

PSC 202

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ANALYSIS

STUDYING POLITICS SCIENTIFICALLY

REMINDERS

CLASS SCHEDULE

Below is a continuously updated class schedule. It contains information on what topics we are covering as well as on the readings and assignments. Please check this site EVERY WEEK.

Week 1

- Monday (8/28): Introduction to the Course
 - Slides
 - Reading: Syllabus for PSC 202
- Wednesday (8/30): No class (Prof. Weschle out of town)

Week 2

- Monday (9/4): No class (Labour Day)
- Wednesday (9/6): Studying Politics Scientifically
 - Reading 1: Shepsle, Kenneth A. (2010): "It Isn't Rocket Science, but..." p. 3-6. (Blackboard)
 - Reading 2: Monroe, Alan D. (2000): "The Scientific Study of Research Questions." p. 1-12. (Blackboard)
 - Multiple Choice Quiz due (3:45 PM, Blackboard)

- <http://www.simonweschle.com/psc202>

HOUSEKEEPING

PSC.202.M100.FALL23.Intro to Political Analysis 11091.1241 Announcements

Announcements

New Announcements appear directly below the repositionable bar. Move the bar to the top of the list and prevent new announcements from superseding existing announcements.

Create Announcement

New announcements appear below this line

Reminder: No Class this Week

Posted on: Tuesday, August 29, 2023 3:41:07 PM EDT

Hi all,

- Reading multiple choice quiz: Any issues?
- New quiz posted after class
 - Due Monday start of class

HOUSEKEEPING

- **Read the syllabus**
 - **Carefully!**

HOUSEKEEPING

- **Textbook available through Orange Instant Access**
- **Automatically enrolled, costs \$42.35 to have e-book for 180 days**
- **Can access through Blackboard > Textbook**
- **Can opt out until September 11, 11.59PM and purchase it elsewhere**

HOUSEKEEPING

- **Sections start on Friday**

OVERVIEW

- Evolution of the study of politics
- Studying politics scientifically
- Topics in political science

WHAT IS POLITICS?

- **Harold Lasswell: Politics is the process of deciding “who gets what, where, and when.”**

HISTORY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

- **Political science today is very different from political science 50-60 years ago**
- **How?**

HISTORY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Stories, anecdotes



Thick description, historical writing

EARLY POLITICAL SCIENCE

- **Descriptive**
 - Description of how a committee (in Congress) works
 - Description of electoral systems (proportional representation, first-past-the-post, etc.)
- **Normative**
 - Concern about dominance of committees in workings of Congress
 - Judgment whether proportional representation or first-past-the-post electoral system is better

