

COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY RESEARCH
MA Mandatory Elective Course, Fall Term, AY 2019/20
2 CEU credits, 4 ECTS

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Instructor

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Classes

Mondays, 17:20-19:00 and Tuesdays, 15:30-17:10

Office Hours

Instructor

Mondays 15:30 - 17:10 and Tuesdays 9:00 - 10:40

Room: QS A-016 Meeting Room

NB: Sign up beforehand at <http://carstenqschneider.youcanbook.me>.

TA

TBA

Course description

The aims of this course consists in making students familiar with the basic rules of doing case study research that aims at drawing descriptive or causal inference with the goal of developing theories. The definition of "case study research" used in this course comprises both comparative and single case studies and it can be situated at the cross-case and at the within-case level. The course will help students to evaluate the methodological merits of those political science publications that use a smaller-N comparative approach or a within-case approach and to design their own (comparative) case study research strategy. With its focus on drawing descriptive or causal inference based on systematic (qualitative or quantitative) empirical evidence, it is

important to point out that this course is not about interpretivist, post-structuralist etc. understandings of doing "qualitative" research. Students interested in these important strands of political science literature are better served by taking the respective mandatory elective course offered at our department. Furthermore, while throughout the course we will read applied case studies and try to practice specific research tasks, this course does not focus on the hands-on principles and practices of data collection, such as interviewing, archival research, field work etc. Again, other courses offered at the department are catering to these important needs.

The course proceeds as follows. In the beginning, we introduce some fundamentals of case study research that are relevant regardless of whether one is performing single or comparative case studies. In fact, most of these issues are so fundamental that they are relevant to any kind of empirical social research. In this part, we discuss different research goals (description vs. explanation; theory testing vs. theory developing; types of causes and how they can be inferred; scope conditions; concept formation strategies etc.). We then move on to the discussion of different types of cases and the analytic purposes that their intense study can and cannot serve. We focus on strategies of case selection and then move to comparative case studies. In the next sessions, we move from cross-case to a within-case perspective. Here we discuss the different logics of within-case analysis, with special focus on process tracing and a brief detour on Bayesian approaches. In the last week, we conclude the course with a session on how to graphically visualize findings from qualitative case studies and a wrap-up session.

The course starts in the second half of the Fall term and meets twice a week. Most of the meetings will be a mix between a lecture at the beginning, followed by a seminar-style discussion among students and the instructor.

Learning outcomes

During the course work, students are asked to write one take-home written exercise, sit in a closed-book exam, and to actively participate during in-class discussions and group work. The written exercise is expected to help develop the ability to synthesize the information gathered from the mandatory readings, determine a focus point, and to develop a coherent line of argumentation. The exam is meant to improve the ability to generate logical, plausible, and persuasive arguments, to compare and contrast, and to derive theoretical conclusions from comparative empirical observations. The emphasis on in-class participation and group work is meant to foster the skills of expressing informative reflections 'on the spot' and to decrease potential fears of speaking in front of others.

Learning Activities and Teaching Methods

Teaching methods consist of lectures, seminars, group work, and student presentation. The following teaching activities will take place.

Presence and Participation

Students are expected to be actively present at all lectures and seminars. In case you are unable to attend, you need to inform the instructor(s) via email prior to the meeting you are going to miss. Unexcused missed classes count with 0 points for participation on that specific day. During the seminars you are expected to reflect critically on the mandatory readings and to engage in discussions with your fellow students and the instructor(s). As some might be more shy than others and because our class might be bigger than average, everybody is encouraged to send questions, suggestions, and comments via email to the instructor(s), preferably prior to the meetings. These emails will count towards the participation grade. In general, for the grade the quality of participation prevails over its quantity, but if quantity is zero, quality is zero, too. Students who are present but do not actively participate receive the lowest passing

grade for participation. Feedback on the class performance (including grade) will be provided if and when students sign up for an appointment during the office hours.

Closed-Book Exam

The written test will take place on session 7 of our course (November 18, 2019). It is a closed book exam in a computer lab and will consist of a critical discussion of a published case study research article. We will provide more than one article to choose from for discussion. We will also provide a loose list of questions that you might want to ask and answer about the methodological aspects of the text.

Take-Home Exercise

Each participant will have to submit one take-home exercise. The exercise aims at testing the student's mastery of the methodological issues addressed in this course, by applying it to the evaluation of published research. The exercise consists of a set of questions that we formulate about an extra reading. The reading and questions will be sent out on the day the take-home exercise starts (after session 12, on December 3, 2019). Deadline for submitting the take-home exercise is December 11, 2019 at 6pm. The take-home exam text must be between 1500-1600 words long. The take-home exercise is similar to the written exam, but because the former takes place at the end of the course, students are expected to apply and thus display mastery of all the issues discussed during the entire course.

