

POLS 200

Study Guide for Exam I

Exam 1 will cover Babbie Chapters 1, 2, 4 & 5, the Putnam and Segal & Cover articles, plus all material covered in class.

Chapter 1

Some Terms:

Aggregates
Attributes
Causal reasoning
Causation
Data collection
Deductive theory
Empirical
Epistemology
Inductive theory
Methodology
Probabilistic reasoning
Qualitative/quantitative data
Relationship
Selective observation
Theory
Tradition
Understanding vs prediction
Variables
Overgeneralization
Inquiry

Some Questions:

What is science?
Why distinguish between social science and other kinds of science?
Why study social science research methods?
Where does most of what we know come from? (How do we know things?)
How do scientists know what is real and what is not?
What is inquiry?
What is the difference between prediction and understanding?
What are some errors in inquiry?
What are the foundations of social science?
What are the 3 major components of the scientific method?
Why is it important to carefully specify the research question?
What are some characteristics of theory?
What is the difference between attributes and variables?
What are the two different approaches to inquiry? (inductive/deductive reasoning)

Chapter 2

Some Terms:

Hypothesis
Hypothesis testing
Operationalization
Paradigm
Theory

Some Questions:

What are the functions of theory in social science research?
What is a paradigm and how do paradigms in the natural sciences differ from those in the social sciences?
What is the relationship between the inductive and deductive approaches in social science research?—Wheel of Science
How do we evaluate political research topics?
What is a hypothesis?
What are the different types of hypotheses?
What are the characteristics of a good hypothesis?

Causation/Chapter 4

Some Terms:

Cross-sectional studies
Cohort studies
Description
Determinism
Ecological fallacy
Explanation
Exploratory research
Longitudinal studies
Necessary and sufficient cause
Panel studies
Trend studies
Triangulation
Units of analysis

Some Questions:

What is the purpose of social science research?
What is determinism (and some other assumptions of social science research?)
What are the criteria for establishing causality?
What are the steps/stages of the research enterprise?
What is research design?
What factors influence the choice of a research design?
How does research design fit together with the process of hypothesis testing?
What are units of analysis?
What is the ecological fallacy?
What are the two major types of research designs we talked about and how do they match up with the criteria for establishing causal relations?
What are some ways to establish time order with cross-sectional data?
What is triangulation?

Chapter 5

Some Terms:

Accuracy
Bias
Concept
Conception/Conceptualization
Construct
Construct validity
Content/face validity

Criterion/empirical validity
Dimension
Indicator
Measurement
Nominal/operational definition
Operationalization/operational definition
Precision
Reliability
Validity
Variable

Some Questions:

What is conceptualization?
What is the difference between operational and nominal definition?
Why are definitions more difficult in the case of descriptive as opposed to explanatory research?
What are two reasons for inaccuracy in measures?
What is measurement reliability?
What are threats to measurement reliability?
What are some conditions that cause errors in the reliability of measurement instruments?
What are some characteristics of measures that cause errors in reliability of measurement instruments?
How can we increase reliability?
What is validity?
How can we establish measurement validity?
When might you use multiple indicators for a concept rather than a single indicator?
What are the different levels of measurement? Can you give examples of variables/attributes for each level of measurement?

Articles

Putnam:

Research question
Familiarity with at least a couple of his hypotheses
Approach to inquiry (inductive or deductive)?
Issues to consider in testing his hypothesis—establishing causal relationship between TV viewing and social capital

Segal & Cover:

How did the authors address issues of measurement validity & reliability?
What were the challenges S&C faced in measuring their key explanatory variable?