

Welcome and First Lecture

Department of Government
London School of Economics and Political Science

- 1 Substantive Material
- 2 Introductions
- 3 Administrative Stuff

Claims

- Politics is full of claims
- The credibility of claims depends on the strength of evidence and argument
- This class aims to give you tools to:
 - make credible claims, *and*
 - evaluate claims made by others

An Example



The image is a screenshot of the The Guardian website. At the top, the logo "theguardian" is displayed in white on a dark blue background, with the tagline "website of the year" underneath. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links for "home", "business", "economics", "banking", "retail", "markets", "eurozone", "UK", "world", and "all". The "Economics" link is highlighted with a blue and yellow arrow icon. The main headline reads "Brexit vote puts Britain's rising competitiveness at risk, says WEF". Below the headline is a sub-headline: "World Economic Forum report gives UK highest ranking in a decade, but suggests leaving EU will have negative impact".

theguardian
website of the year

home > business > economics banking retail markets eurozone UK world all

 Economics

Brexit vote puts Britain's rising competitiveness at risk, says WEF

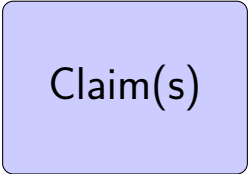
World Economic Forum report gives UK highest ranking in a decade, but suggests leaving EU will have negative impact

Source: Larry Elliott, *The Guardian*, Sep. 27, 2016

Definitions

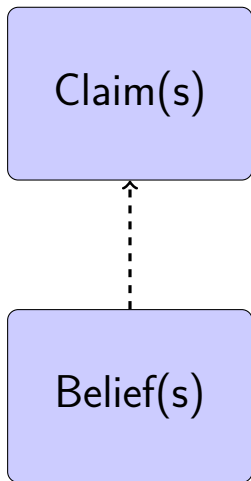
- Inference: “a belief based on evidence *and* rules for processing that evidence”
- Methodology: “tools for gathering and analyzing data to try to make valid inferences”

Drawing Inferences

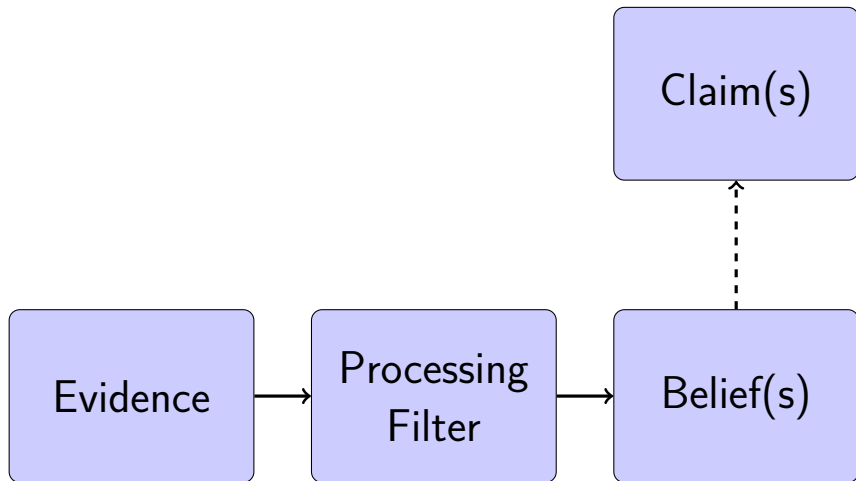


Claim(s)

