

PSC 202

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

# **INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

**STUDYING POLITICS SCIENTIFICALLY**

# HOUSEKEEPING

## 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

- Wednesday (1/18): Introduction to the Course
  - Slides
  - Reading: Syllabus for PSC 202

### Week 2

- Monday (1/23): 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)
- Wednesday (1/25): Research Questions in Political Science
  - Reading: Barakso, Maryann, Daniel M. Sabet, and Brian F. Schaffner (2014): "The Research Question." (Blackboard)

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

# 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 Jan 31, 11.59PM and purchase it elsewhere**

# 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**

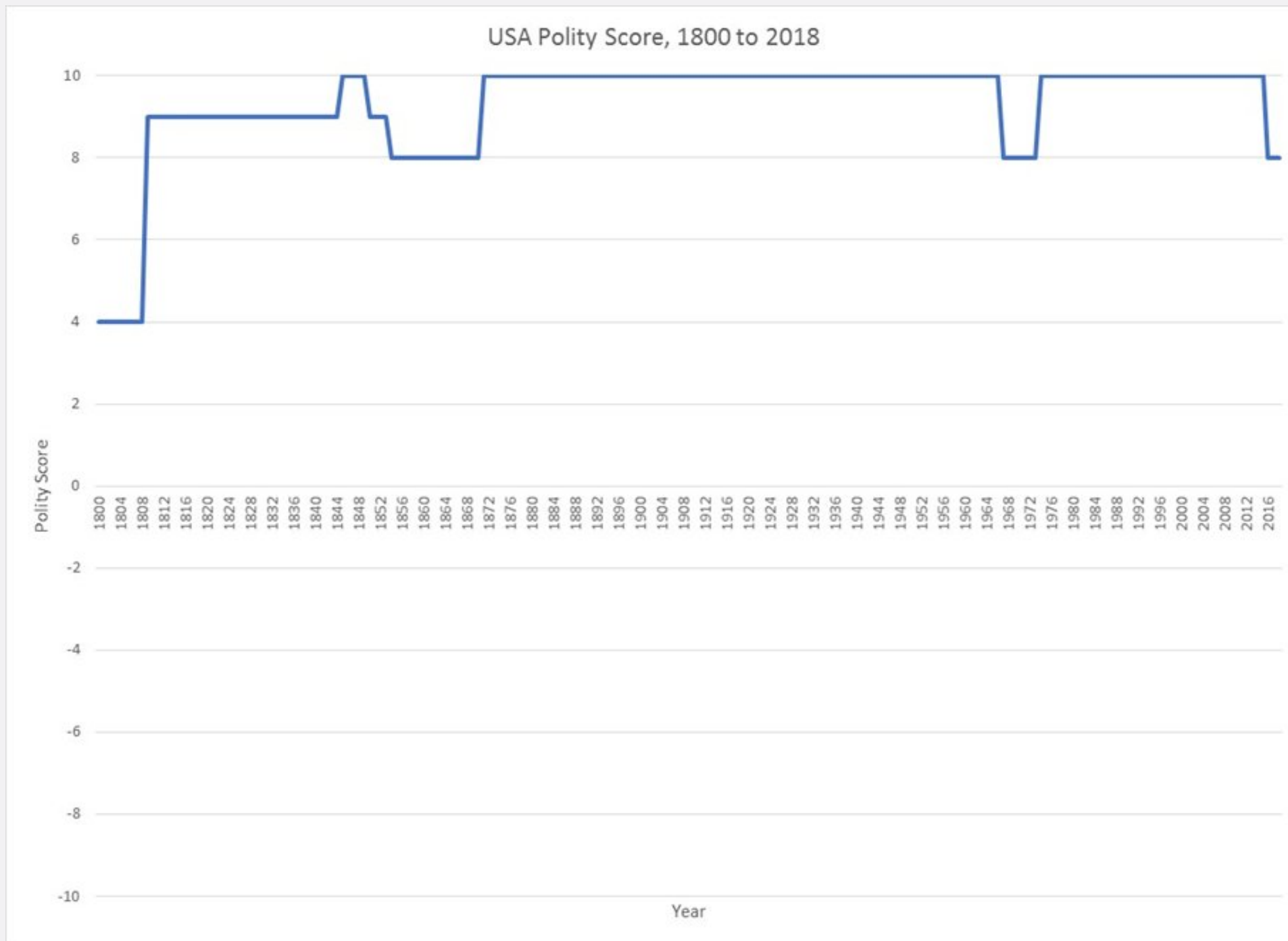


**Thick description, historical writing**



**Systematic measurement**

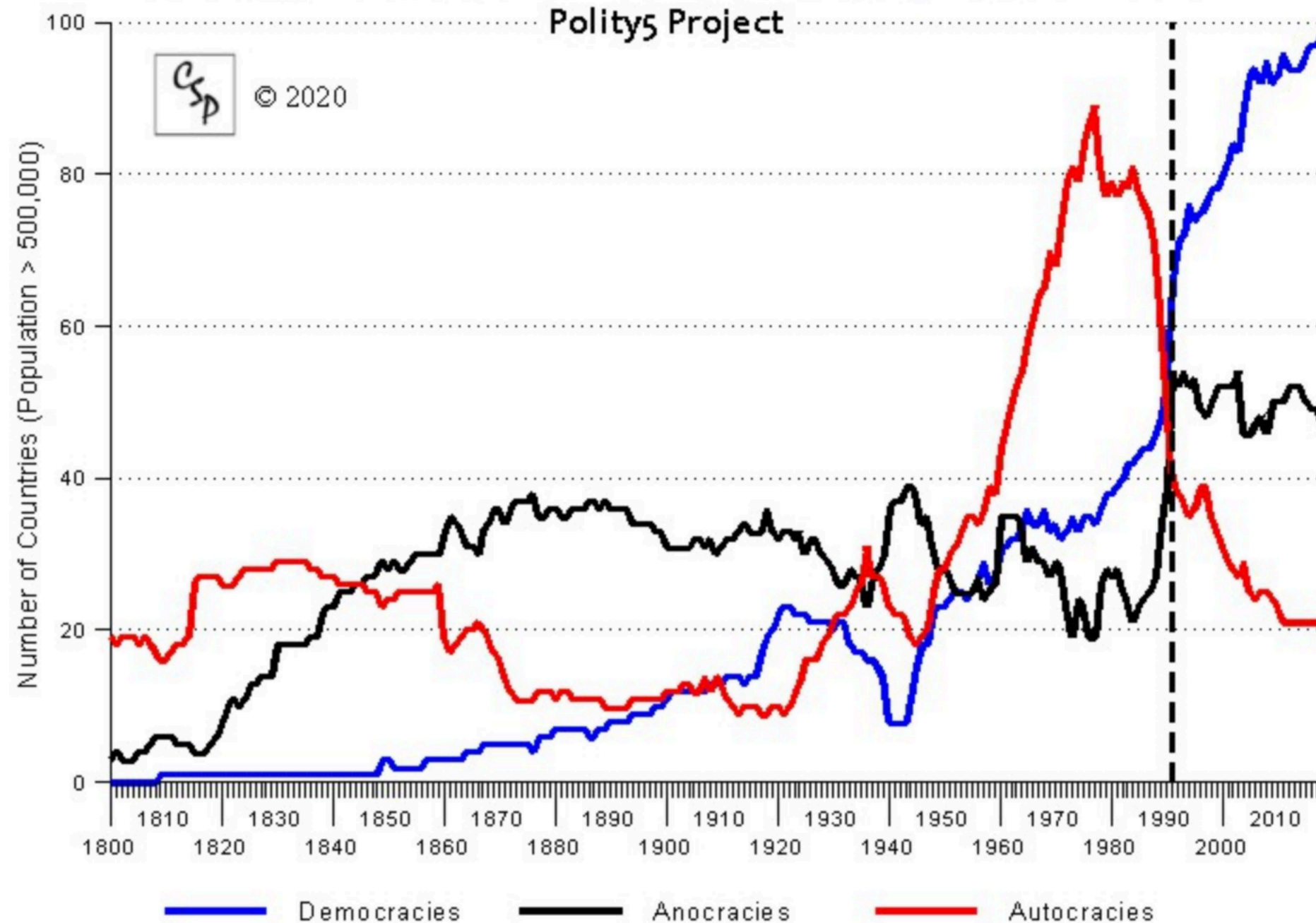
# SYSTEMATIC MEASUREMENT



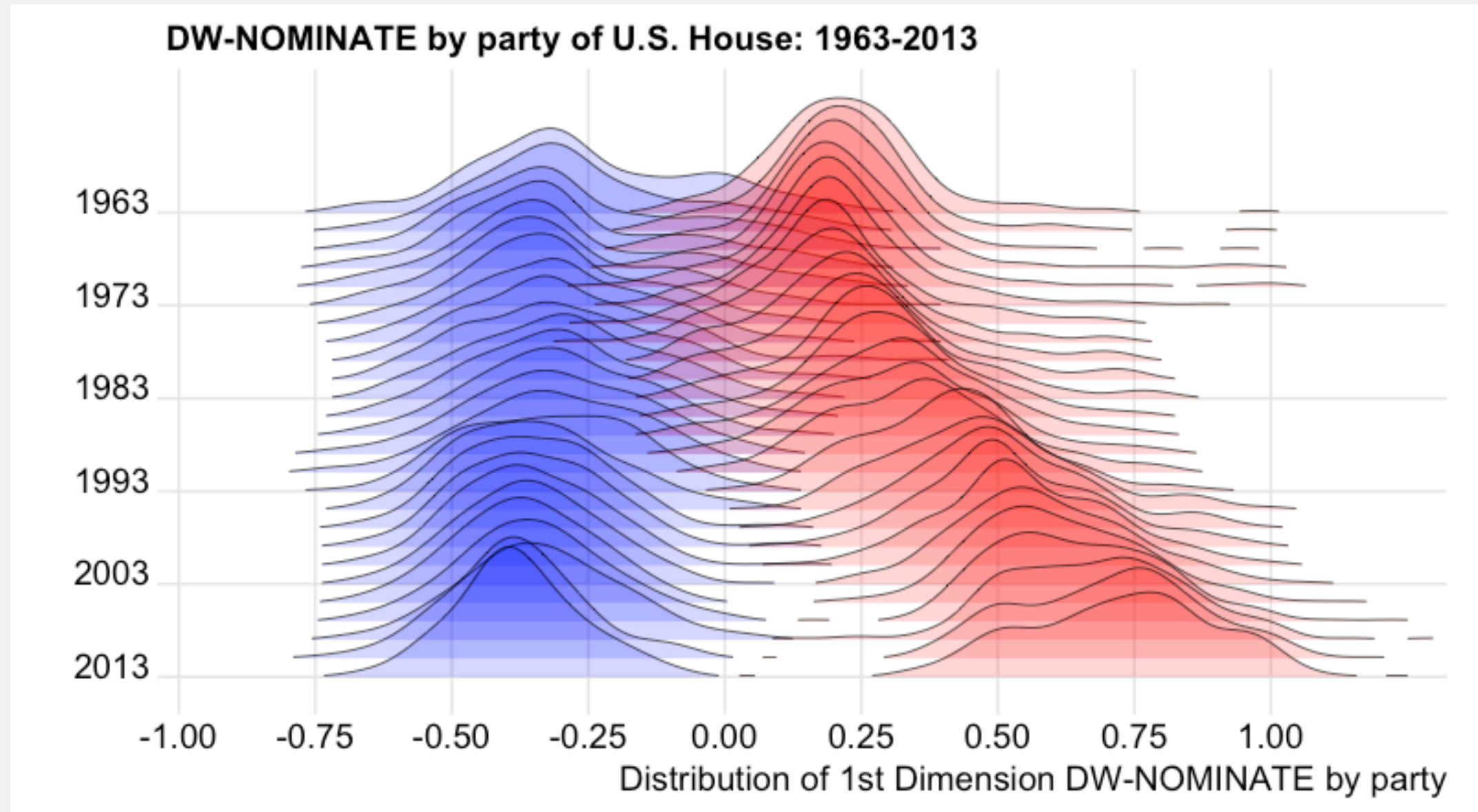
- Polity score measures how democratic countries are

