

University of Milan

Academic year 2009/10

## **Research Methods in Social and Political Science**

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Office hours: Wednesday, 2.30-5.30 pm

### Aims and objectives

The main goal of the course “Research Methods in Social and Political Science” is to enable students to create and critique methodologically sophisticated case-oriented research designs in the social sciences. To do so, the course will present the main tools which are used in the comparative analysis of a small number of cases and will explore the techniques, uses, strengths, and limitations of case study methods as compared with variable-oriented methods, which although not the focus of the course will nonetheless be taken into account. The course focuses on recent methodological writings, although a few classical pieces are also included. Although the examples will mainly come from comparative politics, the readings are not specific to any substantive subfield in political science, and the methodological content of the course is also applicable to the study of comparative sociology.

### Prerequisites, exams and assessment

There are no prerequisites to the course

There will be an intermediate written test on May 31<sup>st</sup>, and a final written test on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The final mark will be the unweighted average of the two marks.

Those who cannot take the two exams, or who are not satisfied with their final mark, will have to write a paper of about 8,000 words (in English) analyzing the use of concepts, theoretical propositions and the research design in a social science work agreed upon with the instructor.

## Course outline and syllabus

1. Introduction to the course (April 12)

2. Concept formation and treatment: Introduction (April 19)

### Required readings

Gary Goertz, *Social Science Concepts*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003, chapter 1 (Introduction), pp. 1-24.

3. Concept formation and treatment: The classical approach (April 29)

### Required readings

Giovanni Sartori, Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics, in *American Political Science Review*, 64, 4., 1970, pp. 1033-1053.

Giovanni Sartori, Guidelines for Concept Analysis, in G. Sartori (ed.) *Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis*, Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage, 1984, pp. 15-88.

4. Concept formation and treatment: Recent approaches (May 3)

### Required readings

Gary Goertz, *Social Science Concepts*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003, chapters 2 (Structuring and theorizing concepts) and 3 (Concept Intension and Extension), pp. 27-94 [skip pp. 55-58]

5. From concepts to measurement (May 5)

### No required readings

6. Concept formation and treatment: applications I (May 12)

### Presentations on:

1. David Collier and James Mahon, Conceptual “Stretching” Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis, in *American Political Science Review*, 87, 4, 1993, pp. 845-855.

2. David Collier and Steven Levitsky, Democracy. Conceptual Hierarchies in Comparative Research, chapter 10 in Collier and Gerring, eds. *Concepts and Method in Social Science. The Tradition of Giovanni Sartori*, New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 269-288.

3. John Gerring and Paul Barresi, Culture. Joining Minimal Definitions and Ideal Types, chapter 9 in Collier and Gerring, eds. Concepts and Method in Social Science. The Tradition of Giovanni Sartori, New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 241-268.

7. Concept formation and treatment: applications II (May 13 – Thursday, h. 12.30)

Presentations on:

1. Christoph Kotowski, Revolution. Untangling Alternative Meanings, chapter 8 in Collier and Gerring, eds. Concepts and Method in Social Science. The Tradition of Giovanni Sartori, New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 203-240.

2. Marcus Kurts, Peasant. Clarifying Meaning and Refining Explanation, chapter 11 in Collier and Gerring, eds. Concepts and Method in Social Science. The Tradition of Giovanni Sartori, New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 289-314.

3. Steven Levitsky, Institutionalization. Unpacking the Concept and Explaining Party Change, chapter 12 in Collier and Gerring, eds. Concepts and Method in Social Science. The Tradition of Giovanni Sartori, New York: Routledge, 2009, pp.315-328.

8. Description and explanation; hypotheses, laws, theories (May 17)

Required readings

Stephen Van Evera, Hypotheses, Laws, and Theories: A User's Guide, ch. 1 in Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997, pp. 7-48.

Suggested readings

John Gerring, Description and Prediction, chapter 6 in J. Gerring, Social Science Methodology. A Criterial Framework, Cambridge Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 118-127.

9. Methods of data collection (May 19) - PhD Candidate Olga Fazzini

Required readings

Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland Lutz, Wyn Grant, Zig Layton-Henry, Research Methods in Politics, Macmillan, London, 2008, Ch. 4 (Surveys and opinion polls), pp. 96-137 and Ch. 9 (Elite interviewing), pp. 231-247.

Alan Bryman, Social Research Methods, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2008, Ch. 13 (Secondary Analysis and Official Statistics), pp. 294-312 and Ch. 21 (Documents as Sources of Data), pp. 514-527

10. Necessary and sufficient conditions I (May 24)

Required readings

Daniele Caramani, Introduction to the Comparative Method with Boolean Algebra, London, Sage, 2009, pp. 41-64 (skip Mill's Methods, pp. 45-55).

