

In sum, the challenges of teaching interpretive methods have been met by these professors with a mixture of pragmatism, reflexivity, and innovation. And it can be argued that their efforts enrich their departments. Just as theorists of deliberative democracy argue that citizens can learn the most by listening intently to those with whom they disagree, so, too, inclusion of interpretive methods in graduate methods curricula can contribute to the vitality of a department's research life—engendering debate in its graduate seminars and departmental colloquia. At a minimum students can learn that there is no need to fear their “methodological others.”

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to the QMMR section for originally sponsoring this roundtable at the 2008 APSA conference in Boston and to newsletter editor Gary Goertz for encouraging the contributors to formalize their remarks for this symposium. Contributors' syllabi are available by emailing the authors or at the CQRM website hosted at the Maxwell School: <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/moynihan/programs/cqrm/syllabi.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Although Kubik reports working on a new stand-alone course on interpretivism, it is likely that such courses are still relatively rare in the discipline. For an exception, see Lisa Weeden's quarter-length course, *Interpretive Methods in the Social Sciences*, at the University of Chicago. As described in the course catalog, “This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to interpretive methods in the social sciences. Students will learn to ‘read’ texts and images while also becoming familiar with contemporary thinking about interpretation, narrative, ethnography, and social construction. Among the methods we shall explore are: semiotics, hermeneutics, ordinary language theory, and discourse analysis.” Often, stand-alone courses first become available under special topics numbers; see, e.g., a 2009 offering by Ido Oren at the University of Florida, *Interpretive Approaches to Political Science*. Oren's syllabus is available through the CQRM website address in note 1.

<sup>3</sup> For example, as Robert Adcock explains, graduate students at his institution must take *either* an advanced statistics course *or* the research design course he describes in his essay.

---

## *Making Room for Interpretivism?*

### *A Pragmatic Approach*

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.940662>

**Robert Adcock**

George Washington University

[adcockr@gwu.edu](mailto:adcockr@gwu.edu)

Interpretivist scholars have carefully documented the minimal, at best, presence that interpretive philosophical perspectives and empirical methods have had in political science methods texts and curricula (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2002; Schwartz-Shea 2003). What are we to make of this absence? Is there a problem to be rectified here? Or an allocation decision justifiable in light of limited pedagogical time and resources? Given the profusion of philosophical perspectives and methods for accessing, generating, and analyzing data found in the social sciences as a whole, some absences are unavoidable in any single discipline. Thus, the *fact* of the relative absence of interpretivism in the methods training of political science gradu-

*Qualitative & Multi-Method Research, Spring 2009*  
ate students cannot alone support *arguments* for (or against) giving it more room.<sup>1</sup>

I expect readers of this newsletter differ, perhaps even strongly, regarding the imperative (or lack thereof) to expand exposure to interpretivism. Moreover, these differences are, I suspect, tied up with alternative assumptions about how graduate students would respond if interpretivism were given more room in methods training. One potential assumption is that greater exposure would lead more students to use interpretive perspectives or methods in their research. Alternatively, increased exposure might be expected to produce more confusion than conversions. The “conversion” assumption is probably more common among advocates of greater attention to interpretivism, and the “confusion” assumption among skeptics.<sup>2</sup> A third possibility would be a “recognition” assumption that increasing exposure may make graduate students more likely to see interpretive research as falling within the disciplinary parameters of political science, without necessarily making them more likely to undertake it themselves. The latter assumption initially motivated me to experiment with giving interpretivism some room in my methods teaching. But, as I explore below, my experiences have subsequently led me to rethink that initial assumption.

My goal in this piece is to promote treating these kinds of assumptions not as the sacred hopes (or fears) of sects fighting for the souls of students, but as tentative hypotheses. Evaluating them requires introducing some students to interpretive perspectives and methods, and reflecting upon the results. Methods instructors comfortable enough with interpretivism to give it room in their teaching are, however, usually favorably predisposed toward it. To counteract confirmation bias, those of us who make room for interpretivism must be especially attentive to the possibility of minimal or even negative outcomes. A self-critical frankness is essential if our reflections on our experiences are to be received by disciplinary colleagues as imbued not with methodological partisanship, but with pedagogical pragmatism. A pragmatic approach toward making room for interpretivism must reflexively seek out, and critically adapt in light of, the practical lessons of pedagogical experiments, whether those experiments turn out as initially hoped or not.

