

Comparative / Historical Methods

A GRADUATE SEMINAR / DEPT OF SOCIOLOGY, RUTGERS, SPRING 2006
THURSDAYS, 1:10-3:50 PM, LUCY STONE HALL B256 (Livingston "Campus")

Professor: Böröcz József

jborocz@rutgers.edu

office hours: Wednesdays, 2-3pm at B207, LSH

This is a graduate reading and "hands-on" seminar on comparative-historical methods, geared toward the needs of advanced graduate students in sociology. There is, of course, no method without a theory, so this is, at least implicitly, a theory-intensive course.

There is thinking without comparing, so this material could be useful for all people who think (including sociologists). In sociology, as it is done in north America today, 'comparative-historical' is a label under which we tuck a very heterogeneous set of research practices that:

- use more than one "case" to address a substantive problem,
- address some aspect of social *change* instead of stagnancy,
- focus on places other than the U.S.,
- emphasize the connectedness of various geographically defined units of analysis, instead of separating them, including those that prefer thinking of such networks of connectedness as "systems", e.g., world-~, etc.;
- try to understand a social phenomenon anchored in a time point other than, or not only, "now,"
- see the present (or any other time) as connected, in meaningful ways, to the past, and
- various combinations of the above.

This course is appropriately heterogeneous. In it, we discuss readings and do a set of exercises designed to enhance your skills in the comparative-historical "area." The readings fall under the following types: (1) texts about various aspects of comparative-historical methods (research designs and techniques) and (2) examples as scholars employ those methods. The purpose of the class is gaining literacy, devising critique and inspiration. You are expected to:

- come to class fully prepared, with an active interest in comparative-historical sociology, an investigative curiosity and a mature intellectual agenda,
- contribute your unique perspective and experience to the discussions, and
- complete the exercises on time (no extensions).

Grading will be based on a judicious combination of the following factors and approximate weights:

class performance / contribution / constructiveness / creativity ☺	30%
Take-home exercise one (initial review of a comparative paper)	5%
Take-home exercise two (original historical source exercise)	15%
Take-home exercise three (comparative original historical source exercise)	20%
Take-home exercise four (your research design)	30%

SCHEDULE

6 Sept **Introduction: people, course and issues**

+ Film-in-class + discussion: Forgács Péter: 1998. *The Danube Exodus*. Hungarian, 61 min.

13 Sept **Invitation and critique**

Tilly, Charles. 1984. *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Arrighi, Giovanni. 2000. "Globalization Meets Historical Sociology." Pp. 117-33. in Janet Abu-Lughod (ed.) *Sociology for the Twenty-First Century. Continuities and Cutting Edges*. Chicago: University of Chicago press. OR: www.soc.jhu.edu/people/Arrighi/gaglobalppr.pdf

20 Sept **"Large-N" Models**

Böröcz, József. 1992. "Travel-Capitalism: The Structure of Europe and the Advent of the Tourist." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34,4:708-41. OR: pp. 23-52 in *Leisure Migration: A Sociological Study on Tourism*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Kentor, Jeffrey. 1998. "The Long_Term Effects of Foreign Investment Dependence on Economic Growth, 1940_1990." *American Journal of Sociology*, 103, 4(Jan):1024_1046.

Bornschiefer, Volker & Christopher K. Chase-Dunn. 1978. "Cross-national Evidence of the Effects of Foreign Investment and Aid on Economic Growth and Inequality: A Survey of Findings and a Reanalysis." *American Journal of Sociology*, 84(3):651-83.

Böröcz József. 2005. "Redistributing Global Inequality: A Thought Experiment." *Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai, India), 26 February. Online at <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~jborocz/redistributing.epw.pdf>

27 Sept **"Small-N" Comparative Work & The Negative Case**

Skocpol, Theda. 1979. "State and Revolution: Old Regimes and Revolutionary Crises in France, Russia and China." *Theory & Society*, 7, 1_2(Jan_Mar):7_95.

Ertman, Thomas. 1997. *Birth of the Leviathan. Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. ONLY the

Introduction (pp. 1-34) and Conclusion (pp. 317-24).

Burawoy, Michael. 1989. "Two Methods in Search of Science. Skocpol versus Trotsky." *Theory & Society*, 18:759-805.

