RSS01.C6 Comparative Historical Analysis: Using History to Enrich Social Inquiry

Class 1:
Historical Thinking: Historians typically spend far more time than social scientists exploring and formulating their research questions. They emphasize the importance of historical thinking in this exploratory process. This class contrasts historical thinking to statistical thinking in terms of its unfreezing of history and geography, that is, its relaxing of conditional independence and unit homogeneity, the two defining elements of variance-based analysis. It shows how historical thinking opens the past as a vast terrain available to discover new inductive insights.

Class 2:
Varieties of Time: Recent CHA work has paid closer attention to various elements of time. This class explicates the temporal vocabulary that various scholars are using by differentiating between a historical notion of time, that pays close attention to dates, events and explores how the past is different from the present, and physical notion of time, that is more context independent and pays close attention to tempo, duration, timing, sequences, and stages.

Class 3:
Eventful Analysis. This strand unfreezes history and geography the most to explore and describe macro-historical phenomena and help update existing research questions. This class goes over the elements of historical description and conceptualization.

Class 4:
Longue Durée Analysis. This strand partially unfreezes history and geography to describe and explore longer-term historical process. It primarily uses time series data and a wide range of data visualizations to compare longitudinal and cross-sectional trends. This class introduces some of these visualization tools and discusses what elements of historical change they do and do not capture.

Class 5:
Macro-Causal Analysis. This strand pivots from describing historical processes to explaining them. It employs various theorizing strategies to incorporate inductive insights generated by eventful and longue durée analysis into existing theories. This class elaborates on Paul Pierson's brilliant time matrix to understand the temporal construction of theories and leveraging this insight to update theories.