POLS 103 A
Comparative Politics
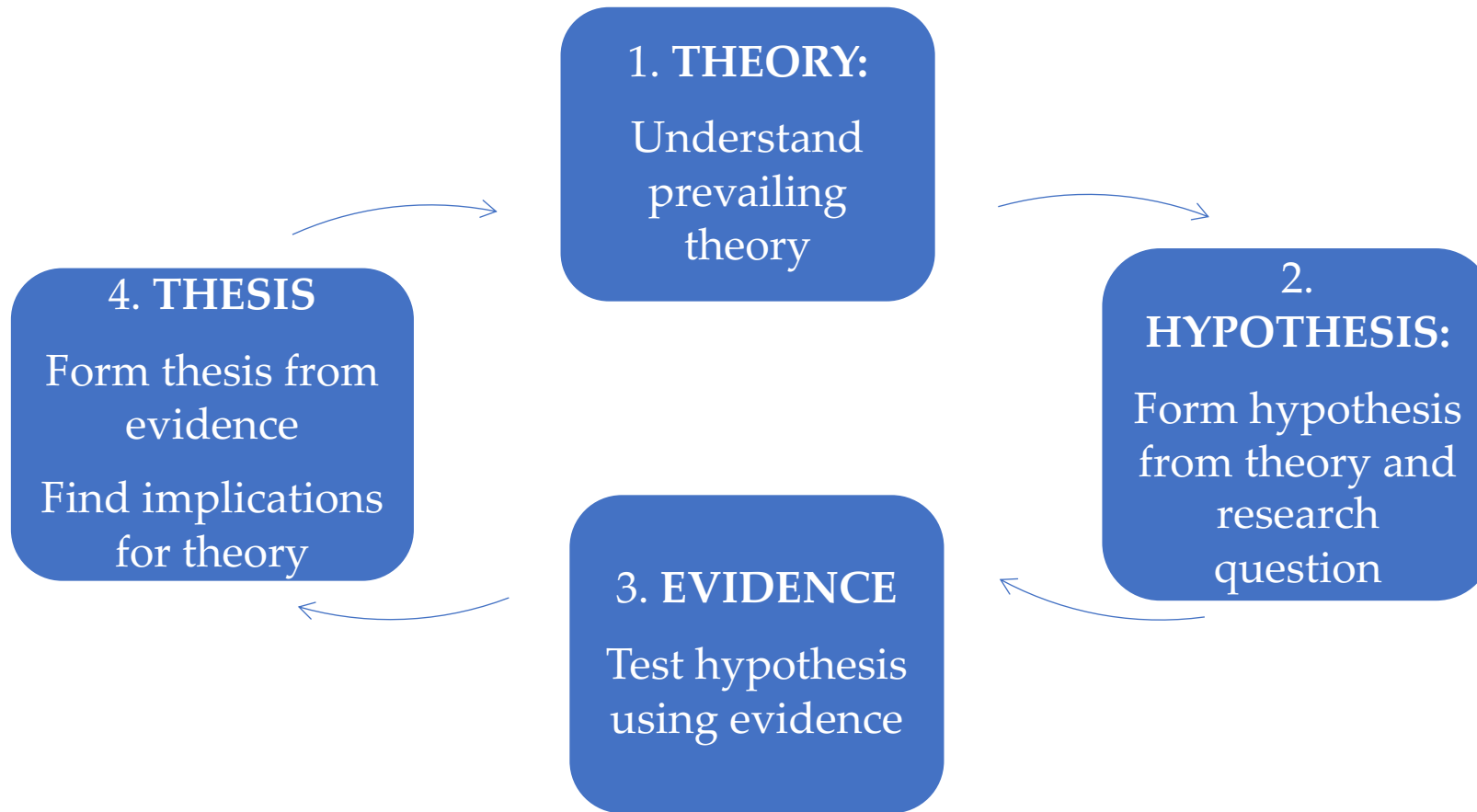
Classes 3 and 4:

Comparative research

Welcome back!

Recap (mostly)

- Concepts, concept stretching, conceptualization, and Sartori's ladder of abstraction

- Empirical puzzles

- Theories, theses, and hypotheses

What's the difference between theories, theses, and hypotheses?