HISTORY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Stories, anecdotes

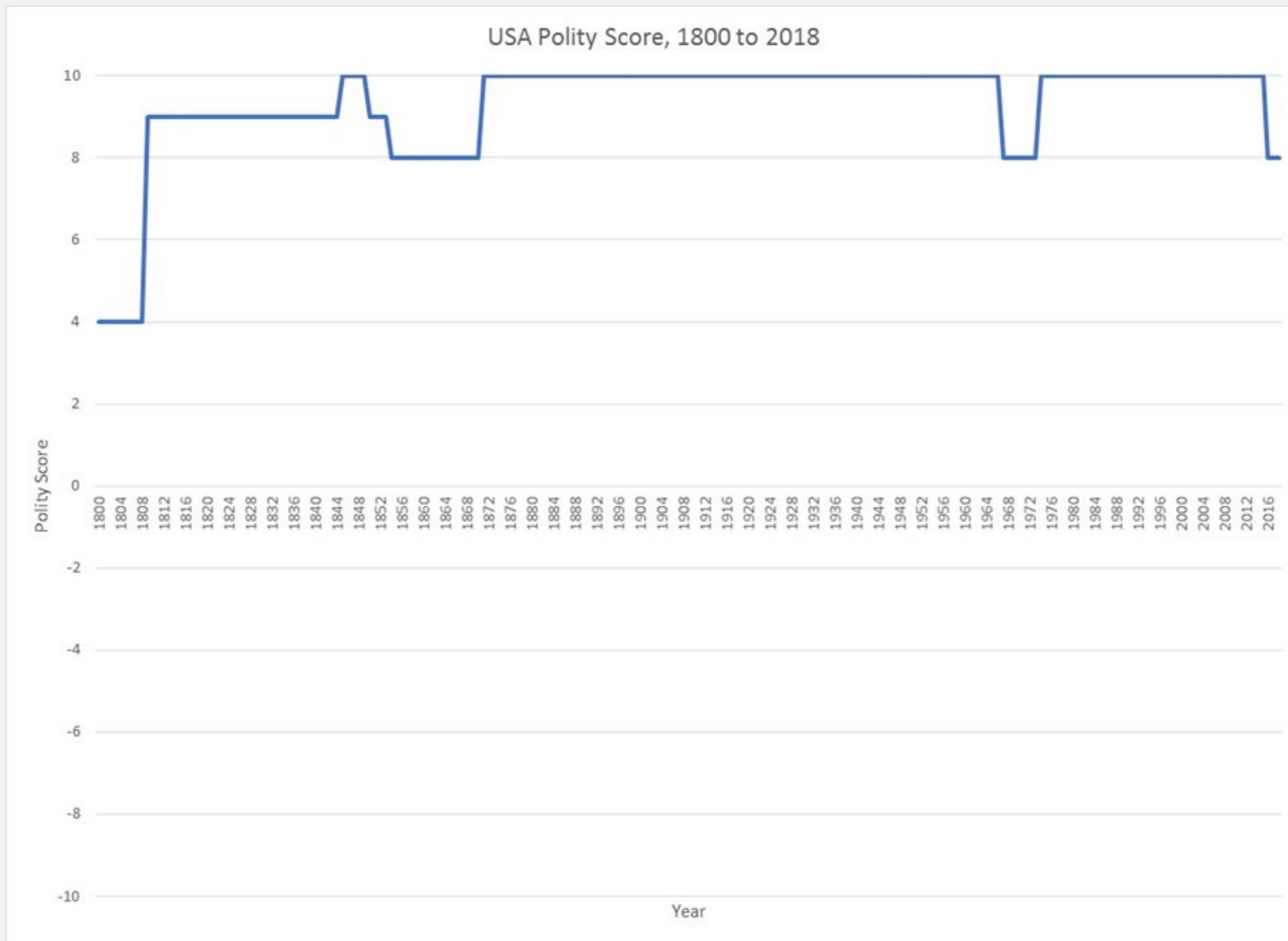


Thick description, historical writing



