

SB 101. INTRODUCTION TO HISTORICAL METHODS

ECPR Summer School, 5 August - 9 August 2019
Central European University, Budapest

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course offers a methodologically pluralist introduction to historical methods for social scientists. The goal of the course is to enable students who are (or are interested in) doing social science research that engages the past to:

- Situate their interest in, and approach to, historical methods in relation to both classic debates and alternative contemporary research programs
- Articulate and justify key methodological assumptions of their own approach to the past
- Undertake historical research with greater clarity and confidence as to what they are and should be doing (and, as importantly, are not and need not be doing)

Ever since the language of “historical method” first came to be deployed by scholars during the mid-19th century, it has been used to identify, valorize, discipline, and contest multiple, diverse, and at times directly competing, research practices and traditions. During our first class session we explore the classic roots of recurrent methodological cleavages over such issues as the uses / limits of cross-societal comparison, and the pros / cons of making inferences about the beliefs of historical agents. Divergent approaches to these and other classic issues continue to differentiate alternative research programs—all self-avowedly historical—within the social sciences today.

Each of the following four days focuses on a contemporary research program, ranging widely from the new institutional economic history, to comparative historical analysis and historical institutionalism, process tracing, and interpretive historical sociology. As we examine and move across these research programs we follow inter-disciplinary connections and contests to treat scholarship by economists, political scientists, and sociologists. In our readings we engage both with works of meta-reflection on the substantive and methodological orientation of each program, and examples of historical work, in order to examine and tease apart the preaching and the actual research practices of each program.

Our course sessions will be seminars in which I provide a framing outline and remarks, but the bulk of class time is devoted to active discussion. The goal of these sessions is not only to help students identify and understand the premises, preaching, and practices of diverse contemporary research programs in historical social science, but also to spur students to identify and articulate the particular kind of historical method that most engages them and how this could (and should) inform their own research.

REQUIREMENTS FOR EARNING ECTS CREDITS

If you want to earn ECTS credits, you must inform the instructor on the first day of the course when you sign the attendance sheet.

Students may earn 2 ECTS credits (graded pass/fail). Earning a pass requires completion of all readings prior to class, attendance of all course sessions, and participation in seminar discussion.

Students seeking 3 ECTS credits (graded on A-F scale) are required to complete the additional task of writing memos to be posted to the course website to help set the stage for our seminar discussions on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Friday. The deadline for posts is 8.00 pm the evening *before* the relevant material will be discussed. Students will write two memos.

- One *reading memo* (max 250 words) in which they engage readings for the next day: for example, by flagging confusing points they would like clarified; raising questions about the claims, premises, or practices of a reading; and/or comparing/contrasting readings.
- One *research memo* (max 500 words) exploring how the historical research program that most interests them relates to research of their own they have or might undertake.

Students seeking 4 ECTS credit (graded on 1-5 scale) are required to also develop their research memo into a final take-home paper (max 2500 words) in which they frame a research project of their own in relation to one (or more) of the research programs surveyed in the course. This essay is due on Monday August 19, and should be emailed to the instructor at adcock@american.edu as an attachment (.doc, .docx, or .pdf).

READINGS

There is much often challenging reading, and students should **access all** of it, and **read as much** of it as possible (ideally all of it) **before** coming to the Summer School. Students will gain the most from the course and our discussions if, while in Bamberg, they are re-reading material for review while preparing for class, rather than only encountering most of it for the first time then.

The bulk of the readings are available electronically via the course website. I expect that many of you will also find it as (or indeed more) easy to access the readings using your home institution's electronic subscriptions. To that end I provide full citation information for each of the readings in the schedule below. If you have trouble finding/accessing any reading then please email me at adcock@american.edu and let me know so we can arrange access for you.

One book from which more is assigned than copyright law allows to be shared electronically is Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Business, 2012). You will therefore find that only some of the assigned pages from the text are on the course website. Please acquire a copy for your use of this widely available and reasonably priced trade paperback (ISBN 9780307719225).

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Monday August 5 **Historical Methods: The Classic Roots of Recurrent Cleavages**

On day one we begin by reviewing the central role “historical method” played in crystallizing positivism as both a philosophy of history and a social science methodology. Readings from Comte and JS Mill showcase: 1) their advocacy of a historical method that would study macro-societal change over time, 2) their divergence over if/how macro-level social change should be related to individual psychology. We transition between the two sessions of the day with selections illustrating how proponents of a self-avowedly “scientific” history came, in turn, to discuss method. In closing, we take up Durkheim and debates he engaged in that highlight cleavages between views of historical method that continue to be contested across traditions of historical social science down to this day.

Session 1. History, Science, and Method in the mid-19th Century (09:00-10:30)

Auguste Comte, “The Positive Philosophy and the Study of Society” in *Theories of History*, ed. Patrick Gardiner (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959), 73-79.

Auguste Comte, Additional selections from *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, trans. Harriet Martineau (New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1858), 473-85. Note: This book is out of copyright. Download at <https://books.google.com/books?id=ISbXAAAAMAAJ>

John Stuart Mill, “Elucidations of the Science of History,” in *Theories of History*, ed. Patrick Gardiner (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959), 82-105.