Theories, hypotheses, evidence, and theses

Recap (mostly)

- Theories and their scope conditions
- Inductive and deductive reasoning
- Levels of analysis
- Operationalization
- Variables
- Qualitative and quantitative evidence
- Case selection:
    - Units of analysis
    - MSS vs. MDS

Textbook-induced confusion

- Small- and large-N: cases vs. observations:
  - Example 1: comparative study of Ghana and Togo, based on 21 interviews
  - Example 2: comparative study of Ghana and Togo, based on a survey with 830 responses
  - Example 3: comparative study of democracies, based on 21 interviews
  - Example 4: comparative study of democracies, based on a survey with 830 responses
- Correlation vs. association

Association vs. causation

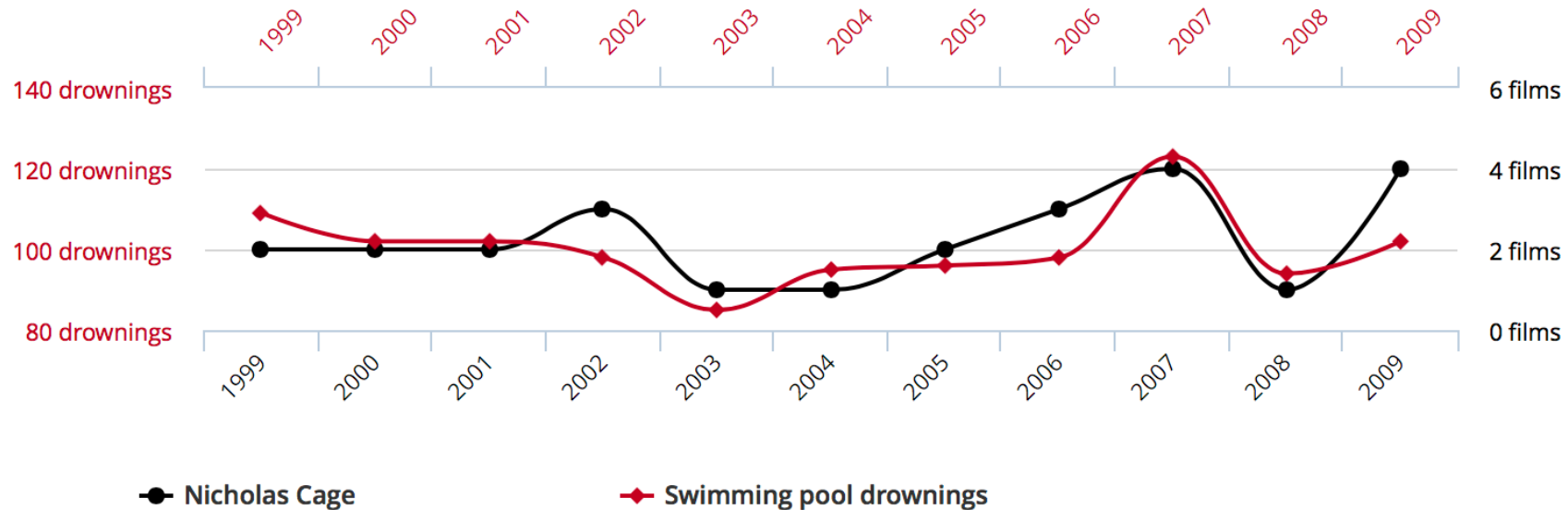Number of people who drowned by falling into a pool