Systematic measurement

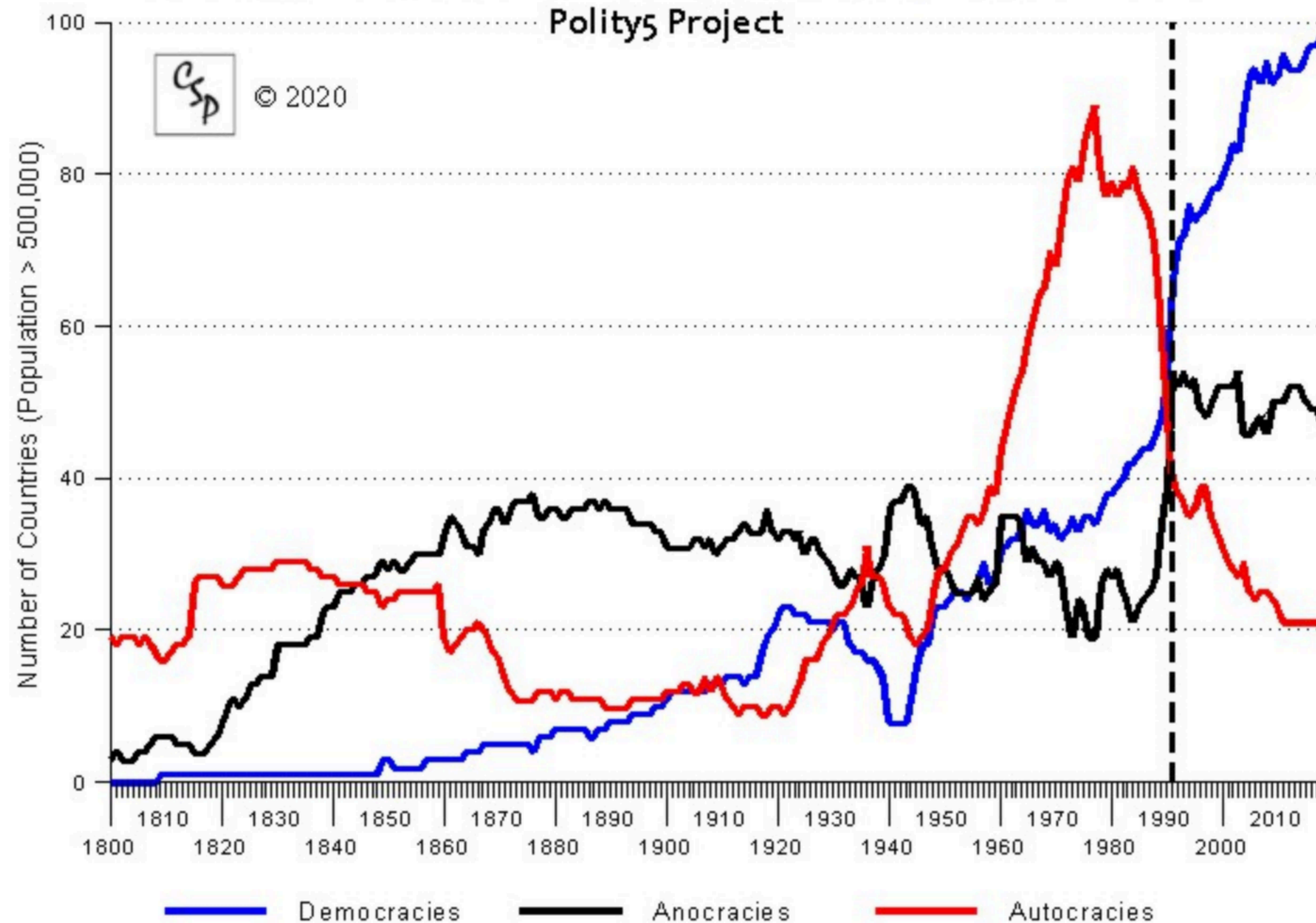
SYSTEMATIC MEASUREMENT



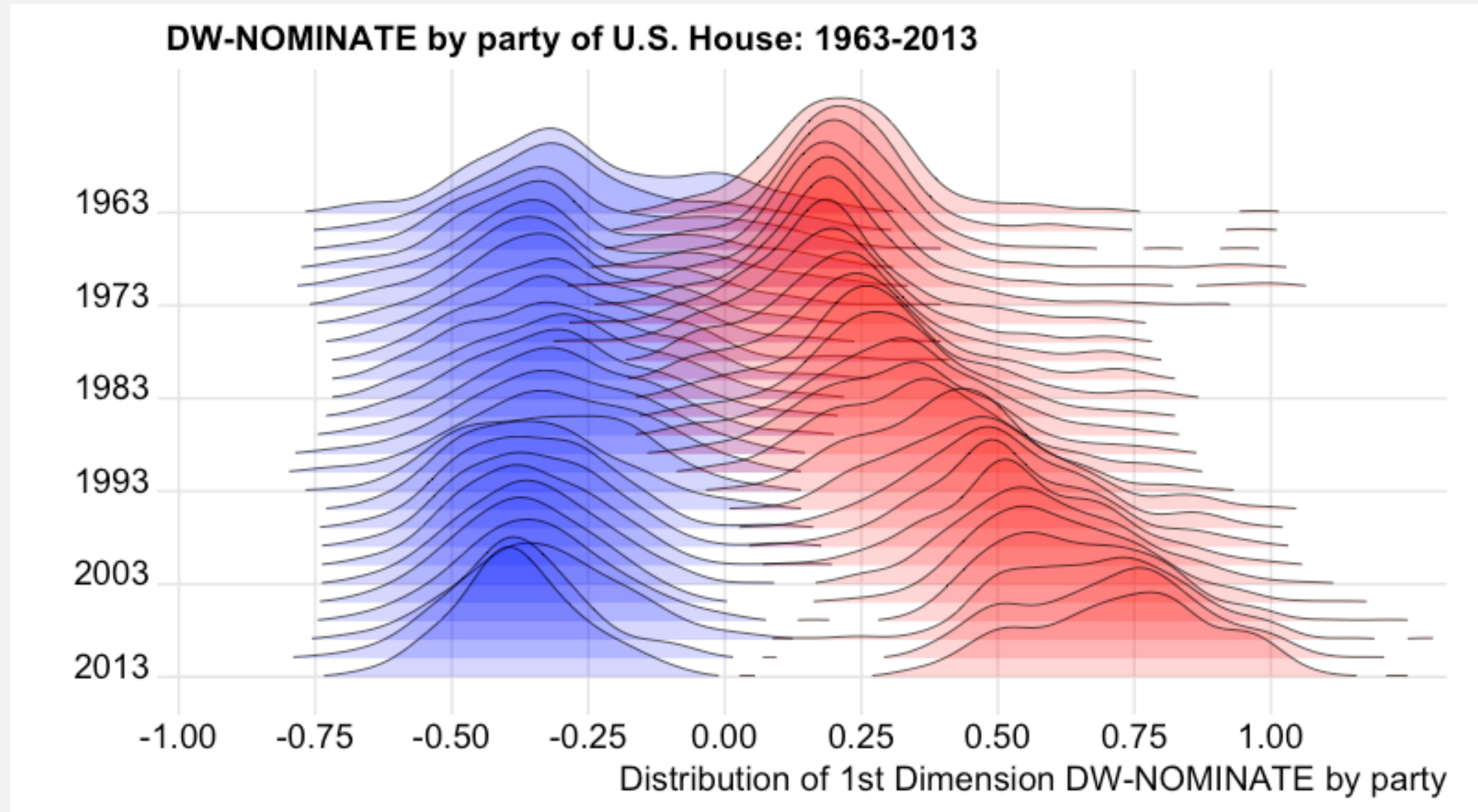
- Polity score measures how democratic countries are

