Case Study Research Methods

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Main disciplines: Political Science, Sociology,
Research Methodology

Dates: 24 - 28 July 2017
Course Credits: 10 ECTS

Objectives
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, the seminar 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 primarily from international relations and comparative politics. The methodological content of the course is also applicable, however, to the study of history, sociology, education, business, economics, and other social and behavioral sciences.

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, 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.
Paper Assignments

**Option 1:** Professor Bennett will be the lead lecturer for the course, and Professors Mjøset and Tranøy will join him in providing feedback on student research designs. Students have the option of presenting a 3,000 word case study research design in the final sessions of the course on Friday for constructive critiques by course participants as well as the lecturers. Presumably, students will choose to present the research design for their PhD thesis, though students could also present a research design for a separate project, article, or edited volume. 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.

For the students presenting their research designs, you do not actually need to prepare a presentation, since we will all read your research designs in advance. You may want to make a few very brief (one or two minutes at most) introductory remarks. These should focus on identifying the issues on which you would really like suggestions or feedback. The rest of the time (we will have about 30 minutes for each research design) will focus on suggestions from the other students and from me. During this time you should mostly take notes, and ask clarifying questions as necessary, rather than engaging in defending or discussing your design, as we want to maximize the feedback you get from everyone.

Students interested in presenting their research design on the final day of the course should email Professor Bennett at BennettA@Georgetown.edu by May 1 with a one-page summary of their research design. This will allow him to provide initial feedback and schedule the research design presentations in the course. For those presenting during the course, the design paper will be due by email on July 1 so it can be distributed for everyone to read.

**Option 2:** Students also have the option of writing a 3,500 to 4,000 word essay within eight weeks after the course. Students are strongly encouraged to present their research design paper on the final day of the course, rather than eight weeks after the course, to receive more immediate feedback and to hear feedback from fellow students as well as faculty.

Whether students write a research design for presentation in the final day of the course, or do so within eight weeks after the course, if the paper receives a passing grade the student will receive 10 points in their PhD account in the ECTS system.
Essential books for preparation to the course
Students must obtain and read this books in advance of the course.

- Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel, eds., *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, (Cambridge, 2014)
- Jason Seawright, *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*, (Cambridge, 2016)

LECTURE OUTLINE

Lecture 1: Inferences About Causal Effects and Causal Mechanisms
This lecture addresses the philosophy of science issues relevant to case study research.
Readings:


Lecture 2: Critiques and Justifications of Case Study Methods
Readings:

- Brady and Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, 1-64, 123-201 (or if you have the first edition, pages 3-20, 36-50, 195-266)
- Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Qualitative and Quantitative Research,” *Political Analysis*, Summer 2006, pp. 227-249.

Lecture 3: Concept Formation and Measurement
Readings:

- Gary Goertz has heroically created a large number of exercises related to his book, published online at: [http://press.princeton.edu/releases/m8089.pdf](http://press.princeton.edu/releases/m8089.pdf)

Please think through the following exercises: 7, 21, 48, 49, 52, 163, 252, 253, 256, 257.
Lecture 4: **Designs for Single and Comparative Case Studies**

Readings:

- George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, chapter 4, pages 73-88.

Lecture 5: **Typological Theory, Fuzzy Set Analysis**

Readings:

- Brief Examples:
  - Andrew Bennett, Joseph Lepgold, and Danny Unger, eds., *Friends in Need*, pp. 24-28
- Also, think through Goertz’s exercises for this chapter, numbers 312, 313, 316, 328, 333, 336, available at: [http://press.princeton.edu/releases/m8089.pdf](http://press.princeton.edu/releases/m8089.pdf)

Lecture 6: **Process Tracing, Congruence Testing, and Counterfactual Analysis**

Readings:

- Andrew Bennett and Jeff Checkel, *Process Tracing*, draft chapter 1, conclusions, and appendix.
Lecture 7: **Multimethod Research: Combining Case Studies with Statistics, Formal Modeling, and Natural Experiments**

Readings:

- Andrew Bennett and Bear Braumoeller, “Where the Model Frequently Meets the Road: Combining Statistical, Formal, and Case Study Methods,” draft paper.
- Jay Seawright, *Multi-Method Social Science*, chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8.

Lecture 8: **Field Research Techniques: Archives, Interviews, and Surveys**

Readings:


Lecture 9 and 10: **Student research design presentations**

See the introduction for details.

**COMPLETE READING LIST:**


Optional Additional Readings:
• APSA-CP: Newsletter of the APSA Organized Section in Comparative Politics, Vo. 9, No. 1 (Winter 1998) articles by David Collier, Tim McKeown, Roger Petersen and John Bowen, Charles Ragin, and John Stephens.


• (“Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing), pp. 665-682.


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
- Peter Hall, Governing the Economy: The Politics of State Intervention in Britain and France, pp. 3-22, 229-284.
- 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, Disputed 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
- Marc Trachtenberg, The Craft of International History (Princeton, 2006), esp. chapt. 5 on working with documents.
The lecturers
Andrew Bennett earned his Ph.D. in Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 1990. He has written about case study research methods, military intervention, foreign policy learning, alliance burden sharing, and American foreign policy. His publications include Condemned to Repetition? The Rise, Fall, and Reprise of Soviet-Russian Military Interventionism 1973-1996 (1999), and, with Alexander L. George, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences.

He is President of the Consortium on Qualitative Research Methods, which sponsors an annual two-week institute on qualitative methods at Syracuse University each spring (Google “CQRM” for information on the institute), and a former president of the Qualitative Methods section of the American Political Science Association. He teaches international relations theory, the U.S. foreign policy process, and qualitative research methods at Georgetown University. Professor Bennett is currently at work on a book examining how members of the Bush Administration, the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Departments of State and Defense, and pundits and academics who supported American intervention in Iraq explain why the intervention did not prove as easy or as successful as they had hoped.

Lars Mjøset is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Oslo Summer School for Comparative Social Science Studies at the Social Science Faculty, University of Oslo, Norway. He is also a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science. Besides books in Norwegian, he published The Irish Economy in a Comparative Institutional Perspective, Dublin 1992. He edited several volumes Comparative Social Research: Vol. 16 (methodology), Vol. 20 (military conscription), Vol. 24 (varieties of capitalism), and most recently Vol. 28 (2011) on Nordic varieties of capitalism. Main areas of research: political economy, comparative historical sociology, environmental sociology, methodology and the history of social science. On the latter topics: “The contextualist approach to social science methodology”, in D. Byrne & C. Ragin, editors, Handbook of Case-based Methods, London 2009; “The Fate of The Sociological Imagination”, in J. Scott & A. Nilsen, editors, C. Wright Mills and The Sociological Imagination, Cheltenham 2013.

Bent Sofus Tranøy is Professor of Political Science at the Faculty of Business Administration, at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences and at Kristiania University College. He has published on macroeconomic governance, financial instability, globalisation, European integration, public policy and intellectual history. He was a member of the Norwegian government task force that sought to draw lessons from the financial crisis of 2008 (NOU 2011:1) and on the task force that evaluated power relationships in the groceries value chain (NOU 2011:4).