correlates with

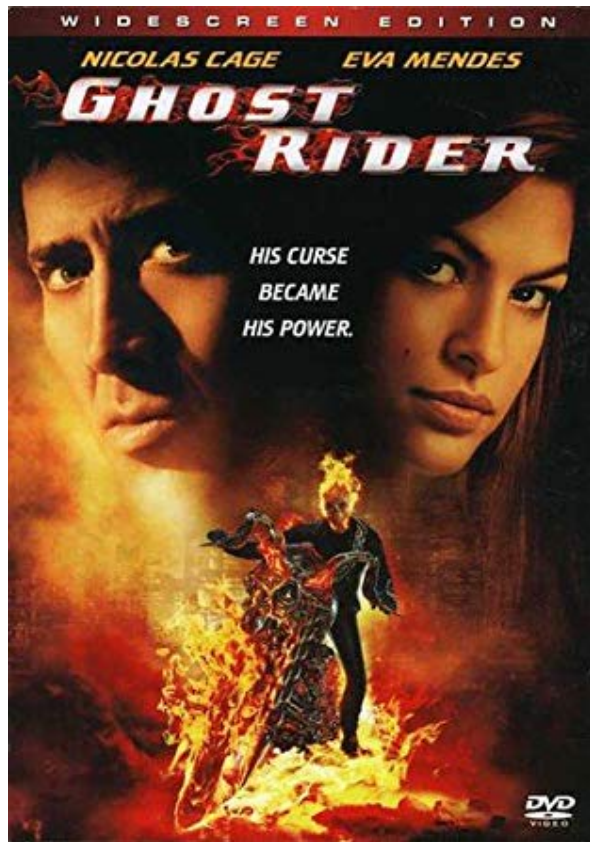Films Nicolas Cage appeared in

Correlation: 66.6% (r=0.666004)

