

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Historical Theory and Practice

edited by

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## A HISTORY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-009-04429-5 — A History of Political Science  
Mark Bevir  
Frontmatter  
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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781009044295](http://www.cambridge.org/9781009044295)

DOI: 10.1017/9781009043458

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First published 2022

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-009-04429-5 Paperback  
ISSN 2634-8616 (online)  
ISSN 2634-8608 (print)

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## A History of Political Science

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DOI: 10.1017/9781009043458  
First published online: August 2022

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**Abstract:** This Element denaturalizes political science, stressing the contestability and contingency of ideas, traditions, subfields, and even the discipline itself. The history of political science is less one of scholars testing and improving theories by reference to data than of their appropriating and transforming ideas, often obscuring or obliterating former meanings, to serve new purposes in shifting political contexts. Political science arose in the late nineteenth century as part of a wider modernism that replaced earlier developmental narratives with more formal explanations. It changed as some scholars yoked together behavioural topics, quantitative techniques, and positivist theory, and as other scholars rejected their doing so. Subfields such as international relations remained semi-detached and focussed on policy as much as theory. Furthermore, the shifting fashions within political science – modernism, behaviouralism, realism, neoliberalism, the new institutionalism – have informed the policies by which governments have tried to tame contingency and govern people.

**Keywords:** political science, international relations, behaviouralism, political institutionalism, neoliberalism

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ISBNs: 9781009044295 (PB), 9781009043458 (OC)  
ISSNs: 2634-8616 (online), 2634-8608 (print)

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