

**4th ECPR Winter School in Methods and Techniques, 13-20 February 2015**  
**University of Bamberg, Germany**  
**Course Description Form<sup>1</sup> [1-week main course, 15 hours]**

**Course title**

**WD205 Advanced multi-method research: techniques and practice**

**Instructor details**

First name, last name: **Ingo Rohlfing**

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**Short Bio**

Ingo Rohlfing is Professor for Political Science, Qualitative Methods at the Bremen International Graduate School in the Social Sciences (BIGSSS). He holds a PhD in Political Science and is doing research on party competition and party organizations. In his research on methods, he is working on the case study method, QCA, and multi-method research. He has published in journals such as *Comparative Political Studies* and *Sociological Methods & Research*.

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**Prerequisite knowledge**

*Note from the Academic Convenors to prospective participants: by registering to this course, you certify that you possess the prerequisite knowledge that is requested to be able to follow this course. The instructor will not teach again these prerequisite items. If you doubt whether you possess that knowledge to a sufficient extent, we suggest you contact the instructor before you proceed to your registration.*

The course does not discuss basics of regression analysis, QCA, case studies, process tracing, or any other method one might use in multi-method research. Participants are expected to have acquired skills on these methods when taking this course because it specifically focuses on how to combine them. (If you need more preparation, the ECPR Summer School and Winter School offer courses on each of these methods.)

**Short course outline**

This course deals with multi-method research (MMR) as it is currently developed in political science and sociology (e.g., Lieberman's nested analysis). The course builds on this development and focuses on the combination of case studies and process tracing with a large-n method and *Qualitative Comparative Analysis* (QCA) and regression analysis in particular. The relative emphasis we put on statistical methods and QCA depend on what methods the participants are applying in their own research. Participants combining case studies with another method such as social network analysis or experiments are also welcome.

The goal of the course is to understand the different varieties in which MMR can be done. We discuss the unique advantages and methodological and practical challenges confronted in implementing

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<sup>1</sup> *Disclaimer: the information contained in this course description form may be subject to subsequent adaptations (e.g. taking into account new developments in the field, specific participant demands, group size etc.). Registered participants will be informed in due time in case of adaptations.*

multi-method designs. Topics include concepts in the small-n and the large-n analysis, case selection for process tracing, and the compatibility of theoretical expectations and inferences on causal effects and causal mechanisms. Method-centered discussions are illustrated with examples from different fields of political science.

At the end of the course, participants are able to realize their own MMR in a systematic manner and to critically evaluate published multi-method analyses.

### **Long course outline**

Although mixed-method research is an enduring topic in the social sciences (e.g., Creswell and Piano 2011), multi-method research (MMR) more narrowly is a relatively new topic in the “US methods debate”. After longstanding antagonistic discussions about the pros and cons of small-n and large-n methods, we now find a growing consensus that each method has its distinct advantages and that they work best in combination with each other. This course builds on the debate about MMR and focuses on its unique advantages and challenges for empirical researchers seeking to combine two (or more) methods.

On *day 1*, we discuss different varieties of MMR. As regards the large-n method, the focus rests on regression analysis and *Qualitative Comparative Analysis* (QCA) as, arguably, the most widely applied cross-case methods in MMR (emphasis on both cross-case methods depends on the method the course participants are implementing). The relative emphasis we put on statistical methods and QCA depend on what methods the participants are applying in their own research. First, the process of making an informed choice between regression analysis and QCA is explained. In addition, we discuss the conditions under which it is better to begin with case studies and utilize the large-n method afterwards, and when it is better to apply the large-n technique first and process tracing second. Furthermore, we have a brief discussion of fundamental terms such as causal effects and causal mechanisms and levels of analysis because these are fundamental to MMR.

On *day 2*, we begin with a reflection on concepts and concept formation in MMR. The session is based on two interrelated claims one finds in the literature. First, it is argued that concepts are thin in large-n and thick in small-n research. Second, it is claimed that this discrepancy creates problems of conceptual stretching undermining causal inference in MMR. We elaborate on whether these assertions are warranted and, to the extent that they are accurate, how concept formation can be improved in MMR. This session utilizes data from studies by Lieberman (2003) and Schultz (2001).

The topic of *day 3* is case selection on the basis of results derived from the large-n analysis. First, it is shown that case selection strategies differ depending on whether one is running a regression analysis or QCA, which is due to their anchorage in the ideas of symmetric and asymmetric causation. Building on this insight, we expand on the identification and choice of different types of cases – e.g., typical and deviant cases – on the basis of regression and QCA results. Following Fearon and Laitin’s (2008) plea for random case selection for process tracing, we further consider the pros and cons of intentional vs. random case selection. In relation with this point, we discuss the role of causal homogeneity assumptions for case selection and how different selection strategies reflect different degrees of belief in the similarity of cases. This session utilizes data by Lange (2009) and Ziblatt (2009).

On *day 4*, the course turns to what can be called *causal consistency* or *causal coherence*. This means that one’s theoretical expectations as regards the large-n results and process tracing insights should fit with each other. Similarly, the inferences that one derives from large-n and small-n analyses should be coherent. For example, a lack of fit occurs when process tracing leads to the conclusion that multiple factors work in conjunction, while the regression analysis models the effect of covariates as independent from each other. We discuss several sources and manifestations of inconsistency, strategies for achieving coherence in the specification of observable implications related to causal effects and causal mechanisms, and raise the awareness for making consistent

causal inferences on effects and mechanisms. This session utilizes data by Howard and Roessler (2006).

