

10-21

JULY

IPSA-FLACSO MÉXICO

SUMMER SCHOOL

2017



**Syllabus of course on:**

**“Comparative research designs and comparative methods”**

**Instructor:** Prof. Dr. Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Ph.D.; Philipps University Marburg/Germany

Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of modern empirical social science, once stated that the comparative method is the only one that suits the social sciences. But Descartes already had reminded us that “comparaison n’est pas raison”, which means that comparison is not reason (or theory) by itself. This course provides an introduction and overview of systematic comparative analyses in the social sciences and shows how to employ this method for constructive explanation and theory building. It begins with comparisons of very few cases and specific “most similar” and “most different” research designs. A major part is then devoted to the often occurring situation of dealing with a small number of highly complex cases, for example when comparing EU member states. Latin American political systems, or particular policy areas. In response to this complexity, new approaches and software have been developed in recent years (“Qualitative Comparative Analysis”, QCA, and related methods). These procedures are able to reduce complexity and to arrive at “configurational” solutions based on set theory and Boolean algebra, which are more meaningful in this context than the usual broad-based statistical methods. In a last section, these methods are contrasted with more common statistical comparative methods at the macro-level of states or societies and the respective strengths and weaknesses are discussed. Some basic quantitative or qualitative methodological training is probably useful to get more out of the course, but participants with little methodological training should find no major obstacles to follow.

Participants should bring their own (Microsoft-compatible) laptops or can rent one. Mac users need a Windows emulator for the (freely available) software.

10-21

JULY

IPSA-FLACSO MÉXICO

SUMMER SCHOOL

2017



### **Lesson 1: Epistemological foundations of the social sciences**

Readings:

Moses, J.W./Knutsen, T.L. (2012), *Ways of Knowing*, London: Palgrave, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., chapter 1, pp. 1 – 15.

Berg-Schlosser, D. “Epistemological building-blocks of political science”, in: Badie, B/Berg-Schlosser, D. /Morlino, L. (eds.) (2011), *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, Los Angeles: SAGE, vol. 1, pp. lvi – lxi.

### **Lesson 2: Mill’s “canons”**

Readings:

Berg-Schlosser, “Comparative Studies: Method and Design”, in: Smelser, N. J./Baltes, P.B. (eds.) (2015) *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Moses/Knutsen, op. cit., chapter 5, pp. 94 – 115.

### **Lesson 3: Further Advances, Overview of comparative research designs**

Readings:

Rihoux, B./Ragin, Ch. (eds.) (2009), *Configurational Comparative Methods*, Los Angeles: SAGE, 2009, Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. XVII – XXV and 1 – 18.

### **Lesson 4. Most similar and most different designs (MSDO/MDSO), Matching and Contrasting of Cases**

Readings:

Rihoux/Ragin, *op.cit.*, chapter 2, pp. 19 – 32.

Berg-Schlosser, D., *Mixed Methods in Comparative Politics*, London: Palgrave, chapter 8, pp. 130 - 159.

### **Lesson 5: Introduction to Boolean Algebra, main steps of QCA**

Readings:

Rihoux/Ragin, *op.cit.*, chapter 3, pp. 33 – 68.

Berg-Schlosser, *Mixed Methods ... op.cit.*, chapters 6.1, 6.2, pp. 85 – 92.

Goertz, G. /Mahoney, J. (2006), *Social Science Concepts*, Princeton: Princeton UP, chapter 2, pp.16 - 38.

10-21

JULY

IPSA-FLACSO MÉXICO

SUMMER SCHOOL

2017



### **Lesson 6: QCA applications, troubleshooting, Multi-Value QCA (mvQCA)**

Readings: Rihoux/Ragin, *op.cit.*, chapters 4 and 6; pp. 69 – 86 and 123 – 145.

Berg-Schlosser., *Mixed Methods ...*, *op. cit.*, chapter 6.3

A.Marx/B. Rihoux/Ch. Ragin (2013), “The origins, development, and application of QCA: the first 25 years”, *European Political Science Review*, pp. 1 – 28.

### **Lesson 7: Fuzzy set analyses, basic features**

Readings:

Rihoux/Ragin, *op.cit.*, chapter 5, pp. 87 – 121.

Ragin, Ch. (2008), *Redesigning Social Inquiry – Fuzzy Sets and Beyond*, University of Chicago Press, chapters 4 and 5, pp. 71-105

### **Lesson 8: Fuzzy set applications (fs/qca)**

Readings:

Ragin 2008, *op.cit.*, chapters 10 and 11, pp. 176-212.

Berg-Schlosser., *Mixed Methods...*; *op. cit.*, chapter 6.4

### **Lesson 9: Macro-quantitative (statistical) methods**

Readings:

U.Wagschal and S.Jaeckle “Aggregate Data Analysis”, in: *International Encyclopaedia of Political Science*, SAGE 2011.

Berg-Schlosser and S. Quenter, “Macro-Quantitative vs. Macro-qualitative Methods in Political Science – Advantages and Disadvantages of Comparative Procedures using the Welfare State Theory as an Example”, *Historical Social Research*, vol.21,no1, 1996, pp. 3-25.

### **Lesson 10: Conclusions and Perspectives**

Readings:

Berg-Schlosser, *Mixed Methods ...*, *op. cit.*, chapter 12, pp. 217 – 225.

### **Recommended further readings:**

Brady, H. E. and D. Collier (eds.) (2010), *Rethinking Social Inquiry – Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield

Schneider, C. and Cl. Wagemann (2012), *Set-Theoretic Methods for the Social Sciences – A Guide to Qualitative Comparative Analysis*, Cambridge: CUP.

10-21

JULY

IPSA-FLACSO MÉXICO

SUMMER SCHOOL

2017



**Useful links:**

[www.tosmana.net](http://www.tosmana.net) (this is the original link to the TOSMANA software),

TOSMANA can now be downloaded free of charge together with a brief manual from:

[www.compass.org/software.htm](http://www.compass.org/software.htm) ;

fs-qca software and manual can be downloaded free of charge from:

<http://www.u.arizona.edu/~cragin/fsQCA/software.shtml>

Information about current events concerning QCA related developments and a working paper series are also available on: [www.compass.org/](http://www.compass.org/)