

Research problems in Political Science

A PhD course held at Stockholm, Dept. of Political Science

7.5 ECTS

Course content

The aim of the course is to develop the abilities of the participants to find, describe, develop and evaluate research problems in political science in general and in research conducted at the Department of Political Science at Stockholm University in particular. This is done through a mix of lectures, seminars and exercises in which doctoral students, individually and in groups, select and discuss research problems in their own fields of expertise as well as in the fields of others. Particular emphasis is given to understanding research problems in modern classics in different sub-disciplines of political science. The term ‘research problem’ is used generically to denote a sufficient reason or set of reasons for conducting demanding research on the basis of a given question. Specific and alternative understandings and instantiations of the concept are explored throughout the course in light of various research traditions and theories. An additional aim of the course is to introduce and stimulate reflections on the ethical dimensions of how political science is conducted and communicated in society at large.

Assignments

Participants will be asked to select three pieces of literature within their own fields of expertise, comprising maximally 50 pages in total (the number of articles and pages may be adjusted in light of the number of course participants). One of those pieces will be presented in class by the participant him/herself and the other will be presented by another course participant with a different thematic specialization. These pieces of literature should be selected and presented with the purpose of allowing discussion of examples of research questions which the course participants themselves find worth pursuing, and examples of general criteria for identifying such questions.

Examination

The course is examined on the basis of seminar participation, oral presentation of research problems and literatures, and a maximally ten pages long research paper which demonstrates reading of the course literature as well as skills mentioned in the course aim.

The paper should discuss the course literature in relation to one or several ideas of what constitutes a good research problem. Papers may also include reflections on the definition and role of research problems in the research presented in the course literature.

In addition to the main paper of the course, it is compulsory also to hand in two to three pages of reflection on ethical dimensions on the conduct of research in political science, as introduced in one of the guest lectures.

All learning activities in the course are compulsory.

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of the course participants should be able to:

- find, describe, develop and evaluate research problems in different areas and traditions of political science
- distinguish different conceptions or elements of research problems in political science and relate those conceptions or elements to each other
- present orally in an authoritative way research problems within their own fields of expertise and in political science more generally
- identify and reflect upon ethical dimensions of the ways in which political science is conducted and communicated in society at large.

The teaching staff

- **Hans Agné** is Associate professor in Political Science at Stockholm.

Apart from Hans, who is the main teacher on the course, the following teachers are recurrently invited to represent various traditions within political science research:

- **Karin Bäckstrand**, Professor in Environmental Social Science, Stockholm University
- **Eva Erman**, Professor in Political Science, Stockholm University
- **Michele Micheletti**, Professor in Political Science, Stockholm University
- **Ulf Mörkenstam**, Associate professor in Political Science, Stockholm University
- **Maria Wendt**, Associate professor in Political Science, Stockholm University

Please note that the composition of the teaching staff might vary.

Course literature

(Preliminary, and to be supplemented by texts selected by participants as part of the course)

The course literature primarily consists of reading assignments by the lecturers to be presented at course start as well as the materials selected and presented by doctoral students within the course. The number of articles and book excerpts to be selected by each course participant will depend on the total number of course participants, so as to arrive at an appropriate number of pages and workload for a 7.5 credits course.

On research problems and how to find them

Bjereld, Ulf, Maria Demker, Jonas Hinnfors 1999. Problematiska problem? Den vetenskapliga problemställningens plats i undervisning och forskning', *Statsvetenskapliga tidskrift* 102(4): 436-442. [available on internet]

Blaikie, Norman. 2007. *Designing social research: the logic of anticipation*. Cambridge: Polity, pp. 45-55

Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand castles*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp 27–40, [available as e-book at SU]

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Page 14-23, 29-33.

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The sociological imagination*, New York: Oxford University Press, Appendix “On Intellectual Craftsmanship” available at http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~psargent/Mills_Intell_Craft.pdf

Shapiro, Ian. 2002. “Problems, Methods, and Theories in the Study of Politics, or What's Wrong with Political Science and What to Do about It”, *Political Theory* 30 (4): 596-619. [available as e-journal at SU]

On the theme chosen by Karin Bäckstrand

Bäckstrand, Karin. 2011. The Democratic Legitimacy of Global Governance after Copenhagen. In *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society* Edited by John S. Dryzek, Richard B. Norgaard, and David Schlosberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dahl, Robert A. (1999). Can International Organizations be Democratic? In *Democracy's Edges*, edited by Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Gordon, 19-36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at:

<http://ebooks.cambridge.org/chapter.jsf?bid=CBO9780511586361&cid=CBO9780511586361A0>

Stevenson, Hayley and Dryzek, John S. (2012). The discursive democratisation of global climate governance, *Environmental Politics* 21 (2): 189-210. [available as e-journal at SU]

On the theme chosen by Michele Micheletti

Stolle, Dietlind and Micheletti, Michele. 2013. *Political Consumerism: Global Responsibility in Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-30.

Young, Iris Marion (2006). Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model, *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23: 102-130. [available as e-journal at SU]

On the theme chosen by Ulf Mörkenstam

Josefsen, Eva, Ulf Mörkenstam & Jo Saglie, 2014. "Different Institutions Within Similar States: The Norwegian and Swedish *Sámedigis*", *Ethnopolitics*:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2014.926611>

Kymlicka, Will, 1995. *Multicultural Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-33.

Mörkenstam, Ulf (2015) "Recognition As if Sovereigns: A Procedural Understanding of Indigenous Peoples' Right to Self-Determination", *Citizenship Studies*.
DOI:10.1080/13621025.2015.1010486.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books. (utdrag om ca 50 sidor, utdelas av seminarieläraren)

On the theme chosen by Eva Erman

Cohen, Gary A. 2003. "Facts and Principles", *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 31 (3): 211-245Published

Erman, Eva and Niklas Möller. 2015."What distinguishes the practice-dependent approach to justice?" *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. DOI: 10.1177/0191453715580475

Sangiovanni, Andrea 2008. "Justice and the Priority of Politics to Morality", *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 16 (2): 137–164

On the theme chosen by Maria Wendt

Cohn, Carol. 1987. "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals". *Signs*, 12(4), 687-718.

McClintock, Anne. 1995. *Imperial Leather: Race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest*. Routledge, s 352-389.

Maria Wendt & Cecilia Åse: The politics of military loss in contemporary Europe (Ansökan om forskningsprojekt beviljad av Riksbankens jubileumsfond 2014)

On the themes chosen by course participants

Readings selected by participant XX

Readings selected by participant YY

Etc

On different kinds of theory and the art of theorizing [for optional seminar]:

Dunne, Tim, Lene Hansen, and Colin Wight. 2013. "The end of International Relations theory?' *European Journal of International Relations* 19: 406-412 (not the whole article) [available as e-journal at SU]

Locke, Karen, Golden-Biddle, Karen, and Feldman, Martha S. 2008. "Making doubt generative: Rethinking the role of doubt in the research process". *Organization Science* 19/6: 907-18. [available as e-journal at SU]

Miller, David, 2003. *Principles of Social Justice*. Cambridge [Mass]: Harvard University Press. pp. 42-60.

Van Evera, Stephen. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca and London: Cornell pp. 7-28.