Overview: This two-day, intensive seminar introduces students to a key method – process tracing - used in much qualitative research. It you read a case study, it is likely that – implicitly or explicitly – the author is using process tracing both to collect data and draw inferences from it.

The seminar proceeds in three parts. We begin - Sessions I & II - with conceptual preliminaries. What is a causal mechanism? Why do we need a technique like process tracing to measure it? Most important, we discuss the underlying logic and best practices of process tracing. In Sessions III & IV, we address practical and operational issues, as applied to deductive and inductive variants of the method. Session V highlights the cutting edge, including the use of process tracing in mixed-method designs, the challenge of transparency and replication, and the debate over formalization. A final session (VI) is devoted to student questions about particular challenges in using process tracing.

Format & Requirements: The course will be run as a seminar, where debate and discussion are the norm. Written discussion questions will serve as the starting point for each session. For this format to be successful, students need to read the seminar readings prior to our first meeting on 15 December.

For each of the first five sessions (I – V), students should prepare 2-3 discussion questions and comments; these should be based on the readings and will be distributed to all other class participants. (Please make sufficient copies [20] for distribution.) Your questions/comments should reflect a critical assessment of those readings. What are their strong and weak points? What are their meta-theoretical, theoretical, methodological, empirical contributions?

Syllabus and Class Schedule

Day #1: Monday, 15 December

Session I (0900 – 1100): Qualitative Research - Bringing Mechanisms Back In


**Session III (1430 - 1630): Process Tracing in Action – Deductive, Theory-Testing Applications**


**Day #2: Tuesday, 16 December**

**Session IV (0900 - 1100): Process Tracing in Action – Inductive/Theory-Development and Interpretive Applications**


**Session V (1115 - 1315): Process Tracing – The Cutting Edge**


**Session VI (1430 – 1600): Q & A**

No reading; instead, students are encouraged to raise conceptual and practical issues they are encountering in utilizing process tracing in their own projects and research designs.