

Political Science 597
Spring 2001
316 Burrowes
M 2:30-5:30

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SEMINAR: COMPARATIVE METHODS

AUDIENCE: Open to all graduate students. Prerequisites: none.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course has been designed to help students refine their research design skills in comparative politics. Class time will be devoted to studying comparative methodology through reading and discussion. Topics covered include the small-n problem, correlative versus deductive methods, the use of case research in generalization and theory-building, causation, concept formation, logic and methods of comparison, and critical reflection on both the small-n and normal science models of political science.

REQUIREMENTS: Students are expected to do all readings, be prepared for class, and participate in discussion. All students will take responsibility for leading one class discussion. The major assignment for the course will be a research paper. It must use comparative or case-study methods as its primary methodology or in conjunction with other methods (e.g. using a case study to elucidate the variables explored by statistical study or combining positive theory and casework in an analytical narrative).

PROCEDURES FOR EVALUATION: Course requirements will be weighted in the following manner--

Research paper.....	70%
General participation*.....	20%
Class Presentation.....	10%

*Students concerned about the weight given to participation are permitted to take on a second class presentation which will count an additional ten percent, reducing the share of participation to ten percent.

TEXTS:

Required:

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Charles Ragin, The Comparative Method, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

Arthur Stinchcombe, Constructing Social Theories, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968).

Max Weber, The Methodology of the Social Sciences, (New York: The Free Press, 1949).

These and all other book for the course are on reserve in the Reserve Reading Room of Pattee Library.

Journals articles will be available on-line through Muse or JSTOR, or in the stacks. Unpublished manuscripts will be posted to my website. The syllabus reflects where you will find the readings -- RRR, JSTOR, MUSE, STACKS.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Session One (August 27)

Organizational Meeting

Distribution of syllabus, discussion of course and requirements.

September 3 Labor Day

Session Two (September 10)

How to do Comparative Politics 101: The Enduring Majority or the Old Orthodoxy?

Readings:

Charles Ragin, The Comparative Method, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 1-84.
[RRR -- H61.R216 1987]

Atul Kohli, et al. "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium," World Politics 48 (1995) 1-49. [MUSE]

John Stuart Mill, "Two Systems of Comparison," (excerpt from A System of Logic, 1888), in Comparative Perspectives: Theories and Methods, Amatai Etzioni and Frederic L. Du Bow, eds. (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1970), 205-213. [RRR – H61.E9]

Arendt Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and Comparative Method," American Political Science Review 65:3 (1971), 682-693. [JSTOR]

Issues: Is there a comparative method? What sorts of methods do comparativists use? What determines which method is employed? Why does Lijphart consider statistical, experimental, and comparative methods scientific (hint: consider the structure of explanation)? What is the "many variable, small-n" problem? Which techniques does Lijphart suggest we use to minimize it? What are the methods of "agreement", "difference", and "concomitant variation"? What are the main types of case-study presented by Lijphart? What roles do the symposium participants see for theory? Is there a consensus or do you perceive differences between the participants?

Session Three (September 17)

How to do Comparative Politics 101: The New Paradigm?

Readings:

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry (Princeton: Princeton

University Press, 1994). [RRR -- H61.K5437 1994]

Issues: What is new about what KKV propose? Does this represent a paradigm shift or some reasonable suggestions for improving the conduct of research?

Session Four (September 24)

What Good is a Single Case or a Few Cases?

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in The Interpretation of Cultures, (New York: Basic, 1973), 3-32. [RRR -- GN315.G36]

Harry Eckstein, "Case-Study and Theory in Micro-Politics" in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, eds., Handbook of Political Science, vol. 7, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 79-138. [RRR -- JA71.H35 v.7]

Alexander George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured Focused Comparison," in Paul Lauren, ed., Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy, (New York: Free Press, 1979), 43-68. [RRR -- JX1664.D56]

Charles Ragin and Howard Becker, eds. What is a Case? (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Chapters by Abbot and White. [RRR – HM48.W43 1992]

Issues: What is thick description? How is interpretative social science different from the natural science model? Eckstein poses three questions (:80) in his contribution. How do all the authors approach them? What are the uses which Eckstein suggests cases can be used? How do George, Abbot, and White approach these issues?

Session Five (October 1)

Causation

Readings:

Arthur Stinchcombe, Constructing Social Theories, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968), 15-130. [RRR -- HM24.S76 1987]

Max Weber, "Objective Possibility and Adequate Causation in Historical Explanation," The Methodology of the Social Sciences, (New York: The Free Press, 1949) 164-88. [RRR – H6.W4]

James Fearon, "Counterfactuals and Hypotheses Testing in Political Science." World Politics 43 (1991) 169-95. [JSTOR]

David Fischer, Historian's Fallacies, (New York: Harper, 1970). 164-186. [RRR – D16.F53]

Issues: What are theoretical and empirical statements? Distinguish falsification, confirmation, and verification. What role does the elimination of competing theories play in the conduct of research? What are crucial experiments? What are variables, dichotomous variables, classifications, gradated and continuous variables? What is a causal law? How do we establish covariation, causal direction, and non-spuriousness? What are concepts? What are type concepts and why are they useful? Summarize

demographic, functional, and historicist explanations of social phenomena? What sort of test does Weber suggest to determine if a factor we think is causal is really significant to the outcome we are trying to explain? How does Fearon update Weber in his use of counterfactuals? What common errors do researchers make in attributing causation in their research?