Auditing

Students who audit the class are expected to be present at all sessions, to do the mandatory readings, and to actively participate in class discussions. Auditing students do not have to submit any written assignment.

Assessment

Table 1: Grade composition

In-Class Participation	15%
Take-Home Exercise	45%
Written Exam	40%

The grading follows the standard scale adopted by the Department of Political Science:
A: 100-94; A-: 93-87; B+: 86-80; B: 79-73; B-: 72-66; C+: 65-59; F: 58-0

Late submission

In case of late submissions, three grade points from the final grade of the assignment are deducted for every 12 hours of delay. For instance, submitting 15 hours late leads to a deduction of six points.

Word-limit violation

A violation consists in writing more words than the upper limit or less than the lower limit. In case of violations of word limits, one grade point from the final grade of the assignment

is deducted for every 5% of word limit violation. For instance, if the lower limit is 3000 and somebody writes 2400 words (= 20% below word limit), four points are deducted.

Use of laptop and electronic devices

To improve the collective learning environment, the use of laptops and other electronic devices in the classroom is not allowed. Students who insist in reading and taking notes in electronic format should come and see the instructor(s) for further discussion.

Useful books and sources of information

The following books are particularly relevant for this course.

1. John Gerring. *Social Science Methodology. A Unified Framework*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, second edition, 2012b. ISBN 9780521115049
2. Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2nd edition, 2019
3. Henry E Brady and David Collier. *Rethinking Social Inquiry. Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, Boulder, second edition, 2010
4. Joachim Blatter and Markus Haverland. *Designing Case Studies. Exploratory Approaches in Small-N Research*. Palgrave Macmillan, Houndsmill, 2012
5. David Collier and John Gerring. *Concepts and methods in social sciences. Giovanni Sartori and his legacy*. Routledge, London, New York, 2008
6. Alexander L George and Andrew Bennett. *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. BCSIA studies in international security. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 2005. ISBN 0262572222
7. John Gerring. *Case study research. principles and practices*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2007
8. Gary Goertz and James Mahoney. *A tale of two cultures: contrasting qualitative and quantitative paradigms*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J, 2012
9. Gary King, Robert O Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing social inquiry. scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994
10. Todd Landman. *Issues and methods in comparative politics. an introduction*. Routledge, London, third edition, 2008
11. Ingo Rohlfing. *Case Studies and Causal Inference: an Integrative Framework*. Palgrave McMillan, Houndsmill, 2012
12. Charles C Ragin. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1987. ISBN 0520058348
13. Charles C Ragin. *Fuzzy-Set social science*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000. ISBN 0226702766
14. Charles C Ragin. *Redesigning social inquiry: fuzzy sets and beyond*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2008
15. Stephen Van Evera. *Guide to methods for students of political science*. Cornell University Press, Itaca, 1997

Course outline

Part 1 – Crucial Concepts

In this part, fundamental concepts of case study research are spelled out

Session 1: Fundamentals I

Sessions 1 and 2 specify what this course is about and what not. Since the term 'case study' means many different things to different people, it is important to make clear which interpretation under-girds this course. After that, we clarify key terms: unit of analysis vs. unit of observation; causal effect vs. causal mechanism; causes of effects vs. effects of causes; correlation vs. set relation

Mandatory readings:

Ingo Rohlfing. *Case Studies and Causal Inference: an Integrative Framework*. Palgrave McMillan, Houndsmill, 2012, chapters 1, 2.1-2.3

Recommended readings:

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz. A tale of two cultures: contrasting quantitative and qualitative research. *Political Analysis*, 14(3):227–249, 2006

Session 2: Fundamentals II

Note: This session falls on a holiday (November 1). We therefore will cover the readings in session 1. Make sure to read those before the start of session 1 .

Mandatory readings:

Ingo Rohlfing. *Case Studies and Causal Inference: an Integrative Framework*. Palgrave McMillan, Houndsmill, 2012, chapter 2.4

Recommended readings:

Carsten Q. Schneider and Claudius Wagemann. *Set-Theoretic Methods for the Social Sciences: A Guide to Qualitative Comparative Analysis*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012, chapter 3

Session 3: Concept Formation and Measurement I

During sessions 3 and 4, we learn about some core ingredients of sound concept formation and measurement, such as validity vs. reliability; context-sensitive indicators (functional equivalence); concept structures and aggregation rules; etc.. We will pay specific attention to the vices and virtues of "mere description" and the logic of typologies. After introducing the fundamental notion of the level of abstraction along which concept formation and measurement moves, we turn to questions of conceptual structure and the related issue of how to aggregate information gathered on a concept.

