

**IPSA Antalya Summer School 2026**  
**Case Study and Process Tracing**  
*Tentative Course Syllabus*

**Course Instructor:**

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**Course Description:**

This course examines the logic and practice of case study research, with a particular emphasis on process tracing in qualitative case studies. It introduces participants to the foundational premises of how to identify, test, and refine causal mechanisms operating in historical processes, with the broader goal of constructing valid, historically grounded causal arguments in their own research.

In a nutshell, a case study is an in-depth analysis of a bounded instance—a case—selected not for representativeness alone but for what it can reveal about a larger theoretical puzzle. Its value lies in its capacity to unpack complexity, trace processes over time, and generate or test causal claims that are historically and contextually situated. Process tracing, in turn, enables the researcher to make well-grounded causal inferences by uncovering the sequence and combination of mechanisms that shape variation in outcomes of interest.

The first part of the course covers the strengths and limitations of the case study method, different types of case studies, and strategies of case selection. The second part turns to the inferential logic of process tracing, focusing on its role in theory testing and theory building, with particular attention to counterfactual reasoning and the structure of causal tests.

By the end of the course, participants are expected to: (i) read, understand, and critically evaluate academic work that employs case study and process tracing methods; and (ii) design and carry out rigorous research using these methods, while also learning how to navigate common methodological and inferential challenges.

**Course Format:**

This is a five-day, intensive, and highly interactive course, designed for graduate students and early-career researchers seeking to deepen their understanding of qualitative methods. While no formal prerequisites are required, participants are expected to be familiar with basic concepts in social science methodology and to be engaged in their own research projects or proposals.

From Monday to Thursday, the first part of each day will be devoted to lectures introducing key concepts, methods, and debates. The second part will be organized around structured discussion, applied exercises, and reflection on the assigned readings, with particular attention to how these materials connect to participants' own research practice. Friday is reserved for a workshop session, where participants will have the opportunity to present their own work—whether a research proposal, a research design, or an ongoing project—and receive in-depth, constructive feedback from both the instructor and peers.

**Course Schedule:**

This course takes place via Zoom. The course hours indicated below are preliminary and may be adjusted depending on participants' availability; however, the day-to-day thematic structure of the course is expected to remain broadly the same. Sessions are currently planned to run from 13:00 (1:00 pm) to 19:30 (7:30 pm), including a 30-minute break. All course times refer to the Istanbul Time Zone (Turkish Standard Time – UTC +3).

1<sup>st</sup> Day (Monday):

- What is a case? What is a case study for?
- Strengths and limitations of case studies
- The logic of causal inference

2<sup>nd</sup> Day (Tuesday):

- Types of case study designs: single, comparative, nested
- Case selection techniques

3<sup>rd</sup> Day (Wednesday):

- Understanding Process Tracing: Its strengths and pitfalls
- Theory-testing and Theory-building: Evidence, causal mechanisms and tests

4<sup>th</sup> Day (Thursday):

- Counterfactual logic of causal reasoning and inference in case study and process tracing.

5<sup>th</sup> Day (Friday):

- Showcasing exemplary research using process tracing
- Workshop for Student Projects

**Core Readings:**

The core readings listed below provide the common basis for the course. Specific readings for each session will be circulated through Antalya Bilim University's LMS to registered participants in advance. Participants are expected to complete these readings before the course begins and to review the relevant readings before the corresponding session.

- Beach, D., & Pedersen, R. B. (2019). *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*, University of Michigan Press.
- Mahoney, J., & Barrenechea, R. (2019). "The logic of counterfactual analysis in case-study explanation." *The British journal of sociology*, 70(1): 306-38.
- Ricks, J. I., & Liu, A. H. (2018). "Process-tracing research designs: A practical guide". *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 51(4): 842-846.
- Gerring, J. (2017). *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge university Press.
- Mahoney, James. 2012. "The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences." *Sociological Methods & Research* 41(4):570-97.
- Seawright, J. and John Gerring. (2008). "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 294-308
- George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press.