



**Core methods seminar**

**Michael Keating**

**First Term – Autumn 2009**

**Unless otherwise stated the seminar is on Mondays, 11-13 h in the Theatre**

**NB: The first session on 5 October is in Sala del Capitolo**

**Registration: [Liz.Webb@eui.eu](mailto:Liz.Webb@eui.eu)**

The aim of this core seminar is to discuss main approaches to political science and sociology, the principal steps in designing research, and some methods for data collection. Taking into account the diverse national and disciplinary background of first year research, the seminar attempts to develop some common knowledge, without losing the richness of plurality. The seminar as a whole, as well as the individual sessions, aim at critically contrasting the advantages as well as problems of the various strategies in the construction of scientific knowledge.

The seminar stems from SPS department's commitment to methodological pluralism and informed debate. Specifically its aims are:

- To provide an overview of approaches in the social sciences, in order to help students to choose their own approach for the thesis, to justify this approach, and to situate it within the discipline;
- To ensure that PhD graduates become fully literate social scientists, able to read and understand work written within different traditions and approaches;
- To introduce researchers to the main issues of debate and contention in the methodology of social sciences and to demystify some of this debate, identifying commonalities, historic continuities, and genuine differences;
- To give first year researchers a common experience and socialization and to encourage them to discuss their own work across sub-disciplines and methodological approaches.

The First Term seminar is based on the just published volume *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences. A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), edited by Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating. In most of the sessions, two different chapters of the volume will be presented; all chapters will be presented and discussed by their authors.

The above textbook will be available at a discount to members of the seminar.

Syllabus starts on next page



**Session 1. 5 October 2009**

**Introduction ([Sala del Capitolo](#))**

Chapter 1. Introduction by *Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating*

Chapter 2. How Many Approaches in the Social Sciences? An Epistemological Introduction, by *Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating*

**Session 2. 12 October 2009**

**Case oriented versus variable oriented research,**

Chapter 11. Comparative Analysis: Case-Oriented versus Variable-Oriented Research, by *Donatella della Porta*

Chapter 15. The Design of Social and Political Research, by *Philippe Schmitter*

**Session 3. 19 October 2009**

**Causal Analysis and Process Tracing**

Chapter 4. Causal Explanation, by *Adrienne Héritier*

Chapter 12. Case Studies and Process Tracing: Theories and Practices, by *Pascal Vennesson*

**Session 4. 26 October 2009**

**Concepts and conceptualization**

Chapter 5. Constructivism: What It Is (not) and How It Matters, by *Friedrich Kratochwil*

Chapter 10. Concepts and Concept Formation, by *Peter Mair*

**Session 5. 9 November 2009 - Session with Prof. [Chwaszcza is at 11 a.m.](#)**

**Theories of Action and Rational choice and its critics**

Chapter 8. Game theory, by *Christine Chwaszcza*

Chapter 9. Rationality and Recognition, by *Alessandro Pizzorno*

**Session 6. 9 November 2009 - Session with Prof. [Steinmo is at 5 p.m.](#)**

**Culture and history in the social sciences**

Chapter 6. Culture and Social Science, by *Michael Keating*

Chapter 7. Historical Institutionalism, by *Sven Steinmo*



**Session 7. 16 November 2009**

**Normative issues in empirical research**

Chapter 3. Normative Theory and Empirical Research by *Rainer Bauböck*

With the participation of Laszlo Bruszt

**Session 8. 23 November 2009 (Refectory)**

Chapter 14. Ethnographic Approaches, by *Zoe Bray*

**Session 9. 30 November 2009 (Refectory)**

**The Logic of Qualitative methods**

Chapter 13. Quantitative Analysis, by *Mark Franklin*

With the participation of *Martin Kohli*

**Session 10. Friday 4 December 2009 (Refectory)**

**Concluding discussion**

Chapter 16. Comparing Methods and Approaches. Some Concluding Remarks, by *Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating*

Michael Keating and Donatella della Porta, 'In Defence of Pluralism. Combining approaches in the social sciences', IPSA 2009.