### **What Kind of Methods Course do I Teach to Whom?**

There is no single recipe for giving interpretivism more room in methods training. Efforts could involve anything from adding an interpretive reading or two to an existing syllabus, to designing a full course, or even a multi-course curriculum, exploring interpretivism in its rich variety. My own effort has been limited. I have added interpretive readings to an existing graduate methods course while taking key parameters of the course as fixed. This newsletter's sophisticated readers will be better judges than I of which aspects of my effort, and the practical lessons I draw from it, might transfer to their own pedagogical contexts. But for readers to make such judgments it is necessary that I spell out some details regarding the kind of course I have been teaching, in what broader curricular setting, and to whom.

I teach a semester-long graduate course entitled “Systematic Inquiry and Research Design” (PSc 209) to students who are nearly all pursuing a political science PhD. PSc 209 combines a short philosophy of science component with more extended readings on research design, and culminates with students writing and critiquing draft research proposals. It is part of my department’s methods sequence, which begins with a course introducing statistical thinking and tools. All PhD students take that course (or have taken its equivalent elsewhere), and they then complete their methods requirement either with an additional semester of statistical training, or by taking PSc 209.

The curricular setting of PSc 209 has two consequences for the abilities and interests of students. First, they have (or are acquiring) some familiarity with basic descriptive and inferential statistics. This has notable payoffs. For example, it helps students to engage with nuanced arguments about the conceptions of causation statistical techniques draw upon (on this topic I assign Abbott 1998 and Goldthorpe 2001). Second, students often take PSc 209 in lieu of a further statistical course if they plan to pursue primarily qualitative dissertation research. Many students thus come to the class looking quite specifically for guidance in qualitative methods. Some students are, however, designing quantitative research, and many are interested in multi-method approaches. In terms of subfield distribution, international relations is the major field of the largest number of students, followed by comparative politics, and lastly American politics.

### **What Aspects of Interpretivism to Include?**

My effort to make room for interpretivism is only one, and not the most important, pedagogical goal shaping the content of my PSc 209 syllabus. I thus have, at most, a few weeks of readings to play with, and can introduce only a taste of the philosophical perspectives and empirical methods of accessing, generating, and analyzing data that might be labeled interpretive. One response to these limits would be to focus the readings and explore in some depth a specific way of framing interpretivism (for example, the framing in Adcock 2003). But I opted instead to experiment with a more diverse set of readings.

The starting point for my pragmatic approach was to scatter readings reflecting various ways of approaching interpretivism throughout the semester. I did not use any kind of sampling frame in selecting readings, but in retrospect they may be summed up as offering at least two readings for each of four entry points to interpretivism:

- (1) Interpretivism as a general epistemological and/or ontological stance;
- (2) Interpretivism as a stance specifically centered on questions of explanation in social science;
- (3) Interpretivism as research emphasizing “reflexivity”;
- (4) Interpretivism as field research methods that seek understanding of others through intensive interaction in day-to-day settings.

I approached my readings as a series of practical experi-

ments—something akin to canaries in a goldmine—to explore student reactions to varied aspects of interpretivism. I sought to gauge reactions both during seminar discussions, and via end-of-semester ratings of readings.<sup>3</sup> My interpretation of these reactions then informed syllabus revisions for my next iteration teaching PSc 209: I trimmed two of the four entry points listed above (1 and 3), while expanding attention to the other two (2 and 4).<sup>4</sup>

In the four sections below, I discuss, for each entry point in turn, the readings I assigned, student reactions, and my subsequent syllabus revisions. It would be disingenuous to present this process as if I were a dispassionate experimenter coolly observing reactions. I went into the course with rather well-developed priors regarding the strengths or weaknesses of alternative formulations of interpretivism (Adcock 2003). I also had assumptions regarding how students would respond to various aspects of interpretive philosophy and methods. If my subsequent syllabus revisions are one register of the results of my pedagogical experimentation, another is the updating of my own beliefs. I include below some commentary on this more personal intellectual dimension because pragmatism involves more than practical experimenting and adaptation; it also involves being reflexive about the role that the subjectivity of the scientist/scholar plays in these processes.

