Think again how the reading relates the topic of each week; come up with summary, comments and questions



- ▶ **Preview:** Get as much information about the reading before you actually read it
  - Why are you reading it (**hint: read session statement on Moodle**)?
  - What can the title tell you about the reading?
  - How is the reading structured?
  - What info is available from the introductory and concluding paragraphs?
  - What is conveyed by the opening/topic sentences?
  - What is the main thesis? What are the main points?



► **Annotating:** Read with a pencil and making notes as you read

- Mark the thesis and main points
- Write signposts to reorganize the reading
- Note the main evidence to support the argument
- Mark key terms and unfamiliar words and note confusing/challenging parts
- Write down your questions/comments and/or experiences
- Underline the sources (**hint: skim through the reference list and further readings on Moodle**)



- ▶ **Analyzing:** Break the reading apart to see how different parts relate to each other
  - Examine the evidence: Adequate? Relevant?
  - Evaluate sources: Relevant? Credible? Current?
  - Consider assumptions: What do we have to believe for the argument to be true?
  - Watch out for author bias



- ▶ **Responding:** Think again how the reading relates the topic of each week; come up with summary, comments and questions
  - Write a response to the reading
  - Keep a notebook
  - Discuss the reading with others



# Epistemology in political and social research

	<b>Empiricist</b>	<b>Interpretivist</b>
<b>Foundationalist</b>	Positivist	
<b>Anti-Foundationalist</b>		Interpretist (or constructivist)

	<i>A positivist approach</i>	<i>A constructivist approach</i>
What is 'reality'?	A definable 'reality' or 'truth' exists and is observable	There is no 'reality' or 'truth' beyond our experiences
What is the goal of academic enquiry?	Acquisition of the 'truth'	A more informed construction of the world
How are the researcher and the 'researched' related?	The researcher is independent of the 'researched'	The researcher is not independent of the 'researched'
What should be the role for values?	None - objectivity sought	Part of 'reality' - subjectivity celebrated
What kind of approach?	Predominantly based on observability or measurability and with the aim of seeking 'evidence'	Predominantly based on discourse and meaning with the aim of seeking a more informed understanding of the world
What kind of data is preferred?	Predominantly quantitative	Traditionally associated with a predominantly qualitative approach
Examples of such studies in Development Studies	Dollar and Kraay (2002) <i>Growth is Good for the Poor</i>	Narayan <i>et al.</i> , (2002) <i>Voices of the Poor</i>

	Economics	Politics	Sociology	Social Anthropology
What is reality?	One reality exists; reality is <i>independent</i> of our thoughts; what is observable is real	One reality exists. reality is <i>independent</i> of our thoughts	One reality exists; reality is <i>independent</i> of our thoughts, but much of reality is unobservable	There are <i>different</i> realities associated with different standpoints and cultures
Goal of enquiry?	Acquisition of a <i>single</i> truth -- a universal, general law	We can establish truths or <i>generalizations</i> about human beings	Truth needs to be understood in terms of <i>practical adequacy</i>	<i>Interpretation</i> of local meanings; there is <i>no universal truth</i>
How are the researcher (you) and the "researched" related?	The researcher is <i>objective</i> and is <i>independent</i> of the "researched"	The researcher is <i>subjective</i> and is <i>not independent</i> of the "researched"	The researcher is <i>subjective</i> and is <i>not independent</i> of the "researched"	The researcher is <i>subjective</i> and is <i>not independent</i> of the "researched"



# Find your research questions

*Developmental puzzles* First, you might, for example, pose a developmental puzzle – **how and why did  $x$  or  $y$  develop?** The  $x$  or  $y$  might be anything, ontologically speaking, for example, racist attitudes, cultural imperialism, the American system of government, a mental illness, and so on.

*Mechanical puzzles* Alternatively, your puzzle might be about how something works or is constituted. **How does  $x$  or  $y$  work? Why does it work in this way?** Again,  $x$  or  $y$  might be anything – intimate personal relationships, a legal system, a penal institution, the human psyche, and so on.

*Comparative puzzles* **Your puzzle might be about what we can learn from comparing  $x$  and  $y$ , and how we can explain differences and similarities between them.** This could involve comparing legal or social institutions internationally, different cultural objects or artefacts, or groups of people with different sets of experiences, for example.

*Causal/predictive puzzles* You might be interested in causality, and pose a puzzle about **what influence  $x$  has on  $y$ , or what causes  $x$  or  $y$ ?** You might extend that into a predictive puzzle - what is the likely outcome of  $x$  or  $y$ , where  $x$  or  $y$  might be a social intervention or programme for example.



- ▶ List the relevant "scholarly" literature(s); arrange the literature(s) by topic/keyword if you'd like
- ▶ Identify the gap, such as
  - Theoretical/empirical tensions or contradictions
  - Different or alternative theoretical perspectives
  - Different methodological approach (e.g., build on more inductive work to propose some hypothesis-testing deductive approach)
  - Extension to new context (e.g., different region, time period)
  - Some conventional wisdom left untested or understudied (e.g., critical element not engaged with, need to consider other conditions)
- ▶ Use literature to think through your RQs (and supervisor preferences)