Comparative research is the process of asking and answering questions with evidence from carefully chosen cases. Comparative research is exciting because defining cases is tough analytical work, and they can be people, artifacts, communities, field sites, organizations, countries, focus groups, periods of time, or texts. This course is designed to help students make definitional decisions in their own work and look at how other scholars do comparative research. In this course, students explore the inquiry process by thinking about how to generate transportable theory by working with people, artifacts, or events in a comparative context. This course has four objectives:

- to teach students about the assumptions, applications, strengths, and limitations of comparative research;
- to give students a sophisticated methodological literacy, enabling them to read broadly and critically, to engage with colleagues who have different approaches to comparison, and to better interpret their own comparative findings;
- to have students develop their scholarly identity by developing a comparative research agenda through a thesis proposal, an article draft, or thesis chapter (as relevant for where they are in their graduate career).

By the end of this class, students should be able to assess the impact of methodological choices on research findings. As much as this is a class in methods, it is also an opportunity for students to choose the questions and themes they find most interesting in comparative. This class will be a workshop in which the instructor, students, and guest lecturers can present ideas on how and when to use different methods of inquiry. Although students are required to try different methods, they have wide freedom to select your line of inquiry, and much of the content of this class will depend on the topics that student interests. Students will finish the course with a good reference packet of notes, reviews, and other handouts.

**Evaluation**

First draft of the manuscript you are developing, due by week 5 (30 points). The exact nature of the draft will be negotiated with each student. The second draft of the manuscript you are developing, much evolved and formally presented to the group sometime during the quarter, due
by week 10 (50 points). Participation in class discussions, which includes leading the discussion of one article sometime during the quarter (20 points).

For the first week of conversation, please read:


The itinerary for the rest of the quarter’s readings will be shaped after the first class meeting to review student interests.
COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

READINGS FOR THE GENERAL EXAM

10/15/2013

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I. THEORIES OF COMPARATIVE METHODS

Approaches to Comparative Research


Debate: Large N v. Small N, Selecting on the Dependent Variable?


Debate: Interpretivist v. Positivist?


**Case Study Research**


Thomas, G. 2011. A typology for the case study in social science following a review of definition, discourse and structure. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17, 6, 511-521


**Mixed Method as Comparative Research**


II. TOOLS FOR COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

Building Event, Incident, or Comparative Datasets

Qualitative Comparative Analysis and Fuzzy Set Logic


Wagemann, C., and C. Q Schneider. 2010. “Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and fuzzy-sets: agenda for a research approach and a data analysis technique.” *Comparative Sociology* 9(3): 376–396.

III. EXAMPLES OF COMPARATIVE RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION

Comparative Media Systems


Comparative Political Communication


**Comparative Historical and Cultural Communication**


**Technology and Society**


Comparative Journalism Studies

Additional Comparative Communication Research