

Questions for week 2, classics

Review all these questions for class and be prepared to discuss. Write a one-pager on one of them, as we work out assignments. In such a paper, ask yourself these questions: Why did the author write this (what was the intended point / puzzle to be solved)? What is the argument / main point? What types of evidence are brought to bear? How convincing is it? (This takes you through the descriptive part of the exercise.) Now, the fun part: How could it be improved? Was it a waste of time? How does it compare to other research? What are the fundamental unanswered questions that stem from it? Pick any such “going forward” question, and also address that. Speculate, postulate, compare, use your own thinking in this section of the paper.

1. Robert Dahl and William Riker were two of the titans of our profession. How did they each approach the measurement of “power” in their 1957 and 1964 articles? How can we evaluate that in retrospect?
2. Schattschneider introduces the concept of the “scope of conflict” and says it is strategic, or basically endogenous to politics. Evaluate that.
3. More generally, Schattschneider postulates a theory about political conflict based on intensity, visibility, direction, and scope from which he says a great many things follow. How can we use those insights to build a theory of what gets on the agenda? (You can also look at his book, *The Semi-Sovereign People* for more detail)
4. Bachrach and Baratz make one of those arguments that everyone dutifully cites, then ignores. In fact, their article is the number one most cited article in the entire history of the APSR. Come to class with a few paragraphs of a proposal of how to design a study of the “second face” of power.
5. Walker did not really focus on Dahl in his initial article, but Dahl sure took it personal. Discuss the tone of that exchange, and the value of such things in the profession.
6. Walker’s argument in some ways is that elite-pluralism, or what Dahl has called “polyarchy” is not really very deeply democratic. Discuss. How does it gibe with Schattschneider? Bachrach and Baratz?
7. What are the routes to agenda-access described by Cobb, Ross, and Ross? Is their set of models complete? What are the difficulties in applying this perspective? Can it be used as a guide for research? What routes to agenda-access are likely to be most common?
8. Downs was dead wrong: The environment never went away as a political problem. Evaluate the importance of this article in light of this. Why is his article still cited a lot?
9. Is there any value in studying political science if we cannot measure power? Or is there a way to measure power that these authors did not find? Or is there value in political science even if we cannot measure such a basic variable?