Example question:

As Arendt Lijphart (1971) has said, comparative politics is the only field of politics specifically focused on methods. As a result, there are many different methods a researcher can use when selecting a research design. In this essay, I will outline the advantages and disadvantages of four types of research designs as well as give examples of each type of research in the field. The four types of research design are: 1) large-n statistical analysis, 2) a small number of deliberately chosen cases, 3) laboratory experiments, and 4) study of a single case. (2014 Fall)

Answer:

**Relation with theory:**

Curtice(2007): use comparative approach on opinion survey. Aim: study the circumstance’s influence on political behavior.

Anderson(2009): multi-source of political behavior(Micro: psychological; Macro:sociological)

Przeworski & Teune(1970): Aim: support causal effects. Rely on reliability and validity.

**Large-n:**

Strategy:

Advantage:

1. Jackman(1985): Share the same logic as other comparative methods, and can be a powerful tool
   1. Highly aggregate measures, appropriate when our substantive concern is with comparing nation states
   2. Can’t directly prove but a powerful aid to causal inference
   3. More readily replicated.
2. Curtice(2007): widen the range of contextual influences; contribute to within-country study by providing points of comparison that make it possible to assess the impact of aggregative level to individual level—bring the two levels together.
3. Przeworski & Teune(1970): cross-national study is quasi-experimental.
4. Collier(1993): push comparativists towards more systematic measurement and hypothesis testing.
5. Gerring(2007):
   1. Research: high external validity; can explore causal effects and broad but shallow propositions.
   2. Empirical: account for useful variation.

Disadvantage:

1. Przeworski & Teune(1970): Measurement error by questionnaire and sampling. Solutions could be high standard sampling (the broader the harder; contextual data should be involved.)
2. Lijphart(1975):
   1. Cannot lead to valid and carefully controlled empirically generalizations since it requires the entire universe of cases to maximize control.
   2. Galton’s problem is an issue – there may be correlations between characteristics but it may be the case that those characteristics just diffused at the same time, and it isn’t really a causal relationship
   3. Sartori's (1970) conceptual stretching
   4. Judgmental data (i.e. ordered logit, Correlates of War, Polyarchy...)
3. Lieberman(2005): against KKV, not the more cases the better; too many cases increasingly superficial.
4. Gerring(2007): Assuming the population is homogeneous; show weak causality.
5. Jackman(1985): deviant (response: outlier analysis), measurement aggregated and single
6. Franzese(2007): statistical models can’t do well with contexts (multi-causality, context-conditionality, and endogeneity).

Example: Inglehart & Welzel (2005)

**Lab:**

Strategy: Morton & Williams (2010): natural, policy, downstream, survey, lab as types; Rubin causal model (test causal effects) and formal theory approaches in terms of approach.

Advantage: Morton & Williams (2010):

1. Rubin: narrow focus to a single cause-and-effect relationship; don’t need full developed formal model
2. FTA: Also address the assumptions and theories.

Disadvantage: Morton & Williams (2010):

1. Rubin: needs theoretical assumptions and expectations.
2. FTA: Need not only developed formal models but empirical evidence for the assumptions.

Example: Tang & Yang 2014

**Comparative case:**

Strategy:

1. Przeworski & Teune(1970):
   1. MSS: Start from system level.   
      Concomitatnt variance(Naroll, 1968), to reduce the systemic reason for difference.
   2. MDS: Start from below the system, i.e., assuming systemic factor doesn’t affect, or say, the populations the samples were drawn are homogeneous. The goal is to eliminate irrelevant systemic factors.  
      H0: Intrasystemic study, assuming systemic factor has no effect. When it is rejected, the study becomes system level study.
      1. Identify indep, which should not be affected by the system.
2. Lieberman(2005):
   1. Model testing:
      1. use main and rival theories in decidedly important and seemingly anomalous outcome in specific time and space
      2. set a basis for large-n.
   2. Model building: use wide-ranging and inductive ways to develop well-specified theoretical account and measurements
3. Tarrow(2010): (talked about paired comparison)
   1. Correlation study
   2. Process tracing