Emigh, Rebeca. 1997. "The Power of Negative Thinking: The Use of Negative Case Methodology in the Development of Sociological Theory." *Theory & Society*, 26, 5(Oct):649_684.

Emigh, Rebeca. 1998. "The Mystery of the Missing Middle_Tenants: The 'Negative' Case of Fixed_Term Leasing and Agricultural Investment in Fifteenth_Century Tuscany." *Theory & Society*, 27, 3, June, 351_375.

4 Oct **Single-N "Stories"**

Adams, Julia. 1996. "Principals and Agents, Colonialists and Company Men: The Decay of Colonial Control in the Dutch East Indies." *American Sociological Review*, 61(Feb):12-28.

Markoff, John. 1988. "Allies and Opponents: Nobility and Third Estate in the Spring of 1789." *American Sociological Review*, 53(August):477-96.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1991. "A Comment on Epistemology: What is Africa?" Pp. 127-9 in *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms*. New York: Polity Press. OR: *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, XXII,2, 1988.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1991. "Does India Exist?" Pp. 130-4 in *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms*. New York: Polity Press.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1991. "Braudel on Capitalism, or Everything Upside Down." Pp. 207-17 in *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms*. New York: Polity Press. OR: *Journal of Modern History*, LXIII, 2, June, 1991.

11 Oct **World-Historical Evidence**

Böröcz József. "Global Economic Weight in the Longue Durée: Nemesis of West European Geopolitics." Online location TBA.

Böröcz József and Mahua Sarkar. 2005. "What Is the EU?" *International Sociology*, 20,2:153-73. OR: <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~jborocz/IS..pdf>

18 Oct **The Extended Case Method—How Far Can It Be Extended?**

Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory*, 16,1(March):4-33. OR:
http://sociology.berkeley.edu/faculty/BURAWOY/burawoy_pdf/The%20Extended%20Case%20Method.pdf

Eliasoph, Nina and Paul Lichterman. 1999. "We Begin with Our Favorite Theory . . .": Reconstructing the Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory*, 17,2(July):228-34.

Derluagian, Georgi. 2005. *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus. A World-System Biography*. University of Chicago Press.

25 Oct **Reflexivity : What is Reflected on What ?**

Bourdieu, Pierre and Loic J. D. Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. The University of Chicago Press.

Ghosh, Amitav. 2002 (1986). "The Imam and the Indian." Pp. 1-12 in *The Imam and the Indian. Prose Pieces by Amitav Ghosh*. Delhi: Ravi Dayal, Permanent Black.

1 Nov **Clues: Taking Advice from Sherlock Holmes and the Inquisition**

Ginzburg, Carlo. 1989(1986). "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm." Pp.96-125 in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*. Translated by John and Anne C. Tedeschi. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ginzburg, Carlo. 1989(1986). "The Inquisitor as Anthropologist." Pp. 156-64. in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*. Translated by John and Anne C. Tedeschi. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Böröcz József. 2005. "Goodness Is Elsewhere: The Rule of European Difference." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 48,1,(January):110-38. OR:
<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~jborocz/zamoly.cssh.pdf>

Recommended:

Ginzburg, Carlo. 1999. *The Judge and the Historian. Marginal Notes on a Late-Twentieth-Century Miscarriage of Justice*. Translated by Anthony Shugar. London: Verso.

8 Nov **Experience & Oral History**

Scott, Joan W. "Evidence of Experience." Pp. 379-407 in Terrence J. McDonald (ed.) *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press.

Sarkar, Mahua. 2006. "Difference in Memory." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 48,1:.

Passerini, Louisa. 1998. "Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism." Pp. 53-62 in Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge.

Portelli, Alessandro. 1998. "What Makes Oral History Different." Pp. 63-74 in Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge.

15 Nov **Interpretation**

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Deep Play. Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." Pp. 412-54. in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example." Pp. 142-69. in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Esposito, Elena. 1996. "Observing Interpretation: A Sociological View of Hermeneutics." *MLN—Modern Language Notes*. 111:593-619.

20 Nov **Denial of Coevalness**

Tuesday

!!

NOTE

DATE

CHAN

GE!

Fabian, Johannes. 1983. *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.