Association vs. causation

Association vs. causation: modernization theory
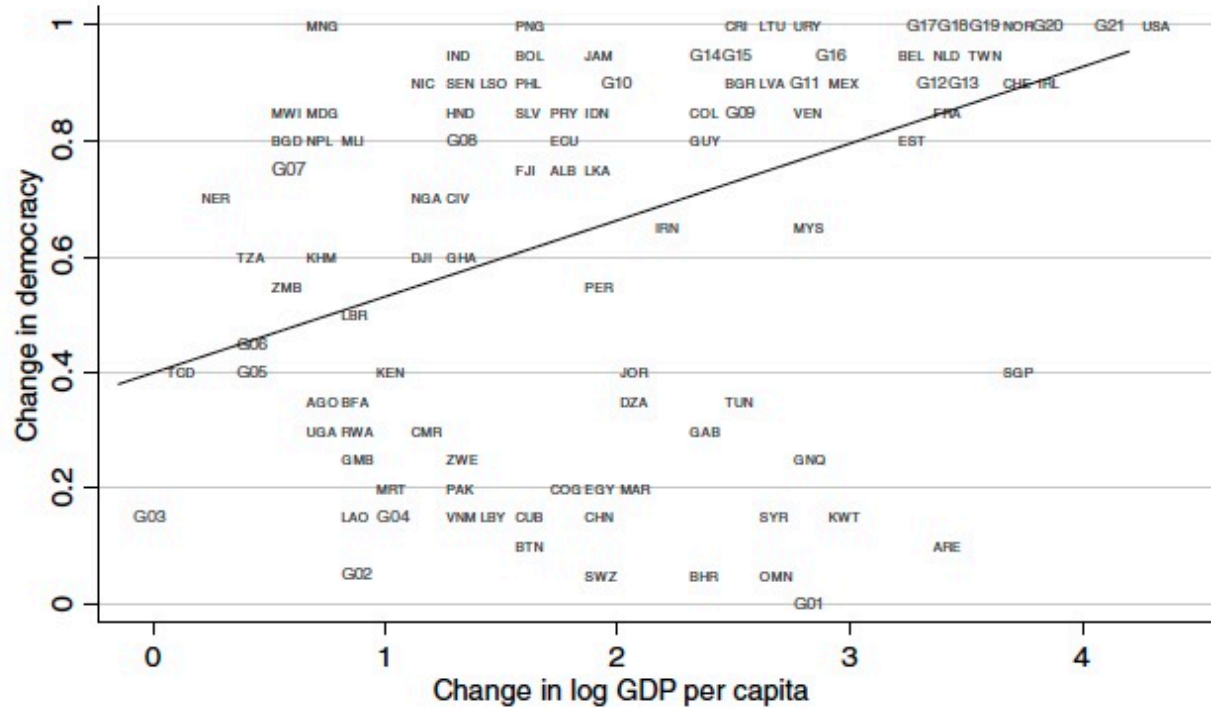
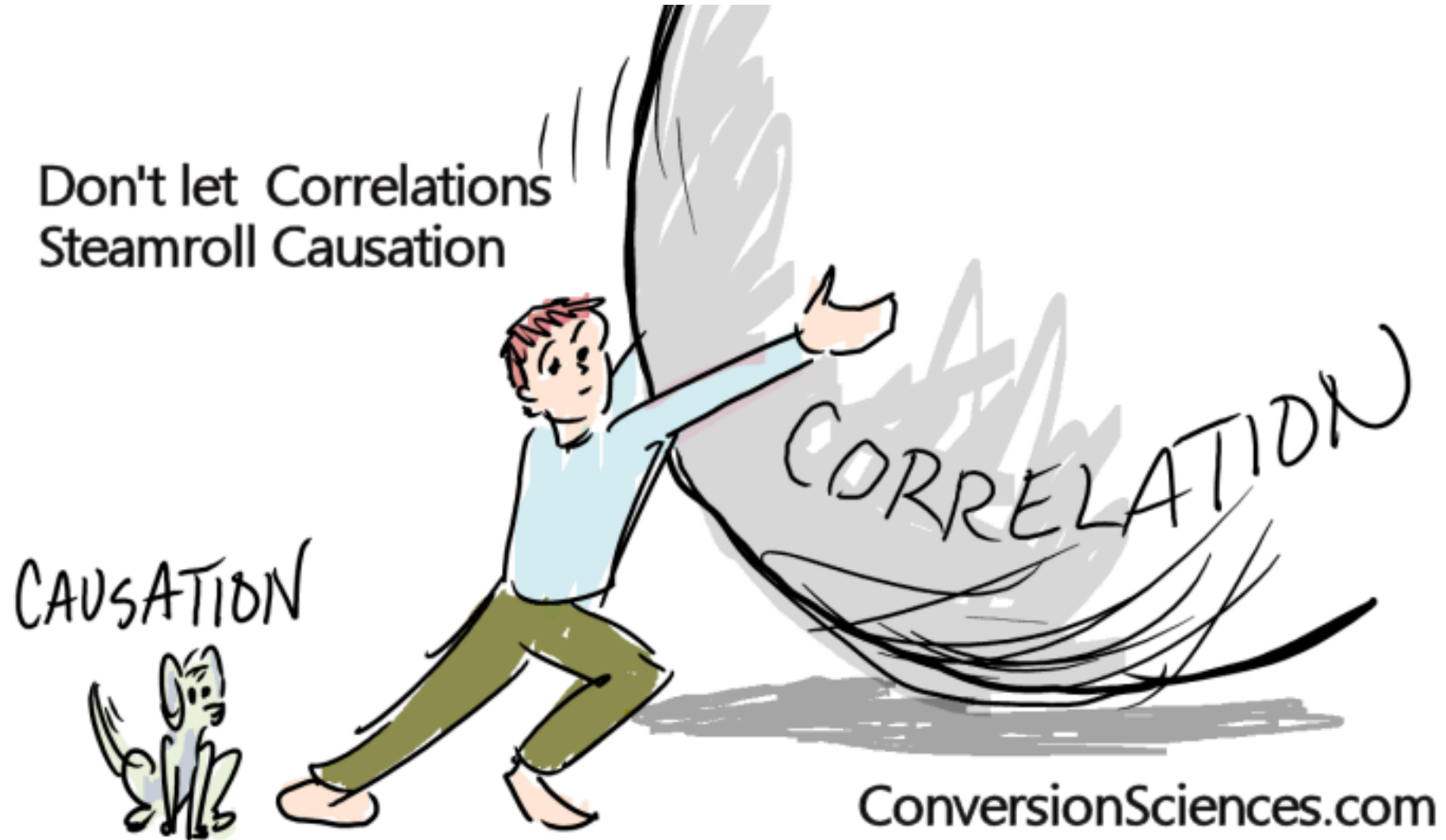FIGURE 5. CHANGE IN DEMOCRACY AND CHANGE IN INCOME, 1500–2000

