

PSC 202

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

**INTRODUCTION TO
POLITICAL
ANALYSIS
RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN POLITICAL
SCIENCE**

RECAP

SYLLABUS

- For all kinds of details, **read the syllabus**
 - Read the parts “Main Things to Know” and “More Details on Important Things”
 - **No really, read them carefully...**

- First class

RECAP

HOUSEKEEPING

- Read the syllabus
 - Carefully!

- Second class

RECAP

Finally, there will be miscellaneous small tasks throughout the semester for which you can get credit. For example, one is right here: To show that you read the syllabus, go to <https://forms.gle/F4ohccct2BCM3fCq5> and enter your name, SUID, and tell me about your current favorite movie/TV show, book, album, or podcast. If you do, you'll receive credit towards your participation grade.

RECOMMENDATIONS

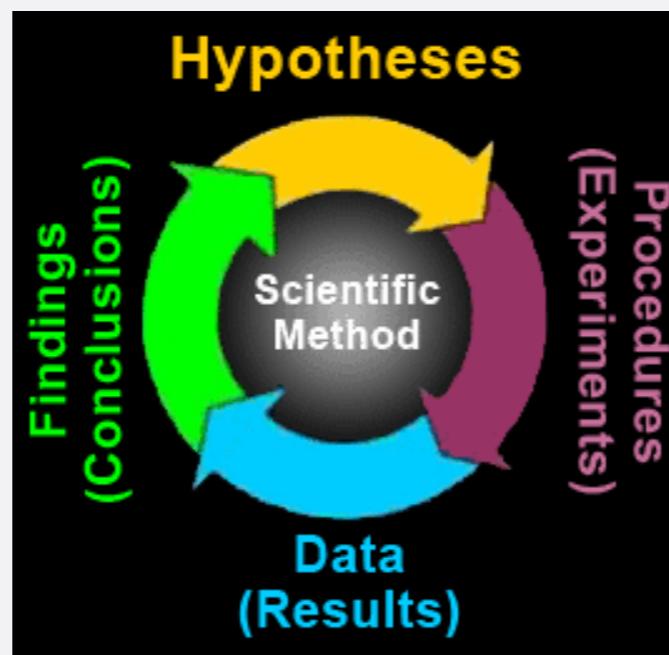
- Multiple mentions:
 - Suits
 - Breaking Bad/Better Call Saul

RECOMMENDATIONS

Normal People								
TV Show: The Summer I Turned Pretty								
My current favorite TV show is suits, it's a show about lawyers in New York City that work at a competitive firm.								
TV Show- One Tree Hill								
My favorite movie of all time is currently Interstellar, directed by Christopher Nolan, if you haven't seen it I highly recommend watching it, it is a masterpiece.								
My current favorite movie is The Batman.								
Suits on Netflix								
Book: Walking with the Wind by John Lewis								
Mamma Mia								
Breaking Bad								
Knives Out for movie, Suits for TV show								
Verity by Colleen Hoover								
Podcast: Aware and Aggravated by Leo Skepi								
Currently, my favorite album is anything by Stromae								
My favorite TV show currently is How I Met Your Mother								
Breaking Bad								
Better Call Saul								
My favorite movie is The Sound of Music								
My current favorite movie is Rush Hour								
My favorite album at the moment is Reputation by Taylor Swift.								
Current favorite show is Better Call Saul, working through the final season now. Highly recommend if you're a fan of Breaking Bad.								
My current favorite album is Stranger in the Alps by Phoebe Bridgers.								
TV shows wise, I finally got around to watching The Sopranos and so far its already in a close tie with Breaking Bad as my favorites								
One Thing At a Time by Morgan Wallen								
Gossip Girl								
Friends								
Good Will Hunting								
My current favorite tv show is Suits.								
Movie: Malignant								
Grey's Anatomy on Netflix is my current favorite TV show!								
Current Favorite TV Show: How To Get Away With Murder								
My TV show is Abbott Elementary.								
Jane the Virgin								
Tv Show: Gossip Girl								
The Barbie Movie.								
My favorite show right now is Hunter X Hunter								
Suits								
Book - Play as it Lays by Joan Didion								
tv show: parks and recreation								
TV show: Scandal								

