

Methods of Comparative Analysis

Political Science 490.23, Fall 2005

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316 Scott Hall

Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4:30 and by appointment

Course Description

This seminar offers a broad introduction to the field of comparative methodology. The emphasis is on what are conventionally regarded in political science as “qualitative” methods for the analysis of a relatively small number of cases. The course focuses on recent methodological writings, though a few classical pieces are also included. The readings are not specific to any substantive subfield in political science. The course assumes no prior background in qualitative methodology.

After some introductory articles, the readings are organized into three main parts: (1) methods of conceptualization and measurement, (2) methods of causal assessment, and (3) methods of causal theorizing. Roughly speaking, the first part provides tools for pursuing descriptive inference; the second part tools for causal inference; and the third part tools for developing theories about causal processes. Taken together, these areas cover many of the essential bases for good research design in qualitative analysis.

Requirements

(1) Seminar Discussion (25%): Students are expected to read the assigned chapters and articles for each seminar meeting and to come prepared to discuss them.

(2) Concept Paper (20%): An essay of 6-10 pages in which students analyze a concept of their choice. This concept should be a dependent variable of interest; choose carefully, because this variable may be used in subsequent assignments.

(3) Causal Assessment Paper (25%): An essay of 6-10 pages in which students discuss the qualitative methods used by other scholars to assess hypotheses concerning their chosen dependent variable. The essay should be critical, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of this literature.

(4) Research Design Paper (30%): An essay of 10-15 pages in which students develop a research design for carrying out a project using qualitative methods. This research design can form the basis for a project that is pursued at a later date.

Books to Purchase

- Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).
- John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Science* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005).
- Gary Goertz, *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
- James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- Charles C. Ragin, *Fuzzy-Set Social Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Course Outline

Part I: Introduction

1. Introduction to the Course (Sept. 20)

No reading assignments; overview of syllabus and resources for people interested in qualitative methods.

2. Starting with Substantive Examples (Sept. 27)

Skocpol, Theda, "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18: 2 (April 1976), pp. 175-210. [Download]

Lerner, Daniel, "The Grocer and the Chief: A Parable," Chap. 1 in *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1958). [Course Packet]

Dreze, Jean, and Amartya Sen, "China and India," in Dreze and Sen, *Hunger and Public Action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). [Course Packet]

Locke, Richard M., and Kathleen Thelen, "Apples and Oranges Revisited: Contextualized Comparisons and the Study of Comparative Labor Politics," *Politics and Society* 23:3 (September 1995): 337-67. [Download]

Tannenwald, Nina, "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use," *International Organization* 53:3 (Summer 1999): 433-68. [Download]

Hicks, Alexander, Joya Misra, and Tang Nah Ng, "The Programmatic Emergence of the Social Security State," *American Sociological Review* 60:3 (June 1995): 329-49. [Download]

3. Overview of the Field (Oct. 4)

Lijphart, Arend, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *American Political Science Review* 65: 3 (Sept. 1971): 682-93. [Download]

Collier, David, "The Comparative Method," pp. 105-19 in Ada W. Finifter, ed., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II* (Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 1993). [Course Packet]

Brady, Henry, David Collier, and Jason Seawright, "Refocusing the Discussion of Methodology," pp. 3-20 in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

Collier, David, Jason Seawright, and Gerardo L. Munck, "The Quest for Standards: King, Keohane, and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry*," pp. 21-50 in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett, "Case Studies and Theory Development," pp. 3-36 in George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Science* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005).

Part II: Conceptualization and Measurement

4. Approaches to Concepts and Measurement (Oct. 11)

Collier, David, and James E. Mahon, "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Alternative Views of Categories in Comparative Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 87:4 (December 1993): 845-55. [Download]

Gerring, John., "Concepts: General Criteria" and "Strategies of Definition," pp. 35-86 in Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Goertz, Gary, *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), chaps. 1-3.

