

Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences

Donatella Della Porta

First Term workshop 2012

10 October 10-12 / 14-17 Emeroteca

12 October 11-13 /14-17 Room 2

The aim of this workshop is to discuss main approaches to political science and sociology, the principal steps in designing research, and some methods for data collection. In this sense, it aims at introducing all main choices that needs to be addressed in the preparation of the April prospectus.

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.

Syllabus

Readings are mainly chapters from D. della Porta and M. Keating (eds.), *Approaches and methodologies in the social sciences*, Cambridge, Cambridge university Press.

Day 1. October 10th; 10-12 and 14-17

Session 1. What do we mean by pluralism (10.00 -12.00)

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*

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

Session 2. Theory and Theories in the Social Sciences (14.00 – 15.30)

Assigned Readings:

Chapter 4. Causal Explanation, by *Adrienne Héritier*

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

Session 3. Concepts and conceptualization (15.30 -17.00)

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*

Day 2 October 12, 11-13 and 14-17

Session 4. Case oriented versus variable oriented research design (11.00 – 13.00)

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 5. Norms and ethics in research (14.00 -17.00)

Assigned Readings:

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

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

Parts of Pierre Bourdieu: Sociology is a Martial Art will be shown and discussed