

SOCIOLOGY 509
A Seminar on Comparative Methods
Spring, 2001

Class time & location: Tuesday, 2-4:30 pm, 4102 BSB
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Introduction

The revival and new growth of comparative sociology raises an emerging need for the more effective use of comparative methods. This method-oriented seminar will meet that need by providing a systematic and integrated introduction to the use of comparative methods to study and understand similarities and differences among social structures. We will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of variable-based (Durkheimian) vs. case-based (Weberian) comparative methods with regard to theory testing and construction. Students are exposed to both cross-national quantitative analysis (quantitative comparison) and in-depth comparative studies of multiple cases (qualitative comparison). The ultimate goal is to understand how comparisons can be done, what they achieve, and how they help to move beyond the study of single cases.

Requirements and grading

Your grade for the seminar will be based on three components. The first is a pair of short essays of 3-4 pages, each of which will count 15% for a subtotal of 30% of your overall grade. The second is a term paper that should run a maximum of 15 tightly argued and reasoned pages for 45% of your grade. This paper should focus on designing and undertaking a comparative study of a sociological topic. I will talk with you individually as the semester goes by about the substance of your paper. The third and final requirement is your participation and performance in the discussions, which will count for the remaining 25% of total grade.

Readings

1. Charles Ragin, The Comparative Method. University of California Press, 1987.
2. Charles Tilly, Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons. Russell Sage Foundation, 1984.

These two books can be purchased in the bookstore on Taylor Street. A set of journal articles and book chapters to be read and discussed (the bulleted items below) are available in a folder outside of my office in Suite 4150. I encourage you to make copies of these articles for yourself. If you want to read an article in your office, you must return it within two hours so that the next person can have access to it.

Seminar Schedules and Readings

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| Week 1: | Introduction |
| 1/9 | Skim Ragin's Preface and Overview |
| Week 2: | The Distinctiveness and Complexity of Comparative Social Science |
| 1/16 | Ragin's Chapters 1 and 2 |
| Week 3: | The Case- vs. Variable-Based Comparison |
| 1/23 | Ragin's Chapters 3 and 4; |

- ☞ Charles Ragin and David Zaret on "Theory and Method in Comparative Research: Two Strategies."
- ☞ John Walton, "Standardized Case Comparison: Observations on Method in Comparative Sociology," in Armer and Grimshaw (eds.)

Week 4: Combining and Comparing Different Comparative Strategies

- 1/30
- ☞ Ragin's Chapter 5;
 - ☞ Stanley Lieberman, "More on the Uneasy Case for Using Mill-Type Methods in Small-*N* Comparative Studies."
 - ☞ Terrence Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Comparative Studies of National Societies," in Etzioni and Dubow (eds.)
 - ☞ Melvin Kohn, "Cross-National Research as an Analytic Strategy."

Week 5: Case Selection and Unit of Analysis in Comparison

- 2/6
- ☞ Jerald Hage, "Theoretical Decision Rules for Selecting Research Designs: The Study of Nation-States or Societies."
 - ☞ Christopher Chase-Dunn and Thomas Hall, "Comparing World-Systems: Concepts and Working Hypotheses."
 - ☞ Xiangming Chen, "The Changing Roles of Free Economic Zones in Development: A Comparative Analysis of Capitalist and Socialist Cases in East Asia." *Studies in Comparative International Development* (1994).

First short essay due

Week 6: Comparing Large-Scale Social Change

- 2/13
- ☞ Tilly's Chapters 1-4;
 - ☞ Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry."

Week 7: Individualizing and Universalizing Comparisons

- 2/20
- ☞ Tilly's Chapters 5 and 6.

Week 8: Finding Variation and Encompassing Comparisons

- 2/27
- ☞ Tilly's Chapters 7 and 8.

Week 9: Mid-Semester Review and Reflections

- 3/6
- ☞ Based on readings thus far.

SPRING BREAK (3/12-3/16)

Week 10: Comparative Methods and Empirical Research

- 3/20
- ☞ Thomas Janoski, "Synthetic Strategies in Comparative Sociological Research: Methods and Problems of Internal and External Analysis."
 - ☞ Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "Different Methods -- Contradictory Results? Research on Development and Democracy."
 - ☞ David Smith, "Method and Theory in Comparative Urban Studies."

Week 11: Cross-National Quantitative Analysis as Comparison

- 3/27

- ✍✍ Glenn Firebaugh and Frank Beck, "Does Economic Growth Benefit the Masses?"
- ✍✍ Ronald Inglehart and Wayne Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values."
- ✍ David Smith and Bruce London, "Convergence in World Urbanization? A Quantitative Assessment."
- ✍ Arne Kalleberg and David Stark, "Career Strategies in Capitalism and Socialism: Work Values and Job Rewards in the United States and Hungary."
- ✍ Xiangming Chen, "The Demographic Profiles of the World's Largest Cities: A Baseline Analysis and Policy Implications." *Cities* (1996).

Second short essay due

Week 12: Cross-Regional and Cross-National Comparative Case Studies

4/3

- ✍ Gary Gereffi, "Contending Paradigms for Cross-Regional Comparison: Development Strategies and Commodity Chains in East Asia and Latin America," in Smith (ed.)
- ✍ Andres Solimano, "The Postsocialist Transition in Comparative Perspective: Policy Issues and Recent Experience."
- ✍ Steven Solnick, "The Breakdown of Hierarchies in the Soviet Union and China: A Neoinstitutional Perspective."
- ✍ Gary Fields, "Changing Labor Market Conditions and Economic Development in Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan, China."
- ✍ Xiangming Chen, "The Evolution of Free Economic Zones and the Recent Development of Cross-National Growth Zones." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (1995).
- ✍✍ Xiangming Chen, "Taiwanese Investments in China and Southeast Asia: 'Go West but Also Go South'." *Asian Survey* (1996).
- ✍✍ Xiangming Chen, "The Geoeconomic Reconfiguration of the Semiperiphery: The Asian-Pacific Transborder Subregions in the World-System." A book chapter (2000).
- ✍✍ Xiangming Chen, "Both Glue and Lubricant: Transnational Ethnic Social Capital as a Source of Asia-Pacific Subregionalism." *Policy Sciences* (2000).

Week 13: A Boolean Approach to Qualitative Comparison

4/10

Ragin's Chapters 6-8.

Week 14: Comparative Methods and Social Science Research

4/17

Ragin's Chapter 9;
Tilly's Chapter 9;

Week 15: Summary and Looking Forward

4/24

- ✍ Joel Smith, "A Methodology for Twenty-First Century Sociology."

Week 16: Term Paper due by Wednesday, May 1 (Tuesday).