Drawing Inferences

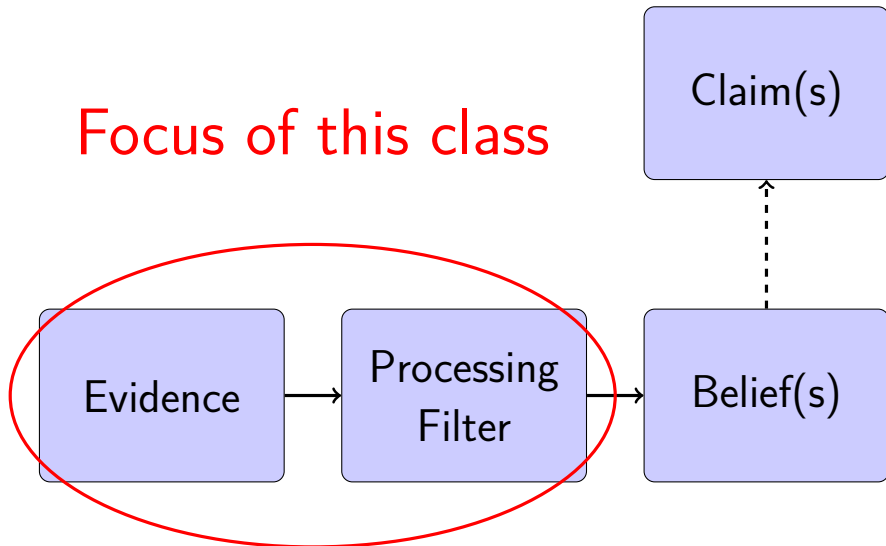


Drawing Inferences



Drawing Inferences

Focus of this class



Question for you

How might we draw an inference about the effect of Brexit on economic competitiveness?

Two Categories of Inference

1 Descriptive Inference

- What are the facts?

2 Causal Inference

- Why does something occur?

Descriptive Inference

- Sometimes seen as the lesser type of inference
- Still often very interesting
- Examples
 - Is the climate changing?
 - Is the United States politically polarized?
 - Is global terrorism increasing?
 - Is Azerbaijan a democracy?

Causal Inference I

- Typically what we are interested in
- Questions about “why?”
- Examples
 - *Why* is the climate changing?
 - *Why* is the United States politically polarized?
 - *Why* is (or is not) global terrorism increasing?
 - *Why* is (or is not) Azerbaijan a democracy?

Causal Inference II

Typically start with either:

1 an outcome (dependent variable)

or

2 a cause (independent variable)

Causal Inference: 2 Types

Reverse

If what, then Y?
What causes Y?

Associated with a
search for causes

ex. What causes
climate change?

Forward

If X, then what?
What happens if X?

Associated with
“Experimentation”

ex. What happens if
we release
greenhouse gases
into the air?

Which of these is a causal research question?

- 1 Will Labour win the next UK general election?
- 2 What had to have happened for Labour to win the last UK general election?
- 3 How has Labour's electoral performance changed over the last three decades?
- 4 What was the result of the last UK general election?
- 5 What role did the economy have on the last UK general election?

Which of these is a causal research question?

- 1 Will Labour win the next UK general election?
- 2 What had to have happened for Labour to win the last UK general election?
- 3 How has Labour's electoral performance changed over the last three decades?
- 4 What was the result of the last UK general election?
- 5 What role did the economy have on the last UK general election?

Which of these is a causal research question?

- 1 Will Labour win the next UK general election?
- 2 What had to have happened for Labour to win the last UK general election?
- 3 How has Labour's electoral performance changed over the last three decades?
- 4 What was the result of the last UK general election?
- 5 What role did the economy have on the last UK general election?

Good research questions

- Start from political problem or puzzle
- Builds on an existing research literature
- Non-obvious¹

¹Note: evolving standard

Which is a better RQ?

Why was Germany allocated 96 seats in the European Parliament during the 2014 elections?

Why was “degressive proportionality” chosen as the method of allocating seats in the EP?

Which is a better RQ?

Given what we know from Skocpol about the causes of social revolutions, why haven't such revolutions occurred in several post-Soviet states in Central Asia?

Given my conversations with taxi drivers during my weekend holiday in Tashkent, why hasn't Uzbekistan become a full-fledged democracy?

Which is a better RQ?

How do social media facilitate Britons' decisions about where to take a summer holiday?

How did social media use shape the development of "Arab Spring" protests in Egypt?

Other ways to generate research questions

- 1 Puzzle-driven
- 2 Theory-driven
- 3 Data-driven
- 4 Method-driven

Scientific method

- 1 Research question(s)
- 2 Clarify the core concepts
- 3 Develop (causal) theory
- 4 Derive specific, testable hypotheses
- 5 Plan data collection
- 6 Gather data/evidence
- 7 Analyze data
- 8 Draw inferences

Questions?