SYSTEMATIC MEASUREMENT

Global Trends in Governance, 1800-2018



POLICY MEASUREMENT



- DW-NOMINATE (voteview.com)

SYSTEMATIC MEASUREMENT

117th Congress (2021-2023) ▾ > Senators

Roster ([Graphical List View](#))

	Name↓↑	Party↓↑	State↓↑	NOMINATE↓↑
1.	WARREN, Elizabeth	Democrat	Massachusetts	-0.752
2.	HARRIS, Kamala Devi	Democrat	California	-0.709
3.	BOOKER, Cory Anthony	Democrat	New Jersey	-0.586
4.	SANDERS, Bernard	Independent	Vermont	-0.537
5.	MARKEY, Edward John	Democrat	Massachusetts	-0.514

117th Congress (2021-2023) ▾ > Senators

Roster ([Graphical List View](#))

	Name↓↑	Party↓↑	State↓↑	NOMINATE↓ ^z _R
1.	TUBERVILLE, Thomas Hawley (Tommy)	Republican	Alabama	0.936
2.	PAUL, Rand	Republican	Kentucky	0.891
3.	LEE, Mike	Republican	Utah	0.891
4.	CRUZ, Rafael Edward (Ted)	Republican	Texas	0.806
5.	BRAUN, Michael	Republican	Indiana	0.8

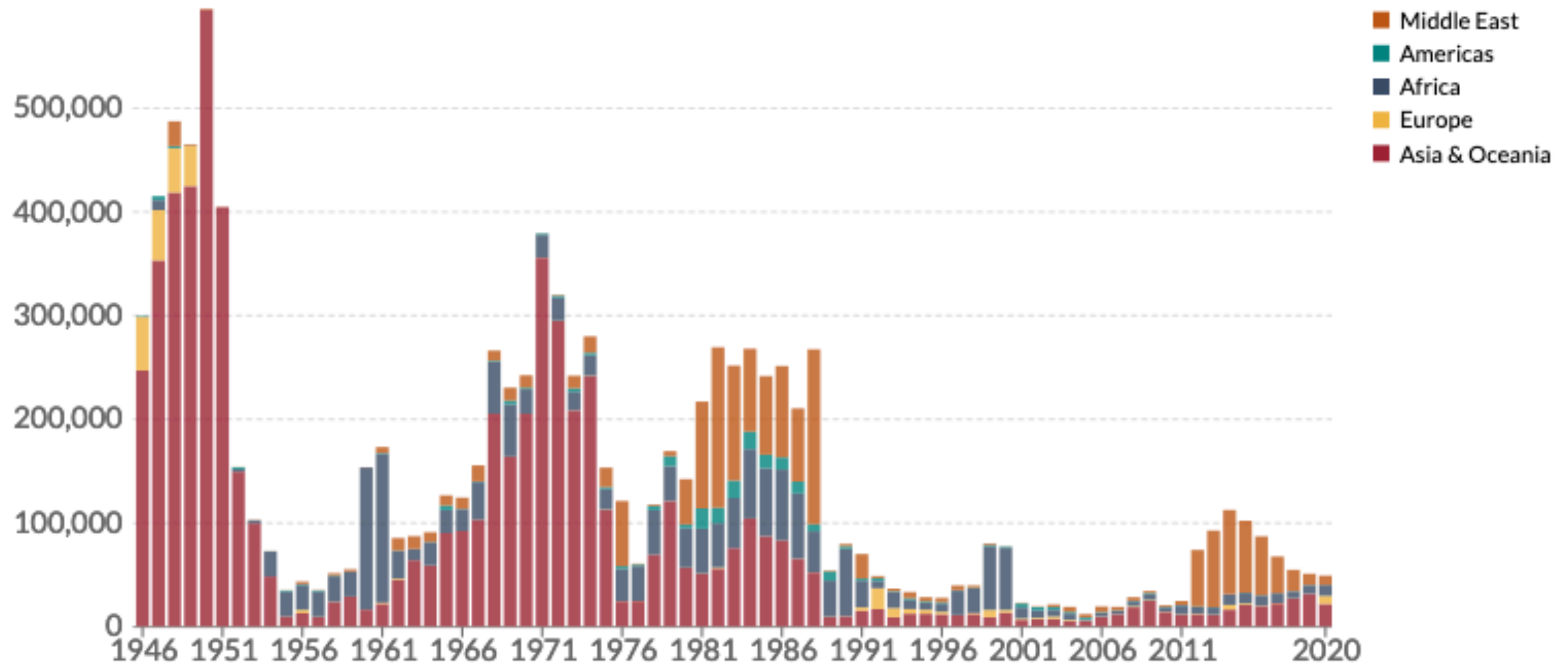
- <https://voteview.com/congress/senate/117/text>

SYSTEMATIC MEASUREMENT

Deaths in state-based conflicts, by world region

Our World
in Data

Civilian and military deaths in conflicts where the government of a state was a participant on at least one side. The data counts only direct violent deaths (i.e. excluding deaths from disease or famine).



