

## **Introduction to qualitative methods** **Specialization module – Module VI: Political science methods**

instructor: Prof. Ingo Rohlfing, PhD  
office hours: Wednesday, 10am-12; by appointment; open door policy  
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first session: 12.10.2018  
last session: 01.02.2019  
room: Institutshörsaal, Gottfried-Keller-Str. 6  
time: 10.00-11.30

Please also regularly check the CCCP information on teaching on the internet:  
<http://www.cccp.uni-koeln.de/en/public/teaching/>

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The course introduces participants to the principles and practice of qualitative research with a focus on the field of Comparative Politics. In our course, “qualitative research” is understood as subsuming case studies and process tracing. We first discuss the standard qualitative/quantitative distinction and the trade-offs involved in doing qualitative research. In the second part, we turn to case selection and the types of cases that are available for analysis. Part three covers “the comparative method”, varieties of comparative case studies and challenges in implementing them. The fourth part deals with process tracing and the analysis of mechanisms. We use multiple examples from different subfields of Comparative Politics for illustrating good practices and not-so-good practices in qualitative research.

At the end of the course, you will be familiar with the key terms, strategies and challenges of comparative case studies and process tracing in single cases. This will allow you to critically read qualitative research on a methodological dimension, evaluate its quality and construct qualitative research designs of your own.

### **Topics and readings**

#### Part 1: General considerations

12.10.18: What qualitative research is & causal analysis and inference I

- Gerring, John (2004): What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political Science Review* 98 (2): 341-354.
- Brady, Henry A. (2008): Causation and explanation in social science. Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M., Henry Brady and David Collier (ed.): *The oxford handbook of political methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 217-270.

19.10.18: Causal analysis and inference II

- Gerring, John (2005): Causation: A unified framework for the social sciences. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17 (2): 163-198.

26.10.18: Populations and universes of cases

- Ragin, Charles (2000): Fuzzy-set social science. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: chap. 2.

#### Part 2: Case selection

##### 02.11.18: Case selection I

- Eckstein, Harry (1975): Case study and theory in political science. Greenstein, Fred I. and Nelson W. Polsby (ed.): *Strategies of inquiry. Handbook of political science, vol. 7.* Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley: 79-137.

##### 09.11.18: Case selection II

- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 3.

#### Part 3: Comparative case studies

##### 16.11.18: "The Comparative Method"

- Lijphart, Arend (1971): Comparative politics and the comparative method. *American Political Science Review* 65 (3): 682-693.
- Tarrow, Sidney (2010): The strategy of paired comparison: Toward a theory of practice. *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (2): 230-259.

##### 23.11.18: Critics of the comparative method

#### **Different room: Hörsaalgebäude (Building 105), Hörsaal G**

- Lieberman, Stanley (1991): Small ns and big conclusions: An examination of the reasoning in comparative studies based on a small number of cases. *Social Forces* 70 (2): 307-320.
- Goldstone, Jack A. (1997): Methodological issues in comparative macrosociology. *Comparative Social Research* 16: 107-120.

##### 30.11.18: An extended view on comparisons

- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 5.
- Skocpol, Theda and Margaret Somers (1980): The uses of comparative history in macrosocial inquiry. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (2): 174-197.

##### 07.12.18: Comparison: An example

- Hale, Henry E. (2011): Formal constitutions in informal politics: Institutions and democratization in post-Soviet Eurasia. *World Politics* 63 (4): 581-617.

#### Part 4: Process tracing

##### 14.12.18: What a causal mechanism is

- Hedström, Peter and Petri Ylikoski (2010): Causal mechanisms in the social sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (1): 49-67.
- Craver, Carl F. and Lindley Darden (2012): *In search of mechanisms: Discoveries across the life sciences.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press: chap. 2 (it is on mechanisms in biology; just ignore the small biological stuff when reading the chapter)

21.12.18: Process tracing and analyzing mechanisms

- Bennett, Andrew and Jeffrey Checkel (2014): Process tracing: From methodological roots to best practices. Bennett, Andrew and Jeffrey Checkel (ed.): *Process tracing in the social sciences: From metaphor to analytic tool*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1-37.
- Levi, Margaret (2004): An analytic narrative approach to puzzles and problems. Shapiro, Ian, Rogers M. Smith and Tarek E. Masoud (ed.): *Problems and methods in the study of politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 201-226.
- Example: Brast, Benjamin (2015): The regional dimension of statebuilding interventions. *International Peacekeeping* 22 (1): 81-99.

11.01.19: Working with sources

- Yin, Robert K. (2013): *Case study research: Design and method*. Thousand Oaks: Sage: chap. 4.
- Lieshout, Robert H., Mathieu L. L. Segers and Anna M. van der Vleuten (2004): De gaulle, moravcsik, and the choice for europe: Soft sources, weak evidence. *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6 (4): 89-139.

18.01.19: Making sense of the evidence I

- Kay, Adrian and Phillip Baker (2015): What can causal process tracing offer to policy studies? A review of the literature. *Policy Studies Journal* 43 (1): 1-21.
- Collier, David (2011): Understanding Process Tracing. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44 (4): 823-830.
- Collier, David (2010): Process Tracing: Introduction and Exercises. *Online document* (<http://polisci.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/people/u3827/Teaching%20Process%20Tracing.pdf>), accessed 11/01/06

25.01.19: Making sense of the evidence II

- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): Case studies and causal inference. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 8 (part on Bayes in particular).
- Example: Fairfield, Tasha and Candelaria Garay (forthcoming): Redistribution under the right in Latin America: Electoral competition and organized actors in policymaking *Comparative Political Studies*.

01.02.19: Wrap-up session

- Trampusch, Christine and Bruno Palier (2016): Between x and y: How process tracing contributes to opening the black box of causality. *New Political Economy* 21 (5): 437-454.
- Elman, Colin and Diana Kapiszewski (2014): Data access and research transparency in the qualitative tradition. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47 (1): 43-47.

### Course requirements and grading

Prior exposure to qualitative methods is recommended, but not necessary for taking the course. The exam is a portfolio exam, meaning that you have to submit multiple written assignments over the course of the term.

Each of the assignments is graded. The first four assignments get a weight of 15%, the last assignment on an entire article 40%. Each assignment is graded on a scale ranging from 18 to 0 points. The final grade is determined by weighting the points (not the grade) of the individual assignments. The course is passed if the weighted final number of points is 9 points or more. Failing an individual assignment (grade 5.0) is possible because only the final grade matters.

If a paper is submitted up to 24 hours after the deadline, I will deduct one point from the grade you would have gotten if you had submitted the assignment in time. I will deduct two points when the submission is between 24 and 48 hours late. If you submit more than 48h late, the grade for the assignment is 5.0 and this assignment is failed.

Each paper has to be written in English. The deadline for the first four assignments is the beginning of the class one week later. The final assignment is due on March, 15, midnight. The first four assignments should have between 4-6 pages. The final assignment should have between 10-15 pages.

If you want to take the course and have a disability or disabilities, please feel free to get in touch with me anytime.