# SYSTEMATIC MEASUREMENT

## Global Trends in Governance, 1800-2018



# POLICY MEASUREMENT



- DW-NOMINATE ([voteview.com](http://voteview.com))

# SYSTEMATIC MEASUREMENT

117th Congress (2021-2023) ▾ > Senators

Roster ([Graphical List View](#))

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

117th Congress (2021-2023) ▾ > Senators

Roster ([Graphical List View](#))

	Name↓↑	Party↓↑	State↓↑	NOMINATE↓ <sub>R</sub> ↑
1.	<a href="#">TUBERVILLE, Thomas Hawley (Tommy)</a>	Republican	Alabama	0.936
2.	<a href="#">LEE, Mike</a>	Republican	Utah	0.891
3.	<a href="#">PAUL, Rand</a>	Republican	Kentucky	0.889
4.	<a href="#">CRUZ, Rafael Edward (Ted)</a>	Republican	Texas	0.819
5.	<a href="#">BRAUN, Michael</a>	Republican	Indiana	0.8

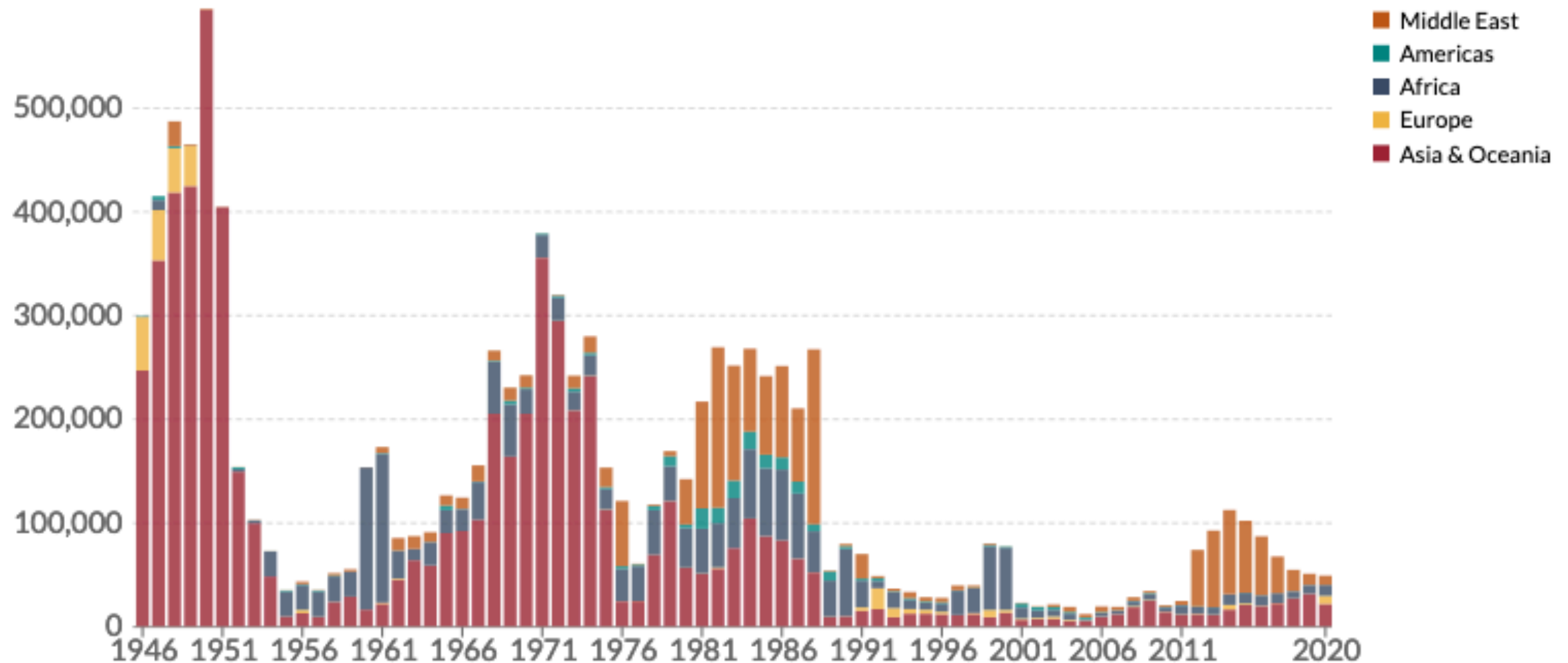
- <https://voteview.com/congress/senate/117/text>