Source: OWID based on PRIO and UCDP

Note: The figures shown aggregate the sources' 'best' estimates for deaths in individual conflicts, or the mid-point between high and low estimates where no best estimate is provided.

OurWorldInData.org/war-and-peace • CC BY

HISTORY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

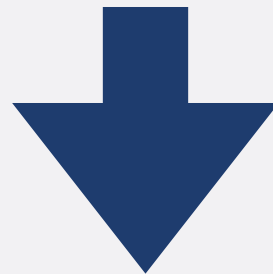
Stories, anecdotes



Thick description, historical writing



Systematic measurement



Explanation, analysis

EXPLANATION & ANALYSIS

- **Explanation, not just description**
 - **Answering “why” questions**
 - *Why* does a Congressional committee exist?
 - *Why* do countries with proportional representation have more parties than countries with first-past-the-post?
- **Analytical, not normative**
 - **Understanding what is going on rather than saying what should be going on**

OVERVIEW

- Evolution of the study of politics
- Studying politics scientifically
- Topics in political science

SCIENCE

- **What does it mean to be scientific?**

SCIENCE

- **What does it mean to be scientific?**
- **"An attempt to identify and test empirical generalizations"**

SCIENCE

- What does it mean to be scientific?
- "An attempt to identify and test **empirical** generalizations"

EMPIRICAL

- **Empirical:** a statement that can be confirmed or shown false through observation
- **Normative:** a statement that expresses judgment or belief about what ought to be

SCIENCE

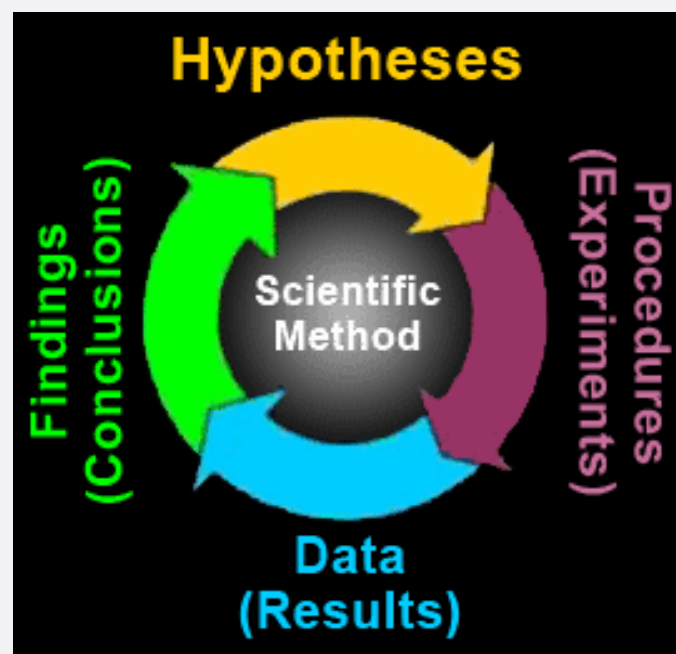
- What does it mean to be scientific?
- "An attempt to identify and test empirical generalizations"

SCIENCE

- What does it mean to be scientific?
- "An attempt to **identify and test** empirical generalizations"

KEY STEPS IN THE SCIENTIFIC PROCESS

- **Formulate research question**
- **Propose explanation/theory, hypotheses**
- **Research design, data collection process**
- **Use data to evaluate hypotheses**
- **Reassess explanation**

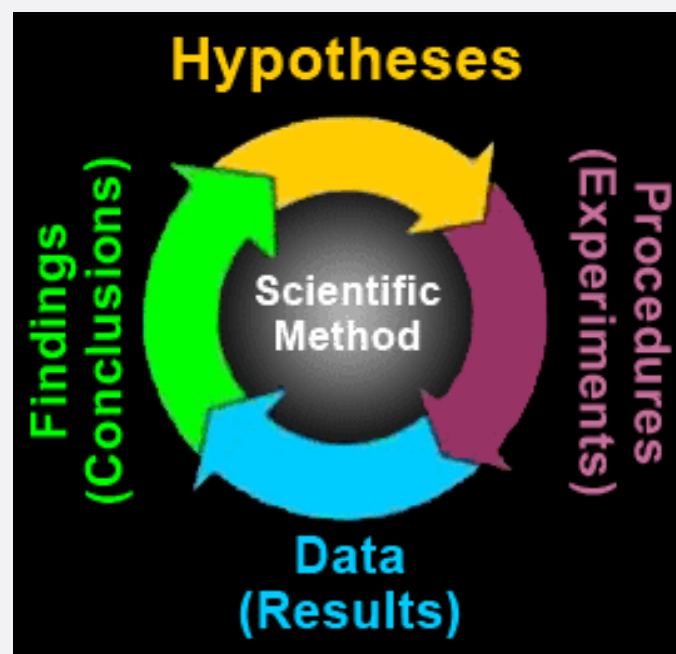


FORMULATE RESEARCH QUESTION

- Remember: an attempt to identify and test *empirical* generalizations
- What is wrong with these research questions?
 - Was Trump a good president?
 - Should taxes be increased?
 - Is democracy the best form of government?

