POS 6933 - 8923
Comparative Qualitative & Mixed Methods

Assistant Professor Staffan I. Lindberg

Office: Anderson Hall 207
Phone: 352-273-2359
Email: sil@ufl.edu
Homepage: http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/sil/

Class Meetings: Tue 5-7 (CBD 234)
Office Hours: Wedn 7.30am – 10.30am

Students must also log in to WebCT/E-Learning on regular basis to access additional course information, study materials, and class notes.

All written assignments are submitted by students on Turnitin.com
The course name is POS6933 Comparative Qualitative & Mixed Methods, Class ID is 246665, and the password is: Thinkers09
For final papers: a hard copy must also be handed to the professor at a time specified for each assignment.

I. OVERVIEW

Welcome.
This class is dedicated to the techniques, uses, advantages, problems and prospects of scholarly work based on one or a small number of cases. It is a classical issue in comparative politics but has extension far beyond the interest of comparatists only, and for that matter, only those working with small N’s. It is also an area that has attracted renewed attention in the last 10 years or so, and methodological advancements have been many by scholars such as Charles Ragin, David Collier, James Mahoney, Paul Pierson, John Gerring, Kathleen Thelen, Gary Goertz, and many others. The standard advise on comparisons based on Mill, and later Lijphart and Przeworski and Teune that shaped generations of scholars has been challenged in numerous ways moving us much further along the path of knowing how to design studies in such a way that gives us causal leverage and avoids pitfalls of claiming too much, or too little. Among other things, this has lead to the recent development of “mixed methods designs” and accordingly the APSA section on Qualitative Methods in 2007 changed its name to “Qualitative and Mixed Methods”. While the central goal of this seminar is to enable students to create and critique methodologically sophisticated ‘macro-qualitative’ case study research designs in the social sciences, we will also emphasize the relationships among these methods, alternative methods, and contemporary debates in the philosophy of science.

The work on how to study and compare single or a smaller number cases, whether cross-national or comparative historical, has thus come far. In my opinion, all students who in some way may confront comparative case study work (in particular any student in comparative politics) must insert themselves firmly in these discussions and really become conversant with the lessons learnt, the debates, and the possibilities.
After a couple of seminars that provides an overview of the main issues, we venture into case study methods proper. A sometimes neglected aspect in this area are the tools in thinking about and forming concepts. Concept formation, disaggregation, operationalization, and re-aggregation has always formed a core aspect of comparative politics and small-N comparisons. This is partly due to the often cited interest in “big questions” often involving complex, multidimensional concepts. It is also partly due to the methodological problems of small-N analysis and how much results are dependent not only of the cases your select, but also on the meaning you give the concepts. Finally, a lot of theoretical generalizations from single and comparative case studies are typology theories relying on ‘thick’ concepts. We will therefore spend a considerable part of the first part of this course learning about and discussing the art of concept formation. It is an art, believe me, requiring just as much skill and training as any art-form.

We will then discuss different forms of causality, causal inference, and theory testing in qualitative case study approaches. With this grounding, the seminar explores core issues in classic qualitative case study research design, including methods of structured and focused comparisons of cases, typological theory, case selection, process tracing, analytical narratives, congruence testing, and the use of counterfactual analysis. Next, the seminar will look at the epistemological assumptions, comparative strengths and weaknesses, and proper domain of case study methods and alternative methods, and address ways of combining these methods in a single research project such as use of nested analysis, experiments, analytical narratives, and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). It concludes with student presentations of case study research designs and constructive critiques of these designs by seminar participants. Presumably, many students will choose to present research designs for their dissertation project, but final papers could also present a research design for a separate project, article or book chapter.

Perhaps a word on what this class is not about is called for as well. The title could have added “macro” to the qualitative, indicating that in principle we will not discuss methods of collecting and analyzing individual level qualitative data such as in-depth interviews, participants observation, and the like. There are special courses both in political science and in other disciplines for that. We will only discuss them in so far as aspects of various macro-qualitative methods, for example elite interviews in process-tracing. Hence, these methods remain a peripheral part of the course.

Finally, this a class that is designed to help you work directly on concepts, and problems of comparison and analysis that relates to your dissertation. It is quite possible to take this class in your first year assuming you have at least moderately thought through your dissertation topic (that also applies for 2nd and 3rd year students !). When we discuss concepts, you will be asked to contribute with analysis of a key concept in your own work, for example. When we discuss comparative historical analysis, you will be asked to evaluate somebody’s work that is relevant for your dissertation topic, and so on. Topics and theoretical approaches of dissertation topics typically changes - yes, but participating in this seminar may then assist you to find out if you are on the right track.