RECAP

- 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

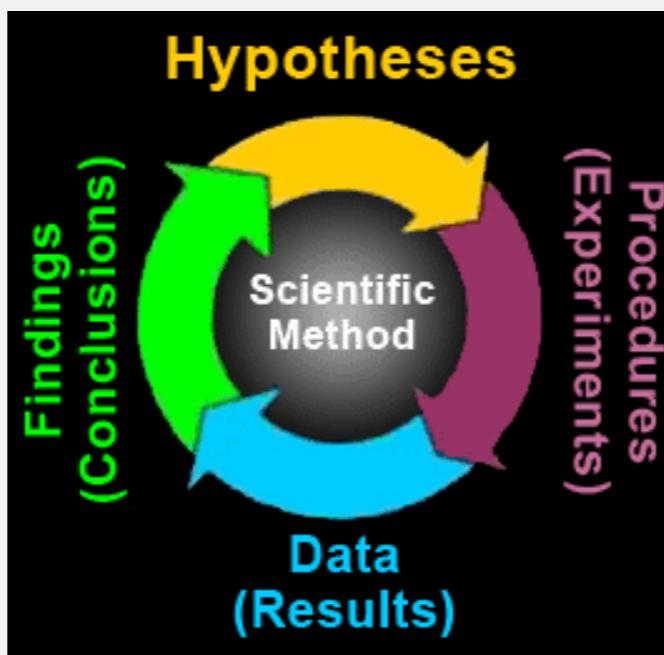
- Political Scientists are the opposite of lawyers
 - Lawyer: Use evidence (selectively) to argue case
 - (Political) scientist: What is the hardest and most rigorous way to test one's own theory

TOPICS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

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

TODAY

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



TODAY

- **Developing a research question**
- **Current research questions in political science**

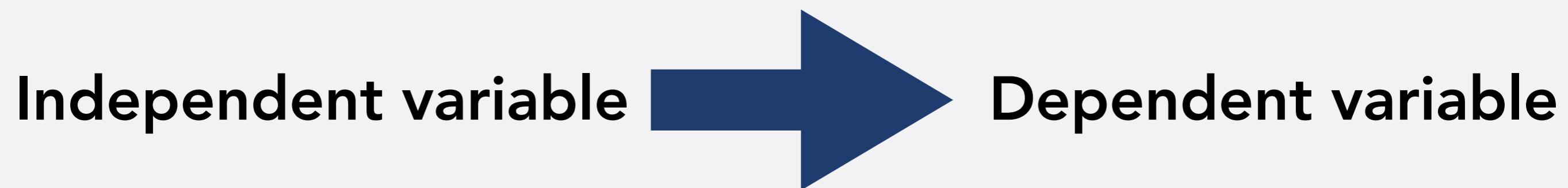
GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Prerequisite for anything else in research process
- A good research project needs a good research question

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO DO?

- Goal: Provide causal explanations for social/political phenomena
- What we are trying to explain: *dependent variable*
- What we are explaining it with: *independent variable*

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO DO?



- **Ultimate goal of research project:**
 - Higher _____ causes higher _____
 - Higher _____ causes lower _____

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS



- Some recent research questions from one political science journal

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Do Immigrants Move to Welfare? Subnational Evidence from Switzerland

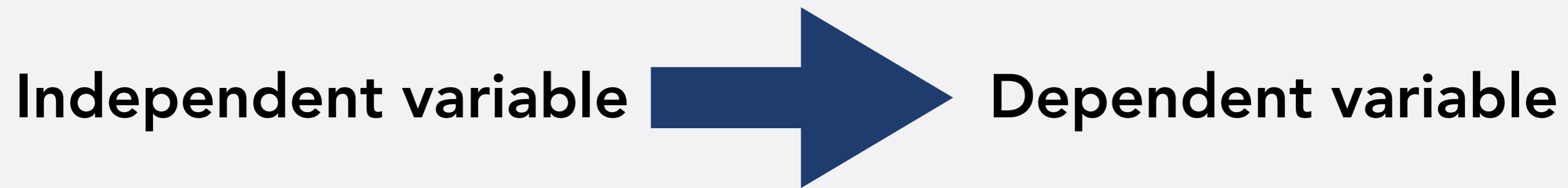
Jeremy Ferwerda ✉, Moritz Marbach ✉, Dominik Hangartner ✉

First published: 13 January 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12766>

Abstract

The welfare magnet hypothesis holds that immigrants are likely to relocate to regions with generous welfare benefits. Although this assumption has motivated extensive reforms to immigration policy and social programs, the empirical evidence remains contested. In this study, we assess detailed administrative records from Switzerland covering the full population of social assistance recipients between 2005 and 2015. By leveraging local variations in cash transfers and exogenous shocks to benefit levels, we identify how benefits shape intracountry residential decisions. We find limited evidence that immigrants systematically move to localities with higher benefits. The lack of significant welfare migration within a context characterized by high variance in benefits and low barriers to movement suggests that the prevalence of this phenomenon may be overstated. These findings have important implications in the European setting where subnational governments often possess discretion over welfare and parties frequently mobilize voters around the issue of “benefit tourism.”