1 Substantive Material

2 Introductions

3 Administrative Stuff

Who am I?

- Thomas Leeper
- Assistant Professor in Political Behaviour
- Originally from Minnesota (USA)
- Interested in public opinion and political psychology
- Office hours:
Mon 10:30–1:30; Fri 9:30–10:30 CON 4.11
(Sign-up on LSE for You)
Otherwise, email: T.Leeper@lse.ac.uk

Who is your GTA?

- Elena Pupaza
- PhD candidate at LSE
- Email: E.C.Pupaza@lse.acuk

Who are you?

- Introduce yourself to a neighbour
- Where are you from?
- What interests you about government or politics?
- What do you hope to learn from the course?

1 Substantive Material

2 Introductions

3 Administrative Stuff

Course Resources

- Reading List:
<http://readinglists.lse.ac.uk/lists/B821602E-0B75-9923-D8C5-457373E1789E.html>
- Toshkov's *Research Design in Political Science*
- Moodle:
<https://moodle.lse.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=4889>
 - Slides (after lecture)
 - Forums
 - Assignments

Textbook



Schedule: Michaelmas Term

MT 1 Introduction (Sep. 29)

MT 2 Concepts: "I'll know it when I see it" (Oct. 6)

MT 3 Measurement: Concepts in Practice (Oct. 13)

MT 4 Tabulation and Visualization (Oct. 20)

MT 5 Description and Evidence Gathering (Oct. 27)

Reading Week

MT 7 Translating Texts into Interpretations and Numbers
(Nov. 10)

MT 8 Actually Talking to People: Participant Observation
(Nov. 17)

MT 9 Sampling and Representativeness (Nov. 24)

MT 10 Ethics and Research Integrity (Dec. 1)

MT 11 From Description to Causation (Dec. 8)

Schedule: Lent Term

LT 1 Causality: Developing Explanations (Jan. 12)

LT 2 Theory Development and Hypothesis Generation (Jan. 19)

LT 3 Literature Review (Jan. 26)

LT 4 Case Comparisons (Feb. 2)

LT 5 Causal Mechanisms (Feb. 9)

Reading Week

LT 7 Statistical Inference (Feb. 23)

LT 8 Getting to Regression: The Workhorse of Quantitative Political Analysis (Mar. 2)

LT 9 Matching and Regression: Accounting for Rival Explanations (Mar. 9)

LT 10 Experimental Design and the Search for Quasi-Experiments (Mar. 16)

LT 11 Conclusion, Exam Prep, Synthesis (Mar. 23)

R

- In several weeks, we will have lab activities and problem sets involving work with quantitative data
- We will use R for this
- Download from:
<https://cran.r-project.org/>

Learning Outcomes

- 1 Identify theories, hypotheses, and methods used in empirical political science research.
- 2 Apply different methods to political science research questions.
- 3 Analyse data to measure concepts, make comparisons, and draw inferences.
- 4 Define causation and the multiple ways of reaching causal inferences.
- 5 Communicate political science concepts, theories, and methods in writing.

Summative Assessment

- 1 Breadth: 2-hour written exam (ST)
 - Similar to last year's paper
 - Sample paper will be available on Moodle
- 2 Depth: 3000-word research design proposal

Research Design Proposal

- Research question
- Theoretical contribution
- Testable hypotheses
- Description of the proposed data collection and analysis
- **Due Date:**
Tues 20 March 2017 at 5:00pm

Problem Sets

Identifying & Evaluating Claims	Problem Set 1	Tues. Oct. 17
Concepts and Measurement	Problem Set 2	Tues. Nov. 7
Data Collection I	Problem Set 3	Tues. Nov. 21
Data Collection II	Problem Set 4	Tues. Dec. 5
Proposal Topics Presentation	Presentation	November

Causality	Problem Set 5	Tues. Jan. 16
Theory Evaluation	Problem Set 6	Tues. Feb. 13
Literature Review	Formative Essay	Reading Week
Article Critique	Problem Set 7	Tues. Feb. 27
Statistical analysis	Problem Set 8	Tues. Mar. 13

Questions?