Session 2. Competing Views of Historical Method in the French Academy (11:00-12:30)

Fustel de Coulanges, Selections, in *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*, ed. Fritz Stern (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 178-90.

Charles-Victor Langlois, and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction to the Study of History*, trans. G. G. Berry (New York: Holt, 1903), 1-3, 17, 63-70, 211, 217-24, 245-49, 316-21. Note: This book is out of copyright. Download at <https://books.google.com/books?id=uEdj8z6hFdYC>

Selections from Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method*, ed. Steven Lukes (New York: Free Press, 1982)

- Durkheim and Fauconnet, “Sociology and the Social Sciences” (1903), 175-76, 194-202.
 - Durkheim, “The Method of Sociology” (1908), 245-47.
 - Durkheim, Seignobos, and others, “Debate on Explanation in History and Sociology” (1908), 211-28.
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Tuesday August 6

New Institutional Economic History

On day two we shift focus to recent decades and begin our survey of contemporary research programs with the new institutional economic history as developed by the Noble-Prize winning economist Douglass North, and prominent recently in the academic and popular works of Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson. In examining the development of this research program, we will also be charting its connection to rational choice scholarship in political science.

Session 1. The Development of New Institutional Economic History (09:00-10:30)

Johan Myhrman, and Barry R. Weingast, "Douglass C. North's Contributions to Economics and Economic History," *Scandinavian Journal of Economics and Economic History* 96, no. 2 (1994): 185-93.

Douglass C. North, and Barry R. Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England," *The Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 4 (1989): 803-32.

Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson, "Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 117, no. 4 (2002): 1231-94. [Read closely 1231-37, 1244-52, 1256-79]

Session 2. Why Nations Fail (11:00-12:30)

Daron Acemoglu, and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown Business, 2012): Preface, chap. 1, chap. 3 (p. 70-87), chap. 4, chap. 15 (p. 428-46).

Wednesday August 7 Comparative Historical Analysis and Historical Institutionalism

On day three we consider the primarily qualitative research program of comparative historical analysis. This program stressing macro-societal comparison developed initially in sociology as one current within a broader upswing of historical sociology. We examine the methodological statements and practices of the program as it came to frame itself as "comparative historical analysis," and as it found its disciplinary home increasingly in political science, where it became interwoven with political science's internally developed agenda of "historical institutionalism".

Session 1. From Comparative History to Comparative Historical Analysis (09:00-10:30)

Theda Skocpol, and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (1980): 174-97.

James Mahoney, "Nominal, Ordinal, and Narrative Appraisal in Macrocausal Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 4 (1999): 1154-96. [Read closely 1154-69, 1188-93]

James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "Comparative Historical Analysis: Achievements and Agendas, in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chap. 1.

Session 2. Historical Institutionalism (11:00-12:30)

Robert Adcock, Mark Bevir, & Shannon C. Stimson, “Historicizing the New Institutionalism(s),” in *Modern Political Science: Anglo-American Exchanges since 1880*, eds. Adcock, Bevir, and Stimson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2007), chap. 12 (p. 259-62, 276-81).

Giovanni Capoccia, “Critical Junctures,” in *Oxford Handbook of Historical Institutionalism*, eds. Orfeo Fioretos, Tulia G. Falleti, & Adam Sheingate (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 2015), chap. 5.

Thomas Ertman, “The Great Reform Act of 1832 and British Democratization,” *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 8/9 (2010): 1000-1022.

Thursday August 8

Process-Tracing and International History

The belief that critical use of sources provides the essential evidentiary basis for a “scientific” study of the past is today perhaps most evident beyond the discipline of history (which has, in recent decades, left behind much of its earlier scientific self-identity). Far from disappearing, however, this methodological concern is prominent in contemporary social science in connection with the research method of process tracing. Process-tracing is, moreover, used especially often in studying the kinds of political and diplomatic actors and events often central to traditional history. On Day Four we join the Advanced Process-Tracing Methods course in an exercise critically analyzing sources for an international history case.

Note: Sessions today held jointly with SB103 Process Tracing Methodology in Practice

Andrew Bennett, “Process-Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, eds. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 702-21.

Derek Beach, and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. Draft chapter 6 from forthcoming second edition. [Read 6.1 through 6.5]

Course packet on Cuban Missile Crisis

Friday August 9

Interpretive Historical Sociology

As the macro-causal analysis strand of historical sociology that became comparative historical analysis increasingly gravitated into political science, in sociology recent decades saw historical scholars creatively pursue an array of new trends. In this final day we review these changes in historical sociology, with a specific focus on the development of what may be called interpretive historical sociology through the cultural turn and its extensions to domains such as race, gender, and colonialism.

Session 1. Social Theory, Historical Sociology, and the Cultural Turn (09:00-10:30)

Julia Adams, Elisabeth S. Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff, “Social Theory, Modernity, and the Three Waves of Historical Sociology,” in *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History, and Sociology*, eds. Adams, Clemens, and Orloff (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005), 1-45.

William H. Sewell, Jr., "Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille," *Theory and Society* 25, no. 6 (1996): 841-81.

Session 2. Race, Gender, and Colonialism (11:00-12:30)

Adams, Clemens, and Orloff, "Social Theory, Modernity, and the Three Waves of Historical Sociology," 45-69.

Ann Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 3 (1992): 514-51.