Mandatory readings:

Gary Goertz. *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*. Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2005, 27-53

Recommended readings:

Robert Adcock and David Collier. Measurement validity: a shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research. *American Political Science Review*, 95(3):529–546, 2001

Gary Goertz. *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*. Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2005, 53-67

Giovanni Sartori. Concept misformation in comparative politics. *American Political Science Review*, 64(4):1033–1053, 1970

Giovanni Sartori. *Guidelines for concept analysis*. Sage, Beverly Hills, 1984, 15-85

Session 4: Concept Formation and Measurement II

We discuss the virtues and challenges of 'mere description' as opposed to aiming for causal inference. Typologies play an important role in case-based research aiming at describing important social phenomena.

Mandatory readings:

John Gerring. Mere Description. *British Journal of Political Science*, 42(04):721–746, May 2012a. ISSN 0007-1234. doi: 10.1017/S0007123412000130. URL http://www.journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0007123412000130

Recommended readings:

David Collier and Steven Levitzky. Democracy with adjectives: conceptual innovation in comparative research. *World Politics*, 49(3):430–451, 1997

David Collier and Robert Adcock. Democracy and dichotomies: a pragmatic approach to choices about concepts. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2:537–565, 1999

D. Collier, J. LaPorte, and J. Seawright. Putting Typologies to Work: Concept Formation, Measurement, and Analytic Rigor. *Political Research Quarterly*, 65(1):217–232, March 2012. ISSN 1065-9129. doi: 10.1177/1065912912437162. URL <http://prq.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1065912912437162>

John Gerring. *Social Science Methodology. A Unified Framework*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, second edition, 2012b. ISBN 9780521115049, chapter 5

Gerardo L Munck and Jay A Y Verkuilen. Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy. Evaluating Alternative Indices. *Comparative Political Studies*, 35(1):5–34, 2002

Gerardo. L. Munck. *Measuring democracy: a bridge between scholarship & politics*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009

PART 2 – Cases, Selection, Comparisons

This part of the course is dedicated to identifying different types of cases, strategies for selecting these cases for single and for comparative case studies.

Session 5: Types of Cases and Case Selection I

In sessions 5 and 6, we introduce criteria based on which different types of cases can be defined and, related to this, criteria for selecting cases for case studies.

Mandatory readings:

Ingo Rohlfing. *Case Studies and Causal Inference: an Integrative Framework*. Palgrave McMillan, Houndsmill, 2012, chapter 3

Recommended readings:

Harry Eckstein. Case study and theory in political science. In Fred Greenstein and Nelson W Polsby, editors, *Handbook of Political Science*, pages 79–137. Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA, 1975

Arend Lijphart. Comparative politics and comparative method. *American Political Science Review*, 65(3):682–693, 1971

Jason Seawright and John Gerring. Case-selection techniques in case study research: a menu of qualitative and quantitative options. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2):294–308, 2008

Session 6: Types of Cases and Case Selection II

The role of case studies in the potential outcomes framework.

Mandatory readings:

Jason Seawright. *Multi-Method Social Science. Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, chapter 7

Recommended readings:

David Collier, James Mahoney, and Jason Seawright. Claiming too much: warnings about selection bias. In Henry E Brady and David Collier, editors, *Rethinking social inquiry: diverse tools, shared standards*, pages 85–102. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2004

Barbara Geddes. How the cases you choose affect the answers you get. selection bias in comparative politics. *Political Analysis*, 2:131–150, 1990

Gary King, Robert O Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing social inquiry. scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, chapter 4

Evan S Lieberman. Nested analysis as a mixed-research strategy for comparative research. *American Political Science Review*, 99(3):435–451, 2005

Ingo Rohlfing. What you see and what you get. pitfalls and principles of nested analysis in comparative research. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(11):1492–1514, October 2008. ISSN 0010-4140. doi: 10.1177/0010414007308019. URL <http://cps.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0010414007308019>

Session 7: Closed-Book Exam

The journal article to be discussed during the exam will be distributed the day prior to the exam.

Session 8: Comparative Case Studies I

Which forms of comparisons are good for which analytic goal? What are 'Mill's Methods' (not) good for?

