Advanced Qualitative Methods in Conflict Studies: Case Research and Process Analytics

A Doctoral Course within the University of Oslo, NTNU and PRIO
Research School on Peace & Conflict

Overview: This seminar provides an in-depth introduction to case-based methods and process analytics. We begin with some preliminaries (epistemology, ethics, transparency) and then survey key methods, including case studies, case selection and several techniques designed to capture process. The latter include interviewing, practice analytics and process tracing. Whenever possible, students will be introduced to both the positivist and interpretive variants of particular methods.

In the course's second part, we move from the conceptual to the applied, examining case and process methods in action - in conflict zones and post-conflict settings. Epistemology, ethics, measurement and data-access/transparency are key themes throughout. The fundamental goal is for students to acquire sufficient knowledge to be smart, epistemologically plural and rigorous users of case-based research in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Credits: 10 ECTS.

Requirements: There are two mandatory requirements; two others are optional.

Mandatory

1) Active Participation in Class Discussions: The course will be run as a seminar, where debate and discussion are the norm; for each session, written discussion questions will serve as our starting point. For this format to be successful, students need to read the seminar readings prior to our first meeting on 20 August.

2) Preparation of Discussion Points: For each class session, students should prepare a brief list of discussion questions and comments (3-5 in number); these should be based on the readings and will be distributed to all other seminar participants. (Please make sufficient copies for distribution!) Your questions/comments should reflect a critical assessment of those readings. What are their strong and weak points? Their meta-theoretical, theoretical, methodological, ethical, empirical contributions/limitations? How do they relate to or build upon other readings or discussions?

Optional

1) Completion of an Analytic Essay: If students wish to receive ECTS credit for the course, they must submit an analytic essay. You have two options. (I) Prepare an analytic review on a topic
that is of special interest and is consistent with the course's purpose and theme; or (II) prepare a draft research design for a PhD project where qualitative methods and process analytics play some role. In either case, essays should be 6000-10000 words and are due by 30 November 2018. On the first day of class – Monday, 20 August - students should provide the instructor with a 1-2 page introduction to their proposed essay. These overviews will then be discussed at one-on-one meetings on the morning of Wednesday, 22 August, 0900 - 1200, when there will be no formal class sessions.

2) Participation in Half-Day Workshop: On the afternoon of Wednesday, 22 August, 1315 - 1630, students will have the opportunity to attend a half-day workshop, where, in a hands-on, group setting they will apply the case/process literature to their own PhD projects.

The workshop – while not required – is open to all course participants. If you wish to have your dissertation project and its methods discussed at the workshop you need to submit a 3-5 page overview by Monday, 20 August. The overview should explain/justify your choice of methods and the practical/data-related/ethical challenges you are encountering as you seek to operationalize them.

Readings: The following six paperback books should be purchased.*


Students should be able to access most other assigned reading – especially journal articles - through their local libraries. A selection of hard-to-get readings (single chapters in books, contributions to newsletters) will be made available via a course Dropbox by early August.

* For those not wishing to purchase the Bennett/Checkel volume, a pdf copy of it will be made available via the course Dropbox in early August.
**Syllabus and Class Schedule**

**Day #1: Monday, 20 August**

**Session I (0900 – 1100): The Preliminaries – Epistemology, Ethics, Transparency**

**Epistemology**


**Ethics**


Cronin-Furman, Kate and Milli Lake, “Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* (Forthcoming in 2018; [First View](#)).

**Transparency**


**Session II (1100 – 1200, 1315 - 1430): Case Studies – Background and Method**


Session III (1430 – 1630): Capturing Process – The Role of Interviewing


**Day #2: Tuesday, 21 August**


Adler, Emanuel and Vincent Pouliot, “Fulfilling the Promises of Practice Theory in IR.” *ISQ Online* (14 December 2015).


Session V (1315 - 1630): Capturing Process – Using Process Tracing to Bring It All Together


**Day #3: Wednesday, 22 August**

Session VI (0900 - 1200): Individual Meetings on Course Essays

Session VII (1315 - 1630): Workshop – Methods in Action (Optional)

**Day #4: Thursday, 23 August**

Session VIII (0900 - 1200): Case Methods and Conflict Studies - Cohen

**Session IX (1315 - 1630): Case Methods and Conflict Studies - Autesserre**


**Day #5: Friday, 24 August**

**Session X (0900 - 1200): Case Methods and Conflict Studies – Straus**