Collier, David, Henry E. Brady, and Jason Seawright, "Conceptualization and Measurement," pp. 202-09 in in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

Adcock, Robert N., and David Collier, "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research," *American Political Science Review* 95:3 (September 2001): 529-46. [Download]

5. Illustrations from Work on Democracy (Oct. 18)

Munck, Gerardo L., and Jay Verkuilen, "Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices," *Comparative Political Studies* 35:1 (February 2002): 5-34. [Download]

Collier, David, and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 49:3 (April 1997): 430-51. [Download]

Bowman, Kirk, Fabrice Lehoucq, and James Mahoney, "Measuring Political Democracy: Case Expertise, Data Adequacy, and Central America," *Comparative Political Studies* (December 2005). [Download or get from me]

Paxton, Pamela, "Women's Suffrage in the Measurement of Democracy: Problems of Operationalization," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 35:3 (September 2000): 92-111. [Download]

Goertz, Gary, *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), chaps. 4-5.

Part III: Causal Assessment

6. Within-Case Analysis (Oct. 25)

George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett, "Process-Tracing and Historical Explanation," pp. 205-232 in George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Science* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005).

Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, and John D. Stephens, "Comparing Historical Sequences – A Powerful Tool for Causal Analysis," *Comparative Social Research* 17: 55-72. [Course Packet]

David Collier, Henry E. Brady, and Jason Seawright, "Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology," pp. 229-66 in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

Brady, Henry E., "Data-Set Observations versus Causal-Process Observations: The 2000 U.S. Presidential Election," pp. 267-71 in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

7. Cross-Case Analysis I (Nov. 1)

Skocpol, Theda, and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22: 2 (1980), pp. 174-197. [Download]

Lieberson, Stanley, "Small N's and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases," *Social Forces* 70: 2 (December 1991), pp. 307-320. [Download]

George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett, "Comparative Methods" and "The Congruence Method," pp. 151-204 in George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Science* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005).

Gerring, John, "Methods," pp. 200-29 in Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Elman, Colin. "Explanatory Typologies in Qualitative Studies of International Politics," *International Organization* 59 (2005): 293-326. [Download]

8. Cross-Case Analysis II (Nov. 8)

Ragin, Charles C., *Fuzzy-Set Social Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), chaps. 3-11.

9. Combining Within-Case and Cross-Case Analysis (Nov. 15)

Mahoney, James, "Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis," pp. 373-404 in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett, "Integrating Comparative and Within-Case Analysis: Typological Theory," pp. 233-62 in George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Science* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005).

Lieberman, Evan. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research," *American Political Science Review* 93: 3 (August 2005). [Download]

Part IV: Causal Theorizing

10. Case Selection (Nov. 22)

Geddes, Barbara, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias and Related Issues," pp. 89-129 in Geddes, *Paradigms and Sandcastles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2003). [Course Packet]

Collier, David, James Mahoney, and Jason Seawright, "Claiming Too Much: Warnings About Selection Bias," pp. 85-102 in Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

Ragin, Charles, *Fuzzy-Set Social Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), chap. 2.

Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz, "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Qualitative Research," *American Political Science Review* 98:4 (November 2004): 653-670. [Download]

Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney, "Scope: Causal and Conceptual Homogeneity in Qualitative Research," manuscript, 2005. [I will send this around as an attachment]

11. Temporal Analysis (Nov. 29)

Aminzade, Ronald, "Historical Sociology and Time," *Sociological Methods and Research* 20 (May 1992), pp. 456-80. [Download]

James Mahoney, "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology," *Theory and Society* 29:4 (August 2000), pp. 507-548. [Download]

Pierson, Paul. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 94 (2000), pp. 251-67. [Download]

Pierson, Paul. "Big, Slow-Moving, and . . . Invisible: Macrosocial Processes in the Study of Comparative Politics," 177-207 in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Thelen, Kathleen, "How Institutions Evolve: Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis," 208-40 in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).