

Define political science • To what extent can one be systematic in a study of the political process How "scientific" is political science?

Introduction

Political science is the study of politics, government, and power. It examines how governments are formed, how decisions are made and how power is distributed in society. Political science also explores political ideologies, laws, policies and international relations. It helps us understand the functioning of political institutions, the role of leaders and the impact of policies on people's lives.

Origin of Political Science

The word 'politics' is derived from the Greek word "polis" which means a city state. The antecedents of western politics can trace their roots

back to Greek thinkers Socrates, Plato
(427 - 347 BC), and Aristotle (384 - 322 BC)

The studies were philosophy oriented.

Stages of Evolution

Philosophical

concerned with ends and purposes

Institutional

concerned with political organization

Behavioral

concerned with motivations and mechanism of human behavior

Pluralistic

concerned with the interaction among groups and organization

Structural

concerned with connections b/w community and individual

Developmental

concerns with process of development, growth

Definition

From the traditional point of view

Political science can be define as

the study of state and government in
all manifestations, aspects and relationships.

early definitions dealt with state,
and government.

J. W. Garner:

"Political science begins and ends with the state."

"~~politics~~ is the study of state and government."

R. G. Gettel:

"Political Science is the historical investigation of
what the state has been, an analytical
study of what the state is and ends, a political
ethical discussion of what the state ought to be."

Leacock: "Political Science deals with
the government only."

At the beginning of 20th century, there
developed a new way of looking at political
science.

Harold Laswell:

"Politics is the study of influence and
the influential" or "the study of the shaping
and sharing of power."

Catlin: Political science is the study of the

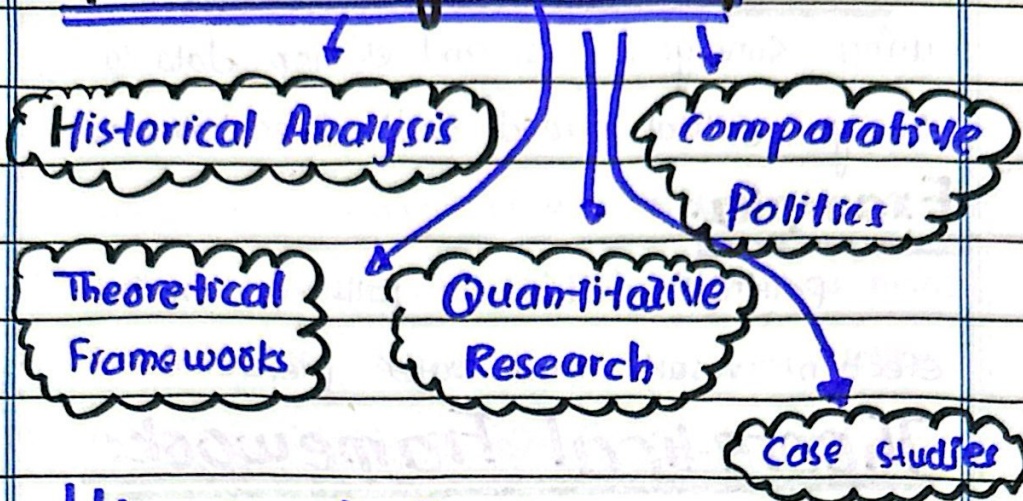
act of human and social control.

Modern political scientists consider politics as a process centring around power and influence. They are concerned with the state and the government and the study and evaluation of political activities, political power, processes and non-governmental institutions.

The Systematic Study of Political Processes

Political science aims to study political processes in an organized and structured way. However since politics involve human behavior, decision making and unpredictable events, it is challenging to apply strict scientific methods. Despite this political scientists have developed systematic approaches to analyze governance, institutions and political behavior. The extent to which political science can be systematic depends on the methods used and the limitations faced in studying political processes.

Methods of Studying Political Processes Systematically.



Historical Analysis

Studying past political events and patterns to understand present-day governance.

Example

The causes of past revolutions (e.g. the French Revolution) help analyze modern political uprisings.

Comparative Politics

Comparing different political systems and governments to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Example:

Comparing democracy in the U.S and the U.K to understand different forms of governance.

Quantitative Research (Data and Statistics)

using surveys, polls and election data to study political trends and voter behavior

Examples:

Political parties use polls to predict election results and voter preferences

Theoretical Frameworks

Applying political theories to explain governance and decision-making.

Example:

Marxism and Liberalism offer different explanations for how governments function

Case Studies

Studying specific political events to understand their cause and effects

Example:

Analyzing Brexit to examine why people voted to leave the EU and its political consequences

Criticism:

while political science uses systematic methods like historical analysis, comparative studies and data research, it cannot be entirely systematic due to the unpredictable nature of politics. Human behavior, sudden political shifts, and cultural differences make it difficult to apply fixed rules. Unlike natural sciences, where results are consistent, political processes evolve over time and are influenced by external factors like wars, economic crises, and public opinion. These uncertainties limit the ability to study political processes with complete accuracy, making political science only partially systematic.

How Scientific is Political Science?

Political science applies systematic methods to study governance, power and political behavior, but it lacks the precision of natural science. Scholars debate its scientific nature, with some arguing it follows empirical methods, while others

highlight its dependence on human behavior and subjective analysis.

Political Science as

a Science

Political Science meets many criteria of a science:

Empirical Research and data

Analysis:

Political Science relies on quantitative research to analyze political trends and decision making.

- uses surveys, voting patterns, and statistical models to study political behavior.

David Easton introduced a "system analysis" approach, viewing politics as an interconnected system where inputs (demands, support) leads to policy outputs.

Comparative and Experimental Methods

Aristotle known as the "father of political science" conducted a comparative study

of constitutions to understand governance structure.

Karl Deutsch advanced behavioralism, applying statistical and mathematical models to predict political trends.

Theories and Hypothesis Testing

Political Science develops theories and models based on empirical evidence:

Robert Dahl created democratic theories using case studies and empirical research

Anthony Downs' "Rational choice theory" explains political decision making using economic principles, assuming individuals act rationally to maximize benefits.

Limitations: Political

Science is not a pure Science

Despite its systematic methods political science differs from a natural science due to:

Unpredictability of Human Behavior:

Political actions are influenced by emotions, culture and ideology, making outcomes uncertain (Max Weber categorized it as a social science)

Lack of Universal Laws:

unlike physics, political theories evolve over time and vary across cultures (Thomas Kuhn's Paradigm Shift explains how political theories changed)

Challenges in Controlled Experiments:

political events cannot be replicated under laboratory conditions due to historical and social influences.

Political science is scientific in nature not a pure science due to complexities of human behavior and governance. It combines empirical research, theoretical models, and historical analysis, making it a social

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a social science with scientific characteristics
rather than a strict natural science
