Research Design Seminar: Comparative Politics and Comparative Method

Peter Mair

Tuesdays 11-13.00, Room 2, 18 January-22 March 2011

Please register with susanna.bergman@eui.eu

This seminar builds on the first-term core methods programme and deals with some of the main problems and alternatives that are confronted when designing and conducting comparative research. The topics we deal with include the problems of concept formation and theorization; the understanding of causation and explanation; most similar and most different case-study design; analytical narratives; conducting case-studies and process-tracing; and (an introduction to) qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). The seminar will also deal with the problems of generalising research results, and we will discuss the challenges facing comparative research as a result of globalisation, Europeanisation, diffusion, and the decline of the boundedness of nation-states. The purpose of the seminar is to offer students a more detailed and hands-on introduction to the ways in which comparative research can be designed as function of a variety of comparative politics and comparative policies research questions.

Each student will be expected to read and comment on the designated literature for each of the topics and to participate actively in the weekly discussions. Researchers will also be expected to formally present and discuss the research design that they propose to adopt in their own thesis work.
Topics:

18 January  **Introduction**

Outline of course and scheduling of assignments; suggestions for additional topics or readings

25 January  **Comparative Politics, Old and New**


1 February  **Concepts, Classifications and Typologies**


Cas Mudde. 2007. *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge University Press. Pp 11-59 offer a good example of the application of some of the approaches discussed here.
8 February **Causation and Explanation** (Guest speaker: Adrienne Heritier)


James Mahoney. 2007. Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics, *Comparative Political Studies*, 122-144

15 February **Most similar and most different systems design**


22 February **Case Studies**


1 March **QCA (guest speaker: Claudius Wagemann)**


Claudius Wagemann and Carsten Q. Schneider. 2010. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Fuzzy-Sets: The Agenda for a Research Approach and a Data Analysis Technique. *Comparative Sociology*, 9:3, 397-418

8 March **Process Tracing and Analytic Narratives**


Peter Hall. 2008. Systematic process analysis: what it is and how to use it. *EPS: European Political Science* 7, 304-317


15 March  **Comparative Politics and Policy Diffusion: Vertical and horizontal perspectives.**


22 March  **Concluding Session: Research Design in Practice, if at all**

Talks about their recently completed theses by various Max Weber Fellows