# 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

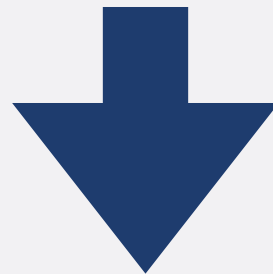
**Stories, anecdotes**



**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

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- **"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"

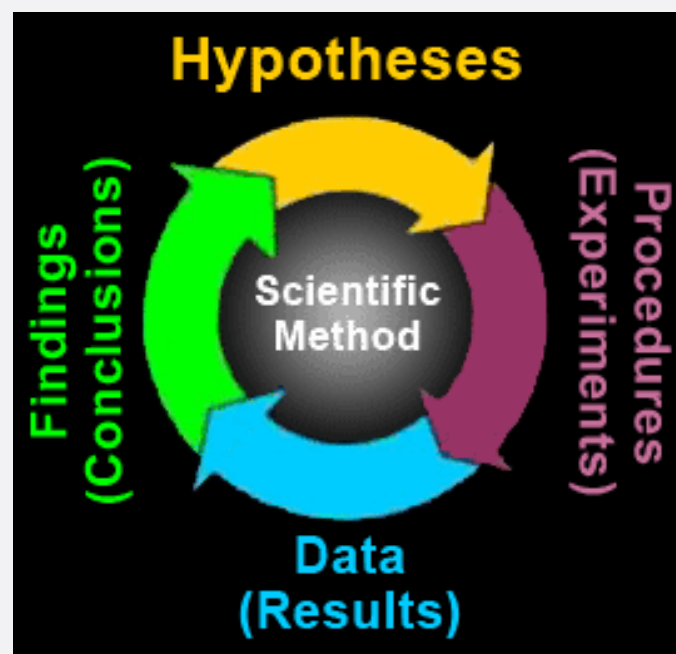
# SCIENCE

- 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**

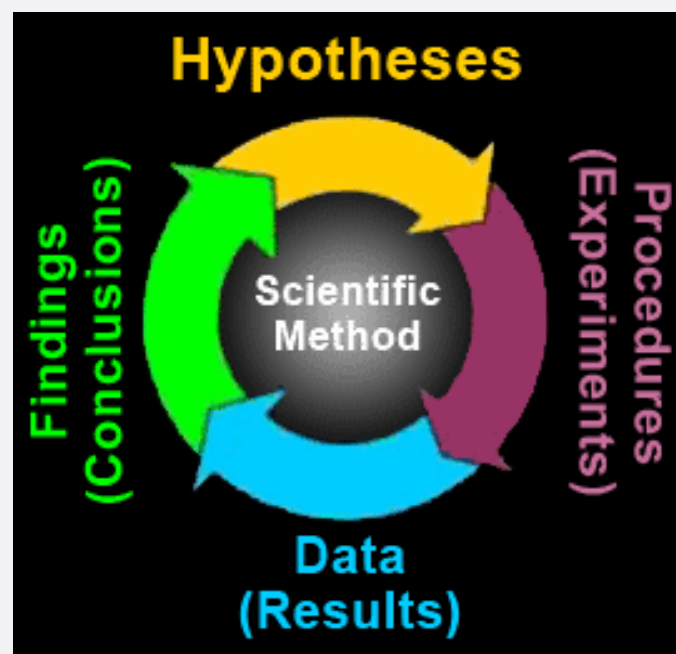


# FORMULATE RESEARCH QUESTION

- 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