The final day, *day 5*, considers generalization in MMR. Generalization is rarely considered for the large-n method – regression analysis and QCA alike – but we also spend some time considering the generalization of large-n results. The main focus lies on the generalization of the inferences generated via process tracing. According to a common line of reasoning, generalization of case study inferences is only possible under conditions that are difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile with MMR. Running counter to this, we discuss a statistical procedure for generalizing process tracing inferences and detail the conditions under which it is applicable.

Participants are given small assignments due the next day that will be discussed at the beginning of each section. The assignments all deal with MMR studies published in journals or books. Participants at a more advanced stage of their MMR are invited to bring their large-n data with them in order to discuss specific issues in Vienna and to immediately attempt to implement the lessons learned in the course.

#### References:

- Creswell, John W. and Vicki L. Plano Clark (2011): *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Fearon, James D. and David Laitin (2008): Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods. Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M., Henry Brady and David Collier (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 756-776.
- Howard, Marc M. and Philip G. Roessler (2006): Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes. *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (2): 365-381.
- Lange, Matthew (2009): *Lineages of Despotism and Development: British Colonialism and State Power*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lieberman, Evan S. (2003): *Race and Regionalism in the Politics of Taxation in Brazil and South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schultz, Kenneth A. (2001): *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*. Cambridge Cambridge University Press.
- Ziblatt, Daniel (2009): Shaping Democratic Practice and the Causes of Electoral Fraud: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Germany. *American Political Science Review* 103 (1): 1-21.

#### **Day-to-day schedule (Monday 16 February to Friday 20 February)**

	<b>Topic(s)</b>	<b>Details [NB : incl. timing of lecture v/s lab or fieldwork etc. hours]</b>
Day 1	General introduction to the topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overview of course schedule</li> <li>- Course goals</li> <li>- Varieties of multi-method research (MMR)</li> <li>- Theories of causation and MMR</li> </ul>
Day 2	Concepts and concept formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thin and thick concepts</li> <li>- Risks of conceptual stretching</li> <li>- Conceptual consistency in MMR</li> </ul>
Day 3	Case selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying types of cases (e.g. typical case) on the basis of large-n method</li> <li>- Causal homogeneity and case selection</li> <li>- Intentional vs. random case selection</li> </ul>
Day 4	Theory building & causal inference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coherence of observable implications for large-n and small-n analysis</li> <li>- Consistency of large-n and small-n</li> </ul>

		inferences in MMR
Day 5	Generalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generalization of large-n inferences</li> <li>- Problems of generalizing small-n inferences</li> <li>- A Procedure for small-n generalization</li> </ul>

### Day-to-day reading list

<b>Readings (please read at least the compulsory reading for the scheduled day)</b>		
Day 1	<p><b>Compulsory</b> Lieberman, Evan S. (2005): Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research. <i>American Political Science Review</i> 99 (3): 435-452.</p> <p><b>Voluntary</b> Rohlfing, Ingo (2008): What You See and What You Get: Pitfalls and Principles of Nested Analysis in Comparative Research. <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> 41 (11): 1492-1514.</p>	
Day 2	<p><b>Compulsory</b> Coppedge, Michael (1999): Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories - Combining Large N and Small in Comparative Politics. <i>Comparative Politics</i> 31 (4): 465-476. Ahram, Ariel I. (2013): Concepts and Measurement in Multimethod Research. <i>Political Research Quarterly</i> 66 (2): 280-291.</p> <p><b>Voluntary</b> Sartori, Giovanni (1970): Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics. <i>American Political Science Review</i> 64 (4): 1033-1053. Collier, David and James E. Mahon (1993): Conceptual Stretching Revisited - Adapting Categories in Comparative-Analysis. <i>American Political Science Review</i> 87 (4): 845-855.</p>	
Day 3	<p><b>Compulsory</b> Seawright, Jason and John Gerring (2008): Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options. <i>Political Research Quarterly</i> 61 (2): 294-308. Schneider, Carsten Q. and Ingo Rohlfing (2013): Combining QCA and Process Tracing in Set-Theoretic Multi-Method Research. <i>Sociological Methods &amp; Research</i> 42 (4): 559-597</p> <p><b>Voluntary</b> Rohlfing, Ingo and Carsten Q. Schneider (2013): Improving necessary condition research: Formalized case selection for process tracing after QCA. <i>Political Research Quarterly</i> 66 (1): 220-235.</p>	
Day 4	<p><b>Compulsory</b> Howard, Marc M. and Philip G. Roessler (2006): Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 50 (2): 365-381. Lange, Matthew (2009): <i>Lineages of Despotism and Development: British Colonialism and State Power</i>. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: chap. 1.</p>	
Day 5	<p><b>Compulsory</b> Lieberman, Stanley (1991): Small Ns and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases. <i>Social Forces</i> 70 (2): 307-320. Kühn, David and Ingo Rohlfing (2010): Causal Explanation and Multi-Method Research in the Social Sciences. <i>IPSA Committee on Concepts and Methods, Working Paper Series Political Methodology, no. 26</i>.</p>	

**Software and hardware requirements**

None. (I will use Stata and can give my syntax to the participants. But we will not all use software in class.)

**Literature**

A useful introduction to mixed-methods research in a broader sense and it is mostly practiced outside of political science is:

Creswell, John W. and Vicki L. Plano Clark (2011): *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

**Lecture room requirement**

Classical lecture style is fine with me.

**Preferred time slots**

No preference

**Other recommended courses (before or after this course)**

**Before this course:**

	<b>Course title</b>	<b>Summer School</b>	<b>Winter School</b>
1	Multivariate regression	X	
2	QCA	X	
3	Case study research	X	
4	Process tracing	X	
5			

**After this course:**

	<b>Course title</b>	<b>Summer School</b>	<b>Winter School</b>
1	QCA (depends on what Carsten Q. Schneider is teaching in this course, but it should be appropriate)		X
2			
3			
4			
5			