

Political Science 501, Baumgartner  
Short paper topics/discussion points  
Week 14: Paradigms and Problems

Readings: King, Baumgartner and Leech, Bates, NSF EITM Report

As mentioned in class in recent sessions, each of the authors in this week's readings, like Morton earlier this semester, identifies what the author considers to be either *the* fundamental problem in political science or, slightly more modestly, focuses on a major issue that hinders scientific accumulation and progress.

There is no point in giving an opinion about which problem is the biggest problem, most likely. Few would doubt that good theories, appropriate statistical techniques, attention to creating work that is comparable to the work that has come before, or good knowledge of the substance of what one is theorizing about are important goals for everyone.

This week's class will focus on a review of the arguments that each person makes. Also include Morton in this mix. So for class discussion, make sure you are able to identify and evaluate the major points each author makes.

For your papers, consider a literature with which you are familiar. Discuss in some detail which of the problems identified by the authors this week fits most clearly with this literature. After identifying the problem and explaining how it relates to this particular literature, discuss in more detail whether the author's prescription for how to solve the problem would work. Is it clear how the solutions will come? Do the applications of the general rules and prescriptions offered by this week's authors seem self-evident, or is this problematic? In other words, do the authors effectively identify a solution to the problem they lay out, or do they mostly focus on identifying the problem without solving it? Note that this question, like most, is best answered with reference to a particular problem or literature, not with generalities.