Association vs. causation

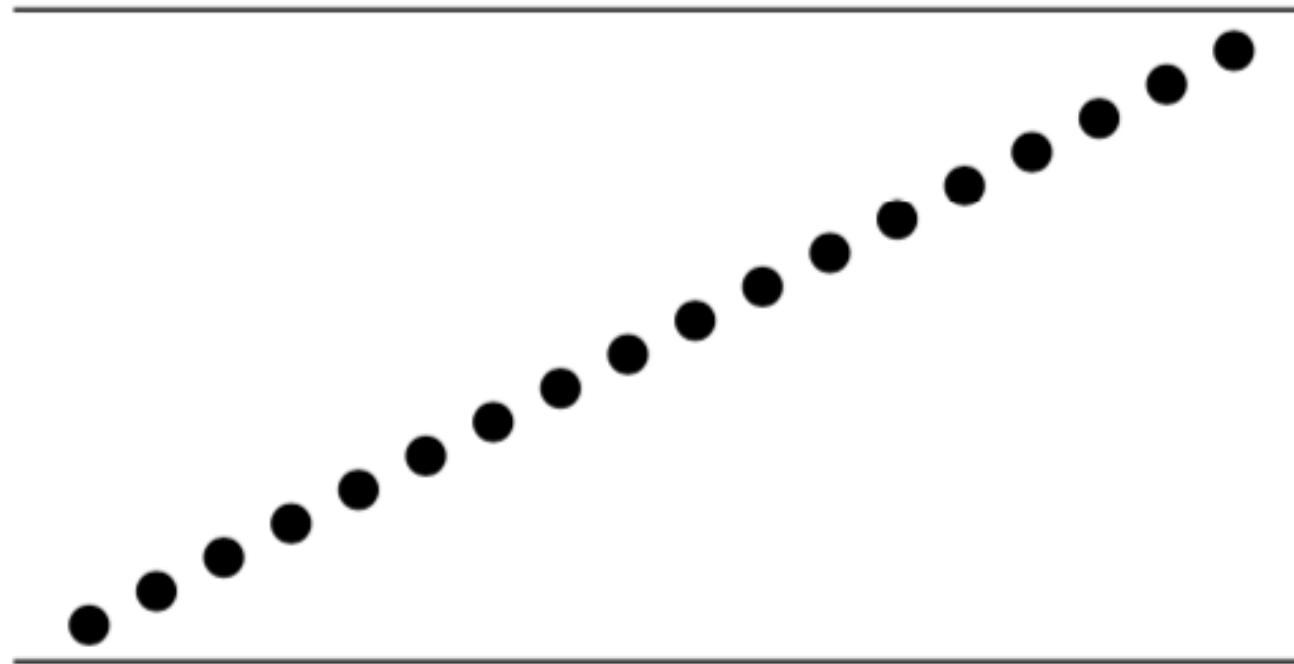# Kahoot!