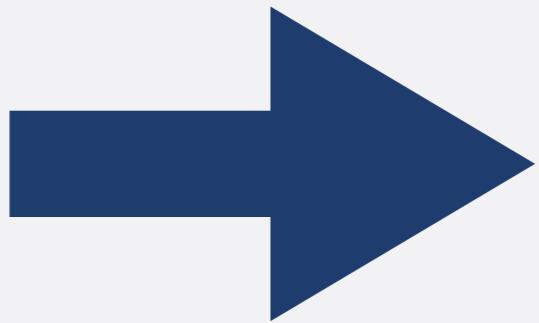
CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS



- Research question: Do immigrants move to places with more generous welfare benefits?

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Welfare benefit
generosity



Immigrants'
decision where
to move

- Research question: Do immigrants move to places with more generous welfare benefits?

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

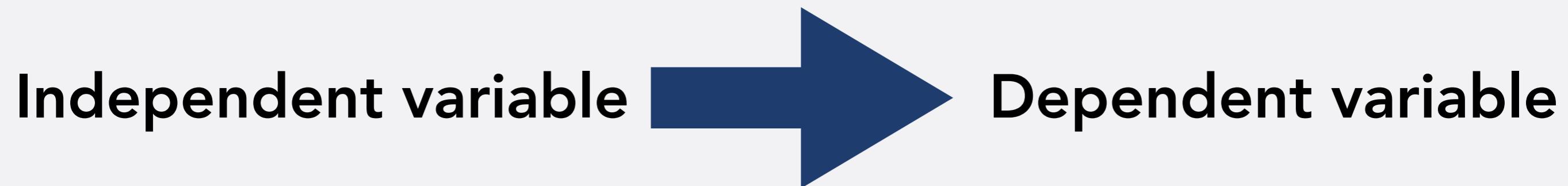
Media Attention and Strategic Timing in Politics: Evidence from U.S. Presidential Executive Orders

Milena Djourelova , Ruben Durante 

Abstract

Do politicians tend to adopt unpopular policies when the media and the public are distracted by other events? We examine this question by analyzing the timing of executive orders signed by U.S. presidents over the past four decades. We find robust evidence that executive orders are more likely to be signed on the eve of days when the news is dominated by other important stories that can crowd out coverage of executive orders. This relationship only holds in periods of divided government when unilateral presidential actions are more likely to be criticized by Congress. The effect is driven by executive orders that are more likely to make the news and to attract negative publicity, particularly those on topics on which president and Congress disagree. Finally, the timing of executive orders appears to be related to predictable news but not unpredictable ones, which suggests it results from a deliberate and forward-looking PR strategy.

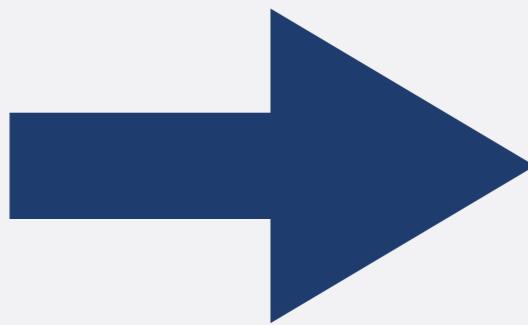
CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS



- Research question: Do politicians adopt unpopular policies when media/public are distracted?

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Media/public
attention



Adoption of
unpopular policies

- Research question: Do politicians adopt unpopular policies when media/public are distracted?

EXERCISE

Politicians' Private Sector Jobs and Parliamentary Behavior

Simon Weschle

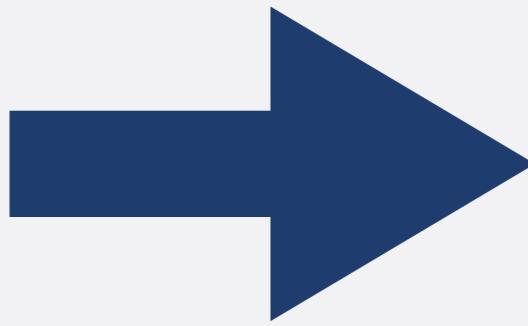
Abstract

About 80% of democracies allow legislators to be employed in the private sector while they hold office. However, we know little about the consequences of this practice. In this article, I use newly assembled panel data of all members of the United Kingdom House of Commons and a difference-in-differences design to investigate how legislators change their parliamentary behavior when they have outside earnings. When holding a private sector job, members of the governing Conservative Party, who earn the vast majority of outside income, change whether and how they vote on the floor of parliament as well as increase the number of written parliamentary questions they ask by 60%. For the latter, I demonstrate a targeted pattern suggesting that the increase relates to their employment. The article thus shows that one of the most common, and yet least studied, forms of money in politics affects politicians' parliamentary behavior.

- **What is the research question? What are dependent and independent variable?**

EXERCISE

Private Sector
Job



Politicians'
parliamentary
behavior

- Research question: Does holding a private sector job affect politicians' parliamentary behavior?

