

Introduction to qualitative methods – Summer term 2022

General information

Lecture: Ingo Rohlfing, PhD

Office hours:

- Tuesday, 10.00-12.00
 - In person in my office
 - Alternatively per Zoom:
 - <https://uni-koeln.zoom.us/j/91278781515?pwd=Q3l0ZDFuOGc2NmFQallyREFhWEppdz09>
 - Meeting-ID: 912 7878 1515
 - Passwort: 968166
- By appointment. Please get in contact with me to agree on a date and a time

Room: Herbert-Lewin-Str. 2, 313.c (right next to the staircase at the South of the building)

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Email: i.rohlfing@uni-koeln.de

Labs: Barbara Ellynes Zucchi Nobre Silva, MA

Office hours:

- Wednesdays: 10.00-11.00
- Zoom by appointment: please get in contact with me to agree on a date and a time
 - If you drop by unannounced, which you can, you might have to wait in the waiting room until the current running appointment is over (just as with face-to-face appointments).
- Permanent Zoom room:
 - <https://uni-koeln.zoom.us/j/7049162834>
 - Meeting-ID: 704 916 2834
- If you wish to schedule an appointment in person, please get in contact with me per email so we can arrange a date and a time.

Email: silva@wiso.uni-koeln.de

Course times

Lecture:

- Thursday, 14.00-15.30
- First session: 07.04.2022

Lab 1:

- Thursday, 16.00-17.30
- First session: 07.04.2022

Lab 2:

- Friday, 14.00-15.30
- First session: 08.04.2022

Registration for *exam* in KLIPS2 (for Master students). PhD researchers don't need to register in KLIPS2.

If you have a disability and need assistance during the course, please get in contact with me at any time. If a problem comes up during the course (illness, loss of a family member etc.) and need a deadline extension or other assistance, please get in contact with me at any time.

Please also regularly check the CCCP information on teaching on the website:

<http://www.cccp.uni-koeln.de/en/public/teaching/>

Course summary

The course introduces participants to the principles and practices 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 are the characteristics of good case studies.

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 for lecture and additional information

1) 07.04.2022, lecture: What is qualitative research

- Gerring, John (2004): What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political Science Review* 98 (2): 341-354.
 - A classic on case studies (you can replace the word 'unit' with 'case' when reading the article) distinguishing dimensions of case studies and trade offs in implementing them.
- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 1.
 - 'qualitative research' means different things to different people. This makes it necessary to clarify at the beginning what the understanding is that we have in our course and what 'qualitative methods' such understood are good for.

1) 07.04.2022 & 08.04.2022, labs: Building groups and searching a qualitative article

- One element of the course is to work on a published qualitative article. In this lab session students will form a group for the rest of the course and discuss search strategies for research articles.

- Goal - Until 15.04.2022, each group should have identified an article that meets the following criteria:
 - Qualitative case study;
 - Theory-centered: Either exploratory or testing a hypothesis;
 - Comparative case study: Comparison of at least two cases;
 - Within-case analysis: Process tracing or, more generally, some process-related evidence;
 - Sources: Primary and secondary sources, interviews only as an addition to the other two.
- The article needs to be approved by us to make sure that it is suitable for the course. You can ask us for our opinion before 15.04. If we find the article is not appropriate, you will have to find another by 21.04.2022.
- Identify a qualitative article to work on for the rest of the course.

14.04.2022 & 15.04.2022: No lecture, no labs

2) 21.04.2022, lecture: Research questions, sources and data in qualitative research

- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba (1994): *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: 14-19.
 - Short intro on what makes a good research question.
- Yin, Robert K. (2013): *Case study research: Design and method*. Thousand Oaks: Sage: chap. 4.
 - Accessible discussion of the different types of sources that one can use and their advantages and disadvantages.
- Example for a qualitative reanalysis: 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.
 - A (rare) example of a reanalysis of qualitative evidence.

