

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 basic methodology and preferable Political Science and International Politics at BA-level for BA-scholars. The preferable students are underway to write their BA- or MA-theses, where comparative methods might be a useful research design.

Teaching hours: 40 in total including supervision

ECTS: 5 ECTS for BA-level and 10 ECTS for 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

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 webpage: <http://www.compass.org/> (also includes other relevant material).

Course Outline:

Lecture and Date	Topic	Reading	Comment
Lecture 1: Date: 28 March 2022 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)	Types of comparative analyses; differences between comparative and statistical methods
Lecture 2: Date: 31 March 2022 Classroom:	Logic of comparative methods; variable thinking; causation	Peters (1998): Chapter 2; Ragin (1987): Chapter 2 and 4; Gerring (2005)	Dependent, independent and intervening variables; causal relationships
Lecture 3: Date: 4 April 2022 Classroom:	Classical comparative methods: MDSD/MSSD; case selection	Ackrén (2006); Rihoux and Ragin (2009): Chapter 2; Ragin (1987): Chapter 3	How to use cases in comparative methods
Lecture 4: Date: 7 April 2022 Classroom:	Other forms of techniques: Comparative-Historical Analysis and Case Studies	Mahoney (2004); Ragin (2000): Chapter 2-3; Peters (1998): Chapter 6	Various techniques regarding case studies within comparative methods
Deadline 1 Deadline: 19 April 2022	Assignment	Readings from lecture 1-4	Research question formulated with dependent and independent variable(s)
Lecture 5: Date: 21 April 2022 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	The basic logic with QCA

Lecture 6: Date: 25 April 2022 Classroom:	QCA and fuzzy-set; the techniques and logic behind them	Ragin (1987): Chapter 8; Ragin (2000): Chapter 6; Ragin 2008): Chapter 1-3	Differences between QCA and fuzzy-set
Lecture 7: Date: 28 April 2022 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	Galton's problem; conceptual stretching; bias; thick description; selection on the dependent variable
Lecture 8: Date: 2 May 2022 Classroom:	Implementation of the techniques; some examples	Ragin et.al. (2003); Ackrén (2006); Ackrén (2009): Chapter 5-7; Ackrén and Olausson (2008)	Establishing a small data base
Lecture 9: Date: 5 May 2022 Classroom:	Software programs: introduction and testing the programs	http://www.compass.org/ : fs/QCA 3.0; MDSO/MSDO	Learning by doing
Lecture 10: Date: 9 May 2022 Classroom:	Wrap-up	Summary of the course Q & A session	Evaluation
Lecture 11-12	Supervision	Continuation of working with your synopsis or assignments	Supervision in Maria's office: C231
Deadline	Submission of your synopsis and assignments	You need to hand in your synopsis and assignments before noon	Submission to Wiseflow
Exam		Oral exam date:	