The most important requirement for this course is that we approach the readings, lectures and each other’s contributions with respect, curiosity, patience, and a willingness to learn. I will allow virtually any arguments and thoughts in class encouraging your individual ability to think and be critical, but I will not tolerate anything insulting or any intimidation of dissenting opinions.
COURSE OUTLINE

A. INTRODUCTION
   1) Overview I: Comparative Method and Qualitative Case Studies
   2) Overview II: Comparative Method and Qualitative Case Studies
   3) Critiques and Justifications of Qualitative Case Study Methods

B. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT
   4) Concept Formation, Classification, Typologies
   5) Qualitative Measurement, Indicators, Levels of Measurement

C. CASE STUDIES AND CAUSAL ASSESSMENT
   6) Thinking About Causality: Inference, Effects, Mechanisms
   7) Single Case Studies, Selection, Bias
   8) Comparative Cross-Case Studies, Selection, Bias
   9) Longitudinal Case Studies: Process Tracing, Congruence Testing, Counterfactual Analysis
   10) Spring Break.....
   11) Longitudinal Comparative Analysis: Path-Dependence, Timing, Sequence, Junctures

D. MIXED METHODS AND CAUSAL ASSESSMENT
   12) Nested Analysis, Experiments and Qualitative Case Studies
   13) Analytical Narratives Using Formal Models
   14) Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)
   15) Finish Papers – Due Friday April 17th, at 1.00 pm

E. STUDENT PAPERS
   16) Seminar A
   17) Seminar B

II. COURSE FORMAT and REQUIREMENTS

This course is organized around seminars with components of lectures by the professor; students presentations; discussions; individual studies; weekly papers; and writing of individual term papers.

Background Readings

It is assumed that you are already well versed in the following literature (from taking, among other classes, Scope and Epistemology and Conduct of Inquiry):

Required Books for this Class:


Required Chapters from Books:


Mahoney, James and Dietrich Rueschesmeyer (ed.) 2003. *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* Cambridge University Press (Chapter 5, 6, 9, 10, and 11)


All the above readings have been put on the reserve in Library West along with some suggested readings. Other readings include a number of articles and working papers - see reading schedule below – and you find them either on AREAS or on-line at our course website on E-learning. All readings are required except if explicitly listed as recommended.

A word of caution.

If you pay sufficient attention to the instructions below, you notice that you will be doing a certain amount of individual reading outside of the required list (when you write ‘think-pieces’). And, let me emphasize this: This is a class that will require you to spend A LOT OF TIME on THINKING. Grades will not be give-aways, particularly not the participation and attendance part. Only high-quality contributions that are demonstratively based on sufficient effort of digesting and thinking about the issues at hand, will be rewarded with the higher grades.

Weekly Seminars - Attendance and Participation (30% of final grade)

Students are naturally expected to complete assigned readings before each seminar. I will typically start us off with an introduction of the topic but there will not be the usual “student presentations”. Instead, a portion (depending on class size) of the students will be asked in advance, to write a short paper on the literature. See more on that below.

Each week, the “think pieces” will form the central basis of our discussions along with the required readings. We will start with collectively identifying the main 2, 3 or 4 key issues, questions or methodological problems based on the required readings and the “think piece” papers. Then I will randomly ask one of you (who were not assigned to write a paper that particular week), to start the discussion of each question or issue. That role includes to A) summarize what the think pieces argue regarding this issue, B) point to weaknesses of their argument, and then C) advance your own argument. You will not be in a position to do this adequately if you have not read both the required readings and the papers, and taken time
to sit down and THINK about them. I will lead the ensuing discussion and everyone is expected to participate.

Hence, all of you will be required to read these student papers before coming to class. This is very important. It will be considered unacceptable for a student not to read the required readings and the student papers, and to sit down to THINK about them, before coming to class. This is an exercise in collective action and I will insist on penalizing instances of free riding.

Learning from mistakes is often the best way of getting a lesson that sticks, but you do not have to make all the mistakes yourself, hence, these weekly exercises. Finally, I will frequently put the required readings into perspective and also give a few remarks about next weeks topic. Lectures reinforce materials in required readings but also add other materials, new concepts, ideas and interpretations.

Attendance is compulsory. Being late is a disruption to the class and is not acceptable. Respect everyone’s time and efforts.

Short papers (30% of final grade)
Each student will thus be asked to write a few short papers, or think-pieces (again, how many depends on the class size). Please, look closely at the reading schedule before our first meeting so we can distribute these assignments immediately. The main task in the papers is not to summarize the texts, but to pursue an interesting and revealing analysis of the arguments and issues they raise. The papers should show creative but at the same time demonstrate stringent and IN-DEPTH THINKING – your own thinking.

