Qualitative Research Methods

Course Goals

The central goal of the seminar is to enable students to create and critique methodologically sophisticated case study research designs in the social sciences. To do so, we will explore the techniques, uses, strengths, and limitations of case study methods, while emphasizing the relationships among these methods, alternative methods, and contemporary debates in the philosophy of science. The research examples used to illustrate methodological issues will be drawn from international relations, comparative politics, and American politics. However, the methodological content of the course is also applicable to the study of history, sociology, and economics.

The seminar will begin with a focus on the philosophy of science, theory construction, theory testing, causality, and causal inference. With this epistemological grounding, the seminar will then explore the core issues in case study research design, including methods of structured and focused comparisons of cases, typological theory, case selection, process tracing, congruence testing, and the use of counterfactual analysis. Next, the seminar will look at the epistemological assumptions, comparative strengths and weaknesses, and proper domain of case study methods and alternative methods, particularly statistical methods and formal modeling, and address ways of combining these methods in a single research project. The seminar then examines field research techniques, including archival research and interviews. It concludes with student presentations of case study research designs and constructive critiques of these designs by seminar participants. Presumably, many students will choose to present the research design for their thesis, though students could also present a research design for a separate project, article, or edited volume.

Requirements

Mastery of assigned readings and active participation in seminar discussions.

Research Design Paper and Comments on other Students’ Papers. Students will be required to submit copies of a research design paper to all seminar participants one week in advance of presenting this design in the seminar. Each student will present their design in the seminar for a constructive critique of a half-hour or so, with a 2-minute introduction from the student and/or advance reading questions suggesting issues or methodological dilemmas upon which participants should focus. The rest of the time will focus on constructive critiques from the students and Prof. Bennett.
Research designs should address all of the following tasks (elaborated upon in the George-Bennett chapters in the assigned readings below): 1) specification of the research problem and research objectives, in relation to the current stage of development and research needs of the relevant research program, related literatures, and alternative explanations; 2) specification of the independent and dependent variables of the main hypothesis of interest and alternative hypotheses; 3) selection of a historical case or cases that are appropriate in light of the first two tasks, and justification of why these cases were selected and others were not; 4) consideration of how variance in the variables can best be described for testing and/or refining existing theories; 5) specification of the data requirements, including both process tracing data and measurements of the independent and dependent variables for the main hypotheses of interest, including alternative explanations.

There is no minimum length limit, though most designs will probably be around 4000-5000 words (about 16-20 pages double spaced) and should be shorter than 7,000 words/28 pages.

Grading
35% mastery of the readings as evident through participation in class discussions and comments on others’ research designs
65% written research design

Books for Purchase


Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*, Princeton University Press, 2012
Course Outline

I) Philosophy of Science and Epistemological Issues
Jan. 13   Inferences About Causal Effects and Causal Mechanisms
Jan. 20   Critiques and Justifications of Case Study Methods

II) Case Study Methods
Jan. 27   Concept Formation and Measurement
Feb. 3    Designs for Single and Comparative Case Studies and Alternative Research Goals
Feb. 10   Typological Theorizing
Feb. 17   Process Tracing
Feb. 24   Counterfactual Analysis, Natural Experiments
March 3   Multimethod Research: Combining Case Studies with Statistics and/or Formal Modeling
Mar. 10   No class - - Spring Break
Mar. 17   Macro-Historical Comparison, Critical Junctures, and Path Dependency
Mar. 24   Field Research Techniques: Archives, Interviews, and Surveys
Mar. 31, April 7, 14, 21: Student research design presentations
Readings

I) Philosophy of Science and Epistemological Issues

Inferences about Causal Effects and Causal Mechanisms

Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development, preface and chapter 7 on philosophy of science issues.

Keohane, King, and Verba (hereafter KKV), Designing Social Inquiry pp. 3-33, 76-91, 99-114.

Charles Ragin, Redesigning Social Inquiry, pp. 1-10.

Optional Readings:


Richard Lebow and Mark Lichbach, eds., Theory and Evidence in Comparative Politics and International Relations (Palgrave, 2007).


II) Case Study Methods
Critiques and Justifications of Case Study Methods


Brady and Collier, pages 1-64, 123-201.


Optional:

George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, Chapter 1.


Phil Schrodt, “Seven Deadly Sins of Contemporary Quantitative Political Analysis.”


Concept Formation and Measurement


Ragin, Redefining Social Inquiry, pp. 71-105.

Gary Goertz, Social Science Concepts, chapters 1, 2, 3.

Gary Goertz has heroically created a large number of exercises related to his book. The exercises are published online at the following link, but note if Gary has updated this after January 8, 2015 the new exercise numbers may be different (note the update date at the start of the exercises):

http://press.princeton.edu/releases/m8089.pdf

Please think through the following exercises: 7, 21, 48, 49, 52, 163, 252, 253, 256, 257.

Optional:


Carsten Q. Schneider and Claudius Wagemann, Set-Theoretic Methods for the Social Sciences (Cambridge University Press, 2012)


James Mahoney, Erin Kimball, and Kendra Koivu, The Causal Logic of Historical Explanation, manuscript, Northwestern University. (Pk) (Er - updated version posted 12.20.07)

**Designs for Single and Comparative Case Studies and Alternative Research Goals**


Forthcoming article on most- and least-likely cases.

Stephen Walt, *Revolution and War*, pp. 12-17

Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire*, pp. 60-65

Optional:


**Typological Theory and Case Selection**

Andrew Bennett and Alexander George, *CSTD* chapter 11.


Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, “Negative Case Selection: The Possibility Principle,” in Goertz, chapter 7.

