

WSSR WORKSHOPS ON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Introduction to Case Studies and Comparative Case Study Methods

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May 14-16, 2018

9:00am – 4:30pm

Summary

The aim of this introductory course is to provide students with a framework for understanding and using case study methods in your own research. A constant theme throughout the course will be on debating the strengths and limitations of different small-n methods, illustrating the types and scopes of inferences that are possible, and whether and how they can be nested into mixed-methods research designs.

The course can either be followed as a stand-alone three day module, or preferably as part of a series of courses relating to case study methods in the WSSR.

The course starts by introducing the debate on whether there is a divide between quantitative, large-n, variance-based and 'qualitative' case-based research methods. This is followed by a discussion of different understandings of causality that underpin different methodologies, developing the foundations for three different variants of case-based methods.

Day 2 begins with an introduction to comparative logic, focusing in particular on Mill's methods of agreement and difference, and the most-similar and most-different systems designs. The afternoon discusses how we can make inferences using non-variational, within-case evidence in case studies.

Day 3 introduces the two most prevalent within-case methods: congruence and process-tracing. The course concludes with a discussion of selection bias and how we can map populations of relatively causally homogeneous cases in case-based research.

Please do ALL of the readings and prepare preliminary responses to the groupwork exercises IN ADVANCE.

Course prerequisites: Students are expected to have encountered basic qualitative, case study research methods in their graduate-level education.



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Schedule of Sessions

Day 1 – 14 May, 2018

Session 1 - Introduction – are case-based methods different?

Schedule

9.30 – 12.00 Introductory lecture and discussion

- Goertz and Mahone (2012) *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 1-15.
<http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF21B2>
- Beach and Pedersen (2016) *Causal Case Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapter 1. Available at Webster Course Reserve Room (3 hour loan)

Session 2 - What are causes? How can we study them empirically?

Key terms: causal theories, causal mechanisms, probabilistic theories, deterministic theories, regularity, counterfactuals, manipulation and mechanism accounts of causality, asymmetric causation, types of causal claims.

Schedule

1.30 – 2.30 Lecture

3.00 – 4.30 Group work on exercise #1 and class discussion

- Beach and Pedersen (2016) *Causal Case Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapter 2. Available at Webster Course Reserve Room (3 hour loan)
- Beach & Pedersen (forthcoming) *Process-Tracing Methods*. 2nd Edition Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapter 3. <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF21CE>

Class exercise #1 - mechanisms

1. How can economic development produce democratization?
2. Develop a causal mechanism linking economic development with democratization.

Day 2 – 15 May 2018

Session 1 – The tools of comparative methods

Key terms: Method of agreement, Method of difference, Most-similar-systems design, Most-different-systems design, causal homogeneity/heterogeneity.

Schedule

9.30 – 10.30 Lecture

10.45 – 12.00 Group work

- Beach and Pedersen (2016) *Causal Case Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapter 7. Available at Webster Course Reserve Room (3 hour loan)

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- Risse-Kappen, Thomas (1991) 'Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies.', *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 479-512.
http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u-http%3A%2F%2F0-www.jstor.org.mercury.concordia.ca%2Fstable%2F2010534%3Fseq%3D1%23page_scan_tab_contents

Class exercise #2 – comparative methods

1. Describe Risse-Kappen's theoretical model. Are there any necessary or sufficient conditions?
2. Describe his research design (briefly). Is the study a most-similar or most-different systems design?
3. What role does process-tracing play in his analysis? In your opinion, does Risse-Kappen's research shed light on the causal mechanism(s) linking public opinion and foreign policy?

Session 2 – Within-case studies – making inferences

Key terms: cross-case inferences, within-case inferences, frequentist logic of inference, comparative logic of elimination, Bayesian logic of inference, prior, Bayesian updating, empirical tests.

Schedule

1.30 – 2.30 Lecture

3.00– 4.30 Group work on exercise #3

- Beach & Pedersen (forthcoming) *Process-Tracing Methods*. 2nd Edition Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapters 5: <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF21CF>
 Chapter 6: <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF21D0>
- Doyle, Arthur Connan (1894) *Silver Blaze* can be downloaded free at: <http://www.wesjones.com/doyle1.htm>

Class exercise #3 – inferences and updating

1. Describe an empirical test used by Holmes in the Silver Blaze story. Describe what hypothesis is being tested, and then provide justifications for the value of the prior and the theoretical certainty and uniqueness of the test.
2. What type of test have you described? A straw-in-the-wind, hoop or smoking gun?

Day 3 – 16 May 2018

Session 1 – within-case studies (congruence and process-tracing)

Key terms: Congruence / matching, Empirical tests, Empirical predictions, Theory-testing PT, Theory-building PT, Explaining outcome PT.

Schedule

9.00 – 10.00 Lecture

10.15 – 11.30 Group work on class exercise #4

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- Beach and Pedersen (2016) *Causal Case Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapters 8 and 9. Available at Webster Course Reserve Room (3 hour loan)
- Löblová (2017) 'When Epistemic Communities Fail: Exploring the Mechanism of Policy Influence.', *Policy Studies Journal*, DOI: 10.1111/psj.12213
<http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u-http%3A%2F%2F0-dx.doi.org.mercury.concordia.ca%2F10.1111%2Fpsj.12213>

Class exercise #4 – Process-tracing and inferences

1. Discuss the causal mechanism developed by Löblová. Does it exhibit 'productive continuity'?
2. Discuss how the evidence relates to the theory for one part of the mechanism.

Session 2 – Defining and mapping populations

Key terms: causal homogeneity, differences in kind versus differences of degree, selection bias.

Schedule

12.30 – 13.30 Lecture and discussion

13.30 – 14.30 Group work on exercise #5

15.00 – 16.00 Concluding discussions

- Geddes, Barbara (1990), "How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: selection bias in comparative politics", *Political Analysis*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 131-150.
<http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u-http%3A%2F%2F0-www.jstor.org.mercury.concordia.ca%2Fstable%2F23317768>
- Collier and Mahoney (1996) 'Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research', *World Politics*, Vol. 49, pp. 56-91.
<http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u-http%3A%2F%2F0-www.jstor.org.mercury.concordia.ca%2Fstable%2F25053989>
- Beach & Pedersen (forthcoming) *Process-Tracing Methods*. 2nd Edition Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapter 4 (skim last sections on sources and solutions relating to mechanistic heterogeneity)
<http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF21D1>

Class exercise #5 – Defining a population

1. Develop a simple Cause->Outcome theory that describes a single causal factor (C) that plausibly enable lobbyists to influence political decision-makers.
2. Develop a case-based research design to investigate the theorized C->O relationship using a (relatively) causally homogeneous population. Discuss different boundaries of the population and what tradeoffs regarding internal and external validity there might be.

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