

## Ray's 5-Cent Tour of Political Science

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Research Methods

### Today's Blueprint

- What is Political Science?
- How do scholars study it?
- What kinds of topics do these scholars pay attention to?

### What is Political Science?

#### What is Political Science?

- "...[politics] is the authoritative allocation of values in a society" or "who gets what, when, and how."—David Easton (1967)

#### What is Political Science?

- "I do not like the term political science. Human relationships, whether in the family or in the state...are not in any sense the subject matter of science. They are the stuff of insight and sympathy and spiritual comprehension."—Woodrow Wilson

#### What is American Politics?

- "knowledge is the goal [of political science]; competence and reason [are] required of those who pursue it."—Alan Bloom (1987, 261)

#### What is American Politics?

- Philosophy
- Mathematics
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Biology

#### What is American Politics?

- "[Political Science is] the science of man...that discerns the nature of man and the ends of government."—Bloom (1987)

### How Scholars Study Politics

#### How Scholars Study It

Three major phases:

- Traditional Era
- Behavioralist Movement
- Post-Behavioralism
- Neo-Institutionalism?

#### How Scholars Study It

1) Traditional Era:

- Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to 1950s
- Political, but not scientific
- Study of government
  - Descriptive study of:
    - Political history (Civil War historians, etc.)
    - Political institutions (Congress, the Presidency, etc.)

- Law (The Constitution, legal codes, courts, etc.)

#### How Scholars Study It

##### 2) Behaviorist Movement (1950s-1960s):

- Rejection of traditional approach
- Charles Merriam/Chicago School
- Put Scientific Method into Political Science
  - The objective truth is out there
  - Science could get us close to it
  - Science is necessary before political knowledge could be applied to solve the problems of society

#### How Scholars Study It

##### 3) Post-Behavioralism:

- Began in 1960s as a reaction to Behaviorism
- Post-Behavioralist believed that Behaviorists:
  - Were too “objective”
  - Did research that was not grounded in reality
  - Did not focus enough on individuals
- Post-Behavioralists sought to put the “human element” back into social science

#### How Scholars Study It

##### 4) Neo-institutionalism?

- Combines the methodology of post-behavioralism with the institutional focus of the traditional era
- Institutions = Formal and informal
- Examines the role of political institutions in:
  - Political behavior (among the masses)
  - Policy making (among the elites)

### What Do Political Scientists Study?

#### What Do They Study?

- Political Violence/Regime Stability (Gurr 1970):
  - *Research Question:* Why are some governmental regimes more stable than others?

#### What Do They Study?

- Repression of Human Rights (Poe and Tate 1994):
  - *Research Question:* Why do human rights violations by governments vary?

#### What Do They Study?

- Welfare (Piven and Cloward 1971):
  - *Research Question:* Why did the welfare roles in the U.S. expand in the 1960 and 1970s?

#### What Do They Study?

- Democracy and Economic Development (Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994):
  - *Research Question:* Does economic development promote democracy?

#### What Do They Study?

- Popular Influences on Public Policy (Page and Shapiro 1983):
  - *Research Question(s):* Why to public officials make the policy decisions they do? Does public opinion influence public policy? Or does public policy influence public opinion?

#### What Do They Study?

- Judicial Decision Making (Segal and Cover 1989):

- Research Question: They ask: Why do Supreme Court Justices take the stances they take on the cases that come before them.

#### What Do They Study?

- Influencing Bureaucracies (Wood and Waterman 1991):
  - *Research Question*: Why do [what causes] the activities of bureaucracies to change?

#### What Do They Study?

- The Effects of Campaign Advertising on Voters (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, and Valentino 1994):
  - *Research Question*: Do negative campaign advertising and other campaign activities have any impact on the electorate?

Fin.

Pass nickels to the front of the class!

#### References

- FYI:
  - Bloom, Alan. 1987. The Closing of the American Mind. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
  - Easton, David. 1967. "The Current Meaning of Behavioralism." In James C. Chadworth, ed. Contemporary Political Analyses. New York: Free Press.