

Government Department Subject Talk



29 March 2017

Degree programmes

- BSc Government
- BSc Government and Economics
- BSc Government and History
- BSc Politics and International Relations
- BSc Politics and Philosophy

- PPE (administered by Philosophy)

Who am I?

- Dr Thomas J. Leeper
- Assistant Professor in Political Behaviour
- PhD Political Science, 2012
Northwestern University
- Undergraduate teaching
 - “Research Design in Political Science”
 - “Experimental Politics”

1 Why Government at LSE?

2 What Is Research-informed Teaching?

3 Q & A

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Location, location, location...















SE-Oxford Commission on
**State Fragility,
Growth and
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Your fellow students...













The academic staff...







Source: Households Below Average Income, CWP (1994/95 onwards) and the 2010

Research-informed teaching...

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/About-LSE/Our-strategy>









LSE EDUCATION STRATEGY

2015-2020



Features of an LSE Education

- 1 One-on-one advising from member of academic staff

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- 4 Undergraduate research opportunities
 - Coursework
 - Undergraduate research internships
 - LSE Groups
 - Posters in Parliament
 - Research seminar series

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- 5 Dissertation

General Course Structure

1 First Year

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- “Introduction to Political Theory”
- Two further modules
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3 Third Year

- Advanced seminars ($n < 15$)
- Optional dissertation

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- BSc Politics and Philosophy

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To know the causes of things

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- Forward causal questions
- Backward causal questions

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 - What effect(s) does X have?

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 - What effect(s) does X have?
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- Backward causal questions
 - What causes Y?
 - Why does Y occur?

What effect did the end of South Africa apartheid have public goods delivery?

**What role do gender quotas
have on the political
participation of women?**

**How can governments use
liberal-paternalist *nudges* to
affect public behaviour?**

What effect will Britain's exit from the EU have on British economic and social life?

How do land rights shape the political behaviour and institutions of Sub-Saharan Africa?

**How do elections affect
citizens emotionally?**

What effect did protest activity have during the Arab Spring?

**How does the non-verbal
behaviour of Bank of England
Governors affect their political
influence?**

**How do immigration policies
affect the political and
economic freedoms of the
native-born?**

**Why did some people vote to
Leave the EU while others
voted to Remain?**

**How does nationalism develop
in the politics of South-East
Asian states?**

How do local politicians make decisions about aid distribution in Malawi?

**Why do so many terrorists
have degrees in engineering?**

How do leaders of one-party states decide which partisans to purge to preserve political control?

**How do post-conflict societies
build stable political
institutions?**

“What works?” discourse

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- Causal inference is not just an academic exercise
- Governments, firms, and NGOs worldwide want to know *what works?*
- To do that we need students to not just be passionate about learning what we already know but also *creating* new knowledge

Drawing causal inferences

- Causal inference is the effort to *explain* how and why the world works as it does
 - What consequences does *something* have?
 - Why does *something* happen?

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- This goes beyond looking for patterns
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- How, then, do we identify causal relationships in politics?

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Causal inference involves inferring *what would have happened* in a counterfactual reality *where the potential cause took on a different value*

We can only observe the reality that occurs!

“A Christmas Carol”

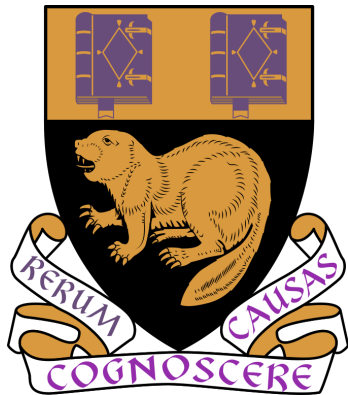
- 1843 novel by Charles Dickens
- Ebenezer Scrooge is shown his own future by the “Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come”
- Has the choice to either:
 - stay on current path (one counterfactual), or
 - change his ways (take a different counterfactual)

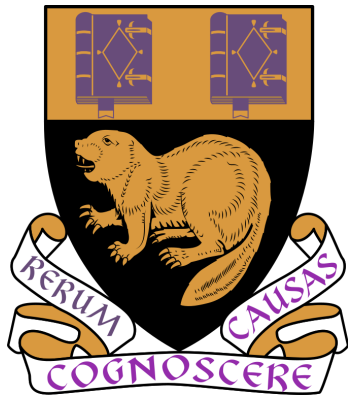
Drawing causal inferences

- Causality is defined as the difference between two *potential* outcomes:
 - 1 the outcome that occurs if X occurs
 - 2 the outcome that occurs if X does not occur

Drawing causal inferences

- Causality is defined as the difference between two *potential* outcomes:
 - 1 the outcome that occurs if X occurs
 - 2 the outcome that occurs if X does not occur
- To *know the causes of things* we need to know how to gather evidence and process that evidence in order to *infer* causality when we cannot see it directly





What works?

For more information...

- ...about admissions:
“Applying to LSE” (Old Theatre): 11:30, 12:30, 14:30
- ...about courses:
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/calendar/Default.htm>
- ...about the Government Department:
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/government/home.aspx>
- ...about LSE Education Strategy:
<https://www.lse.ac.uk/about-lse/Image-assets/PDF/Education-Strategy.pdf>
- ...about public events:
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/Events>

Questions?

Photo credits

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- <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/files/2011/09/Nick-Clegg-LSE.jpg>
- <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/reevaluating-gordon-brown-its-important-to-factor-context-into-our-assessment-of-political-leaders>
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- <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/five-minutes-with-nicola-sturgeon-minority-government-is-perfectly-capable-of-being-stable-governor>