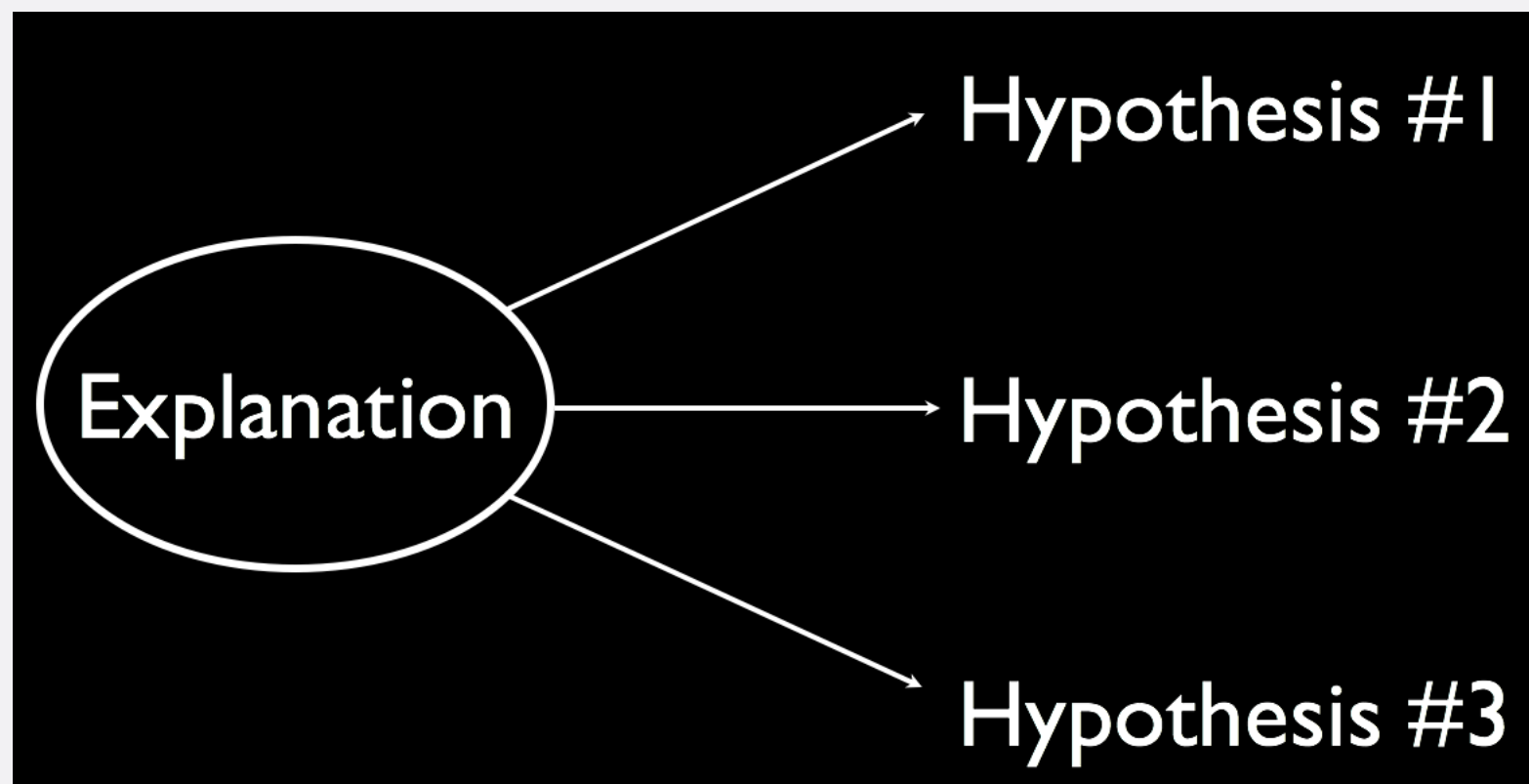


# PROPOSE EXPLANATION/ THEORY, HYPOTHESES

- **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 Trump was a good president?
  - **Explanation/Theory:** Approval of Trump depends on how well voters' did economically during his presidency
- **Hypotheses:** empirically testable statement that follows from a theory

# PROPOSE EXPLANATION/ THEORY, HYPOTHESES

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

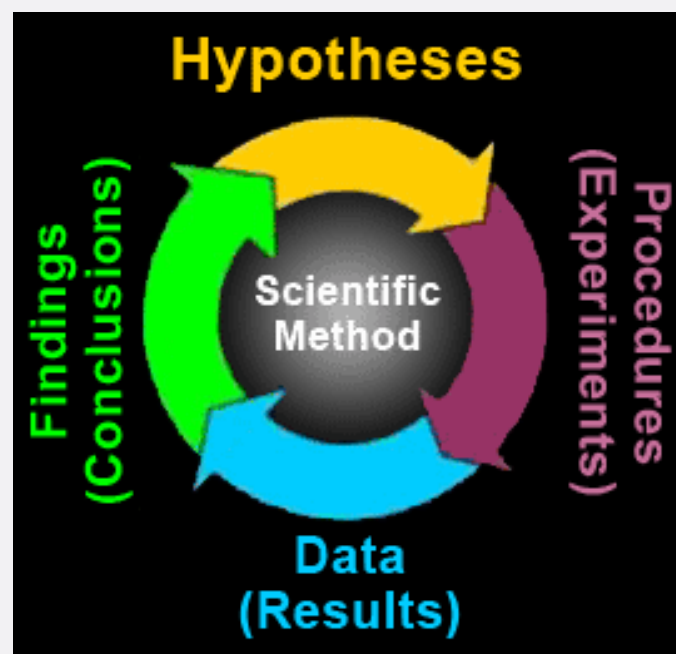