These are thus to be methodological “think pieces” (probably two or three of them for each seminar) that should discuss, critique, and evaluate the main points made in the required readings. Then the papers should put this new knowledge into use by “tearing apart” some scholar’s work. This means using your new knowledge to find methodological weaknesses in the work and suggest how an alternative could have improved on the quality of the work and/or led to different substantial findings. What you thus ‘tear apart’ can be an article, a book chapter in an edited volume, or a book, and you can focus on just one part or aspect of it rather than the whole work. The two important things are that 1) the work is either a single or a comparative case study, and 2) that the work you decide to dissect includes sufficient information on empirical methods for you to analyze. Thus, a book might actually be easier to work with than an article. It is perfectly alright to choose a piece of work that you already know but have not analyzed in this way before, or something you have to read carefully for your prospectus, dissertation, or for qualifying exams.

The idea is that we each week get to discuss the conceptual and methodological questions as such in detail, as well as practice how to use this knowledge in evaluating others’ work and learn to avoid their mistakes. These short papers are also meant as pieces that can become building blocks for discussions of methodology in your dissertation or other writings.

The ‘think pieces’ should be no shorter than 4 pages and no longer than 8 pages (double spaced, 1” margins). Each short paper must be submitted on turnitin.com, emailed as pdf to everyone in the class, and handed in as hard copy to me. We have class on Tuesdays at 11.45 and the deadline for submitting papers will be each Monday at 12.00 noon so that everyone has a fair chance to read and think about the think pieces as well.

Term paper (40% of final grade):
You have two options for the term paper. Either you do a research design paper for a single or (preferably) comparative case study, or you write a substantive research paper on a methodological issue.
The research design paper should aim to become an integral part of a current research project; your dissertation or an article/book chapter project. This must discuss in detail the literature in the class and make a solid and sophisticated case for your design that can pass a critical examination by a ‘variable-oriented’ scholar. This is a good option for most students who will be doing case studies in their dissertation and are at a relatively advanced stage with regards to their topic, key question and key variables.

The model for a research paper is an academic article published in an established, peer-review journal such as the articles/chapters we have been reading. Your paper should be an essay on methodology, preferably focusing on one core issue or debate. The paper should both pursue a methodological argument and then critique a number of existing works in light of that argument, i.e. of good and not so good examples. If you are smart, you write a paper that is directly tied to your dissertation work or an article project you are working on.

The length should not be less than 7,000 and not exceed 9,000 words exclusive of references. You submit it electronically on Turnitin.com, send it via email to everyone in the class, and hand in a hard copy to me.

Each paper will be examined during our final paper seminars. The exact form of this evaluation may be subject to change depending on class size and other factors but we will try to make the seminars allow for half an hour or so discussion of each paper. A peer student will be the discussant on your paper raising critique and questions and you will be given opportunity to defend your analysis and conclusions. You will also be assigned to be the discussant on one paper. I will grade your paper as well as the quality of your performance both in defending your argument orally, and in your role as a discussant.

III. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND GRADING

Policy on Make-up and Late Papers

Make-ups will be arranged only for university accepted excuses. In the event of an illness, students should notify the professor prior to the deadline and provide proper documentation from their physician. In almost any situation, it is possible to pass along a message to the professor via email, phone, a classmate or a family member. If a student misses a class, presentation, or other deadline and for good reasons cannot contact me beforehand, it is the student’s responsibility to contact me within 24 hours after the deadline. If the student fails to contact me within the allotted time, or fails to produce acceptable documentation, the student will receive a zero on the assignment.

Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism

All students should observe the University of Florida’s standards of academic honesty. Progress in the social sciences is predicated on the principle of open access to theories and results produced by other scholars. We staunchly seek to guard our peers’ intellectual property because that is the only way we can make sure that science as we know it survives. You are expected to participate fully in our efforts. In the event that a student is found cheating or plagiarizing, the student will automatically fail the course and will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs.

Acts of Cheating and Plagiarism include:

- Turning in a paper or any other assignment that was written by someone else (i.e. another student, a research service, a scholar, downloaded off the internet).
- Copying, verbatim, a sentence or a paragraph of text from the work of another author without properly acknowledging the source through a commonly accepted citation style and using quotation marks.

- Paraphrasing (i.e. restating in your own words) text written by another author without citing that author.

- Using an unique idea or concept which you discovered in a specific reading without citing the author.

