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Chapter 2: The Empirical Approach to Political Science

Test Bank

Multiple Choice

1. Knowledge that is evaluative, value-laden, and concerned with prescribing what ought to be is known as _____ knowledge.
A. normative
B. nonnormative
C. probabilistic
D. nonprobabilistic
Ans: A
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Knowledge
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Easy

2. Most political scientists, like scientists in other disciplines, accept _____, in which it is not necessary to explain or predict a phenomenon with 100 percent accuracy.
A. approximate explanation
B. nonapproximate explanation
C. probabilistic explanation
D. nonprobabilistic explanation
Ans: C
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Medium

3. A _____ is a body of statements that systematize knowledge of, and explain, phenomena.
A. research statement
B. hypothesis
C. null hypothesis
D. theory
Ans: D
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.2: Discuss the importance of theory in empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Knowledge
Answer Location: The Importance of Theory
Difficulty Level: Easy

4. The process of reasoning from general theory to making predictions about events or behavior in specific situations is referred to as _____.

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A. deduction
B. induction
C. parsimony
D. falsifiability
Ans: A
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.2: Discuss the importance of theory in empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Knowledge
Answer Location: The Importance of Theory
Difficulty Level: Easy

5. The process of reasoning going from specific observations to a general explanation or theory is known as _____.
A. deduction
B. induction
C. reduction
D. production
Ans: B
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.2: Discuss the importance of theory in empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Knowledge
Answer Location: The Importance of Theory
Difficulty Level: Easy

6. Practitioners of _____ believe that a proper goal of social science is to critique and improve society (by making it more just and humane) rather than merely understand or explain what is going on.
A. empiricism
B. the scientific method
C. critical theory
D. deduction
Ans: C
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.5: Summarize competing perspectives.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Constructionism and Critical Theory
Difficulty Level: Medium

7. Proponents of alternatives to the scientific methods may be labeled as _____.
A. nonempiricists
B. empiricists
C. deductionists
D. inductionists
Ans: A
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.5: Summarize competing perspectives.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Introduction
Difficulty Level: Easy

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8. Which of the following is a crucial aspect of empirical theory?
A. It meets the tenets of critical theory.
B. It de-emphasizes parsimony.
C. It is not cumulative.
D. It leads to specific testable predictions.
Ans: D
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.2: Discuss the importance of theory in empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: The Importance of Theory
Difficulty Level: Medium

9. _____ dictates that when given a choice between two compelling explanations, the explanation that relies on fewer explanatory factors is the better choice.
A. Falsifiability
B. Parsimony
C. Induction
D. Verification
Ans: B
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Medium

10. Modern political science relies heavily on one kind of knowledge, knowledge obtained through _____.
A. normative thought
B. objective observation
C. critical theory
D. constructivism
Ans: B
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Medium

11. _____ theories claim to describe and account for an entire body of human behavior.
A. Global
B. Narrow
C. Midrange
D. Societal
Ans: A
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.2: Discuss the importance of theory in empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: The Importance of Theory
Difficulty Level: Easy

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12. _____ is an approach to knowledge that asserts humans actually construct--through their social interactions and cultural and historical practices--many of the facts they take for granted as having an independent, objective, or material reality.
A. Empiricism
B. The scientific method
C. Critical theory
D. Constructionism
Ans: D
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.5: Summarize competing perspectives.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Constructionism and Critical Theory
Difficulty Level: Medium

True/False

1. When statements or hypotheses can in principle be rejected in the face of contravening empirical evidence we can say that they are falsifiable.
Ans: T
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Easy

2. Most scientific knowledge depends on verification.
Ans: T
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Knowledge
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Easy

3. Scientific knowledge is general in that both the substantive findings and research techniques are built upon the results of prior studies.
Ans: F
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Easy

4. An empirical generalization summarizes relationships between individual facts.
Ans: T
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Knowledge
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Easy

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5. Interpretation means decoding verbal and physical actions, which is a similar task to proposing and testing hypotheses.
Ans: F
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.5: Summarize competing perspectives.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Interpretation
Difficulty Level: Medium

6. Empirical research problems arise because many concepts are abstract.
Ans: T
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.4: Describe practical obstacles that challenge the empirical approach.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Reactions to the Empirical Approach: Practical Objections
Difficulty Level: Medium