Mandatory readings:

Ingo Rohlfing. *Case Studies and Causal Inference: an Integrative Framework*. Palgrave MacMillan, Houndsmill, 2012, chapter 4

Recommended readings:

Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune. *The logic of comparative social inquiry*. Wiley Interscience, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, 1970

Session 9: Comparative Case Studies II

We discuss strategies to enhance inference in comparative case studies, such as increasing the number of cases; including a temporal dimension, refining the scope conditions, and refining what the unit of analysis is.

Mandatory readings:

Ingo Rohlfing. *Case Studies and Causal Inference: an Integrative Framework*. Palgrave MacMillan, Houndsmill, 2012, chapters 5 and 9

Recommended readings:

Gary Goertz and James Mahoney. *A tale of two cultures: contrasting qualitative and quantitative paradigms*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J, 2012, chapter 16

James Mahoney. Strategies of Causal Inference in Small-N Analysis. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 28(4):387–424, 2000

Charles C Ragin. *Fuzzy-Set social science*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000. ISBN 0226702766, chapter 2

Henry A Walker and Bernard P Cohen. Scope statements: imperatives for evaluating theory. *American Sociological Review*, 50(3):288–301, 1985

Part 3 – Within-Case Analysis

Almost by definition, case study research does have to involve a strong component of within-case analysis. This, in turn, unavoidably goes hand in hand with the introduction of a temporal dimension into the analysis. The most prominent methodological tool for performing within case evidence is process tracing. We discuss the logic(s) of process tracing and how different tests are used to evaluate process tracing evidence in light of theoretical expectations

Session 10: Within-Case Analysis I

Mandatory readings:

Jacob I. Ricks and Amy H. Liu. Process-Tracing Research Designs: A Practical Guide. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, (October):1–5, 2018. ISSN 1049-0965. doi: 10.1017/S1049096518000975

Ingo Rohlfing. *Case Studies and Causal Inference: an Integrative Framework*. Palgrave MacMillan, Houndsmill, 2012, chapter 6

Recommended readings:

Anna Grzymala-Busse. Time Will Tell? Temporality and the Analysis of Causal Mechanisms and Processes. *Comparative Political Studies*, December 2010. ISSN 0010-4140. doi: 10.1177/0010414010390653. URL <http://cps.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0010414010390653>

Tulia G Falleti and Julia F Lynch. Context and Causal Mechanism in Analysis. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42(9):1143–1166, 2009

Peter A Hall. Systematic process analysis: when and how to use it. *European Management Review*, (3):24–31, 2006. doi: 10.1057/palgrave.emr.1500050

Session 11: Within-Case Analysis II

Mandatory readings:

Ingo Rohlfing. *Case Studies and Causal Inference: an Integrative Framework*. Palgrave MacMillan, Houndsmill, 2012, chapters 7 and 8

Recommended readings:

David Collier. Understanding Process Tracing. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(04): 823–830, October 2011. ISSN 1049-0965. doi: 10.1017/S1049096511001429. URL http://www.journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S1049096511001429

James Mahoney. The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 41(4):570–597, March 2012. ISSN 0049-1241. doi: 10.1177/0049124112437709.

URL <http://smr.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0049124112437709>

Ingo Rohlfing. Comparative hypothesis testing via process tracing. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 43(4):606–642, 2014

Stephen Van Evera. *Guide to methods for students of political science*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1997, chapter 1

Wrap-up

Session 12: Visualizing Arguments and Results

Arguments made in case study research are often complicated. It is all the more important to convey the main messages in a clear manner. Graphical visualizations are a powerful tool.

Mandatory readings:

James Mahoney and Rachel Sweet Vanderpoel. Set Diagrams and Qualitative Research. *Comparative Political Studies*, 48(1):65–100, January 2015. ISSN 0010-4140. doi: 10.1177/0010414013519410. URL <http://cps.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/0010414013519410>

Ingo Rohlfing. *Case Studies and Causal Inference: an Integrative Framework*. Palgrave MacMillan, Houndsmill, 2012, chapter 10

Recommended readings:

Gary Goertz and James Mahoney. Two-level theories and fuzzy set analysis. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 33(4):497–538, 2005

James Mahoney and Rodrigo Barrenechea. The logic of counterfactual analysis in case-study explanation. *The British Journal of Sociology*, forthcoming, 2017. ISSN 00071315. doi: 10.1111/1468-4446.12340. URL <http://doi.wiley.com/10.1111/1468-4446.12340>

Question for take-home exercise is sent out. The deadline for submission is specified in the syllabus above.

References

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- Stephen Van Evera. *Guide to methods for students of political science*. Cornell University Press, Itaca, 1997.
- Henry A Walker and Bernard P Cohen. Scope statements: imperatives for evaluating theory. *American Sociological Review*, 50(3):288–301, 1985.