October 8 (Fall Break)

Session Six (October 15)

Concepts

Readings

Giovanni Sartori, ed., Social Science Concepts. (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984), 15-85 ("Guidelines for Concept Analysis"). [RRR – H61.S58996 1984]

Giovanni Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." American Political Science Review, 64:4 (1970), 1033-53. [JSTOR]

David Collier and James E. Mahoney, "Conceptual Stretching Revisited: Alternative Views of Categories in Comparative Analysis," American Political Science Review 87:4 (1993), 845-855. [JSTOR]

Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," The Methodology of the Social Sciences, (New York: The Free Press, 1949), 89 last ¶ - 104 first ¶. [RRR – H6.W4]

Issues: Why is language important? How does Sartori propose we develop good concepts (how do we eliminate vagueness and ambiguity, how do we select essential defining characteristics)? What is concept stretching and how do we approach the levels of analysis problem from a conceptual viewpoint? What challenges do family and radial categories pose for concept "traveling" and "stretching" in comparative politics? What is an ideal-type? How do we construct ideal-types and how do we use them?

Session Seven (October 22)

Paper Assignment

Individual discussions during class time at my office by appointment. You should be prepared to discuss the general topic of your paper, its hypothesis or purpose, as well strategies for pursuing your topic (sources, methods, argument, etc.)

Session Eight (October 29)

Further Issues in Comparison

David Collier, "New Perspectives on the Comparative Method," in Comparative Political Dynamics,

- Dankwart A. Rustow and Kenneth Paul Ericson, eds. (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 32-53. [RRR – JF51.C6144 1991]
- Theda Skocpol and Margaret Sommers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," in Social Revolutions in the Modern World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 72-98. [RRR – HN16.S54 1994]
- Giovanni Sartori, "Comparing and Miscomparing," Journal of Theoretical Politics 3:3 (1991), 243-257. [PATERNO 2 -- JA1.A1 J68]
- Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry, (New York: Wiley 1970), 31-46. [RRR – H62.P79 1982]
- Charles Ragin and Howard Becker, eds. What is a Case? (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Chapter by Lieberman. [RRR – HM48.W43 1992]

Issues: Why do we compare? Where do meaningful comparisons originate? Can and should one compare apples and oranges? What is comparable? What is incommensurability? What three logics of comparison do Skocpol and Sommers outline, and what purpose do they serve? What effect do exceptions have on theories? What are "parochialism," "misclassification," "degreeism"? What role do most similar and most different systems play in designing comparative research. What is Lieberman's critique of Millian logic? Is it valid?

Session Nine (November 5)

Selection Bias, Problems of Evidence, Alternative Logics

- Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." Political Analysis 2 (1990) 131-50. [PATERNO 2 -- JA73 .P63]
- David Collier and James Mahoney. "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research," World Politics 49 (1996) 56-91. [MUSE]
- Ian S. Lustick. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," American Political Science Review. 90 (1996) 605-18. [JSTOR]
- James Mahoney. "Strategies of Causal Inference in Small-N Analysis." Sociological Methods and Research 28 (2000) 387-424. [PATERNO 2 -- HM1 .S65]
- Charles Ragin, The Comparative Method, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 85-124. [RRR -- H61.R216 1987]

Issues: What is selection bias on the dependent variable? What problems does it pose for drawing accurate conclusions? What response do Collier and Mahoney have to Geddes? Lustick raises the issue of using secondary sources for historical research. What is the problem? And how does it affect the results of research? What are the three strategies that Mahoney discusses? How are they combined in the work of the authors he uses? What alternative logic does Ragin propose? How do we use it?

Session Ten (November 12)

Critical Reflections I

Alasdair MacIntyre. "Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible?," in Against the Self-Images of the Age, (South Bend: Notre Dame, 1971), 260-279. [RRR -- B29.M34]

Albert O. Hirschman, "The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Understanding," World Politics 22:2 (April 1970), 329-43. [JSTOR]

Almond Gabriel and Stephen Genco, "Clouds, Clocks and the Study of Politics," World Politics 29 (1977), 489-522. [JSTOR]

Timothy Luke, "The Discipline as Disiplinary Normalization: Networks of Research," New Political Science, 21 (1999).

Philippe C. Schmitter, "Seven (Disputable) Theses Concerning the Future of 'Transatlanticized' or 'Globalized' Political Science" (manuscript).

Peter Hall, "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research" (manuscript).

Issues: What obstacles does MacIntyre think stand in the way of a general science of politics (i.e., one that produces law-like cross-cultural generalizations)? What does he pose as an alternative? Why did Popper come to believe that models appropriate to explanation in the physical sciences are not appropriate for human or cultural phenomena? What is his alternative? Why does Hirschman see paradigms as a hindrance to the accumulation of knowledge? How are social science regularities different from those in the physical sciences? What are Almond and Genco's criticisms of the assumptions that political science has adopted from natural science? What social science problems does such an approach miss? What does Luke mean by the discipline being disciplinary? What are its ramifications? What are the ramifications of the "Atlanticization" of political science? What does Hall mean by ontology? Why is it out of alignment with methodology? What can be done about it?

Session Eleven (November 19) and Session Twelve (November 26)

Research Time and Individualized Meetings of the Paper

Individual meetings during class time at my office by appointment. Discussion of progress on paper. You may sign up for either week or both. One meeting required.

Session Thirteen (December 03)

Final Presentations

Mock panels. Twenty minute presentations.