

Modules for Social Science Courses
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The following Modules provide sample materials, questions, and discussion topics that might be used in Social Science courses.

Module I

Politics: why not just study the political rules of the game or “national culture?”

Short clip of *Rocky IV* showing fight and Politburo.

1. What did you learn about Russians from this? Images of them and their mentality

Short clip of Russian street scene in 1991

1. What did you learn about Russians from this? Images and mentality

Do these folks look different and behave differently in the two scenes? Can you explain why?

That’s why we study far more than rules and “national culture.” Stay tuned.

(In class lecture... the elements we study as politics...socialization, participation, interest articulation, interest aggregation, policy making, policy implementation, policy adjudication. Bureaucratic traditions...)

Module II

Why do we compare and call ourselves a science?

1. The difference between a “social science” and “humanities” is how you “know” and how you “discover” and explain cause and effect.
2. We don’t just do experiments with people:
 - a. People are more complicated than mice or metal.
 - b. It’s hard to get all the experiences and pressures that cause people to have a revolution, vote for a particular candidate, have an opinion. And, they build up over a long period of time.
 - c. It’s not legal to do lots of things to people in an experiment that might happen to them in real life.
3. Imagine a small pet turtle. A grade school class asks you whether it’s a “girl” or “boy”. You look up gender differences in turtles. It says male turtles have longer tails and “more” convex bottom shells. You are holding a turtle with a tail and a bottom shell that neither seems to go in or out--- not noticeably at least. What is the best way to “know” if the Turtle is a “she” or “he”? (*get a turtle you*

already know is male or female and compare... or look at a model of a male turtle and compare it.)

4. Now for politics.....example from material such as

If you read the reading on democracy, you saw that strong democracies have good economies and weak democracies or undemocratic systems have weak economies. What facts would you look for to determine whether a country is a strong democracy or a weak one? Could you determine whether a country you don't know much about has the economic base to be a strong democracy?
(Compare economic states of strong and weak democracies)

5. OK, you used what were probably explicit comparisons to create a model. It tells you how parts fit together just like all the models you built when you were little or the charts we will use about the powers of politicians and how they control each other. Would you feel more or less sure of your model if the number of cases you compared was not 2 but 20 or 200 or 2000? Why?

6. Can you tell me why good economies make for democracy?

7. You can think of reasons why—that's a theory but it's not necessarily accurate. What we really need to understand in politics is not just what the models are or characteristics of something are but **how** things work and **why** they work that way.

8. Back to the turtle story: Why do male turtles have longer tails and convex bottom shells?

9. What might you do to get some ideas if you had a male and female turtle? To be sure what would you have to collect?

10. Well, why do male turtles have longer tails and convex bottom shells do you think?

11. You just made a **hypothesis**--- an educated guess about **cause and effect** (Think about it, that's what a theory is.

12. What was the mental and data collection processes you went through?

13. In politics, what kind of data can you use? Ways comparativists get data?

Qualitative:

History

Interviews

Qualitative

Statistics

Surveys

Experimental

Games and simulations

14. Remember this. We'll be looking at data and see how it works while we go along.

Show HBS adds of two objects with good and bad, sweet and sour... etc.

15. Can you build a theory with this?

16. The equivalent in politics is when people say "It's a bad system" or "I don't like it." Think about those comments--- what did you learn from each or would you learn if you heard one of these statements.

17. Remember, its all about using words that make sure that what you see is what someone else sees so you two can compare. You need to define your terms and use words that are not value laden.

18. Also, it's not about you! Where the social scientist comes in is when he decides what to study and what kind of data to use--- there is where his passions come in.

19. Is this it? No, once you know or come close to knowing "cause and effect", you can make decisions about what you can do to make things better... but that's not for this course. We are giving you tools to think about the world around you and be effective in helping make change or protect what you believe in.

Module 3

Political Party Ideology

1. Do reading on British parties and the brief material on the French parties as well as class lecture on the differences between left, right, radical right, and new left. What groups does each serve and what caused them to change over time..

2. Based on what you read and heard, what do you think makes something leftist? Right wing? (Labor in Britain is left and Conservatives are right.)

List of websites for French and English parties.

3. Divide students into 4 person groups...two students for French parties and two for English parties should review the party platforms on the websites. Work in your national

groups to identify what parties fit in each category. Compare the ideology/programs in your national group. Compare the French and British parties as a foursome. What do you see different about the ideologies of the parties in each and what do you see different in the range of ideologies in each country?

4. For your midterm come in with an hypothesis either as to why there are these differences or what the impact of the differences is on the kinds of public policy or the policy process. Your answer will be graded not on your hypothesis (as long as has a cause and effect) except if you say that the French ideologies are the way they are because the people are French or something similar with England. What I will grade you on is the data or evidence that you have mustered to prove the cause and effect you have selected and your ability to fit this with the theories we have talked about in classes and you have seen in the readings.