# PROPOSE EXPLANATION/ THEORY, HYPOTHESES

- Hypotheses: *Empirically testable* statements that follows from a theory
  - Hypothesis 1: Voters whose income grew between 2016 and 2020 are more likely to think that Trump was a good President
  - Hypothesis 2: Voters who lost their job at any point between 2016 and 2020 are less likely to think that Trump was 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

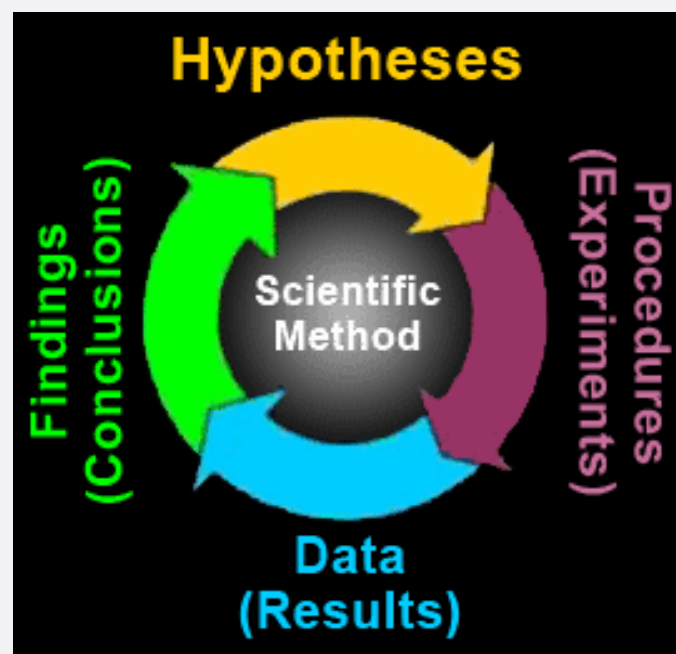
- **What kind of data could we collect to test our hypotheses?**
  - **Survey**

# DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

- **What kind of data could we collect to test our hypotheses?**
  - **Survey**
  - **Need information on:**
    - **Did respondents think Trump was a good president?**
    - **Income in 2016 and 2020**
    - **Unemployed between 2016 and 2020, 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

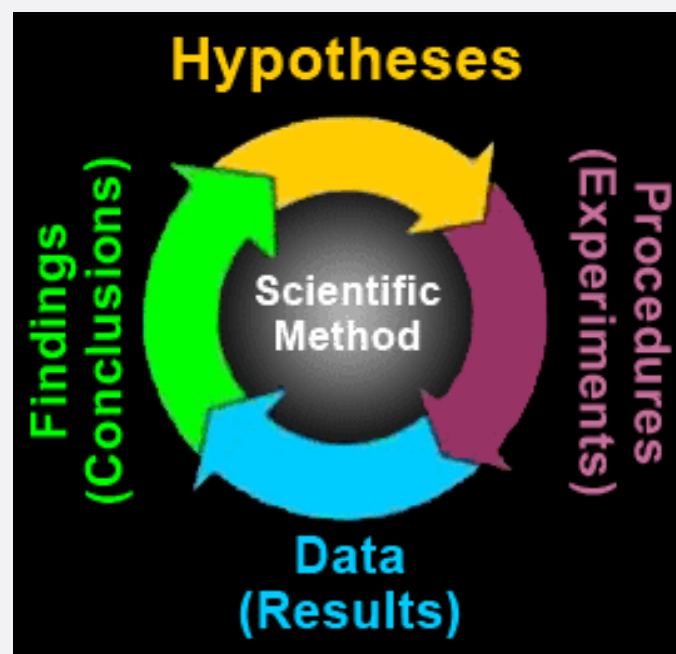


# USE DATA TO EVALUATE HYPOTHESES

- **Hypothesis 1: Voters whose income grew between 2016 and 2020 are more likely to think that Trump was a good President**
  - Use data to decide if true or false
- **Hypothesis 2: Voters who lost their job at any point between 2016 and 2020 are less likely to think that Trump was 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

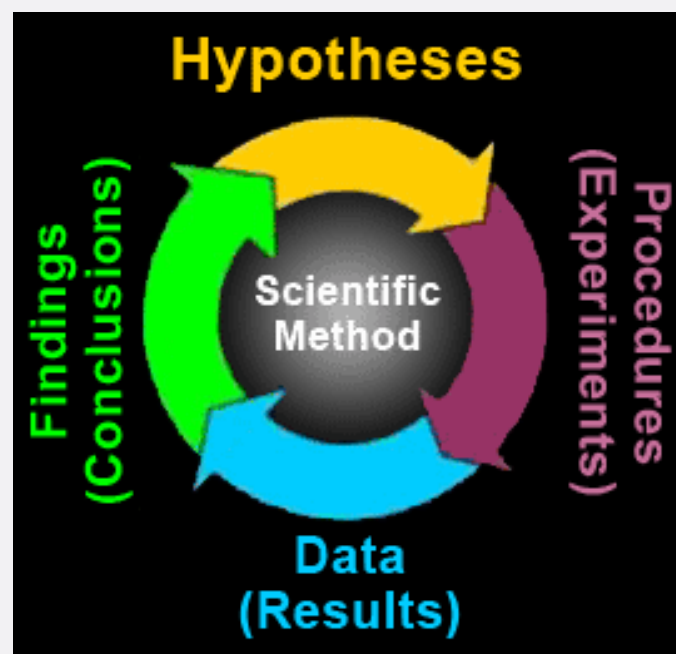


# REASSESS EXPLANATION

- **Did our explanation/theory find support?**
  - **Explanation/Theory: Approval of Trump 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 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
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- Topics in political science

# TOPICS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

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