2) 21.04.2022 & 22.04.2022, labs: Identifying sources & getting started with MAXQDA

- For qualitative data analysis (QDA), you will work with MAXQDA. During the course, *you will get from us a free MAXQDA license that is valid for 120 days*. This will be enough for working on all assignments. In this lab session, you will do first steps with MAXQDA.
- Substantively, you will start identifying the sources used in the selected article and try to collect for your reanalysis of the article.

28.04.2022 & 29.04.2022: No lecture, no labs

3) 05.05.2022, lecture: Case selection

- 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.
 - Cases can be framed as belonging to different *types*. The text by Eckstein is a classic and introduces a couple of types that became the canon of case study research. It

is important to know the types because different types are useful for different purposes.

- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 3.
 - The case selection chapter of my book tries to systemize the then existing arguments about what types are available, what they are good for and how they are related to each other.

3) 05.05.2022 & 06.05.2022, labs: Intermediate report on collection of sources & discussion of qualitative coding

- Groups should discuss progress on collecting sources, as well as possible problems and strategies to address them.
- Introduction to coding with MAXQDA and coding strategies:
 - Silver, Christina, and Ann Lewins (2014): *Using Software in Qualitative Research: A Step-by-Step Guide*. SAGE. (specific chapters will be added later)

12.05.2022 & 13.05.2022: No lecture, no labs

4) 19.05.2022, lecture: Process tracing and interpretation of evidence

- 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.
 - The text gives a good overview of what process tracing and mechanisms are and what they are good for.
- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 8 (ignore the part about frequentism).
 - Qualitative research offers different ways to come to conclusions and make inferences based on the available sources. In this session and the next one, we discuss different approaches and their advantages and disadvantages for making sense of the evidence.
- Example: Fairfield, Tasha and Candelaria Garay (2017): *Redistribution under the right in Latin America: Electoral competition and organized actors in policymaking* *Comparative Political Studies* 50 (4): 1871-1906 + appendix. (the appendix in particular)

4) 19.05.2022 & 20.05.2022, labs: Interpreting evidence for selected empirical article

- Following the discussion in the lab, you will exercise the interpretation of evidence in your selected article.
- Goal until 14.07.2022: Reevaluate the interpretation of all evidence that you have identified (use as example what is done in the article by Lieshout et al. (2004), see above).

26.05.2022 & 27.05.2022: No lecture, no labs

5) 02.06.2022, lecture: Case comparisons

- Lijphart, Arend (1971): *Comparative politics and the comparative method*. *American Political Science Review* 65 (3): 682-693.

- A classic, foundational text on case comparisons that popularized the term “the comparative method”.
- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 5.
 - A text on comparative case studies in which I try to synthesize the work on case comparisons. The difference between correlational and set-relational research can be ignored because I do not find it relevant anymore (you will have seen why by the time we get to this part of the course).

5) 02.06.2022 & 03.06.2022, labs: Update on coding

- Groups discuss coding strategies and schemes developed for their own analysis. This includes the possibility for problem-fixing and discussions of coding approaches between groups.

09.06.2022 & 10.06.2022: No lecture, no labs (Pentecost week)

16.06.2022 & 17.06.2022: No lecture, no labs

6) 23.06.2022, lecture: Generalization and transparency of qualitative research

- Ragin, Charles (2000): *Fuzzy-set social science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: chap. 2.
 - In our course the goal of a qualitative study is to make inferences that go beyond the cases that one studies empirically. The specification of a population (or universe) of cases systemizes the scope of the inferences, that is, how far they go beyond the selected cases.
- Rohlfing, Ingo (2012): *Case studies and causal inference*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: chap. 9.
 - A chapter on generalization strategies for case studies.
- Elman, Colin, Diana Kapiszewski and Arthur Lupia (2018): *Transparent Social Inquiry: Implications for Political Science*. *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (1): 29-47.
 - Regardless of the method that is used, all good empirical research is transparent. This session builds on the three previous sessions and reflects upon the meaning of ‘transparency’ in qualitative research.