Finally, one thing: Wikipedia is not an acceptable source of information. Anything presented in writing based on Wikipedia will be treated as if no source has been given, hence, will be open to charges of plagiarism.

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**IV. ELECTRONICA & OFFICE HOURS**

You will use email as the regular mode of communication for this class so make sure you check your email frequently, especially before coming to class. I will use the website for our class (you will find it when you log in at E-learning) to post class notes, readings, and related materials. All class notes are the intellectual property of your professor and can not be used for any other purpose than completing this course without a written approval from me. I encourage you to take advantage of office hours to pose questions, discuss readings, or explore related topics. All paper submission will be made on Turnitin.com where I have set up our class with its own homepage.

**V. DISABILITY POLICY**

University of Florida recognizes its responsibility for creating an institutional climate in which students with disabilities can succeed. In accordance with this policy, if you have a documented disability, you may request accommodations to obtain equal access and to promote your learning in this class. Please, contact the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Anyone with disability should feel free to see me during office hours to make the necessary arrangements.
VI. DETAILED COURSE AND READING SCHEDULE.

*Articles from journals, a few papers, and APSA Newsletters are found on the course website (E-learning)
**Books and book chapters are put on reserve
***A few readings can be downloaded from the reserve (AREAS download)

A. INTRODUCTION

WEEK 1 Overview I: Comparative Method and Qualitative Case Studies   Tue   1/6.
Readings (~ 90 pages):
Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz. 2006. A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research, Political Analysis 14:3 (Summer 2006): 227-249.

WEEK 2 Overview II: Comparative Method and Qualitative Case Studies   Tue   1/13
Readings (~ 85 pages):

Also have a quick look at:

Recommended Further Reading:
WEEK 3  
Critiques and Justifications of Case Study Methods  
Tue  1/20

Readings (≈ 105 pages):


Recommended Further Reading:
All articles in APSA Qualitative Methodology Newsletter American Political Science Association No. 3.1.


B. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND QUALITATIVE MEASUREMENT

WEEK 4  
Concept Formation, Classification, Typologies  
Tue  1/27

Readings (≈ 175 pages):


Recommended Further Reading:


Recommended Further Reading:


C. QUALITATIVE CASE STUDIES AND CAUSAL ASSESSMENT

WEEK 5 Qualitative Measurement, Indicators, Levels of Measurement Tue 2/3

Readings (= 85 pages):


WEEK 6 Thinking About Causality: Inference, Effects, Mechanisms Tue 2/10

Readings (= 110 pages):


**Recommended Further Reading:**


**WEEK 7**

**Single Case Studies, Selection, Bias**

**Readings (≈ 140 pages):**


**Recommended Further Reading:**

**WEEK 8 Comparative Cross-Case Studies, Selection, Bias**

**Readings (= 125 pages):**

**Recommended Further Reading:**
WEEK 9  Longitudinal Case Studies: Process Tracing, Congruence Testing, and Counterfactual Analysis  Tue  3/3

Readings (≈ 170 pages):


Recommended Further Reading:


WEEK 10  SPRING BREAK – no class

WEEK 11  Longitudinal Comparative Analysis: Path-Dependence, Timing, Sequence, Junctures  Tue  3/17

Outline of term paper due – bring to class!

Readings (≈ 110 pages):


**Recommended Further Reading:**


**D. MIXED METHODS AND CAUSAL ASSESSMENT**

**Week 12**

**Nested Analysis, Experiments and Case Studies**

Outlines returned in class.

**Readings (≈ 110 pages):**


**Recommended Further Reading:**


Green, Donald and Gerber, Alan S. “Reclaiming the Experimental Tradition in Political Science”. In Katznelson, Ira and Helen V. Milner, eds., Political Science: The State of The Discipline. New York, W.W. Norton.


Examples:

WEEK 13 Analytical Narratives Using Formal Models Tue 3/31
Readings (~100 pages):

Recommended Further Reading:

WEEK 14 Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) Tue 4/7
Readings (~90 pages):


Recommended Further Reading:


Graham R. Gibbs, Susanne Friese, and Wilma C. Mangabeira, The Use of New technology in Qualitative Research. Forum for Qualitative Social Research 3(2).


WEEK 15 “Finish Paper Week” – No Class
Final version of Term Papers due Friday April 17th, at 1.00 pm!!!
Submit on Turnitin.com, one hard copy in the box outside my office, and email a pdf-version to your peers.

E. STUDENT PAPER SEMINARS

Tue 4/21 Paper Seminar A
Tue 4/28 Paper Seminar B

Literature for the Next Step – From Theory to Practice and Other Considerations:


