

GOVT 6053
Comparative Methods and the Study of Politics
Spring 2018
Tuesdays, 10:10 – 12:35, Uris Hall 494

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This seminar introduces PhD students to the study of politics through “the comparative method.” Topics will include concept formation, theory development and testing, case selection, measurement, and causal inference using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Students will learn to assess research designs and causal claims as both consumers and producers of research.

This course is the second of two required courses for students whose major field is Comparative Politics. However, because comparison is found across the discipline of political science, and because the conceptual and theoretical issues that we entertain are general, all students in the PhD program in Government should take this course. There are no prerequisites except for an interest in learning the material and understanding how social scientists use comparison to build and assess arguments. Course readings are sometimes technical, but are accessible to any student who has completed the equivalent of U.S. high school algebra and wants to complete them.

Requirements

Assignments and Grading: You are required to attend all class meetings, to come to seminar having read and thought about the assigned material for the week, and to participate actively in class discussions. Class participation will comprise 30% of the final grade.

The remainder of your course grade is comprised of two written exercises.

1. *Research design* (30% of the final grade). Complete five research design assignments, and be prepared to discuss these ideas in class. All assignments are due Sundays at 10:00 PM via email to me, on the following dates.

Assignment 1: February 4
Assignment 2: February 11
Assignment 3: March 11
Assignment 4: April 15
Assignment 5: April 29

We will discuss these assignments in more depth in our first class meeting.

2. *Replication and extension* (40% of the final grade). The purpose of this exercise is to acquaint you with the details of actual research and of constructive criticism. You will identify by February 13 a piece of research—article or book—that you can feasibly replicate and extend. The methodology may be qualitative or quantitative. Your task is not to download and re-run an existing replication file, but to work with original source materials to reconstruct the argument and analysis, and build from there. This will be due at the end of the semester.

Finally, students are expected to give one another regular feedback on their written work. Before the second assignment is due, the class will be divided into small research support groups. You should read the written assignments of the other members of your group as you receive them and e-mail constructive comments to one another. Groups may also meet regularly to discuss their ideas.

Readings:

The following books are available for purchase at the Cornell bookstore. Copies are also available at the Olin Library reserve desk.

1. Joshua D. Angrist and Jorn-Steffen Pischke. 2015. *Mastering 'Metrics: The Path from Cause to Effect*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (“AP”)
2. Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel. 2015. *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (“BC”)
3. Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (“KKV”)
4. Stephen L. Morgan and Christopher Winship. 2015. *Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research*. 2nd edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. (“MW”)
5. Layna Mosley (ed.) 2013. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (“Mosley”)

Remaining assigned readings are available online at the Blackboard course site, which may be accessed at <http://blackboard.cornell.edu>. The course ID is 6492_2018SP. Readings are found under the **Readings** tab on the left-hand navigation panel.

Course Schedule

January 30: “The” Comparative Method. *In this class, we ask “what do we mean when we say ‘the’ comparative method?”*

- Lijphart, Arend. 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *American Political Science Review* 65(3): 682-93.
- Anderson, Benedict. 2016. "Frameworks of Comparison." *London Review of Books* 38 (2): 15-8.
- Przeworski, Adam, and Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. pp. 3-46.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 2010. "The Strategy of Paired Comparison: Toward a Theory of Practice." *Comparative Political Studies* 43(2): 230–259.
- MW, pp. 3-27.

Also review

- Laitin, David. 2003. "Comparative Politics: The State of the Subdiscipline," in Helen Milner and Ira Katznelson, eds. *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*. New York: W. W. Norton.

February 6: Units, Cases, and Ontologies. *In this class, we ask "what are the things in the world and what are they made of?"*

- Gerring, John. 2007. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 17-36.
- Hall, Peter A. 2003. "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research." In *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, edited by James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 373-404.
- Elster, Jon. 1989. *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2 and 15.
- List, Christian, and Kai Spiekermann. 2010. "Methodological Individualism and Holism in Political Science: A Reconciliation." *American Political Science Review* 104(7): 629-643.
- Delanda, Manuel. 2016. *Assemblage Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. pp. 1-50.
- Snyder, Richard. 2001. "Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36(1): 93-110.