KEY STEPS IN THE SCIENTIFIC PROCESS

- Formulate research question
- Propose explanation/theory, hypotheses
- Data collection process
- Use data to evaluate hypotheses
- Reassess explanation



PROPOSE EXPLANATION/ THEORY, HYPOTHESES

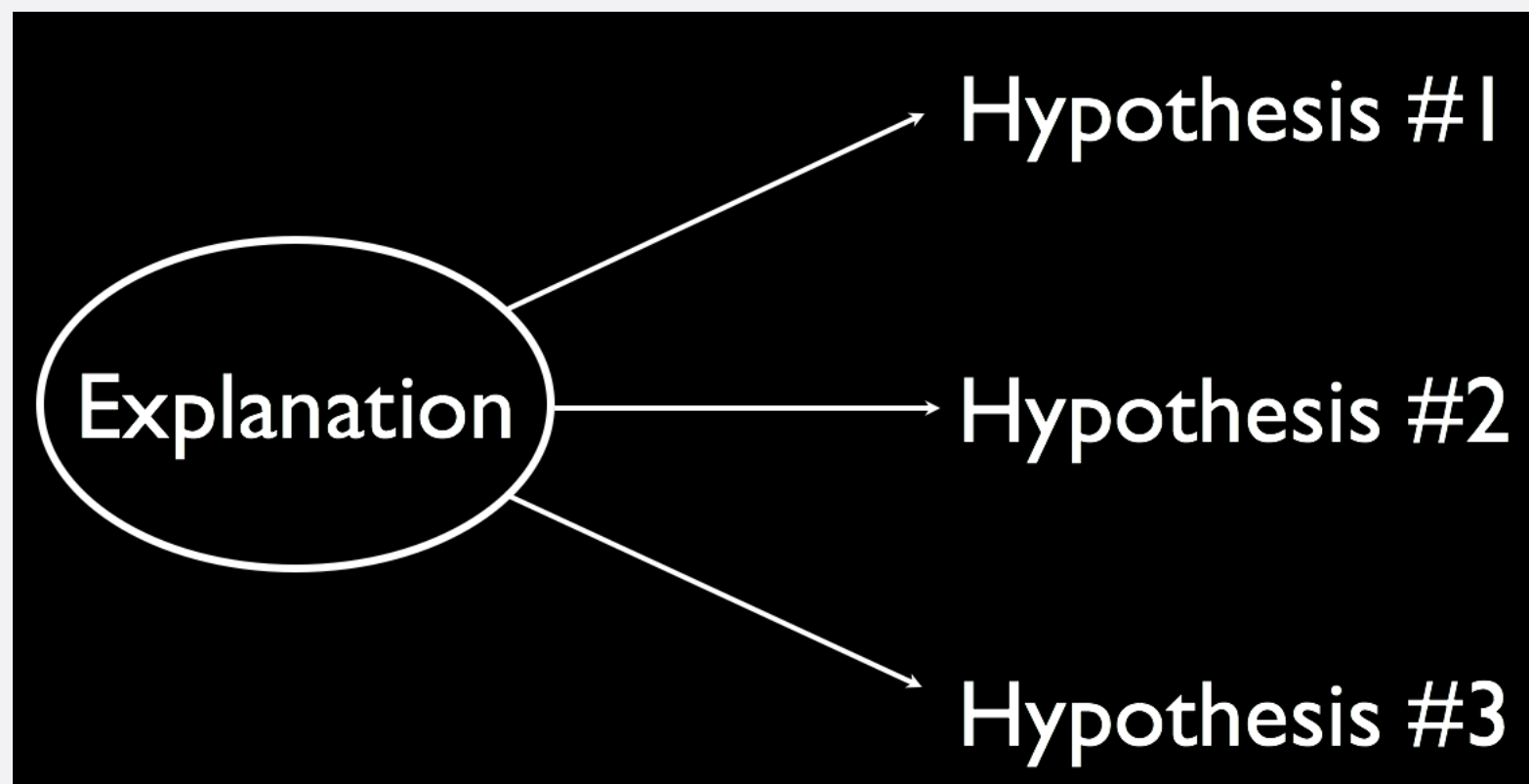
- **Explanation/Theory:** broad statement about how, and why the world works in a specific way
 - **Research question:** Why do some Americans, but not others, think Biden is a good president?
 - **Explanation/Theory:** Approval of Biden depends on
- **Hypotheses:** empirically testable statement that follows from a theory

