

Fall 2022

PS0700 Research Method in Political Science

[Recitation 2]

Political Science as “Science”

September 8th

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The Outline of Today's Recitation

- A Brief Review: Political Science as “Science”
 - The What, The Why, The How
 - Why Political “Science”?
 - Behaviorism and Positivism
 - Criticisms of the Scientific Methods
- Discussion: Readings for Today's Recitation

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A Brief Review: Political Science as "Science"

The What, The Why, The How

Why Political "Science"?

Behaviorism & Positivism

Criticisms of the Scientific Methods

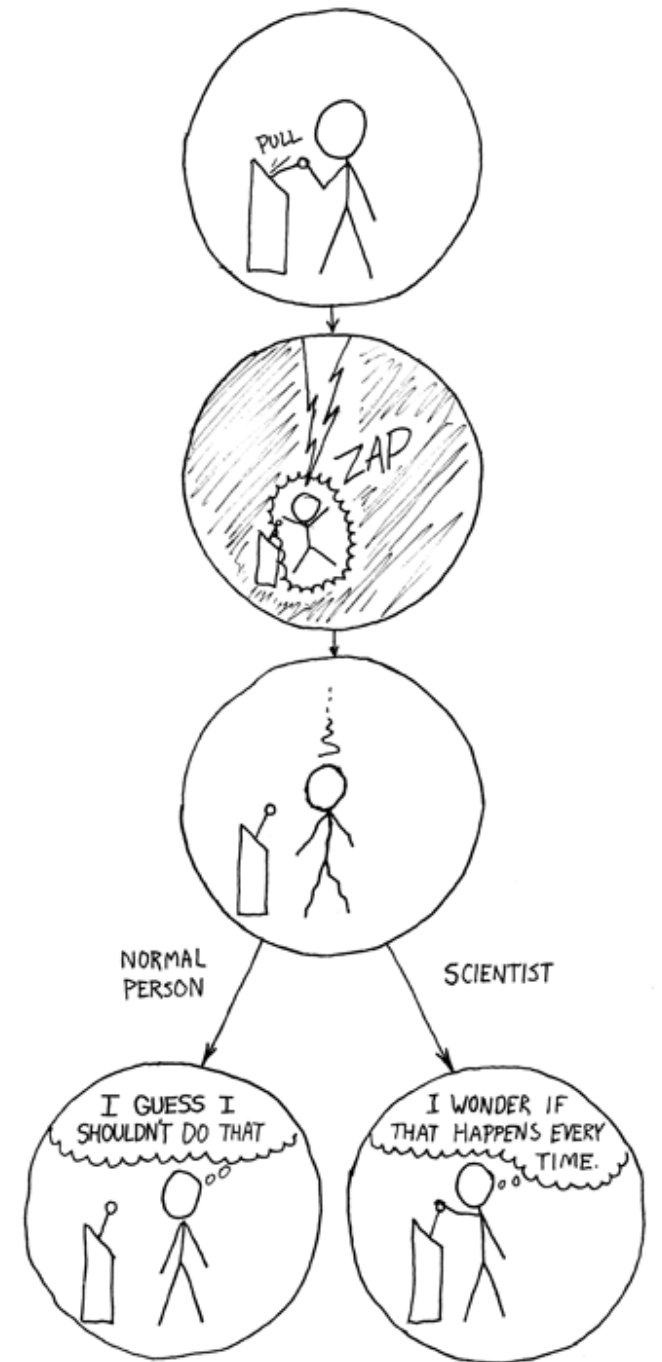
Perestroika in Political Science

The What, The Why, The How

- This course is an introduction to research process in political science
 - The basics of social scientific inquiry, research design, data collection and data analysis
- What are the “good” reasons for taking this course?
 - Political science majors
 - Professionals in your later life
 - Citizens and participants in public discourse
- How do we use our recitation sessions?
 - Brief review of weekly lectures
 - Discussion of relevant articles

Why Political "Science"?

