

# ADVANCED POLITICAL ANALYSIS

**Professor: Colin Hay**

**Academic Year 2016/2017: Common core curriculum – Fall semester**

## OBJECTIVES

This module aims to provide an advanced level of understanding of issues related to the theoretical basis of contemporary political analysis. By the end of the module students will be able to:

- Display an understanding of philosophical and methodological issues related to the conduct of research in the social sciences and in particular in the analysis of political systems.
- Demonstrate an understanding of key theoretical and meta-theoretical debates in contemporary political analysis.
- Display an understanding of influential and innovative works in political analysis, appreciating their strengths and weaknesses as well as recognising their analytical differences.
- Demonstrate appropriate cognitive, communicative and transferable skills, including the ability to evaluate advanced concepts and theories, to present reasoned and effective arguments in written and oral form, to pursue independent learning and to show critical judgement.

## ASSESSMENT

- Journal article review (50%) – students are required to write a critical review of 1500 words of one of the readings listed in the appendix to this course outline.
- Essay (50%) – students are required to write a short essay of 1500 words in which they explain how one of the concepts (e.g.: power) or pairs of concepts (e.g.: structure and agency) or theories (e.g.: rational choice theory) discussed in the module might inform an analysis of a political subject of their choice.

## DETAILED MODULE CONTENT

The analysis of politics is, like its subject matter, highly contested. This has implications for the research process in contemporary political analysis. Above all, methods of empirical investigation cannot be separated from assumptions about ontology (the nature of social reality) and epistemology (the nature and status of knowledge that we can have about this reality). Even those who assert that 'facts speak for themselves' do so from the point of view of particular ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Yet, amidst this uncertainty, political scientists have to get on with empirical investigations into concrete matters. Given the contested and inherently contestable nature of the subject and object of political analysis,

the aim of this course is not to provide definitive solutions to such problems. Rather, it aims to provide a context within which students can reflect upon the merits and limitations of different forms of political analysis and methodology, their relative adequacy in relation to different types of research question, as well as their relevance and applicability.

This course provides students with a critical introduction to the practices and controversies of contemporary political analysis and to their relevance to substantive research. Its overall aim is to identify and analyse the foundations of the methodological choices political analysts make. Particular attention is paid to meta-theoretical controversies that have surfaced in political analysis in recent years and the debates they have generated. Wherever possible such controversies are discussed in the context of concrete examples and substantive debates. Particular emphasis is placed on the implications of such debates for the conduct of research in contemporary political analysis and the appropriateness and credibility of the claims political analysts make.

Throughout the module students are introduced to the implications of a variety of ontological, epistemological and methodological choices in political science and their relationship to different research traditions. This is achieved by considering a series of important, often contentious, meta-theoretical issues and concepts that have animated ontological, epistemological and methodological debates among political analysts. Key concepts in the analysis of political change are reviewed, assessing the contribution of a variety of theoretical approaches to our understanding of the processes of institutional, behavioural and ideational change. Their relevance to current research and controversies in political analysis is explored. The variety of different approaches to political analysis (domestic, comparative and international) will be considered, with particular attention given to the nature and distribution of power and the changing relationship between state and society in contemporary political systems. Wherever possible, the techniques of political analysis considered in the course will be related to a series of issues of contemporary concerns and controversy.

## CORE READINGS

The first two books listed here are compulsory readings and you are expected to have access to each. They appear frequently on the list of required readings for each week and we cannot provide digitalised copies of individual chapters (for copyright reasons).

- Hay, C. (2002) *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* London: Palgrave.
- Marsh, D. and Stoker, J. (eds.) (2010) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Both books relate meta-theoretical controversies in the social sciences to political research. They provide the core-reading (but of course, by no means the totality of the required reading) for the course.

In addition, the following collections provide useful general resources:

- Dowding, K. (2015) *The Philosophy and Methods of Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Goodin, R. E. (2010) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Parsons, C. (2007) *How to Map Arguments in Political Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, S., Booth, K. and Zalewski, M. (eds.) (1996) *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### Biographical note

**Colin Hay** is Professeur des Universités in Political Science in the Centre d'études européennes at Sciences Po, Paris. He has held visiting positions at Australian National University, Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Manchester University. He is the author of a number of books including, most recently, *Civic Capitalism* (Polity, 2015, with Anthony Payne), *The Legacy of Thatcherism* (Oxford University Press 2014, with Stephen Farrall), *The Failure of Anglo-Liberal Capitalism* (Palgrave 2013) and *The Political Economy of European Welfare Capitalism* (Palgrave 2012, with Daniel Wincott). He is perhaps best known for his prize-winning book *Why We Hate Politics* (Polity, 2007) and for *Political Analysis* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). He is editor of the journals *New Political Economy*, *Comparative European Politics* and *British Politics*. He was Chair of the UK Research Excellence Framework Sub-Panel for Politics and International Studies and is an elected Fellow of the UK Academy of Social Sciences.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Topic 1: Ontology, epistemology and methodology

An introduction to the concepts of ontology, epistemology and methodology and their relevance to political analysis. A consideration of the relationship between these three terms and of the idea that they exert a 'directional dependence' upon one another. A review of core approaches to political analysis in terms of their ontological and epistemological choices and their methodological implications.