29 Nov **In-Class Exercise 1**

Object TBA

6 Dec **In-Class Exercise 2**

Object TBA

Take-Home Exercises:

Exercise 1: **Review of a Comparative Paper**

1:

due in
class on

20 Sept

Imagine that you have just been asked by a very methodology-conscious editor of a comparative-historical sociology journal to review a paper. Choose a paper from the last ten years' volumes of one of the following journals: /1/ *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, /2/ *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* or /3/ the *Journal of World-System Research* (<http://jwsr.ucr.edu/index.php>) and write a mock review of it. The review should

- discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the comparative-historical strategy employed by the author,
- suggest possible improvements, and
- be no longer than 300 words.

There is no need for you to go into details regarding specific points, assertions, conjectures, etc. made in the paper: all you need to focus on is the relationship between the main purpose of the paper and the comparative design that is there to substantiate it.

Exercise 2: **Analysis of a Primary Document¹**

2:

due in
class on

18 Oct

The purpose of this exercise is to give you some experience in the kind of interpretive work that historians and even some brave historical sociologists do with “primary sources.” For this assignment, we will use an old book, *A Satchel Guide for the Vacation Tourist in Europe*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912. Study it carefully. (And *handle it carefully* as it is a rare book.)²

Prepare a 1200-to-2000-word discussion, focussing on how the document was prepared, the nature of its contents, its strengths and weaknesses as an historical source, possible errors of commission or omission contained in the document, and the ways in which the information contained in it might be useful for answering sociologically relevant questions. In preparing to write, you might want to think about some of the following issues:

- Who composed the document, and why? Why has it survived and have any changes been introduced over the years? What methods appear to have been used to acquire the information contained in the document?
- What are some of the biases in the document and how might you go about checking them or correcting for them? Was there a time lapse between the writing and the publication of the document? How reliable or dispassionate was the person who wrote the document? Under what institutional constraints or routines was he or she probably operating, and how might these have affected the document?
- Evaluate the possible uses of the document as (1) a direct report about the past and (2) an index of institutional activities or cultural outlooks. What role did etiquette, convention, and custom play in the composition of the document?

- Are there any contradictions within the document, or with otherwise known facts, that might lead you to question the credibility of pieces of information contained in it? What other kinds of documents or sources of evidence might you consult to correct biases, check inaccuracies, or provide further evidence on issues connected with the document? If you relied solely upon advice contained in the document, how might your vision of the past be distorted?
- What are the key categories and concepts used by the writer(s) to organize the ideas presented? What are the selectivities or silences that result from these categories of thought?
- Identify some questions in historical social science that this document might help to answer. With what methods of analysis could one use this document (and perhaps others like it) to address those questions in a reliable and valid way? Are there questions for which this document might seem appropriate, but where, in fact, it could an investigator astray?

Exercise 3 *Comparative Analysis of Primary Documents*

due in class on 8 Nov Choose a contemporary item to serve as a comparative counterpart to the document used in Exercise Two. Keeping in mind the considerations developed with respect to the item in Exercise Two, sketch a 1200-2000 word comparative analysis of the two explaining

- the most important facts that make the two documents comparable,
- the most significant ways in which they differ from each other, and
- what sociological inference you derive from those observations.

Exercise 4: **Your Own Research Design**

Due in class on 6 Dec Devise a research design (between 2000 and 3000 words) that addresses a substantive problem of your choosing that calls for a comparative and/or historical research strategy. Elaborate the research puzzle, argue the way in which you can ascertain answers to the puzzle by considering a selection of cases, periods, etc. Make sure the design is within the realm of the possible (imagine that you will have a chance to obtain some funding, but no more than \$ 15,000.00 for a year, to do this research). Of course you will not have to do the research itself (unless you really insist. ☺)

¹ This is an adaptation of an exercise developed by Ronald Aminzade (Univ.of Minnesota), reported by Theda Skocpol (Harvard) in an ASA publication on syllabi for courses on comparative-historical sociology.

² If you wish to consult further sources on primary sources, look up the readings recommended in the annotated bibliography at the end of Skocpol's *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, especially those by Bailey (1978), Cantor and Schneider (1967); Clubb and Scheuch (1980), Davidson and Lytle (1982), Fogel (1982) and Shafer (1974). Extra reading is not necessary, however. Careful attention to the document is more important.