6) 23.06.2022 & 24.06.2022, labs: Generalization + Update of groups on coding + information on how to design a poster

- Discussion of how generalization is addressed in your selected article.
- Groups can share the progress that they made, problems that were confronted and strategies for addressing those problems.
- In the final lecture (see below), each group should present its reanalysis of the selected article on a poster. In this lab session, guidelines for designing posters will be discussed and illustrated with posters from political scientists.

30.06.2022 & 01.07.2022: No lecture, no labs

07.07.2022 & 08.07.2022: No lecture, no labs

7) 14.07.2022, lecture: Poster session

- Groups will present their posters as hard-copy posters in class. Expenses for printing will be covered by Ingo Rohlfing.

7) 14.07.2022 & 15.07.2022, labs: Qualitative data sharing

- Share the codings for your article in a repository. The material that will be shared should be prepared in a specific format and documented in a README file. The repository folder you create will be private and not accessible for anyone but you and us (Ingo Rohlfing and Barbara Silva). The “what” and “how” will be discussed in this session.

Assignments, grading and consequences of cheating, plagiarism etc.

General points:

- The exam category in this course is the *portfolio exam*. Participants have to submit assignments during the course. The assignments will be returned to the participants with comments and a grading scheme.
- The requirements for taking and passing this course are a mix of individual assignments and collective work. (For formal reasons, only individual assignments can be graded).
- The final grade depends on all assignments.
- 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.
- If I detect cases of *plagiarism*, they will be reported to the department and the “Prüfungsausschuss” (committee overseeing exams) will decide about the consequences.

More details:

The portfolio exam has three elements:

- 1) A methods-focused discussion of one element from a published case study
- 2) A poster summarizing the work on the published case study
- 3) Codings of evidence from a published case study plus overall evaluation of strength of evidence

1) Methods-focused discussion of one element from a published case study (15 points)

For each selected article, there are, in this step, four assignments covering different topics. Since each group should have four members, each each participant only has to submit one of the following four assignments (with each assignment being covered by a different member of the group). All the assignments taken together should produce a bigger picture for the selected article. The members of a group should decide for themselves who will submit which assignment. It is not possible that two group members work on the same topic for the same article. Regardless of the topic, each assignment should not be longer than 1.000 words. Details on the assignments will be shared later on ILIAS.

Task	Deadline for submission
Substantive summary and theory (1.250 words, excluding references and title page)	5.5.2022, noon

Case selection (1.250 words, excluding references and title page)	19.5.2022, noon
Process tracing (1.250 words, excluding references and title page)	2.6.2022, noon
Case comparison (1.250 words, excluding references and title page)	17.6.2022, noon

2) Poster summarizing the work on the published case study (15 points)

Based on the four assignments and the identification of sources and codings of evidence, each group should present a poster in the last lecture. The poster should be prepared together substantively and stylistically. There will be a hard copy of the poster shown in the last session of the lecture. This gives each group the opportunity to present its work and others the chance to ask for details and clarification. For formal grading reasons, the poster has to be partitioned into four parts – each being prepared under the responsibility of a different participant.

Deadline for poster submission as a file: 7.7.2022, noon

3) Codings of evidence from a published case study plus overall evaluation of strength of evidence (15 points)

Each participant has to upload the codings for the selected article and a written overall evaluation of the strength of evidence from the empirical analysis of the article. (1000 words max.)

Deadline for submission: 28.7.2022, noon

Grading is based on a 45-point scale:

Points	Grades
42.5-45	1
40.5-42	1.3
38-40	1.7
36-37.5	2
33.5-35.5	2.3
31.5-33	2.7
29-31	3
27-28.5	3.3
24.5-26.5	3.7
22.5-24	4
0-22	5.0 (fail)

