

An Introduction into Comparative Case Study Research

Course description:

The goal of this course is to provide participants with a clear understanding of:

- what case study research is about at all, and what case studies are good for (like making inferences on causal mechanisms, finding explanations for specific cases, and improving or constructing theories)
- the relationships between single case research, small-n comparative research, and large-n variance-oriented research; including an overview of the various forms of case study research
- the epistemological and methodological challenges of case study research (causality vs. correlation; role of theory; rules for case selection; how to collect and properly analyze case study data)
- sound research designs for (small-n comparative) case studies, and of how they can be nested into mixed methods research designs.
- After completing this course, participants should have a clear picture of the strengths and limits of case study research. They will be able to go into details by own readings, and they should be able to outline sound research designs for case studies of their own. Basic knowledge of social science methodology would be helpful, but is not required for taking this course. It would be perfect if participants could come to the course with an emerging or ongoing case study project of their own, such that course teaching and own research experiences can benefit from each other.
- The teaching format will be seminar-like lecturing based on a slide show that can be downloaded and worked through before. As a result, well-informed discussions of crucial aspects of case study research should be made possible.