- Goals of Social Science Research:
 - To develop causal explanations that account for observed empirical regularities in social behavior
 - To organize those explanations into broader empirical theories of behavior that can generate new predictions and lead to the investigation of new regularities
- The Scientific Methods
 - Verification, Falsification, Observation
 - Systematic, Public, and Replicable procedures



Behaviorism and Positivism

- Principles of Behaviorism:
 - Regularity, Quantification, Verifiability, Falsifiability, Observation ...
- The Influence of Positivism
 - The Unity of Scientific Method
 - Empirical vs. Normative
- Criticisms of Behaviorism and the Scientific Methods in Political Science
 - Criticisms I: Complexity and Practical Difficulties in Scientific Political Research
 - Criticisms II: The “Interpretivist” Approach
 - Criticisms III: The Challenge of “Social Constructivism”
 - Criticisms IV: Lack of “Relevance” of Much Scientific Research

"Perestroika" in Political Science

- A recent movement within political science to break the “hegemony” of the scientific approach.
- “Problem-driven” as opposed to “theory-driven” research
- Methodological pluralism: positivism, interpretivism, constructivism, critical theory, all kinds of approaches needed for “truth” in political science to emerge
 - Interdisciplinary inquiry needs to better integrate with other social sciences, anthropology, history
- Main Debate: Kasza (2001) vs. Bennet (2002)

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Discussion

"Just How Relevant is Political Science"

"Is 'Social Science' an Oxymoron? Will That Ever Change?"

"Justice Roberts Said Political Science Is 'Sociological
Gobbledygook.'

Here's Why He said it and Why He's Mistaken"

Article 1: “Political Sciences Is Irrelevant!”

- Cohen, Patricia. 2009. “Field Study: Just How Relevant is Political Science?” The New York Times.
- Discussion Questions
 - What does “relevant” research mean?
 - Is relevant research “good” research?
 - What are the potential problems of it ?

Article 2: “Political ‘Science’ Is Not a Thing?!”

- Horgan, John. 2013. “Is ‘Social Science’ an Oxymoron? Will That Ever Change?” Scientific American.
- Discussion Questions
 - How are social (political) sciences different from the natural sciences?
 - And, how are they similar to the natural sciences?
 - Why do (some) social scientists aspire to be more like the natural sciences? Why some are not so bothered?

Article 2: "Political 'Science' Is Not a

FIELDS ARRANGED BY PURITY

→
MORE PURE

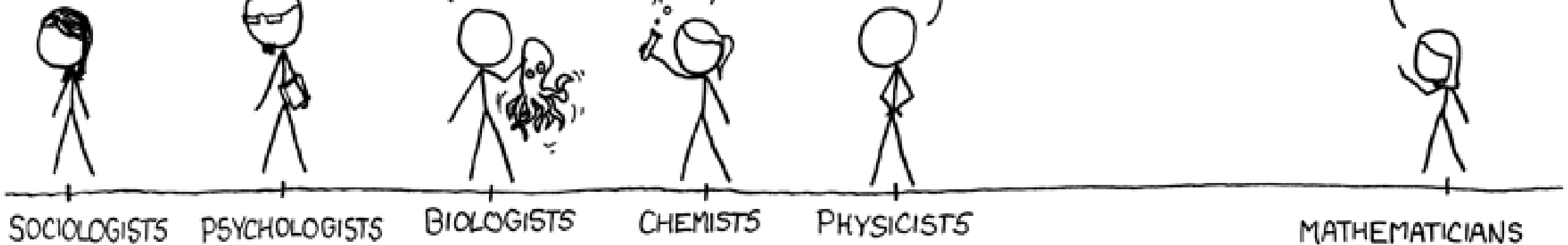
SOCIOLOGY IS
JUST APPLIED
PSYCHOLOGY

PSYCHOLOGY IS
JUST APPLIED
BIOLOGY.

BIOLOGY IS
JUST APPLIED
CHEMISTRY

WHICH IS JUST
APPLIED PHYSICS.
IT'S NICE TO
BE ON TOP.

OH, HEY, I DIDN'T
SEE YOU GUYS ALL
THE WAY OVER THERE.



Article 3: “Political Sciences Is *Gobbledygook!*”

- Rocco, Philip. 2017. “Justice Roberts said political science is 'sociological gobbledygook.' Here’s why he said it, and why he's mistaken.” Monkey Cage.
- Discussion Questions
 - What are the key questions that the court has to consider in the gerrymandering case? Why are they difficult to answer?
 - How can political science help?
 - Why is the court skeptical of the usefulness of political science research in this case?

The Punchlines of Today's Recitation

- What do we aim for through this course?
- What is political “science”?
- What are main critiques of the scientific approach to social science?