“And thus I proceeded boldly to the completion of my work, being convinced that when an investigator has made researches of some extent in authentic records, with an earnest spirit and a genuine desire for truth, though future discoveries may indeed determine certain details more precisely, they can only strengthen his fundamental conception. For Truth can be but One.” (Leopold von Ranke, History of Germany in the Reformation, 1839)

Leopold von Ranke famously said that the historian’s task was to determine “what actually happened.” Few historians today believe they are impartial investigators. But it was Ranke’s generation of “objective” historians who turned ad fontes (“to the sources”) and established the methodological standards of primary source analysis. Social scientists do not need to work like historians in order to do good historical work, but they cannot ignore these standards either and enter—or invade—historians’ territory “just” looking for “the data.” This seminar, therefore, provides an introduction to the historian’s toolkit and historical analysis in the social sciences.

The sessions will pair up substantive works and primary sources with methodological topics, e.g. how historians and social scientists think about temporality and causality, what kinds of questions can benefit from a historical approach, the research process, archival research, historical source criticism, case studies, comparative research designs, process tracing, counterfactual analysis, and multi-method approaches. We will also address the challenges in this kind of research, such as the ever-present tension between historically specific arguments and causal generalization, types and levels of bias, evidentiary satisfaction in archival research, the identification of the effects of interests, ideas, and culture, historical (mis-)interpretation, transparency and replication, and research ethics and cases of “bad practice.”

Requirements

The course grade will be based on: seminar participation (40%), a short methods paper (15%), and a final paper based on original historical research (45%).

1. Participation: Seminars live and die by the quality of discussion. You are expected to complete the assigned readings, to contribute when we review and practice the methods and tools covered, and to read and discuss the methods papers (see 2.).
2. **Methodological analysis:** Contribute one short (less than 2,000 words) analysis applying a method or analytical approach covered that week (and, if appropriate, previous weeks). For example, this can be an analysis of authorship for a quantitative dataset that interests you, an outline of two different study designs for a hypothetical project, a mini-study using process tracing, a historical source criticism, or a report on a small archival research project. I will usually ask you to address a specific problem, but I am of course open to suggestions.

Your analysis should be concise and clearly structured. Consider using lists, tables, charts, or an Appendix if you have additional material. Email your paper to everyone and save it in the seminar Dropbox folder by **Tuesday 6 pm**.

Please email me your top five preferences for weeks/topics once you have finalized your schedule.

3. **Final paper:** The paper should be historical and work with primary sources, e.g., a qualitative or quantitative archival project, a source criticism, a comparative-historical analysis, a case study, or an application of historical and archival methods in political philosophy (e.g., working with manuscript collections and personal papers, or a project on the history of ideas). The paper should clearly state the topic and question, explain the research design and methods, and propose and demonstrate an argument.

An initial outline with the topic, research question(s) and methods is due by **November 18, 6 pm** by email to all. We will discuss the projects when we meet on November 19. The second outline is due **December 2, 6 pm**, with another round of feedback on December 3. The deadline for the final paper is **December 18**.

**Readings and Weekly Schedule**

The following books will be on reserve at CSSSI. Please note: (1) * Required readings are marked with an asterisk. (2) ** If we are reading only part of the book and the assigned pages are available as PDFs, the item is marked with two asterisks. Look for it either on e-Reserves, the “Resources” folder on classes, or the seminar Dropbox folder. (3) *** Three asterisks indicate that the item is required and the library has it as an e-book.


All other required (and most of the recommended) readings can be accessed through *Course Reserves*, the Resources folder on *classes*, or the seminar’s Dropbox folder.

1 Aug. 27. Introduction

2 Sept. 3. The historical turn in political science: Payoffs, pitfalls, and promise. The Kreuzer – Cusack/Iversen/Soskice controversy on the origins of electoral systems.

Recommended


Recommended


Recommended

- Thelen, Kathleen. 2004. *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Skim the shadow cases; focus on the argument and how it plays out in Germany and Britain]

Sept. 24. Skocpol’s *Social Revolutions.* Study design, selection bias and omitted variable bias in comparative historical research. Necessary and sufficient conditions.


**Recommended**


**Recommended**

− Woodberry, Robert D. 2012. “The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy.” *American Political Science Review*. 106 (2): 244-274. [See the online Appendices as well]

7 Oct. 8. Discovering questions, defining projects, finding and analyzing primary sources. Historical source criticism.


Recommended

8 Oct. 15. How archives work, and how to work in archives. Using online tools to prepare archival research, and access primary sources. Introduction to the key tools, and the U.S. National Archives & Presidential Libraries. Guest speaker: Melanie Maksin, Yale University Library.


Recommended
− Barrett, David M. 2012. “Rummaging Through the Attics of the CIA and Congress: How Archival Research Enabled Me to Write a Previously Untold Political History.” In Frisch et al., 223-238.
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9 Oct. 29. Same sources, contrary theories: The Goldhagen-Browning controversy
I. Identifying bias through source criticism: Author, audience, and the analyst. Time, place, and perspective.

- Primary sources:

Recommended
10 Nov. 5. Same sources, contrary theories II: *Ordinary Men* or *Ordinary Germans*? Adjudicating between Browning and Goldhagen using a different type of source: The British transcripts of bugged conversations between German POWs. What makes for good historical description? – Finding facts, source selection, scaling, and reordering time and space.


**Recommended**


11 Nov. 12. “For Truth can be but One”? Replication standards for analyzing primary sources. Interests and actors in the Swenson—Hacker/Pierson controversy about the origins of the welfare state.


**Primary sources:**


**Primary source:** National Association of Manufacturers, Eastern Division. 1965. *Public Affairs Report*. 89th Congress – 1st Session, No. 2. January 27, 1965. (If you have time, have a look at Swenson 2013 on this source)

**Recommended**


**Nov. 19. Comparative methods and counterfactual analysis. Lawrence’s Imperial Rule and the Politics of Nationalism.**


**Recommended**


13 Dec. 3. Building quantitative datasets from archival records. Guest speaker: Matthew Kocher, Department of Political Science

Recommended