

Introduction to qualitative methods

instructor: Prof. Ingo Rohlfing, PhD
office hours: Tuesday, 10am-12; by appointment; open door policy
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first session: 11.10.2019
last session: 05.02.2020
room: Institutshörsaal, Gottfried-Keller-Str. 6
time: 10.00-11.30 (see course plan for changes of course schedule)

registration for exam in KLIPS2 (for Master students)

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

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

11.10.19: 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.
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18.10.19: Causal analysis and inference II

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

25.10.19: Populations and universes of cases

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

Part 2: Case selection

01.11.19: 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.

08.11.19: Case selection II

- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 3.
- *Plus one empirical study that is to be determined*

Part 3: Comparative case studies

15.11.19: "The Comparative Method"

- Lijphart, Arend (1971): Comparative politics and the comparative method. *American Political Science Review* 65 (3): 682-693.
- Slater, Dan and Daniel Ziblatt (2013): The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison. *Comparative Political Studies* 46 (10): 1301-1327.

22.11.19: Critics of the comparative method

- 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.

29.11.19: An extended view on comparisons (Monday, 12-13.30)

- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 5.

06.12.19: Comparison: An example (Monday, 12-13.30)

- 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

13.12.19: 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)

20.12.19: 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.

10.01.19: 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.

17.01.19: 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

24.01.20: 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*.

31.01.20: Qualitative methods in practice

- The plan is to have a guest in this session who reports about how process tracing and qualitative methods are used in the evaluation of developments projects. This has yet to be confirmed.

07.02.20: 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%. The course is passed if the weighted final number of points is higher than the median number of points on the grading scale (scale yet to be determined). Failing an individual assignment (grade 5.0) is possible because only the final grade matters. Assignments that miss the deadline receive 0 points.

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, 1, midnight (the night from March 1 to March 2). The first four assignments should have between 3-5 pages. The final assignment should have between 8-12 pages. Further information will be given in the exam sheets. In case of a conflict between the exam sheet and this course outline (which should not happen), the information in the exam sheet counts.

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