https://kahoot.com/mobile-app/

Causal inference and its challenges

Perfect correlation

- Perfect correlation != falsifiability

Perfect Correlation

Reverse causation

"The Usual"
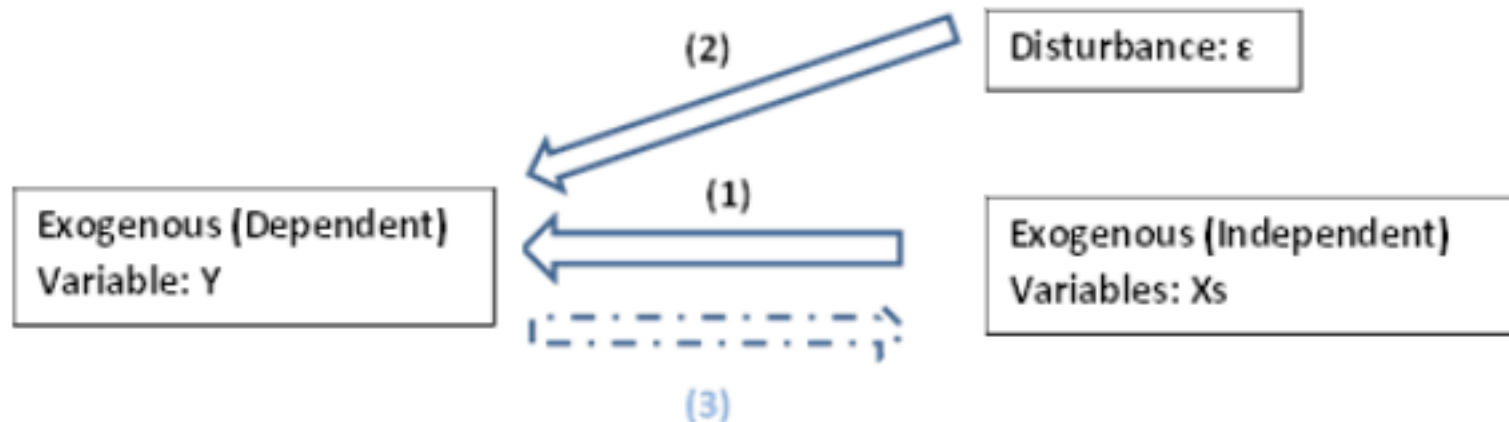
X ➡ Y

Reverse Causality

Y ➡ X

Simultaneity

X ⬌ Y

Endogeneity

- Technically: correlation between independent variable and error term
- Common usage: multiple *endogenous* relationships
- (Textbook wrong)

Simultaneity

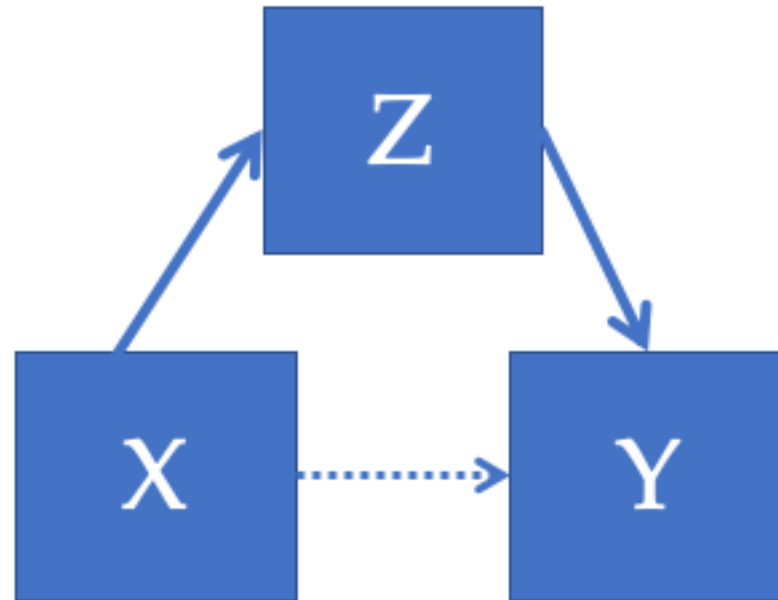• Simultaneity != endogeneity

"The Usual"

