

# Core methods seminar

Donatella Della Porta and Pascal Vennesson

First Term 2010

Unless otherwise stated the seminar is on **Mondays, 11:00 am – 13:00 pm**

in the Seminar Room 2

(please note that the first session is on **September 29<sup>th</sup>**)

Registration: [Monika.Rzemieniecka@eui.eu](mailto:Monika.Rzemieniecka@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 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.

*If you want to write a term paper for this seminar, please send a copy to the seminar's professor and the relevant secretary by 14 January.*

Syllabus starts on next page



**Session 1. 29 September 2010**

**Introduction**

**Session chaired by Donatella della Porta**

Assigned Readings:

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. 4 October 2010**

**Normative issues in empirical research**

**Session chaired by Rainer Bauböck, Laszlo Bruszt and Pascal Vennesson**

Assigned Readings:

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

**Session 3. 11 October 2010**

**Causal Analysis and Process Tracing**

**Session chaired by Adrienne Héritier and Pascal Vennesson**

Assigned Readings:

Chapter 4. Causal Explanation, by *Adrienne Héritier*

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

**Session 4. 18 October 2010**

**Concepts and conceptualization**

**Session chaired by Friedrich Kratochwil, Peter Mair and Pascal Vennesson,**

Assigned Readings:

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. 25 October 2010**

**Culture and history in the social sciences**

**Session chaired by Sven Steinmo and Pascal Vennesson**

Assigned Readings:

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

Chapter 7. Historical Institutionalism, by *Sven Steinmo*

**Session 6. 8 November 2010**

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

**Session chaired by Alessandro Pizzorno and Pascal Vennesson**

*Assigned readings:*

Chapter 8. Game theory, *Christine Chwaszcza*

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

**Session 7. 15 November 2010**

**The Logic of Quantitative methods**

**Session chaired by Mark Franklin, Martin Kohli and Pascal Vennesson**

Assigned Readings:

Chapter 13. Quantitative Analysis, by *Mark Franklin*

**Session 8. 22 November 2010**

**The Logic of Qualitative methods**

**Session chaired by Pascal Vennesson**

Assigned Readings:

Chapter 14. Ethnographic Approaches, by *Zoe Bray*

**Session 9. 6 December 2010**

**Case oriented versus variable oriented research**

**Session chaired by Donatella della Porta**

Assigned Readings:

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 10. 13 December 2010**

**Concluding discussion**

**Session chaired by Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating**

Assigned Readings:

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.