### **Entry Point #1: Epistemology and Ontology**

Contemporary interpretivists claim the status of an autonomous third position within a tripartite division of the terrain of methodology and methods that includes also quantitative and qualitative positions (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006: xv–xiv). The claim relies, first and foremost, on the argument that interpretivists share a distinctive epistemological and ontological stance which sets them apart from a diffuse “positivism,” seen as the philosophical common ground of quantitative, and also most qualitative, political scientists. This argument was (and remains) my least favorite entry point to interpretivism (see Adcock 2009). Yet philosophical abstinence did not appear plausible either, because leading currents in recent methodological conversations—such as wide embrace of the ideal of “shared standards” (Adcock and Collier 2001; Brady and Collier 2004) among quantitative and qualitative scholars—do rely on epistemological premises questioned by many interpretivists.

My initial syllabus included two readings chosen to spotlight these issues. I selected the sixth edition of Neuman’s *Social Research Methods* (2006) as a text largely because of its material on epistemology and ontology. Neuman identifies three major longstanding philosophical traditions in social science—positivist, interpretive, and critical—and surveys their positions across a range of epistemological and ontological issues. He also introduces feminism and postmodernism as more recently developed stances that may inform empirical social science. Neuman’s discussion is a textbook example of the pros and cons of textbooks. It is accessible and concisely summed up in a helpful table (2006: 105). But to pull this off nuances are eliminated. As a more advanced reading a little later in the class, I assigned “What would an adequate philoso-

phy of social science look like?” by Fay and Moon (1977). They contrast traditions of “naturalism” and “humanism,” and then argue that a social science capable of “critique” must transcend this dichotomy. Fay and Moon here use slightly different terminology to engage the same three traditions as Neuman, but they advance a philosophical argument between traditions, rather than a textbook survey.

I assumed that some of my students would be attracted to one or another of these anti-positivist philosophical traditions, and some confused by them. I hoped, in turn, that the attracted students would spark a class discussion which, by differentiating alternative anti-positivist stances and debating them, would help clarify philosophical issues for them and their classmates.<sup>5</sup> But I was entirely mistaken. In the class sessions for which the Neumann and Fay and Moon readings were assigned, students did not raise the alternatives to positivism themselves, and when I pushed this material into one discussion, they reacted by identifying with positivism. Indeed, the main effect of my interjection was to spur students to argue that alternative positions fail to meet key norms of political science, such as objectivity. In sum, rather than loosening positivist tendencies in my students’ developing sense of disciplinary identity, presenting epistemological and ontological challenges only provided an “other” which reinforced those tendencies. Exposure led to rejection, rather than to recognition, of the claim of other views to be potential philosophical foundations for empirical research in political science.

In light of this experience, I dropped this first entry point to interpretivism from the next iteration of PSc 209. My decision was made easier by the discovery that other readings were effective at getting students to debate shared standards. The reading that worked best here was Mahoney and Goertz’s “A Tale of Two Cultures” (2006), which highlights differences in how quantitative and qualitative scholars tend to conceive of explanation and causation, and then traces the ramifications of these differences through a wide array of research norms and practices. Mahoney and Goertz synthesized specific contrasts that were tangibly familiar to students from readings in their substantive classes. The pedagogical take-home for me was that exploring how any one standard—such as “causal inference”—is actually pursued in familiar political science examples is a more effective spur to discussion of whether we have (or should have) “shared standards” than staging a philosophical “battle royale” at the level of epistemology and ontology.

### **Entry Point #2: What Makes for a Good Explanation?**

My second entry point to interpretivism, while still philosophical in character, was pitched at the level of a specific question: what makes for a good explanation in social science? I incorporated interpretive views on this question within a several-week unit on explanation and causality. I devoted most of one session to the classic debate regarding the relation between understanding and explanation, assigning Charles Taylor’s “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man” (1971), alongside readings selected to engage subfield interests in American politics (Soss 2006), comparative politics (Schwartz 1984;

Kurzman 2004), and international relations (Wendt 1998).