X ➡ Y

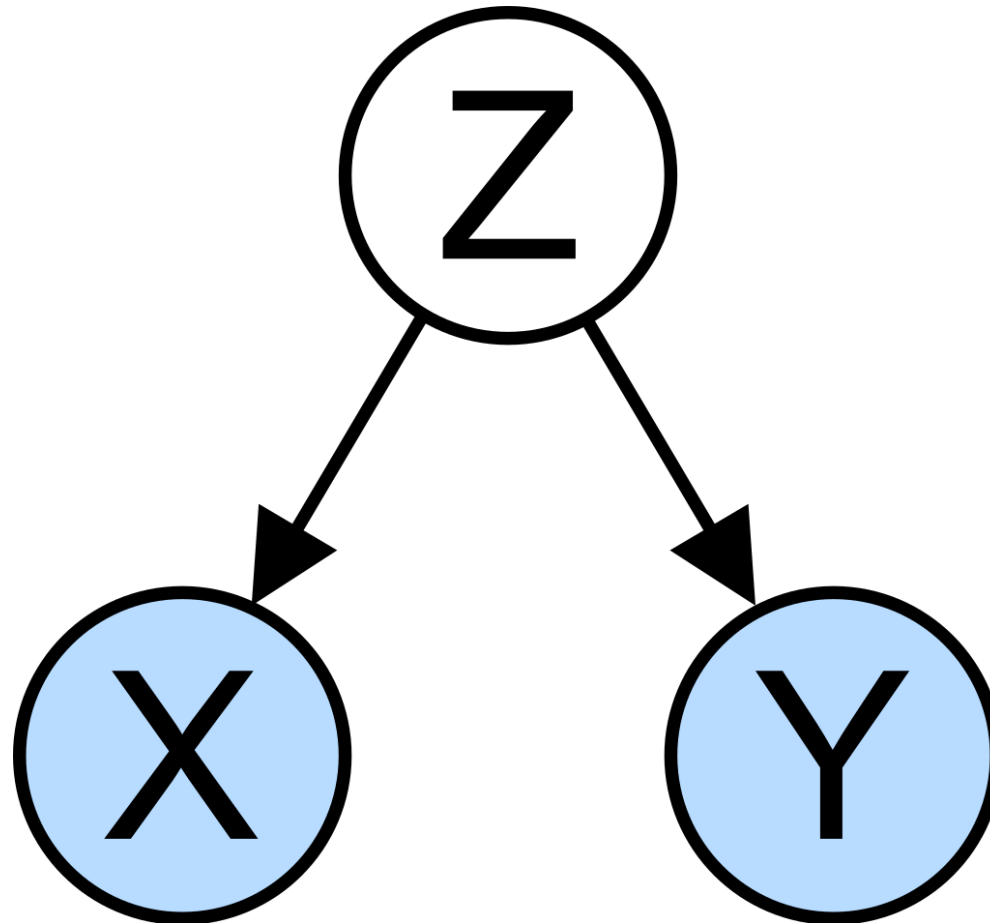**Reverse Causality**

Y ➡ X

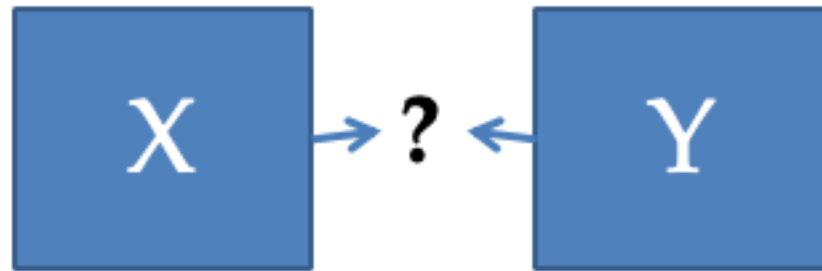**Simultaneity**

X ⬌ Y

Intervening variables

Confounders / lurking variables

- Confounder != omitted variable

Spuriousness

Measurement problems

- Measurement errors
- Measurement bias
- Measurement validity
  → operationalization

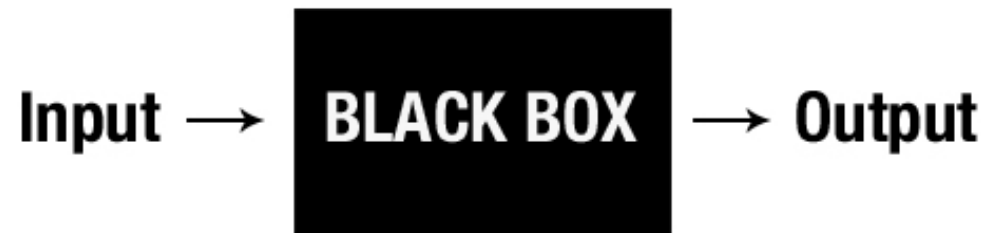The Rogoff-Reinhart data scandal reminds us economists aren't gods

Heidi Moore

The fact that economics spits out cold, hard numbers doesn't mean it produces the cold, hard truth

Principles of causation

- Association
- Nonconfounding
- Direction (temporal precedence)
- Mechanism: pathway / channel through which an effect is produced

Input → **BLACK BOX** → Output

Takeaways

- Research design:
  - Empirical puzzle
  - Research question
  - Hypotheses, theses, and theory (with its scope conditions)
  - Operationalization and (independent and dependent) variables
  - Level and unit(s) of analysis
  - Case selection and design type (small- and large-N, MSS or MDS)
  - Empirical testing and data collection
- Important considerations:
  - Relationship between variables: association vs. causation
  - Causal inference challenges and measurement problems