**Optional Course: Comparative Methods**

**Teacher: Maria Ackrén**

**Language of Instruction: English**

**Description of the course:**

This course will give the students basic knowledge in comparative methods. We will go through the logic of comparative methods and apply the technique(s) in the assignments. The introduction will give the students a basis of knowledge of what comparative politics and comparative methods are. The variable thinking will be taught as this can be used for various research problems. The course is focused on the qualitative comparative methods, such as, John Stuart Mill's Most Different Systems Design (MDSD) or Method of Agreement and Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) or Method of Difference, Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) based on Boolean algebra and Fuzzy-Set based on set-theory. The course will give an insight in the usefulness of these techniques as well as their challenges and limitations. We will also test some software programs which are free of charge within this course. The students will learn the techniques by using them in their assignments throughout the course.

**Prerequisite for attending the course:**

The students are expected to have passed the courses in Political Science and International Politics at BA-level for BA-scholars and the Advanced Course in Political Science at MA-level for MA-scholars. The preferable students are underway to write their BA- or MA-theses, where comparative methods might be a useful research design.

**Teaching hours:** 36 in total including supervision

**ECTS:** 10 ECTS for both BA- and MA-level

**Exam: BA-level:** oral exam with a synopsis

**MA-level:** oral exam based on a free, written assignment (max. 15 pages)

**Censorship:** Internal/external?

**Grading:** Grades are given according to the GGS-Scale

**Preliminary List of Readings:**

**Articles:**

Arend Lijphart (1971). 'Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3. (Sep., 1971), pp. 682-693.

David Collier and James E. Mahon (1993). 'Conceptual "Stretching" Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 4. (Dec. 1993), pp. 845-855.

Charles C. Ragin, David Shulman, Adam Weinberg and Brian Gran (2003). 'Complexity, Generality, and Qualitative Comparative Analysis', *Field Methods*, Vol. 15, No. 4, (Nov. 2003), pp. 323-340.

James Mahoney (2004). 'Comparative-Historical Methodology', *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 30 (Aug. 2004), pp. 81-101.

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz (2006). 'A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research', *Political Analysis*, Vol. 14, Issue 3 (June 2006), pp. 227-249.

John Gerring (2005). 'Causation: A Unified Framework for the Social Sciences', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol. 17, Issue 2 (April 2005), pp. 163-198.

**Book Chapters:**

B. Guy Peters (1998). *Comparative Politics - Theory and Methods*. Basingstoke and London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Charles C. Ragin (1987). *The Comparative Method - Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Charles C. Ragin (2000). *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Charles C. Ragin (2008). *Redesigning Social Inquiry - Fuzzy Sets and Beyond*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Benoît Rihoux and Charles C. Ragin (2009). *Configurational Comparative Methods - Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Techniques*. Los Angeles-London-New Delhi-Singapore: Sage Publications.

**Other Material:**

Maria Ackrén (2006). *Comparing Comparisons: Territorial Autonomies in the Light of Alternative Methods*. Meddelanden från Ekonomisk-Statsvetenskapliga Fakulteten vid Åbo Akademi. Statskunskap, Ser. A:549. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.

Maria Ackrén (2009). *Conditions for Different Autonomy Regimes in the World - A Fuzzy-Set Application*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press.

Maria Ackrén and Pär M. Olausson (2008). 'Condition(s) for Island Autonomy', *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, Vol. 15, No. 2-3, pp. 227-258.

**Software programs:**

Available at the following web-page: <http://www.compasss.org/> (also includes other relevant material).

**Course Outline:**

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| **Lecture and Date** | **Topic** | **Reading** | **Comment** |
| **Lecture 1:**  Tuesday 4 September 2018  Classroom: | Introduction: What is comparative method? What is the difference between comparative and other methods? | Peters (1998): Chapter 1; Ragin (1987): Chapter 1; Mahoney and Goertz (2006); Lijphart (1971) |  |
| **Lecture 2:**  Thursday 6 September 2018  Classroom: | Logic of comparative methods; variable thinking; causation | Peters (1998): Chapter 2; Ragin (1987): Chapter 2 and 4; Gerring (2005) |  |
| **Lecture 3:**  Tuesday 11 September 2018  Classroom: | Classical comparative methods: MDSD/MSSD; case selection | Ackrén (2006); Rihoux and Ragin (2009): Chapter 2; Ragin (1987): Chapter 3 |  |
| **Lecture 4:**  Thursday 13 September 2018  Classroom: | Other forms of techniques: Comparative-Historical Analysis and Case Studies | Mahoney (2004); Ragin (2000): Chapter 2-3; Peters (1998): Chapter 6 |  |
| **Deadline 1 October 2018** | **Assignment 1** |  | **Research question formulated with dependent and independent variable(s)** |
| **Lecture 5:**  **Friday 5 October 2018**  Classroom: | Feedback on assignment 1: Introduction to QCA | Ragin (1987): Chapter 6-7; Rihoux and Ragin (2009): Chapter 1 and 3; Peters (1998): Chapter 7 |  |
| **Lecture 6:**  Tuesday 30 October 2018  Classroom: | QCA and fuzzy-set; the techniques and logic behind them | Ragin (1987): Chapter 8; Ragin (2000): Chapter 6; Ragin 2008): Chapter 1-3 |  |
| **Lecture 7:**  Thursday 1 November 2018  Classroom: | Possibilities and limitations with the various techniques | Collier and Mahon (1993); Rihoux and Ragin (2009): Chapter 7-8; Peters (1998): Chapter 4 and 10 |  |
| **Lecture 8:**  Tuesday 13 November 2018  Classroom: | Implementation of the techniques; some examples | Ragin et.al. (2003); Ackrén (2006); Ackrén (2009): Chapter 5-7; Ackrén and Olausson (2008) |  |
| **Lecture 9:**  Tuesday 20 November 2018  Classroom: | Software programs: introduction and testing the programs | <http://www.compasss.org/>:  fs/QCA 3.0; MDSO/MSDO | Learning by doing |
| **Lecture 10:**  Tuesday 27 November 2018  Classroom: | **Deadline for assignment 2**: Continuing with the software | <http://www.compasss.org/>:  fs/QCA 3.0; MDSO/MSDO | **Second assignment: application of one of the methods: pilot test** |
| **Lecture 11:**  Tuesday 4 December 2018  Classroom: | **Feedback on assignment 2: Supervision** |  |  |
| **Lecture 12:**  Tuesday 11 December 2018  Classroom: | **Summary of the Course: wrap-up: Supervision** |  | **Q & A - session** |
| **Exam** | **Deadline for synopsis and assignment:** | **Oral exam date:** |  |