This second entry point to interpretivism was the most successful in raising sympathetic student engagement. In broad outline, our class discussion tracked a path that I expected. Students were receptive to the argument that gaining understanding is a core task of social science, so long as understanding was framed in Weberian fashion as an aid, rather than alternative, to explanation. I was, however, surprised by students’ reactions to two readings. First, put bluntly, they hated Taylor’s famous essay. They found it too abstract, perhaps in part because they lacked familiarity with its examples from political science debates of the 1960s. Second, the students were excited by Wendt’s argument that there is more than one kind of explanation. These reactions inverted my own priors, which ranked Taylor as the best reading, and underrated Wendt’s concept of “constitutive explanation” as a mode of explanation distinguished from “causal explanation.”

In light of these reactions, I subsequently revised my syllabus in three ways. First, I cut Taylor’s article since it just does not speak effectively to my graduate students. Second, I reevaluated my view of Wendt’s distinction between causal and constitutive explanations. I decided that, rather than a confusing novelty, it links up nicely with the distinction between causal and unification theories of explanation presented in the philosophy of science text I assign (Godfrey-Smith 2003: Chap. 13). It is, moreover, useful for unpacking the “interpretist” approach of Schwartz (1984) as being explanatory in a specifically constitutive sense. Third, I added readings to explore varieties of explanation far more fully. In particular, I chose readings which, like Wendt, distinguish kinds of explanations, but that draw distinctions along different lines: Roth (2004) on “structural” vs. “situational” vs. “intentional” explanations, and Abbott (2004) on “semantic” vs. “syntactic” vs. “pragmatic” explanatory programs. Finally, to balance the splitting tendency of these readings, I added material from Elster’s new *Explaining Social Behavior* arguing that all good social science explanations share common features based on the hypothetico-deductive method (2007: 15–20).

These syllabus shifts supplemented the classic issue I began with—the relation of understanding to explanation in social science—with questions about whether there are multiple varieties of explanation, and if so, whether there are integrating standards relevant across them all. Raising these additional questions remakes the old debate about understanding as an aid or an alternative to explanation. The debate becomes whether understanding is necessary to *all* species of social science explanation (and thus offers a shared standard in light of which all explanations that do not incorporate understanding fall short), or whether it is, instead, necessary only for some kinds of explanation (and thus a distinguishing feature of those kinds). My beliefs on these questions are unsettled. But I hope teaching my methods class will continue to push along my thinking in the years ahead!

### **Entry Point #3: Reflexivity**

It is common for interpretivists to emphasize the need for, and benefits of, greater “reflexivity” in social science. Reflex-



ivity involves scholars reflecting upon their own knowledge-producing activities with the same tools and critical distance they apply when analyzing the activities of others. This can be done at an individual level, with researchers considering, for example, how their personal identity characteristics influence their research activities and products. My initial PSc 209 syllabus included one reading chosen to introduce this personalized reflexivity (Shehata 2006). Reflexivity might, however, be pursued with more aggregate units of analysis: research programs, subfields, disciplines, or even social science writ large.

I selected three readings exemplifying reflexivity in its more sociological and historical forms. First, I assigned Oren's (2006) argument that major changes in the way that American political scientists conceptualize democracy have followed shifts in America's international relations, with "democracy" reconceived to exclude nations that become America's enemies and include its allies. A second reading emphasized the interplay between the ebb and flow of current events and intellectual shifts in political science, asking what this entails for the kinds of "progress" that are (and are not) possible in our discipline (Dryzek 1986). The third reading (Osborne and Rose 1999) looked at the dynamic between social science and society from the opposite direction, by asking whether social science can produce novel social phenomena. In particular, the reading argued that the creation of sampling techniques remade not only social scientists' knowledge of public opinion, but ultimately the character of public opinion itself.

I was personally excited about these three reflexivity readings because they spotlight the history of social science, which is one of my own research areas. However, the readings fell decidedly flat. In each week for which one was assigned, students largely ignored it in favor of discussing other readings. For example, I paired Oren's article with Collier and Levitsky (1997) work on conceptualizations of democracy, which analyzes a narrower period of political science usage and does not attend to the international context Oren emphasizes. It was the latter piece students engaged with, however, because it delved in more detail into specific conceptual developments in recent literature. When I flagged the contrasting approaches of the pieces, my students argued that Oren's historical approach did not offer the practical aid in clarifying conceptual confusions and choices they face in their own research, which they found in Collier and Levitsky's work.

Taking account of such reactions, I have eliminated this third entry point to interpretivism from my syllabus. The sole exception is Dryzek (1986), which I retain as part of a philosophy of science week on "progress." A broader take-home of this experience was to push me to think more carefully (and humbly!) about the status of reflexive historical analyses of social science. While all methods courses encourage students to reflect upon the methods they use, I now incline to the view that specifically historical and sociological forms of reflexivity are two among many substantive research specializations, rather than methodological ideals for social scientists more generally to try to live up to.

#### **Entry Point #4: Intensive Interaction in Day-to-Day Settings**

My fourth entry point to interpretivism focused on gathering data through intensive in-person interaction with subjects in their day-to-day settings. While such interaction is a core part of ethnography, I wanted to emphasize that it is a broader data-gathering method. So in selecting readings I paired the anthropologist Clifford Geertz's classic "Thick Description" essay (1973) with readings from former APSA president Richard Fenno (1977, 1990) about his participant observation of members of Congress in their home districts. A second goal was to highlight the endeavor to grasp the perspective of subjects who interpret and act in the world using concepts different from those of the academics studying them. To this end I assigned Schaffer (2006) on interviewing ordinary citizens of other societies in a way designed to elicit details and nuances of what a concept like "democracy" means in their language and political context. I also assigned a further essay by Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View" (1979), which reflects on the task of grasping the "experience-near" concepts of subjects, but also contends that the ultimate goal is to relate those concepts to the "experience-distant" concepts of generalizing social science theory.

During class discussion of this day of readings, the dynamic of students identifying in contrast to an "other," which had surprised me with regard to my first entry point, was again noticeable. The principal "other" here was Geertz and "ethnography" more generally, which my students saw as something anthropologists, as *opposed to* political scientists, do. Some of this dynamic also developed in response to Fenno. While recognizing his work as a classic in the American politics subfield, my students identified his method of participant observation as marginal to more recent developments in that subfield. They then debated whether it could be a viable method today for young scholars of American politics anxious to be seen as contributing to the cutting edge of the contemporary subfield. Hence, while I had chosen my Geertz and Fenno readings as accessible pieces that might provide interesting models, students referred to them in our discussion first and foremost as examples of what they believe they should *not* (or cannot) do in their own research.

An illuminating contrast was, however, provided by the very positive reaction of my students to Schaffer (2006). With regard to endeavors to grasp the perspective of others, I expected students to prefer Geertz's "From the Native's Point of View" since it suggests that understanding local perspectives is not an end in itself, and that the social scientific goal in such work is to connect local perspectives to generalizing theory. But two points about the Schaffer piece won student appreciation. First, Schaffer presents his method as a mode of interviewing. While in-depth field interviewing is a central part of both ethnography and participant observation, about half of my students singled out interviewing as something they plan to do and want guidance in, even as they distanced themselves from labels such as "ethnography" or "participant observation." Second, Schaffer's piece presents a lengthy excerpt of an actual interview to illustrate his differentiation of

types of questions and their role at different points in an interview. It thus offered students a concrete sense of what in-depth interviewing can involve, which turned out to be much closer to what they were looking for than the more meta-reflections of Geertz's essay.

In revisiting my syllabus in light of these reactions, I dropped Geertz's "Native's Point of View" and turned interviewing into a central topic. I added a PS symposium (Leech et al. 2002) on elite interviewing with both overseas and domestic examples. I also added a chapter (Walsh 2009) from the forthcoming volume *Political Ethnography* edited by Edward Schatz. Like Schaffer's, Walsh's piece offers students a tangible connection to the in-person field research experience, in her case by excerpting conversations of ordinary citizens of Michigan. Finally I added selections from scholarly interviews with Robert Bates and James Scott (Munck and Snyder 2007) in which each talks about his field research overseas. My goal here was both to show leading political scientists of very different methodological persuasions arguing that field research is essential, and to give more concrete examples of the back-and-forth dynamics of good interviewing.

### Conclusion: Two Take-Home Lessons

Early in this contribution I suggested that instructors seeking to pragmatically make room for interpretivism be self-critical about where they themselves are coming from, in order to be as open as possible to learning from student reactions, even, and indeed especially, reactions that cut against prior beliefs. My first concluding lesson is that it is no less important to reflect on where our students are coming from. Looking back over the reactions reported above, I am constantly reminded that the bulk of my students were third-years, in the middle of taking comprehensive exams, and anxious about formulating a dissertation project that could engage faculty advisors and, hopefully, in the longer term, political scientists elsewhere. Having invested much time and effort in prior classes and exam studying, students at this stage in a PhD program are especially receptive to methods readings that connect to works and debates they are already familiar with. This both makes a reading more accessible and reassures students that the method or perspective being presented is within the bounds of the "political science" they are being socialized into. For any scholar, faculty or student, our sense of what "political science" is has been shaped by what we have read (or at least read about), and third-year students have already read a lot! Students at this stage are, moreover, also understandingly eager consumers of readings that give a concrete sense of, and advice about, the practical realities of doing research.

My second concluding lesson concerns the results of exposing students to novel perspectives or methods. Partisans of interpretivism should be aware that increasing student exposure is no sure route to greater disciplinary recognition, let alone use, of interpretive perspectives and methods. Students are busy people who allocate attention selectively. They may skim the surface and not really engage interpretive readings (especially if they are assigned plenty of other readings). Alternatively, they may engage interpretivism, but do so via

criticism and identifying against it. My take-home point is certainly not that making room for interpretivism will always be futile or outright counterproductive. But I want to advocate the relative payoff of selectively focusing on interpretive readings that address activities our students already expect to pursue. They all plan to construct explanations, and many to conduct interviews of one sort or another. Interpretivists have distinct viewpoints to offer regarding the standards for good explanation in social sciences, and practical guidance to give about methods—such as in-depth interviewing—that help meet those standards. Interpretivism is, I would suggest, most likely to win a receptive hearing among political science graduate students, and the discipline more broadly, when it engages matters of common and practical concern.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The political theory subfield is predominantly interpretive. Hence, more precisely, the point in question is whether interpretivism should be given more room in the methods training of graduate students outside of political theory.

<sup>2</sup> The flow from assumptions to arguments here is not automatic. Advocates of greater exposure subscribing to a conversion assumption also believe (or hope) that the *consequences* of conversion will be positive for individual converts and, over the longer term, for the discipline more broadly. Different assessment of consequences could, however, reframe "conversion" as a "corruption," either of individual careers or the discipline.

<sup>3</sup> At the end of the semester I gave students fresh copies of the syllabus and had them put a + (or multiple ++'s for stronger reactions) next to readings they would recommend for the next iteration of PSc 209, and a – next to those they would not. I did not single out interpretive readings for special attention in this process, but rather encouraged students to rate any readings that stood out to them.

<sup>4</sup> Student reactions informed changes to various aspects of my syllabus, not just my interpretivism readings. Thus, for example, I also dropped a unit on lab experiments in political science.

<sup>5</sup> The tensions between "humanist" (aka "interpretive") and "critical" philosophies deserve, I believe, just as much attention as the disputes either of them has with "positivism." Eliding these tensions helps construct the appearance of a united "anti-positivist" position, but that appearance is purchased at the price of philosophical confusion.

### References

- Abbott, Andrew. 1998. "The Causal Devolution." *Sociological Methods and Research* 27:2, 148–181.
- Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Adcock, Robert and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95:3, 529–546
- Adcock, Robert. 2003. "What Might it Mean to be an 'Interpretivist'?" *Qualitative Methods: Newsletter of the Qualitative Methods Section* 1:2, 16–18.
- Adcock, Robert. 2009. "Making Making Social Science Matter Matter to Us." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 21:1, 97–112. .
- Brady, Henry and David Collier, eds. 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Collier, David and Steven Levitsky. 1997. "Democracy with Adjec-