11. Necessary and sufficient conditions II (May 26)

Required readings

Same as previous lecture

12. Approaches to causality (May 27, Thursday h. 12.30)

Required readings

Henry E. Brady, Causation and explanation in social science, in J.M. Box-Steffensmeier, H.E. Brady and D. Collier, The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 217-249.

**13. Intermediate written test (May 31)**

14. Research design and strategies (June 3, Thursday h. 12.30)

Required readings

Philippe Schmitter, The design of social and political research, in D. Della Porta and M. Keating, Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences. A pluralist perspective, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 263-295.

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research, in Political Analysis, 14, 2006, pp. 227-249.

Suggested readings

Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry. Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research, chapters 1 (The *Science* in Social Science), 2 (Descriptive Inference) and 3 (Causality and Causal Inference), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 3-114.

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005, chapter 1 (Case Studies and Theory Development), pp. 3-36.

Henry E. Brady, David Collier, and Jason Seawright, Toward a Pluralistic Vision of Methodology, in Political Analysis, 14, 2006, pp. 353-368

David Collier, Henry Brady and Jason Seawright, Sources of leverage in causal inference : toward an alternative view of methodology, in H. Brady and D. Collier (eds.) Rethinking Social Inquiry. Diverse Tools, Shared Standards, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 229-265.

Timothy McKeown, Case Studies and the Limits of the Quantitative Worldview, in H. Brady and D. Collier (eds.) Rethinking Social Inquiry. Diverse Tools, Shared Standards, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 139-167.

Charles Ragin, Turning the Tables: How Case-Oriented Research Challenges Variable-Oriented Research, in H. Brady and D. Collier (eds.) Rethinking Social Inquiry. Diverse Tools, Shared Standards, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 123-138.

#### 15. The comparative method (June 7)

##### Required readings

David Collier, The Comparative Method, in A. Finifter (ed.), Political Science: The State of the Discipline II, Washington D.C.: American Political Science Association, 1993, pp. 105-119.

Daniele Caramani, Introduction to the Comparative Method with Boolean Algebra, London, Sage, 2009, Mill's Methods, pp. 45-55.

##### Suggested readings

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005, chapter 8 (Comparative Methods: Controlled Comparison and Within-Case Analysis), pp. 151-179.

Arend Lijphart, Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method, in "American Political Science Review", Vol. 65 (September), 1971, pp. 682-693.

Arend Lijphart, The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research, in Comparative Political Studies, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1975, pp. 158-177.

#### 16. The comparative method: critiques (June 9)

##### Required readings

Morris Zelditch, Intelligible Comparison, in I. Vallier (ed.), Comparative Methods in Sociology, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, pp. 267-308.

Stanley Lieberson, Small N's and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases, in Social Forces, 70, 2, 1991, pp. 307-320.

##### Suggested readings

Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry. Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, chapter 4 (Determining What to Observe), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 115-149.

David Collier, James Mahoney and Jason Seawright, *Claiming Too Much: Warnings About Selection Bias*, in H. Brady and D. Collier (eds.) *Rethinking Social Inquiry. Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 85-101.

Barbara Geddes, *How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics*, in J. Stimson (ed.) *Political Analysis*, vol. 2, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990, pp. 131-150.

James Mahoney, *Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis*, in J. Mahoney and D. Rueschemeyer (eds.) *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 337-372.

#### 17. The case study method and process tracing (June 14)

##### Required readings

John Gerring, *The Case Study: What it is and what it does*, in C. Boix and S.C. Stokes, *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 90-122.

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005, chapter 10 (Process-Tracing and Historical Explanation), pp. 205-231.

##### Suggested readings

John Gerring, *Case selection for case-study analysis: Qualitative and quantitative techniques*, in J.M. Box-Steffensmeier, H.E. Brady and D. Collier, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 645-684.

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005, chapters 4 (Phase One: Designing Case Study Research), 5 (Phase Two: Carrying Out the Case Studies) and 6 (Phase Three: Drawing the Implications of Case Finding for Theory), pp. 73-123.

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005, chapter 7 (Case Studies and the Philosophy of Science), pp. 127-149.

Harry Eckstein, *Case Study and Theory in Political Science*, in F. Greenstein e N. Polsby (a cura di), "Handbook of Political Science", Vol. 7, 1995, Reading, Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley, pp. 79-137.

#### 18. Application: Skocpol's work on social revolutions (June 16) - PhD Candidate Olga Fazzini

Required reading

Theda Skocpol, France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions, in Comparative Studies in Society and History, 1976, 18, 2, pp. 175-210.

Suggested reading

Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions, Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press 1979, at least chapters 1 (Explaining Social Revolutions: Alternatives to Existing Theories), 2 (Old-Regime States in Crisis), 3 (Agrarian Structures and Peasant Insurrections) and 4 (What Changed and How: A Focus on State Building), pp. 3-173.

19. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (June 21) – Prof. Damonte

Required readings

To be assigned

**20. Final written test (June 23)**