February 13: Theories and Models *In this class, we ask "how do we know what to study, and what do we do after we've studied it?"*

- *Selections from* Lakatos, Imre. 1970. "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes." *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 91-138 and 173-180.
- Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: The University Press of Michigan. pp. 1-23.
- Clarke, Kevin A., and David M. Primo. 2007. "Modernizing Political Science: A Model-Based Approach." *Perspectives on Politics* 5, 4: 741-753.

- Gorski, Philip S. 2004. "The Poverty of Deductivism: A Constructive Realist Model of Sociological Explanation." *Sociological Methodology* 34: 1-33.
- Healy, Kieran. 2017. "Fuck Nuance." *Sociological Theory* 35(2): 118-127.
- Little, Andrew T., and Thomas B. Pepinsky. 2016. "Simple and Formal Models in Comparative Politics." *Chinese Political Science Review* 1: 425-447.

February 20: No Class (February Break)

February 27: Concepts. *In this class, we ask "how do we link 'what the world is made of' to 'how we know what to study'?"*

- Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. "Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review* 64(4): 1033-1053.
- Collier, David, and James E. Mahon. "Conceptual Stretching Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 87(4): 845-855.
- Goertz, Gary. 2006. *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 27-94.
- Collier, David, and Steven Levitsky. 1997. "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research." *World Politics* 49(3): 430-451.
- George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*: Cambridge: The MIT Press. pp. 233-262.

March 6: Description. *In this class, we ask "how do we actually learn about those things in the world that we think exist and that we ought to study?"*

- KKV, pp. 34-74.
- Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95, 3: 529-546.
- Layna Mosley "Introduction," and Mary Gallagher, "Capturing Meaning and Confronting Measurement," in Mosley.
- Wedeen, Lisa. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13(1): 255-272.
- Brass, Paul. 1997. *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 1-30, 58-96.
- Aronow, Peter M. and Benjamin T. Miller. Unpublished book manuscript. *Foundations of Agnostic Statistics*, ch. 3. (review ch. 1-2 if necessary).

March 13: Case Section. *In this class, we ask "which instances of the things in the world that we think exist and ought to study should we actually study?"*

- KKV, pp. 115-149.

- Gerring, John. 2004. "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?" *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 341-354.
- Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2(1): 131-150.
- George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2004. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Chapter 3, "The Methods of Structured, Focused Comparison." pp. 67-88.
- Pepinsky, Thomas B. 2017. "Regions of Exception." *Perspectives on Politics* 15(4): 1034-1052.

March 20: Causal Inference *In this class, we ask "what do we mean when we say that one of the things that we think exists in the world causes another of the things that we think exists in the world?"*

- Fearon, James D. 1991. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science." *World Politics* 43, 2 (January): 169-195.
- KKV, 75-114.
- MW, pp. 37-149.
- Aronow and Miller, pp. 180-186.
- Bennett, Andrew. 2010. "Process Tracing and Causal Inference." In *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. 2nd Edition. Edited by Henry E. Brady and David Collier. New York: Rowman and Littlefield. pp. 207-219.

March 27: Experiments. *In this class, we ask "under what conditions do experiments allow us to infer that one of the things that we think exists in the world causes another of the things that we think exists in the world?"*

- AP, pp. 1-46.
- Blair, Graeme, C. Christine Fair, Neil Malhotra, and Jacob N. Shapiro. 2012. "Poverty and Support for Militant Politics: Evidence from Pakistan." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(1): 30-48.
- Paler, Laura. 2013. "Keeping the Public Purse: An Experiment in Windfalls, Taxes, and the Incentives to Restrain Government." *American Political Science Review* 107(4): 706-725.
- Glynn, Adam N. 2013. "What Can We Learn with Statistical Truth Serum? Design and Analysis of the List Experiment." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 77 (S1):159-172.
- Teele, Dawn, Joshua Kalla, and Frances Rosenbluth. Unpublished paper. "Faces of Bias in Politics: Evidence from Elite and Voter Conjoint Experiments on Gender."

