

Investigating the Social World

Dr Chao-Yo Cheng

Masterclass (2025 version) announced

Week	Speaker Series (6-7:30pm)	Pieces-of-Craft Workshops (7:40-9pm)
1	Introduction and Welcome	AI in Social Research: From Big Data to SDS
2	Critical Discourse Analysis	AI in Social Research: Qualitative
3	Historical Research and Archives	AI in Social Research: Quant and Computational
4	Multi-sited Fieldwork	Transparency and Open Social Science
5	Research on Creative and Cultural Industries: A Qualitative Guide	Communicating Your Research
	Reading Week	
6	Mixed-Methods Research	Dissertations Fair 1
7	Geographic Data Science	Dissertations Fair 2
8	Surveys	Dissertations Fair 3
9	Text-as-Data	Dissertations Fair 4
10	Quali-Quant Methods for Social Media Research (<i>followed by end-of-year happy hour</i>)	

Invitation to audit will be sent to all PG students

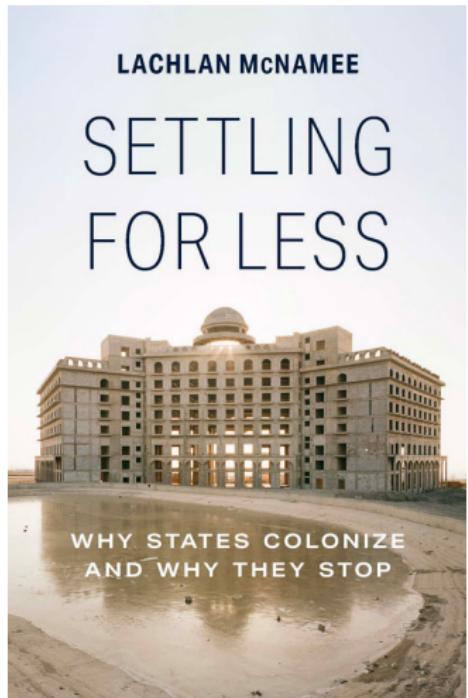
Before Reading Week: Varieties of social research

- ▶ ISW is a special module to reflect on the production of "valid" knowledge about the social world
 - Know what you do and explain the objectives of your scholarly inquiry;
 - Know the differences between various objectives and engage other researchers' work constructively and effectively
- ▶ Social research involves a series of careful thinking about epistemology, theory-building, and methodology (hence theory-empirics alignment is key to rigour)
 - **Reveal nuances of the real world:** constructivism; (interpretative) theory as approach; interpretation; qualitative; inductive/abductive
 - **Search for the "ultimate" truth:** positivism; (explanatory) theory as paradigm; explanation; quantitative; deductive

Exceptions exist – norms are constantly being contested and redefined

	<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>

Thinking beyond your case to boost contribution



Weeks 6-10: Analytical (or investigative) frameworks



Professor Silvia Posocco
(Psychosocial/Sociology)



Dr Ivana Bevilacqua
(Geography)



Ms Joy Brooks-Gilzeane
(Politics)



Dr Sarah Marks
(History)

- ▶ Rational choice theory (Dr Chao-Yo Cheng)
- ▶ Psychosocial framing (Professor Silvia Posocco)
- ▶ Decolonizing social research (Dr Ivana Bevilacqua)
- ▶ Intersectional sensibilities (Ms Joy Brooks-Gilzeane)
- ▶ Situating lived experience (Dr Sarah Marks)

Assessment II: Analytical essay (60%)

- ▶ You will write an essay of 2,500 words in length
- ▶ The key idea is to choose **TWO** frameworks introduced after Reading Week to analyze an issue or problem of your choice
- ▶ You are free to carry out any necessary outside/additional research; cite references properly (e.g., APA or MLA)
- ▶ You can come to my office hours to discuss your preliminary responses with me; the goal is not to give you a mark before the deadline but to clear any confusion
- ▶ Instructions and sample submissions available on Moodle now

Lecture 7: Rational choice



Lecture 7: Rational choice



"Anyone fancies an end-of-term happy hour?"

Plan for today

- ▶ Rational choice and beyond
- ▶ Workshop: "Analytical narratives"
 - Principles
 - Critiques and responses
 - Examples
 - Exercise

Barbara's "verdict" on rational choice

- ▶ There are many **misperceptions** about rational choice
 - Rational choice does not assume people are "selfish"
 - Rational choice does not assume people are driven by material interests
 - Rational choice does not assume preferences are stable or fixed
 - Rational choice does not ignore/discard ideology and/or history
- ▶ Rational choice is an **approach** (i.e., ways of seeing), not a theory
 - Rational choice highlights the importance of "rationality"
 - Rational choice does not dictate a single or universal explanation/prediction
 - Rational choice provides a micro-foundation for us to research the social world

Martin's take

TBA.



Rational choice and rationality

Rational choice as an analytical approach

Example: Prisoner's dilemma

The Analytic Narrative Project

ROBERT H. BATES *Harvard University*

AVNER GREIF *Stanford University*

MARGARET LEVI *University of Washington*

JEAN-LAURENT ROSENTHAL *University of California, Los Angeles*

BARRY R. WEINGAST *Stanford University*



Robert Bates
(Harvard)



Avner Grief
(Stanford)



Margaret Levi
(Stanford)



Jean-Laurent Rosenthal
(Caltech)



Barry Weingast
(Stanford)

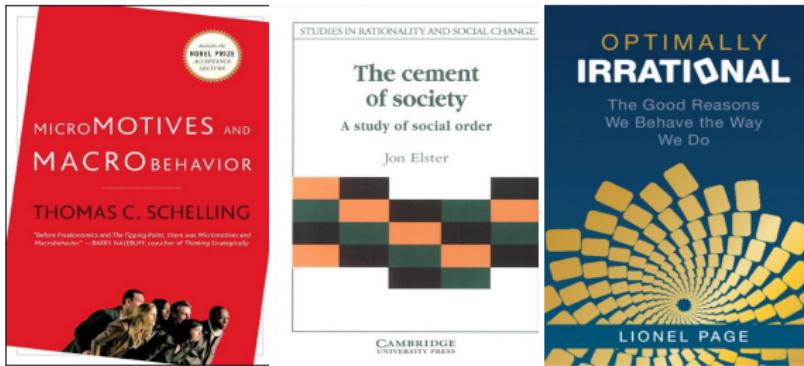
Rationale and principle

Critque and responses

Example

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Exercise



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Thank you!



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