- Hay, Colin (2002) *Political Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 2.
- Hay, Colin (2011) 'Political Ontology', in R. E. Goodin (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry (eds.) (2012) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Basingstoke : Palgrave. Introductory chapter.

### Topic 2: The art and science of political analysis

Is a science of politics possible and, if so, at what price? What would a science of politics entail and is this credible and/or desirable? What would we have to exclude were we to limit ourselves to that we might credibly defend as scientific? Insofar as a science of politics is possible, what form would it/does it take? For those for whom a science of possible is neither possible nor desirable, how should we evaluate political analysis?

- Dowding, Keith (2015) *The Philosophy and Methods of Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, chapters 5 and 10.
- Hay, Colin (2002) *Political Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, chapters 1 & 2.

- Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry (2012) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Introduction and chapter 1.

### Topic 3: Causation, correlation and explanation

What is causation and how does it differ from correlation. Is establishing correlation sufficient to establish causation and is establishing causation sufficient to explaining an outcome. What is the difference between explanation and understanding and which should we seek as political analysts? How are explanation and understanding differently understood by contemporary political analysts?

- Dowding, Keith (2015) *The Philosophy and Methods of Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, chapters 3 and 6.
- Kurki, Milja (2006) 'Causes of a divided discipline: rethinking the concept of cause in International Relations theory', *Review of International Studies*, 32 (2), 189-216.
- Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry (2012) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 1.

### Topic 4: Structure and agency

What are structure and agency and how are they related? Is the problem of structure and agency one that can be solved – if so, how; if not, why not? What are the principal attempts to deal with the problem of structure and agency and what are their strengths and weaknesses? What is structuralism? What is intentionalism?

- Hay, Colin (2002) *Political Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 3.
- Hay, Colin (2009) 'King Canute and the Problem of Structure and Agency: On Time, Tides and Heresthetics', *Political Studies*, 57 (2), 260-79.

### Topic 5: Strategy and strategic context

What might we mean by strategy and strategic context and how are both related to the question of structure and agency. How might we understand the relationship between strategy and strategic context and how might this inform the political analysis we do. What are the dangers of such an approach?

- Blyth, Mark (2003) 'Structures do not come with an Instruction Sheet: Interests, Ideas, and Progress in Political Science', *Perspectives on Politics*, 1 (4), 695-706.
- Hay, Colin (2009) 'King Canute and the Problem of Structure and Agency: On Time, Tides and Heresthetics', *Political Studies*, 57 (2), 260-79.

### Topic 6: Ideas and their referents

What is meant by the distinction between material and ideational factors – is it a credible and useful distinction? Should political analysts accord a causal and/or explanatory role to ideas in accounting for political outcomes – and why are they seemingly so reluctant to do so? How should we understand the relationship between political ideas and their referents (the things to which they refer) and what impact do ideas have on their referents? How does bringing ideas in change our understanding of the structure-agency relationship? How do different approaches to political analysis deal with the 'problem' of ideas?

- Finlayson, Alan (2007) 'From Beliefs to Arguments: Interpretive Methodology and Rhetorical Political Analysis', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 9 (4), 545-563
- Hay, Colin (2002) *Political Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 3.
- Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry (2012) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 10 (especially the second half).

### Topic 7: Power and politics

What is power and why is it so integral to political analysis? Is power to political analysis what exchange is to economics? How should we conceptualise power and how has it been conceptualised? Is power multi-dimensional – and, if so, how many dimensions is it useful to identify?

- Hay, Colin (2002) *Political Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 5.
- Lukes, Stephen (2005) *Power: A Radical View*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 1 or 'Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds', *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, 33 (3), 477-493.

### Topic 8: Temporality

How should political analysts deal with the question of time and temporality? What makes political analysis different from historical analysis and what can the former learn from the latter? Is political temporality evolutionary or revolutionary – or both? What influences the path of political change and how might we analyse political temporality in the light of this? What is 'process tracing' and what is its potential value?

- Hay, Colin (2002) *Political Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 4.
- Tilly, Charles (2006) 'Why and How History Matters', in R. E. Goodin and C. Tilly (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University.

### Topic 9: Rationality, rationalisability and rational choice

What is rational choice theory and what is its appeal to political analysts? What is it to be rational and is all political action rational? Is all political action rationalisable and is rationalisability the same as rationality? What role does the assumption of rationality perform in modern political analysis? What motivations inform political behaviour and are all such motivations rational? If not, what happens when we start to correct the assumption of rationality? How should we conceive of political motivation?

- Hay, Colin (2004) 'Theory, Stylized Heuristic or Self-fulfilling Prophecy? The Status of Rational Choice Theory in Public Administration,' *Public Administration*, 82 (1), 39-62.
- Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry (2012) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 2.