PROPOSE EXPLANATION/ THEORY, HYPOTHESES

- **Explanation/Theory:** broad statement about how, and why the world works in a specific way
 - **Research question:** Why do some Americans, but not others, think Biden is a good president?
 - **Explanation/Theory:** Approval of Biden depends on how well voters' did economically during his presidency (so far)
- **Hypotheses:** empirically testable statement that follows from a theory

PROPOSE EXPLANATION/ THEORY, HYPOTHESES

- **Explanation/Theory: Approval of Biden depends on how well voters' did economically during his presidency**

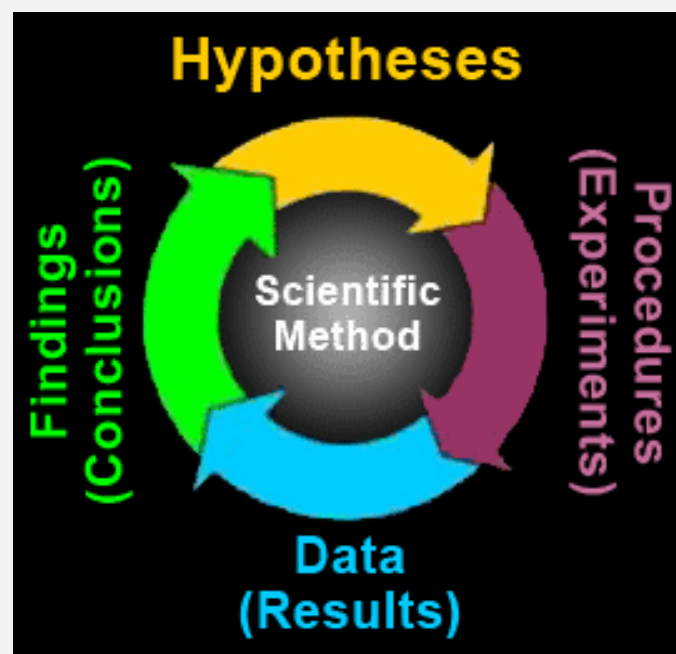


PROPOSE EXPLANATION/ THEORY, HYPOTHESES

- Hypotheses: *Empirically testable* statements that follows from a theory
 - Hypothesis 1: Voters whose income grew since 2020 are more likely to think that Biden is a good president
 - Hypothesis 2: Voters who lost their job at any point since 2020 are less likely to think that Biden is a good president

KEY STEPS IN THE SCIENTIFIC PROCESS

- Formulate research question
- Propose explanation/theory, hypotheses
- Data collection process
- Use data to evaluate hypotheses
- Reassess explanation



DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

- **What kind of data could we collect to test our hypotheses?**

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

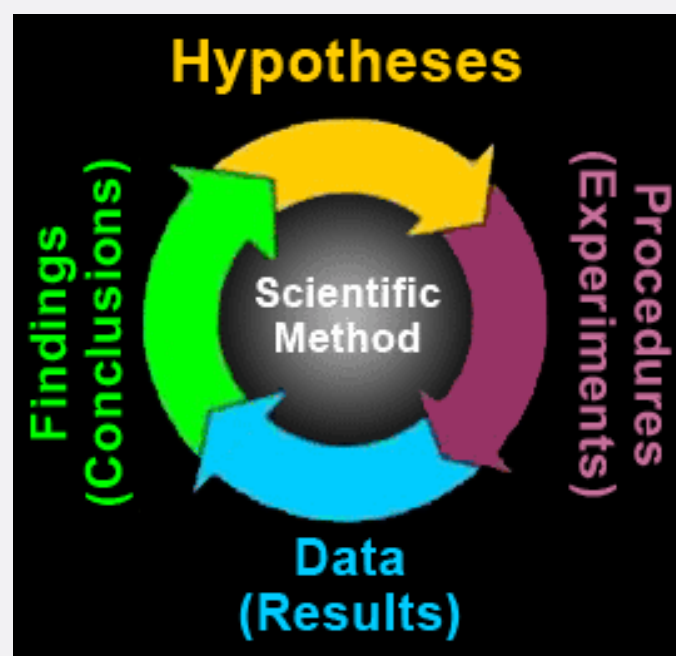
- **What kind of data could we collect to test our hypotheses?**
 - **Survey**

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

- **What kind of data could we collect to test our hypotheses?**
 - **Survey**
 - **Need information on:**
 - **Do respondents think Biden is a good president?**
 - **Income today and in 2020**
 - **Unemployed between 2020 and today, yes or no?**

KEY STEPS IN THE SCIENTIFIC PROCESS

- Formulate research question
- Propose explanation/theory, hypotheses
- Data collection process
- Use data to evaluate hypotheses
- Reassess explanation

