

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
Department of Political Science

Political Science 509
Seminar on the Comparative Case Study Method

Winter 2004
John Mearsheimer

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course examines the case study method for doing social science. The strengths and weaknesses of this approach will be considered, with particular attention placed on the mechanics of doing case studies.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Every student is expected to do all the reading and attend all the class meetings. Each student is also expected to participate in seminar discussions. Grades will be based on classroom participation (33%), and two seven-page papers (33% each).

The papers will be due at the beginning of class on March 3 and March 10. We will discuss the specific book assigned for those class meetings. Each paper should be double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, and utilize a standard font size.

The following books – all in paperback-- are available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore:

- Alan F. Chalmers, What Is This Thing Called Science? (Hackett Publishing)
- John Gerring, Social Science Methodology (Cambridge)
- Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry (Princeton)
- Robert D. Putnam, Making Democracy Work (Princeton)
- Stephen Van Evera, Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science (Cornell)

All of the articles and book chapters with ** next to them are on 2-hour reserve at Regenstein Library, and on E-reserve at Regenstein Library.

I will send the following document as an e-mail attachment to the students in the class.

Alexander Downes, Targeting Civilians in War (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation)

COURSE OUTLINE

1. January 7: Organizational Meeting and Introduction

2. January 14: Basic Epistemological Issues

- Chalmers, What Is This Thing Called Science? read all.

3. January 21: Case Studies and Theory

-- Harry Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in F. Greenstein and N. Polsby, eds., Handbook of Political Science, Vol. 7: Strategies of Inquiry, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975).**

-- John Stuart Mill, "Two Methods of Comparison," in A. Etzioni and F. Dubow, eds., Comparative Perspectives: Theories and Methods, (Boston: Little Brown, 1970).**

-- Arthur L. Stinchcombe, Constructing Social Theories, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), chapters 1-2.**

-- Van Evera, Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science, pp. 7-48.

4. January 28: Case Studies and Large-N Studies: Birds of a Feather

-- King, Keohane, and Verba, Designing Social Inquiry, read all.

-- Timothy J. McKeown, "Case Studies and the Statistical Worldview," International Organization, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Winter 1999), pp. 161-190.** (skim)

-- Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," American Political Science Review 65, No. 3 (September 1971), pp. 682-93.**

5. February 4: Case Studies and Testing Causal Logics

-- Alexander L. George and Timothy J. McKeown, "Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision-Making," in R. F. Coulam and R. A. Smith, eds., Advances in Information Processing in Organizations, Vol. 2 (Greenwich: JAI Press, 1985), pp. 21-58.**

-- James Mahoney, "Strategies of Causal Inference in Small-N Analysis," Sociological Methods and Research, Vol. 28, No. 4 (May 2000), pp. 387-424.**

-- Paul K. McDonald, "Useful Fiction or Miracle Maker: The Competing Epistemological Foundations of Rational Choice Theory," American Political Science Review, Vol. 97, No. 4 (November 2003), pp. 551-565.**

-- Bruce Russett, "International Behavior Research: Case Studies and Cumulation," in Russett, ed., Power and Community in World Politics (San Francisco: Freeman, 1974), chap. 1.**

-- Van Evera, Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science, pp. 49-88.

6. February 11: Path Dependency

-- Daniel Little, "On The Scope and Limits of Generalizations in the Social Sciences," Synthese, 97 ((1993), pp. 183-207.**

-- James Mahoney, "Path Dependency in Historical Sociology," Theory and Society, 29 (2000), pp. 507-548.**

-- Paul Pierson, "Not Just What, but When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes," Studies in American Political Development, 14 (Spring 2000), pp. 72-92.**

-- Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," American Political Science Review, Vol. 94, No. 2 (June 2000), pp. 251-267.**

7. February 18: Critiques and Rejoinders

-- Christopher Achen and Duncan Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies," World Politics 41, No. 2 (January 1989), pp. 143-169.**

-- Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," Political Analysis, Vol. 2 (1990).**

-- Douglas Dion, "Evidence and Inference in the Comparative Case Study," Comparative Politics 30, No. 2 (January 1998), pp. 127-146.**

-- Olav Njolstad, "Learning from History?: Case Studies and the Limits to Theory-Building," in Nils Peter Gleditsch and Olav Njolstad, eds., Arms Races: Technological and Political Dynamics (London: Sage, 1990), pp. 220-246.**

-- Charles Tilly, "Means and Ends of Comparison in Macrosociology," Comparative Sociological Research 16 (1997), pp. 43-54.**

8. February 25: Case Studies in the Big Picture

-- Gerring, Social Science Methodology, read all.

9. March 3: Doing Case Studies-I [PAPER #1 DUE]

-- Downes, Targeting Civilians in War, read all.

10. March 10: Doing Case Studies-II [PAPER #2 DUE]

-- Putnam, Making Democracy Work, read all.