Brief Examples:

Bennett, Lepgold, and Unger, *Friends in Need*, pp. 24-28


Also, think through Goertz’s exercises for this chapter. Again, note that if Gary has updated this after January 8, 2015 the new exercise numbers may be different (note the update date at the start of the exercises):

http://press.princeton.edu/releases/m8089.pdf
Please think through the following exercises: 312, 313, 316, 328, 333, 336

Optional:

Andrew Bennett, chapter excerpt from Jeff Checkel, ed., *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War*

Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures*, pp. 161-171.


David Collier, James Mahoney, and Jason Seawright, “Claiming Too Much: Warnings about Selection Bias,” chapter 6 in Brady and Collier.

**Process Tracing**

Bennett and Checkel, intro chapter, Waldner chapter, concluding chapter, and appendix.

Brief Examples of Process Tracing:


David Collier exercises on process tracing, at:


Optional:


Ragin, *Redesigning Social Inquiry*, pp. 147-175.

Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures*, pp. 87-126.


George and Bennett, *CSTD*, chapter 9.


**Counterfactual Analysis, Natural Experiments**


Thad Dunning, “Design-Based Inference: Beyond the Pitfalls of Regression Analysis?” in Brady and Collier, pp. 273-312.

Thad Dunning, *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-Based Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), Chapters 1, 7

Optional:


Philip Tetlock and Aaron Belkin, eds., Counterfactual Thought Experiments, chapters 1, 12.

**Multimethod Research: Combining Case Studies with Statistics and/or Formal Modeling**

Andrew Bennett and Bear Braumoeller, “Where the Model Frequently Meets the Road: Combining Statistical, Formal, and Case Study Methods,” draft paper.


[Seawright draft chapter(s) if available]

Optional:


Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development, Chapter 2.

KKV, Designing Social Inquiry, pp. 55-63, 91-95.


Ingo Rohlfing, critique of Lieberman, forthcoming.

Macro-Historical Comparison, Critical Junctures, and Path Dependency


Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, “Concepts in Theories: Two Level Theories,” in Goertz, chapter 9.

Goertz exercises TBD

Optional:

James Mahoney, “Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative-Historical Analysis,” in
Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, 2003).


Additional examples:

Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*
Jack Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*
Jeff Goodwin, *States and Revolutionary Movements*
Gregory Leubbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy* (related to his article above)
Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*
Ian Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disupted Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza*, pp. 1-51, 439-53

Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State? Reagan, Thatcher, and the Politics of Retrenchment*

Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*

Dietrich Reuschemeyer and Evelyn and John Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*

Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*

Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change*

Charles Tilly, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*

David Waldner, *State Building and Late Development*

Timothy Wickham-Crowley, *Guerillas and Revolution in Latin America*

**Field Research Techniques: Archives, Interviews, and Surveys**


Optional:


Hope Harrison, “Inside the SED Archives,” CWIHP Bulletin


**Possible session on research transparency and ethics**

--Andrew Moravcsik in Security Studies on research transparency

--the IRB process

Andrew Moravcsik, “Active Citation: A Precondition for Replicable Qualitative Research,” PS: Political Science and Politics 43(1) (January 2010): 29-35.


**Additional Useful Readings**

**Case Studies and The Interdemocratic Peace Research Program**


**Case Studies in American Politics**

Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power*
Burke and Greenstein, *How Presidents Test Reality*

Larry Sabato, *Media Feeding Frenzies*
Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush*
Richard Fenno, *Homestyle: House Members in their Districts*

**I) Philosophy of Science and Epistemological Issues:**


David Waldner, chapter in Lebow and Lichbach book.


Paul Humphreys, *The Chances of Explanation: Causal Explanation in the Social, Medical, and Physical Sciences*


Jon Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description" and "Notes on a Balinese Cockfight"


Hawthorn, *Plausible Worlds*


Carl Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History," in his *Aspects of Scientific Explanation*


Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*

Larry Laudan, *Beyond Positivism and Relativism; Progress and its Problems*

Richard Miller, *Fact and Method*, 1987

Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*

Clayton Roberts, *The Logic of Historical Explanation*

Wesley Salmon, *Four Decades of Scientific Explanation*, 1989

Wesley Salmon, *Causality and Explanation*, 1998


Arthur Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories*

Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It." *International Organization*


II) Case Study Methods


III) Critiques and Justifications of Case Studies and Alternative Methods


Donald Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, (Yale, 1994) pp. TBD.


Donald Campbell, "Degrees of Freedom and the Case Study," *Comparative Political Studies* 8 no. 2 (July 1975), pp. 178-193.

Phil Schrodt, “Beyond the Linear Frequentist Orthodoxy,” *Political Analysis*.

Doug Dion, "Evidence and Inference in the Comparative Case Study," *Comparative Politics*.


**IV) Additional Examples of Case Study Research**

**International Relations**

Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision*


Stephen R. Rock, *Appeasement in International Politics*


Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*

Bruce Jentleson, *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized: Preventive Diplomacy in the Post-Cold War World*

Helen Milner, *Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations*

Steve Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*

Steve Weber, *Cooperation and Discord in U.S.-Soviet Arms Control*

**Comparative Politics**: See the excellent bibliography of qualitative research compiled by David Collier at <http://www.polisci.berkeley.edu:9000/faculty/dcollier.html>

**V) Readings on Concept Formation, Measurement, Uses and Limits of Archival, Interview, and Other Data Sources**

Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research*
Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research*

James Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design*

A. Strauss and J. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*

A. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis*

Lewis Dexter, *Elite and Specialized Interviewing*

Gerome Murphy, *Getting the Facts* (on interview techniques)