

Introduction to qualitative methods – 2020-09-22

Instructor: Prof. Ingo Rohlfing, PhD

Office hours: Online by appointment. Please get in contact with me to agree on a time and date

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First session: 06.11.2020

Last session: 13.02.2021

No session: 25.12.2020 / 01.01.2021 (public holiday)

Room: Seminar will be exclusively online. Zoom links will be shared via ILIAS.

Time: 10.00-11.30

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” covers case studies and process tracing for the purpose of making causal arguments. The main goal of the course is to understand what the research questions are that one can answer with qualitative research and what the characteristics of good case studies are.

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 (NOTE: The reading list, not the topics, might be slightly revised until the course starts)

Part 1: Basics and theory

06.11.20: What qualitative research is (in this course)

- Gerring, John (2004): What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political Science Review* 98 (2): 341-354.

- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 1.

13.11.20: Research questions, approaches and theory in case studies

- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba (1994): *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: 14-19.
- Day, Christopher and Kendra L. Koivu (2018): Finding the Question: A Puzzle-Based Approach to the Logic of Discovery. *Journal of Political Science Education*: 1-10 (advance access).
- Gerring, John (2005): Causation: A unified framework for the social sciences. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17 (2): 163-198.

20.11.20: 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 biological stuff, which is not much, when reading the chapter)

Part 2: Populations, types and case selection

27.11.20: Populations and universes of cases

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

04.12.20: 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.

11.12.20: Case selection II

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

Part 3: Comparative case studies

18.12.20: "The Comparative Method"

- Lijphart, Arend (1971): Comparative politics and the comparative method. *American Political Science Review* 65 (3): 682-693.
- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 5.

08.01.21: Critics of the comparative method and extensions

- Lieberson, 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.
- 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

15.01.21: 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.
- Example: Brast, Benjamin (2015): The regional dimension of statebuilding interventions. *International Peacekeeping* 22 (1): 81-99.

22.01.21: Working with sources

- Yin, Robert K. (2013): *Case study research: Design and method*. Thousand Oaks: Sage: chap. 4.
- Example: 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.

29.01.21: Making sense of the evidence I

- Gonzalez-Ocantos, Ezequiel and Jody LaPorte (2019): Process Tracing and the Problem of Missing Data. *Sociological Methods & Research* advance access: 10.1177/0049124119826153
- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 8 (ignore the part about frequentism).

05.02.21: Making sense of the evidence II

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

12.02.20: Transparency in qualitative research

- Elman, Colin and Diana Kapiszewski (2014): Data access and research transparency in the qualitative tradition. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47 (1): 43-47.
- Elman, Colin and Diana Kapiszewski (2018): The Qualitative Data Repository's Annotation for Transparent Inquiry (ATI) Initiative. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51 (1): 3-6.

Assignments, exam and grading

- The exam in this course is the *portfolio exam*. Participants have to submit assignments during the course.
- The final grade depends on all assignments. The final grade is determined based on the sum of the points across all assignments and is graded using a 100-point scale (see below).
- The final grade is determined by weighting the points (not the grade) of the individual assignments. The weighted points are rounded to the nearest number of full points (37.44 will be rounded to 37 points, 37.5 will be rounded to 38 points), which determines the final grade.
- Failing a single assignment does not have negative consequences. Only passing in the end matters.
- The assignments will be returned to the participants with comments and a grading scheme.
- If I detect cases of *plagiarism*, the part of the assignment that has been plagiarized will receive 0 points. I will report the case to the department and the “Prüfungsausschuss” (committee overseeing exams) will decide about the consequences.

All assignments are about this published case study:

Zibblatt, Daniel (2004): Rethinking the Origins of Federalism: Puzzle, Theory, and Evidence from Nineteenth-Century Europe. *World Politics* 57 (1): 70–98.
(<https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2005.0013>)

Four assignments on this text cover different elements of case studies. The assignments will be made available by the time the course starts. The following table summarizes the topics and dates.

Task	Deadline for submission	Points
Research question and theory	27.11.2020 (incl.)	25
Types of cases and case selection	18.12.2020 (incl.)	15
Comparisons	15.01.2021 (incl.)	15
Process tracing and evidence	26.02.2021 (incl.)	45

The recommended style guide for the papers is the following (for comparability of the papers):

- 2.5 cm margin at each side
- Times New Roman
- 12 points font size
- 1.5 line spacing
- References in the reference list should be complete and should be specific enough to allow readers to find the text online.

Grading is based on a 100-point scale:

Points	Grades
100-95	1
94.5-90	1.3
89.5-85	1.7
84.5-80	2
79.5-75	2.3
74.5-70	2.7
69.5-65	3
64.5-60	3.3
59.5-55	3.7
54.5-50	4
0-49	2