Advantage:

1. Przeworski & Teune(1970):
   1. MSS:
      1. Usage 1: maximally control for irrelevant variable (esp. common systemic factors)
      2. Usage 2: minimize the scope of potential explanatory variable (esp. intersystem difference)
   2. MDS: the level of relevant factors is always an open question.
2. Lijphart(1971): with limited time and resources, comparative cases can goes more complete and deep.
3. Collier(1993): push comparativists toward more carefully contextualized analysis
   1. Three goal: 1) show causality; 2) show utility of a model; 3) show difference among cases; 4) assessing hypotheses
4. Lieberman(2005):
   1. gives contextually based evidence that how well to apply the theory in a real case.
   2. Can explain how and why factors are related, in order to verify plausibility of causal mechanism
   3. Account for both similar and contrasting cases—being more transparent to large-n
5. Tarrow(2010): (talked about paired comparison)
   1. A paired correlation comparison offers more detail between starts and ends, which gives more confidence that the causality is real.
   2. A paired process tracing; show how x connects y; itself is the outcome of study. Comparing to single case study, avoid the situation when X disappears, Y still occurs.
6. Ruechemeyer et al.(1992): comparative historical work is the most important in explaining causal relationships and in developing an adequate theoretical framework for the transition to democracy. It can show complex interaction between class struggle, the power and autonomy of the state, and transnational influences.   
   Evidence: use comparative historical works on western Europe and western Hemisphere showing working class always pro-democracy, and landowners always anti-democracy.

Disadvantage:

1. Przeworski & Teune(1970):
   1. MSS:
      1. Requires positive identification of relevant systemic factors (the similarities).
      2. Assuming the systemic characteristics affect the object in an isolated way rather than in syndromes
      3. The experimental variables cannot be absolutely isolated, because the standards for similarity can be diverse.
      4. strengthen confidence on the experimental variable, while not able to exclude other non-systemic variables
   2. MDS: Systemic factors can be disregarded; research shift to the systemic level as long as the statement can't cross-system fit.
2. Lijphat(1971):
   1. If there are many variables, degree of freedom are easily used out.   
      Solution: 1) level down or combine indeps. 2) use MSS. 3) one case diachrionically.
   2. If use MSS, not many proper cases can be found
3. Tarrow(2010):
   1. Insufficient d.f.
   2. Not representative
   3. Case selection might be atheoretical
   4. The scope condition(external validity) of the theories are usually ignored.
4. Riker(1985): process-tracing is non-scientific.
   1. In a case, the movers and actors may not appear in both initial and terminal situations, in which case there are multiple starts and ends. This may yield fake generalizations.
   2. Only interpret the temporal sequence rather than manifesting the causality(in terms of causal effects.)

Example: Skcopol (1974)

**Field work:**

Strategy:

1. Lijphart(1971): within area comparison or single case. (1) level down or combine indeps. 2) use MSS. 3) one case diachrionically.)

Advantage:

1. Lijphart(1971): enlighten further studies.
2. Collier(1993): push the comparative qualifiers toward more carefully contextualized analysis.

Disadvantage:

1. Lijphart(1971): Area approach contributes to CP if it does not end in itself.
2. Needs crucial controls.

Example: Shi & Lu (2010)

**Single case:**

Gerring(2007): a case refers to a spatially delimited phenomenon observed at a single point in time or over several period of time. Therefore, a case does not equals an observation; it could include multiple observations. The goal is to use a case to explain a theory based on a set of similar cases.