- tives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research.” *World Politics* 49, 430–451.
- Dryzek, John S. 1986. “The Progress of Political Science.” *Journal of Politics* 48:2, 301–320.
- Elster, Jon. 2007. *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Fay, Brian and J. Donald Moon. 1977. “What Would an Adequate Philosophy of Social Science Look Like?” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 7, 209–227.
- Fenno, Jr., Richard F. 1977. “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration.” *American Political Science Review* 71:3, 883–917.
- Fenno, Jr., Richard F. 1990. “The Political Scientist as Participant Observer.” In Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *Watching Politicians: Essays on Participant Observation*. Berkeley: IGS Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.” In Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1979. “‘From the Native’s Point of View’: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding.” In Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, eds., *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Godfrey-Smith, Peter. 2003. *Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Goldthorpe, John H. 2001. “Causation, Statistics, and Sociology.” *European Sociological Review* 17:1, 1–20.
- Kurzman, Charles. 2004. “Can Understanding Undermine Explanation? The Confused Experience of Revolution.” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 34:3, 328–351.
- Leech, Beth L., et al. 2002. “Interview Methods in Political Science.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35:4, 663–688.
- Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz. 2006. “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research.” *Political Analysis* 14, 227–249.
- Munck, Gerardo L. and Richard Snyder. 2007. *Passion, Craft, and Method in Comparative Politics*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Neuman, W. Lawrence. 2006. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Oren, Ido. 2006. “Political Science as History.” In Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds., *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.
- Osborne, Thomas and Nikolas Rose. 1999. “Do the Social Sciences Create Phenomena? The Example of Public Opinion Research.” *British Journal of Sociology* 50:3, 367–396.
- Roth, Paul A. 2004. “Hearts of Darkness: ‘Perpetuator History’ and Why There is No Why.” *History of the Human Sciences* 17:2/3, 211–251.
- Schaffer, Frederic Charles. 2006. “Ordinary Language Interviewing.” In Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, eds., *Interpretation and Method*.
- Schwartz, Joel D. 1984. “Participation and Multisubjective Understanding: An Interpretivist Approach to the Study of Political Participation.” *Journal of Politics* 46:4, 1117–1141.
- Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine. 2003. “Is this the Curriculum We Want? Doctoral Requirements and Offerings in Methods and Methodology.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36:3, 379–386.
- Shehata, Samer. 2006. “Ethnography, Identity, and the Production of Knowledge.” In Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds., *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.
- Soss, Joe. 2006. “Talking Our Way to Meaningful Explanations.” In Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, eds. *Interpretation and Method. Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.
- Taylor, Charles. 1971. “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man.” *Review of Metaphysics* 25, 3–51.
- Yanow, Dvora and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. 2002. “‘Reading’ ‘Methods’ ‘Texts’: How Research Methods Texts Construct Political Science.” *Political Research Quarterly* 55:2, 457–486.
- Yanow, Dvora and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. 2006. “Introduction.” In Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, eds. *Interpretation and Method. Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.
- Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2009. “Scholars as Citizens: Studying Public Opinion through Ethnography.” In Edward Schatz, *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wendt, Alexander. 1998. “On Constitution and Causation in International Relations.” *Review of International Studies* 24:5, 101–118.

---

## *Undoing the Opposition Between Theory and Methods*

**Emily Hauptmann**

Western Michigan University  
*emily.hauptmann@wmich.edu*

The division of curricular labor in most departments usually leaves teaching methods courses to only a small portion of the faculty. And in most departments, there is little overlap between those who teach methods and those who teach political theory. When I began teaching almost twenty years ago, I would have ranked “methods” towards the bottom of courses I expected or wanted to teach. But a few years ago, that began to change. Since 2006, I have team-taught a graduate course in Qualitative and Interpretive Methods and an undergraduate course in Scope and Methods of Political Science. This spring, I will offer The Logic of Political Inquiry, a graduate course on the history of the discipline and the philosophy of the social sciences. Several circumstances (which I touch on below) made it possible for me to teach this array of courses.

I do not expect most theorists have either the inclination or the opportunity to explore teaching any methods courses. But I believe that this state of affairs is a product of the overdrawn opposition between theory and methods that many of us implicitly accept. In what follows, I discuss the conflicting ways in which I learned about methods and what I now believe are the best reasons for theorists to consider contributing to their department’s methods offerings.

### **Learning “Theory versus Methods”**

I learned a particular view of the discipline as a political theory student at Berkeley in the 1980s. At the time, Berkeley’s graduate curriculum included no general methods requirements; like many other students in political theory, I finished my graduate education without any course work in either research methods or statistics. What I learned instead was to see what political theorists did and knew in opposition to *any* approach that stressed methods—what Sheldon Wolin famously called