### Topic 10: Institutions and institutionalisms

What are political institutions and why do institutionalists pay so much attention to them? Are they right to do so? Are we all institutionalists now? How do different varieties of institutionalism understand the relationship between institutionally-embedded behaviour and institutional change? Are there limits to the explanatory power of institutionalism? Which, if any, variant of the new institutionalism should we prefer?

- Hall, Peter A. and Taylor, C. Rosemary (1996) 'Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms', *Political Studies*, 44 (4), 936-57 [note also the debate on this piece with Hay and Wincott in *Political Studies*, 46 (5), 951-62, 1998].
- March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (1983) 'The new institutionalism: organizational factors in political life', *American Political Science Review*, 78 (3), 734-749.
- Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry (2012) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 3.

### Topic 11: Normative political analysis

What is normative political analysis and is it consistent with political science? How might its value be defended and how might it best be conducted? How do we evaluate and adjudicate between contending normative claims? What is the role for normative political analysis in contemporary political analysis?

- Gerring, John & Yesnowitz, Joshua (2006) 'A Normative Turn in Political Science?', *Polity*, 38 (1), 101-133.
- Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry (2012) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapter 8.

### Topic 12: The responsibility of the political analyst

What is relevance? What makes political analysis relevant – and does it need to be relevant? If so, relevant to what and whom? What is the public responsibility of political analysis and how and to what extent is it fair to judge them in such terms? What are the dangers of a political science that values relevance above all else?

- Dowding, Keith (2015) *The Philosophy and Methods of Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, chapter 10.
- Stoker, Gerry, Peters, B. Guy & Pierre, Jon (eds.) (2015) *The Relevance of Political Science*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Chapters 1, 3 & 4, introduction and conclusion.
- See also the debate between Matthew Flinders and Peter John in *Political Studies Review*, 11 (2), 149-73 (2013).

### Appendix 1: List of journal articles for review essay

Please pick one of the following titles for your 1500 word review essay. Think especially of the value and significance of the piece to political analysis and, if it is an older piece, whether it continues to retain the value and significance it might have had when it was first written.

- Blyth, Mark (2006) 'Great punctuations: prediction, randomness, and the evolution of comparative political science', *American Political Science Review*, 100 (4), 493-498.
- Dessler, David (1989) 'What's At Stake in the Agent/Structure Debate?', *International Organisation*, 43 (3), 441-74.
- Fearon, James D. (1991) 'Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science', *World Politics*, 43 (2), 169-195.
- Finlayson, Alan (2007) 'From Beliefs to Arguments: Interpretive Methodology and Rhetorical Political Analysis', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 9 (4), 545-563.

- Flinders, Matthew (2013) 'The Tyranny of Relevance and the Art of Translation', *Political Studies Review*, 11 (2), 149-67 [consider reading alongside the readings identified for topic 12].
- Gerring, John & Yesnowitz, Joshua (2006) 'A Normative Turn in Political Science?', *Polity*, 38 (1), 101-133.
- Hall, Peter A. (1993) 'Policy Paradigms, Social Learning and the State: The Case of Economic Policy-Making in Britain', *Comparative Politics*, 25 (3), 175-96.
- Hall, Peter. A & Lamont, Michele (2013) 'Why social relations matter for politics and successful societies', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 16, 49-71.
- Hall, Peter A. and Taylor, C. Rosemary (1996) 'Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms', *Political Studies*, 44 (4), 936-57 [see also the debate on this piece with Hay and Wincott in *Political Studies*, 46 (5), 951-62, 1998].
- Hay, Colin (2004) 'Theory, Stylized Heuristic or Self-fulfilling Prophecy? The Status of Rational Choice Theory in Public Administration,' *Public Administration* 82 (1), 39-62.
- Hay, Colin (2009) 'King Canute and the Problem of Structure and Agency: On Time, Tides and Heresthetics', *Political Studies*, 57 (2), 260-79.
- Kurki, Milja (2006) 'Causes of a Divided Discipline: Rethinking the Concept of Cause in International Relations Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 32 (2), 189-216.
- Lukes, Stephen (2005) 'Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds', *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, 33 (3), 477-493.
- Mackay, Fiona, Kenny, Meryl, & Chappell, Louise (2010) 'New Institutionalism through a Gender Lens: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism?', *International Political Science Review*, 31 (5), 573-588.
- March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (1983) 'The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life', *American Political Science Review*, 78 (3), 734-749.
- Pierson, Paul (1993) 'When Effects Become Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change', *World Politics*, 45, 595-628.
- Pierson, Paul (2000) 'Increasing Returns, Path Dependence and the Study of Politics', *American Political Science Review*, 94 (2), 251-68.
- Trampusch, Christine & Palier, Bruno (2016) 'Between X and Y: how process tracing contributes to opening the black box of causality', *New Political Economy*, 21 (5), forthcoming (see also the debate in the rest of the special issue of this journal).
- Wendt, Alexander (1987) 'The Agent/Structure Problem in International Relations', *International Organisation*, 41 (3), 335-70.
- Wendt, Alexander (1992) 'Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organisation*, 46 (2), 391-425.