Strategy:

1. Lijphart(1971): six strategies:
   1. Atheoretical: descriptive, offering a basis of data-gathering operation
   2. Interpretative: not theory oriented; use established theory to explain, rather than contribute to theory.
   3. Hypothesis-generation: develop theory from areas no theory exists; prepare for large-N tests.
   4. Theory confirming: strengthen established propositions.
   5. Theory infirming: weaken established propositions.
   6. Deviant analysis: uncover additional variables, refine definitions of certain variables.
2. Gerring(2007): disprove a deterministic causal position.
3. Eckstein(1975):
   1. Configurative-idiographic study (present depictions of the overall Gestalt; allow facts to speak for themselves)
      1. Pro: pull together and elegantly organized wide and deep researches; an impressive feel for the case
      2. Con: rarely involving even the systemic accumulation of facts; antitheoretical
   2. Disciplined-configurative study (apply general laws/established theories to a case; designed to show that valid theory compels a particular case interpretation and rules out others)
      1. Pro: point up a need for new theory in neglected areas
      2. Con: might be antitheoretical as configurative-idiographic study
   3. Heuristic study (Disciplined-configurative + refine question)
      1. Pro: theory building; can be nonempirical; rule out alternatives
      2. Con: Grounded theory: based only on certain observations
   4. Plausibility probe study (determine whether potential validity may reasonably be considered great enough to warrant the pains and costs of testing)
      1. Con: preliminary, rather loose and inconclusive
   5. Crucial case study (null hypothesis test; find a case that must closely fit a theory but not fit equally well any rule contrary to that proposed)
      1. Con: assuming crucial case existing
4. Geertz(1973): thick description-like study; without a deep understanding of language, symbols, metaphors, and context the description of, and usefulness of ideology as a concept is very limited.

Advantage:

1. Lijphart(1971): save resources; contribute to establishment of general proposition
2. Gerring(2004): more useful for forming descriptive inferences, and when useful variance is available for only a few unites.
3. Gerring(2007):
   1. Research goal: generate hypothesis; explore causal mechanism and deep but narrow proposition.
   2. Empirical: use concentrated data.
4. George & Bennet(2005): use case study to analyze causal mechanism
   1. Showing conceptural validity, account for contextualized comparison
   2. Deriving new hypotheses through deviant and outliers
   3. Exploring causal mechanisms, inductively observe unexpected aspects with a large number of intervening variables inductively observe unexpected aspects with a large number of intervening variables

Disadvantage:

1. Lijphart(1971): can’t be a basis for a valid generalization or disapprove an established generalization.
2. George and Bennet(2005):
   1. Case seleciton bias
   2. Inconclusive
   3. lack of representativeness
   4. lack of variance
   5. potential lack of independences of cases
3. KKV(1994): to process tracing: because process tracing frequently involves looking at a finer degree of detail, it can involve a potential “infinite regress” of studying endless “steps between steps between steps” in a case.

Rigor:

1. Przeworski & Teune(1970): should not reject a theory because of only one anomaly.
2. Gerring(2004): removed simply by more careful attention to the task of specification (Gerring 2001, 90-99); be clear about which propositions are intended to describe the unit under study and which are intended to apply to a broader set of units.

Example: Magaloni (2006)

Example question:

One of the buzz words currently circulating around political science scholars is “mixed-methods.” Discuss some commonly thought of combinations of methods paying particular attention to the advantages, and tradeoffs, of adopting these methods in combination. Next, give a well-known example of a work in comparative politics that uses a “mixed-methods” approach emphasizing the connection between the author(s) choice of mixed-method and their research question.(2010, 2011Fall)

Answer:

**Necessity of mixed-method:**

1. Przeworski & Teune (1970): research only involving one level is not comparative.
2. Lieberman(2005): to complement large-n studies.
3. 我：two mix: method mixed(quantitatie/qualitative) and approach mixed(rational institutionalism[Shepsle2006], analytic narratives[Bates 1998], etc.)

**Advantage:**

1. Fearon and Laitin (2008): usefulness of case studies in mixed method designs:
   1. To assess whether arguments in the empirical association are plausible causally.
   2. Adding additional data of beliefs, intentions, considerations, and reasoning of people
   3. Justify the validity and accuracy of measures used in large-N.