April 3: No Class (Spring Break)

April 10: Regression, DD, and Matching. *In this class, we ask “under what conditions do regressions and related things allow us to infer that one of the things that we think exists in the world causes another of the things that we think exists in the world?”*

- AP, pp. 47-97, 178-208.
- Aronow and Miller, pp. 187-217.
- Samii, Cyrus. 2016. “Causal Empiricism in Quantitative Research.” *Journal of Politics* 78(3): 941–955.
- Arindrajit Dube, Oendrilla Dube, and Omar García-Ponce. 2013. “Cross-Border Spillover: U.S. Gun Laws and Violence in Mexico.” *American Political Science Review* 107(3): 397-417.
- Sekhon, Jasjeet. 2009. “Opiates for the Matches: Matching Methods for Causal Inference.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 487–508.

Supplemental readings

- MW, pp. 188-225, 355-392.
- Find a regression-for-causal-inference *or* a differences-in-differences paper on your own. Read it and be prepared to discuss it with the class.

April 17: IV, RDD, and Beyond. *In this class, we ask “under what conditions do natural experiments allow us to infer that one of things that we think exists in the world causes another of the things that we think exists in the world?”*

- AP, pp. 98-177.
- Miguel, Edward, Shanker Satyanath, and Ernest Sergenti. 2004. “Economic Shocks and Civil Conflict: An Instrumental Variables Approach.” *Journal of Political Economy* 112(4): 725-753.
- Brollo, Fernanda and Tommaso Nannicini. 2012. “Tying Your Enemy’s Hands in Close Races: The Politics of Federal Transfers in Brazil.” *American Political Science Review* 106(4): 742-761.
- Sekhon, Jasjeet and Rocío Titiunik. 2012. “When Natural Experiments are Neither Natural nor Experiments.” *American Political Science Review* 106(1): 35-57.

Supplemental readings

- MW, pp. 291-324, 355-392.
- Find a RDD paper *or* an instrumental variables paper on your own. Read it and be prepared to discuss it with the class.

April 24: Process-Tracing. *In this class, we ask “under what conditions does a close analysis of mechanisms allow us to infer that one of things that we think exists in the world causes another of the things that we think exists in the world?”*

- BC, whole book.
- Collier, David. 2011. "Understanding Process Tracing." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44(4): 823-830.
- Elster, Jon. 1989. *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 3-10.
- Gerring, John. 2010. "Causal Mechanisms: Yes, But..." *Comparative Political Studies* 43(11):1499-1526.
- MW, pp. 325-353.

May 1: Time, Sequence, and Complexity. *In this class, we ask "do we need different tools or concepts to make sense of causal relationships that operate across time rather than across space, or that involve interference or spillovers across units?"*

- Lustick, Ian. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *American Political Science Review* 90: 605-18.
- Pierson, Paul. 2003. "Big, Slow-Moving, and... Invisible: Macro-Social Processes in the Study of Comparative Politics." In *Comparative-Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 177-207.
- Lieberman, Evan S. 2001. "Causal Inference in Historical Institutional Analysis: A Specification of Periodization Strategies." *Comparative Political Studies* 34, 9: 1011-1035.
- Page, Scott E. 2006. "Path Dependence." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 1: 87-115.
- Bernstein, Steven, Richard Ned Lebow, Janice Gross Stein, and Steven Weber. 2000. "God Gave Physics the Easy Problems: Adapting Social Science to an Unpredictable World." *European Journal of International Relations* 6(1): 43-76.
- Robert J. Franzese, and Jude C. Hays. 2008. "Interdependence in Comparative Politics: Substance, Theory, Empirics, Substance." *Comparative Political Studies* 41(4/5): 472-480.

May 8: Mixing Methods. *In this class, we ask "can we put together 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' comparative methods, and if so, how?"*

- Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *Political Analysis* 14: 227-249.
- Lieberman, Evan I. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99(3): 435-452.
- Cathie Jo Martin, "Crafting Interviews to Capture Cause and Effect," in Mosley.
- Glynn, Adam N., and Nahomi Ichino. 2015. "Using Qualitative Information to Improve Causal Inference." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(4): 1055-1071.

- Humphreys, Macartan, and Alan M. Jacobs. 2015. "Mixing Methods: A Bayesian Approach." *American Political Science Review* 109(4): 653-673.