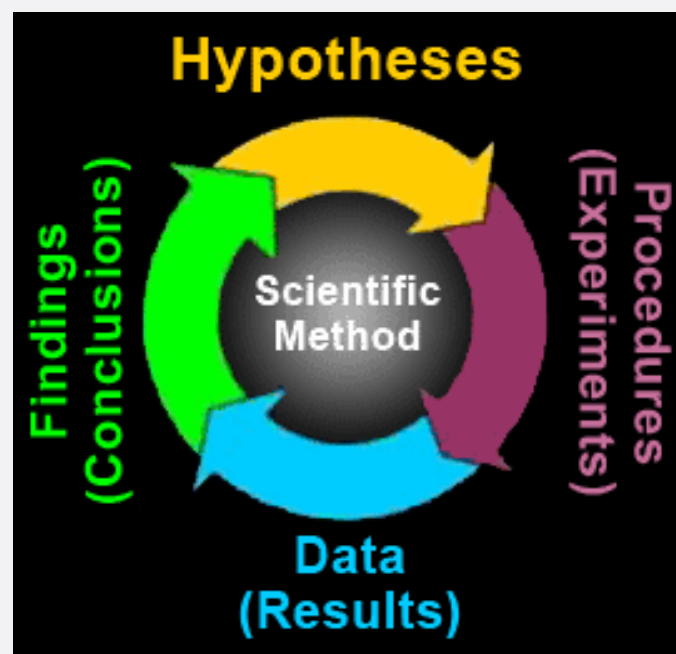


USE DATA TO EVALUATE HYPOTHESES

- **Hypothesis 1: Voters whose income grew since 2020 are more likely to think that Biden is a good president**
 - Use data to decide if true or false
- **Hypothesis 2: Voters who lost their job at any point since 2020 are less likely to think that Biden is a good president**
 - Use data to decide if true or false

KEY STEPS IN THE SCIENTIFIC PROCESS

- Formulate research question
- Propose explanation/theory, hypotheses
- Data collection process
- Use data to evaluate hypotheses
- Reassess explanation

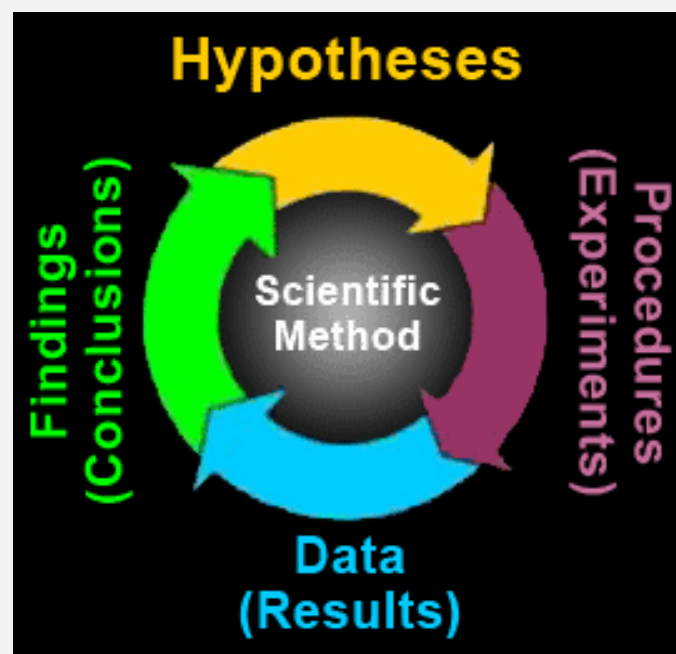


REASSESS EXPLANATION

- **Did our explanation/theory find support?**
 - **Explanation/Theory: Approval of Biden depends on how well voters' did economically during his presidency**
- **Yes/no/partly?**

KEY STEPS IN THE SCIENTIFIC PROCESS

- **Formulate research question**
- **Propose explanation/theory, hypotheses**
- **Data collection process**
- **Use data to evaluate hypotheses**
- **Reassess explanation**



CHARACTERISTICS

- Science is a *procedure* to conduct objective testing
 - Outcome of test should not depend on personal political preferences
 - Intersubjective testability
 - Science: Following procedure and report all steps
 - Someone else who follows the steps comes to same conclusion as I do

CHARACTERISTICS

- **Political Scientists are the opposite of lawyers**
 - **Lawyer: Use evidence (selectively) to argue case**
 - **(Political) scientist: What is the hardest and most rigorous way to test one's own hypothesis**

STARTING NEXT CLASS

- **Journey through the research process**
 - **How to do scientific empirical research in political science**

OVERVIEW

- Evolution of the study of politics
- Studying politics scientifically
- Topics in political science

TOPICS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

- **American Politics**
- **Comparative Politics**
- **International Relations**
- **Political Theory**