**Disadvantage (tradeoff):**

1. using a mixed-design increases the work-load of the researcher tremendously. In fact, it can be seen as equivalent to running the research multiple times. If the end result is only slightly more appreciated than a single methods design, researchers (especially young, pre-tenure) will not want necessarily want to put in the extra hours on a single project. Fearon and Latin’s argument about randomizing the case study, while nice in theory, would be extremely difficult for researchers to implement.
2. The entire advantage of having regional experts (knowledge of language and an intricate understanding of the local culture) would be lost if researchers were asked to use an entirely randomized case selection procedure.

**Example:** Tang & He(2010)

Example question:

One of the major challenges facing researchers is that of measurement. Our goal is to achieve accuracy and precision while still capturing the essence of the concepts being measured. Please discuss broadly the challenges associated with measurement in comparative political science research. Do not neglect issues of reliability and validity but also do not restrict your discussion to these alone. (2010, 2012, 2013Fall, and 2014Spr.)

Answer:

**Standard of measurement:**

1. Conceptual stretching: Collier & Mahon(1993): Sartori’s(1970) ideal concept: a clear boundary and defining properties. The weakness of this definition are 1) likely abandoning a category pre-naturely; 2) block a different way to fit new cases. Concept stretching is to take a category developed for one set of cases and extend it to additional cases. This may lead to problem when apply a measurement to a lot fo cases.
2. Conceptual equivalence: Przeworski & Teune(1970): iff system inference is present and measurement involves inference
3. Validity: Przeworski & Teune(1970): the factor analysis resulted in in the hypothesized dimensions.
4. Reliability
5. Data quality: Huckfeldt(2009): ecological/individual-level fallacy

**Validity:**

Definition: Przeworski & Teune(1970): system-specific + time-specific

Approach: Przeworski & Teune(1970):

1. Minimize the influence of the system
2. Adding system-specific items if the indication is highly affected by the system.
3. Weight the measure in different system.

Example:

**Selection bias:**

Definition:

1. Dion(1998): If observations are selected based on the value of the dependent variable, then estimates obtained by ordinary least squares will be biased. This problem cannot be corrected by control or N-size.
2. Fearon and Laitin(2008): unless using randomly case selection, the selection bias issue is widely suffered.
3. Gerring(1990):
   1. Problem: conclusion that any characteristic that the selected cases share is a cause; assuming that a relationship (or the absence of a relationship) between variables within the selected set of cases reflect relationships in the entire population of cases.
   2. Causes:
      1. the cases are selected precisely because they share the trait one wants to explain
      2. cases are selected on a variable—geographical region—that is correlated with the dependent variable.
      3. selection on the dependent variable in a complicated, contingent historical or path-dependent argument
      4. selection of the end points of a time-series or historical case study on the dependent variable.
      5. The analyst chooses as the endpoint for the study a year in which the variable to be explained has attained some high or low point.

Approach:

1. Dion(1998): Selection on DV is admissible in evaluation of necessary conditions (small N, comparative case studies.).
2. Geddes(1990): In practice, identifying the universe of cases that meet the structural criteria is probably an impossible task.

Example:

1. Skocpol (1979): No contrasting cases for all the arguments; not prove whether the theory fits other cases.

**Reliability:**

Definition: Przeworski & Tuene(1970): assuming the true scores approximates the observed variance; invariance of the logical value of the measurement statements resulting from these instruments (shown by the consistence of the instruments in different systems.)

Approach: Przeworski & Tuene(1970):

1. indicators behave in the same way in all systems
2. correlation with other reliable variables

Example:

For data quality: Lieberman(2010): historical-oriented and integrated replication database(HIRD): measure all phenomena with the same level of certainty, including both qualitative and quantitative data, and a base for mixed data.

