

Title: Replication, Replication	Lecturer: Professor Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck
Type of Course: Research Seminar Comparative Politics	ECTS: 14 Semester: Autumn 2013

Course Description:

Analytical social science is an inherently critical endeavor – good social scientists are highly talented at finding reasons why findings of published research should not be believed. Replicating existing findings from empirical research is an indispensable tool of critical social science. It can come in two appearances: (a) as verification, seeking to repeat an existing analysis in every respect with the aim of exactly reproducing its results, or (b) as reanalysis of the same research problem with different data and perhaps also more or less different methods, aiming to provide another check of the same hypotheses by means of new research. In its first variety, replication is a tool that helps to understand the intricacies of empirical social research, since trying to reproduce existing results makes clear how many more or less far-reaching methodological choices need to be taken at the various stages of the empirical research process, and to what degree findings are influenced by these decisions. In its second variety, replicating existing studies adds to our cumulative knowledge: by broadening the support base of hypotheses through independent research that leads to similar findings, by calling them into question if findings contradict existing research, or by indicating how the hypotheses' validity depends on certain conditions, thus making them more complex. The idea of this research seminar is that each participant replicates an existing study of his or her own choice, out of the field of survey-based research into political behavior or attitudes (micro-level political sociology). In principle replications of both type (a) or (b) can be conducted, but (a) presupposes access to the dataset used in the study that is to be replicated.