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Good research questions:
 - Do immigrants move to places with more generous welfare benefits?
 - Do politicians adopt unpopular policies when media/public are distracted?
 - Does holding a private sector job affect politicians' parliamentary behavior?
- But how to come up with a good research question?
 - Trial and error
 - Some hallmarks of good research questions

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *You should care about your research question*
- Inspiration can come from what you care about personally
 - But: A topic is not a question

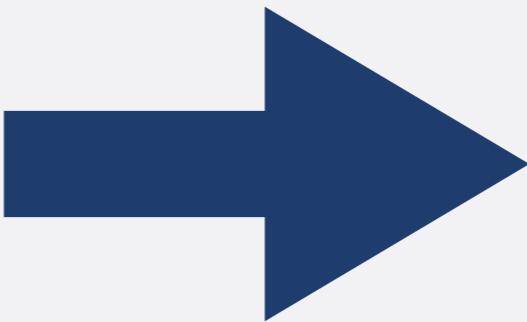
PERSONAL EXAMPLE



- **Gerhard Schröder**
- **Former German chancellor**
- **September 2005: Signs agreement to build controversial gas pipeline between Russia and Germany**
- **November 2005: Resigns as chancellor**
- **17 days later: Accepts position as board chairman of the consortium building the pipeline**
- **Does the fact that politicians can get lucrative jobs in the private sector influence their decisions in office?**

PERSONAL EXAMPLE

Private Sector Job



Decisions in Office

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *The question should not be normative*
- Instead, question should be answerable with data
 - Understand not what should be, but what is
 - Not: “Should politicians be able to take positions in the private sector?”

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *The question should answer an important question in the real world*
- Do people who are not political scientists care about your research question?
 - Does it contribute to a current debate?
 - Does it have policy implications?
 - “So what?”

PERSONAL EXAMPLE

The revolving door: why politicians become lobbyists, and lobbyists become politicians

September 21, 2016 4.28pm EDT

Exclusive

Westminster Accounts: MPs earn £17.1m on top of their salaries since the last election - with Tories taking £15.2m

Eric Cantor enters Wall Street's post-politics revolving door

A Revolving Door Helps Big Banks' Quiet Campaign to Muscle Out Fannie and Freddie

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *The question should answer an important question in the scientific literature*
- Do political scientists care about your research question?
 - Has it been answered before?
 - Does it contribute to a current debate in political science?

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *The question should not be too broad*
 - If too broad, hard to answer: “What effects do private sector jobs have?”
 - Should be specific enough to give direction to research project: “What effect do private sector jobs have on how politicians vote in parliament?”

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ***The question should not be too narrow***
 - “What effect did the private sector job with Gazprom have on Gerhard Schröder’s decision to sign an agreement to build a gas pipeline between Russia and Germany?”
 - Better: “What effect do private sector jobs have on the parliamentary votes of politicians in Germany?”

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **Finding a good research question is a process with lots of trial and error**
 - Question will be too broad
 - Question will be already answered in the scientific literature
 - Question will not be of interest to many
 - You find that you cannot answer your question without answering a different question first
 - etc.

GOOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- You should care about your research question
- The question should not be normative
- The question should answer an important question in the real world and the scientific literature
- The question should not be too broad or too narrow

CURRENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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CURRENT RESEARCH, EXPLAINED



- **Will be launched very soon**
- **goodauthority.com**

CURRENT RESEARCH, EXPLAINED

THE DUCK OF MINERVA



BRIDGING THE POLICY-ACADEMIC GAP: LESSONS FROM AUSTRALIA

Posted by Maria Rost Rublee | 7 September 2023, 07.11 EDT | Academia, Bridging the Gap | 0

GO GREEN FAST: ARE THE INDUSTRIAL POLICIES OF THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION WORKING?

by Josh Busby & Nathan Jensen | 30 August 2023, 13.26 EDT | Environment & Energy | 0

SELECTION PROCESSES IN ACADEMIA: TIME FOR A REVAMP

by Consuelo Thiers | 25 August 2023, 09.53 EDT | Academia | 1

STRATEGIC SERVICE ON THE TENURE TRACK

by Andrew Szarejko & Sibel Oktay | 28 August 2023, 08.30 EDT | Academia, Featured | 0

PATRIARCHY AND THE CULT OF COERCION: PALE, MALE, AND STALE WILL MAKE DETERRENCE FAIL

by Van Jackson | 21 August 2023, 18.26 EDT | Academia, Gender, Security, US Foreign Policy | 0

- www.duckofminerva.com

CURRENT RESEARCH, EXPLAINED

BROADSTREET

The origins of government and the state

Posted on [July 20, 2023](#) by [Leander Heldring](#)



The question on the origins of government and the state is one of the most enduring questions in the social sciences and humanities. On this blog alone, we have had several posts on the origins of various aspects of the state and its capacity, see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Two clusters of theories of ...

[CONTINUE READING](#)

- www.broadstreet.blog

NEXT TIME

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