Short Answer

1. Please explain the difference between normative and nonnormative knowledge.
Ans: Knowledge that is evaluative, value-laden, and concerned with prescribing what ought to be is known as normative knowledge. Knowledge that is concerned not with evaluation or prescription but with factual or objective determinations is known as nonnormative knowledge. Most scientists would agree that science is (or should attempt to be) a nonnormative enterprise.
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Application
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Medium

2. How would you apply the concept of Ockham's razor to work in political science? In your answer, please provide an example.
Ans: Varies. The answer should include an explanation of how scientists recognize that theories should be parsimonious. It should include an example of a complex theory and a simple theory with the acknowledgment that the simple theory is the better explanation.
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Application
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Medium

3. Please explain why scientific knowledge must be transmissible.
Ans: The methods used in making scientific discoveries must be made explicit so that others can analyze and replicate findings. The transmissibility of scientific knowledge suggests "science is a social activity in that it takes several scientists, analyzing and

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criticizing each other, to produce more reliable knowledge." To accept results, people must know what data were collected and how they were analyzed. A clear description of research procedures allows this independent evaluation. It also permits other scientists to collect the same information and test the original propositions themselves. If the original results are not replicated using the same procedures, they may be incorrect.
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Application
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Hard

4. Explanation is an important component of scientific knowledge. How does explanation lead to prediction?
Ans: An explanation gives scientific reasons or justifications--for why a certain outcome is to be expected. In fact, many scientists consider the ultimate test of an explanation to be its usefulness in prediction.
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Easy

5. What is a theory?
Ans: A theory is a body of statements that systematize knowledge of, and explain, phenomena. Stated differently, theories help "organize, systematize, and coordinate existing knowledge" in a unified explanatory framework. Two crucial aspects of empirical theory are (1) that it leads to specific, testable predictions and (2) that the more observations there are to support these predictions, the more the theory is confirmed.
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.2: Discuss the importance of theory in empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Comprehension
Answer Location: The Importance of Theory
Difficulty Level: Easy

Essay

1. Please summarize the debate over whether political science is really a science. In your answer, please give arguments from both sides of the debate and indicate which side of the argument is correct.
Ans: Varies. Students should explain that those who think political science is a science point to the adherence to the scientific method. This position claims that the method is the most important part of defining a science. On the other side of the debate, there are both practical and philosophical objections to classifying political science as a science. Practical objections include measurement problems, people may act in misleading ways on purpose to foil examination, data are hard to obtain, and that human behavior is too complex to predict. One philosophical objection is that humans do not simply discover knowledge of the real world through a neutral process like the scientific method but

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rather create it. Instead of knowing reality directly in its unvarnished or pure form, our perceptions, understandings, and beliefs about many "facts" stem largely, if not entirely, from human cultural and historical experiences and practices.
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.5: Summarize competing perspectives.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Analysis
Answer Location: Competing Points of View
Difficulty Level: Hard

2. In this essay, please identify and discuss the central components of scientific knowledge in political science. In your answer, please explain how each component contributes to the validity of the work.
Ans: Varies. Students should correctly identify and discuss the key terms in the chapter that make up scientific knowledge. These terms include empirical verification, falsifiability, nonnormative knowledge, transmissibility, the cumulative nature of science, empirical generalization, explanatory, replication, probabilistic explanation, and parsimony. Instructors can modify this question to be as specific or general as they want by indicating how many components they would like the students to include in the answer.
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Analysis
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Hard

3. Please explain the difference between induction and deduction. In your answer, please define each term. Also, please provide an example of each.
Ans: Varies. Induction refers to the process of drawing an inference from a set of premises and observations. This type of reasoning differs from deduction because the premises do not guarantee the conclusion but instead lend support to it. An inductive argument, in other words, does not rely on formal proof but rather gives us (more or less solid) reasons for believing in the conclusion's truthfulness. Students can include various examples. For instance, an example of inductive reasoning might be making a generalization from a sample while an example of deductive reasoning might be making a series of logical statements that, if true, would prove the conclusion correct. Instructors should note that by including the third sentence in the question they can make this into a longer question requiring an example of each form of reasoning, or exclude the sentence to make it a shorter question.
KEY: Learning Objective: 2.1: Identify eight characteristics of empiricism.
REF: Cognitive Domain: Application
Answer Location: Elements of Empiricism
Difficulty Level: Hard

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