



Case Studies for Policy Analysis

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May 23-24, 2019

9:00am – 4:30pm

Summary – Goals of this Workshop

Students of public policy are interested in understanding the processes that lead to policies being adopted, and the real-world effects that public policies can have. Case study methods are particularly well-suited to answering both questions because they allow us to explore how processes play out within real-world cases. In this introductory workshop, the goal is to provide students with a good working knowledge of how to use state-of-the-art case study methods in the analysis of public policy. We will distinguish between within-case methods like Process-tracing, and cross-case methods including longitudinal methods and small-n comparisons (e.g. most-similar systems).

The workshop starts on day 1 by introducing what defines case study methods, focusing in particular on the types of claims we are making and the types of evidence that we need to collect. The afternoon session will look at a practical example of a policy study that uses Process-tracing.

Day 2 starts with developing practical guidelines for using the core methods of Process-tracing and small-n comparisons. We will discuss when and how the different case study methods can be used. The course ends with a discussion of standards for case selection and generalization.



WSSR WORKSHOPS ON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

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NOTE ON READINGS

Credit Students: see [Course Reserves website](#)

Non-Credit Students: if you are unable to access these readings through your home institution, please email us at wssr@concordia.ca and we will do our best to assist you.

Schedule of Sessions

Day I – May 23rd

Session 1 - Introduction –case-based methods for studying public policy

Schedule

9.30 – 10.00 Introductory lecture

10.30 - 12.00 Group work and discussion of exercise #1

- Beach, Derek (forthcoming) 'Causal case studies in comparative policy studies.' in Fontaine and Peters (eds) *Handbook of Methodology for Comparative Policy Analysis*.
- Beach & Pedersen (2019) *Process-Tracing Methods*. 2nd Edition Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press Chapter 3 “Theorizing Concepts and Causal Mechanisms”

Class exercise #1 - mechanisms

1. Develop a causal theory for how an interest group could influence a policy reform. Discuss what type of resources they could use to gain influence (money, ability to mobilize voters, or information).
2. Develop a causal mechanism linking the interest group with resource X and influence over a policy reform.

Session 2 - Evidence in case-based methods

Schedule

1.30 – 2.30 Lecture

3.00 - 4.30 Group work and discussion of exercise #2

- Beach & Pedersen (2019) *Process-Tracing Methods*. 2nd Edition Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press Chapter 5 “Making inferences using mechanistic evidence”
- Doyle, Arthur Connan (1894) *Silver Blaze* can be downloaded free at: <http://www.wesjones.com/doyle1.htm>

Class exercise #2 – inferences and updating

1. Map the causal mechanism (process) of the crime in the Silver Blaze story into a set of distinct parts.
2. Describe an empirical test used by Holmes to evidence once of the parts in the mechanism.
3. Provide plausible justifications for the prior and the theoretical certainty and uniqueness of the test.



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Day 2 – May 24th

Session 3 – comparative methods and within-case process-tracing

Schedule

9.30 – 10.30 Lecture

11.00 – 12.00 Group work on exercise #3

- Beach and Pedersen (2016) *Causal Case Study Methods*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press
 - Chapter 7: “Comparative Methods” with Jorgen Moller and Svend-Erik Skaaning, pp. 227-268.
- Beach, D (2017) 'Process-Tracing Methods in Social Science.' *Oxford Research Encyclopedias of Politics: Qualitative Political Methodology*. Oxford University Press.
- Löblöová, O (2017) 'When Epistemic Communities Fail: Exploring the Mechanism of Policy Influence.', *Policy Studies Journal*, 46 (1): 160-189.

Class exercise #3 – Process-tracing in practice

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

Session 4 - Case selection and generalizing

Schedule

1.30 – 2.30 Lecture and discussion

3.00 – 4.30 Group work and discussion of exercise #4

- Geddes, Barbara (1990), “How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: selection bias in comparative politics”, *Political Analysis*, 2(1): 131-150.
- Collier and Mahoney (1996) 'Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research', *World Politics*, 49:56-91.
- Beach, D & Pedersen, Rasmus Brun (2018) 'Selecting appropriate cases when tracing causal mechanisms', *Sociological Methods & Research*. 47(4):837-871.

Class exercise #4 – Defining a population

1. Make a list of major policy reforms in Canada (or another country that you know) that were in response to a major crisis (broadly defined - political, economic, natural etc..)
2. Develop a theory (or set of theories) of why reforms are made in response to different types of major crises.
3. Discuss how you would split up the population of reforms to study these different theories.