Example question:

What are the contributions to the study of comparative politics made by scholars working in the rational-choice tradition? What drawbacks or limitations might work in the rationalist vein entail? What processes, if any, cannot be explained as the result of maximizing actors pursuing rewards? (2008Fall, 2012)

Institutions play a major role in many comparative studies of politics. Indeed, those who endorse distinct, even rival, approaches to comparative analysis describe their methods as institutionalist. Take the several leading institutionalist approaches to comparative politics, explain the distinctive methods that each one entails, and then critically assess each one's methodology for advancing the field of comparative politics over the coming 25 years. You should be as specific as possible in all parts of your answer, including what kind of knowledge the field needs to pursue. (2014Fall)

Answer:

**Rational choice approach:**

Advantage:

1. Munck(2001):
   1. General: high generalization and prediction; focusing on individual actors and their behavioral strategies.
   2. Theory: offer universal principles, broader horizon of issues, and a cumulative knowledge system
   3. Design:
      1. There is general and clear scoped theoretical base
      2. Offer logically rigorous and internally consistent predictions
      3. Strong, and falsifiability-guaranteed tests
2. Ostrom(2007):
   1. Also contribute to individual heterogeneity to political decisions. E.g., Olson(1965) individuals with stronger interests of public goods increase public goods supply.
   2. Explain the influence of information, dynamic (interaction) and evaluation of preferences in repeated scenarios.
3. Levi(2009): combine detailed and nuanced empirical research with rational choice analysis.
4. Tsebelis(1990)

Disadvantage:

1. Anderson(2009): group variety in rationality connect to structuralism and culturalism.
2. Munck(2001):
   1. General: can’t explain the process before fixing the preferences, and lack of applicability in domains of great significance.
   2. Logic:
      1. EU: lack of realism
      2. Equilibrium: unable to always produce unique predictions
      3. Game: can’t explain the rule of game.
   3. When doing pragmatic amendment: the purity of the theory cannot be guaranteed.
      1. Some issues are beyond game theory
      2. More external factors and theories added—undermine the value of the rational theory.
   4. Design:
      1. Solvability and logical consistency are not enough, one still needs substantively significance and meaningful
      2. Different methods may produce different result based on the same theory
3. Levi(2009): ignoring cognitive psychology and behavioral economics.
4. Shepsle(2006): for rational institutionalism
   1. The limitation of rationality
   2. Behavioral economics: individuals are cognitively constrained
   3. Transaction/exchange needs costs
   4. Give historical dependence and contextualized aspect to RC (Analytical narrative, Bates et al 1998)

Example:

1. Van der Brug(2007): two-level model of voting behavior affected by economy:
   1. voters generalize party propensity based on retrospective and prospective view on party policies
   2. voters compare the propensities and vote for parties (supporting choice is coherent to general economic condition; effects are different across time and countries, while party competition enhances economic influence.)
   3. Data: OECD countries, three surveys.
   4. Contribution: 1)bring prospective voting in (party size, ideology); 2)party characters (size, incumbent, ideology) matters; 3)show the causality for voters to use economic conditions for voting choice.
2. Magaloni(2006): use Mexico: macro-/micro-level data; within-case analysis.
   1. Develop the political survival model in an environment with hegemonic party (power asymmetry is significant).
   2. Showing that the autocratic hegemonic party is vulnerable to elites divisions
      1. Create an image that non invincible.
      2. Elite split occurred more frequently in period when the expenditure decreases.
   3. Showing why voters support hegemonic
      1. Both retrospective and prospective
      2. Opposition parties are highly uncertain
      3. Voters are informative and knowledgeable: being aware of economic bust after election and the electoral fraud and violence the ruling party may use.
   4. Showing the opposition party’s decision making:
      1. Coordination dilemma: diverse in oppositions
      2. Punishment regime
   5. Connect the party game with democratization
      1. Structure and economic factors enable voters to defect
      2. Party equality and economic growth are good for democratization in long term, by reduce the value of voting buying.

**Cultural approach:**

Definition:

Advantage:

Disadvantage:

1. Anderson(2009): mass politics is an important bridge connecting micro- and macro-level.

Example:

**Structural approach:**

Definition:

Advantage:

1. Easton(1957): every political parts relates to each other.

Disadvantage:

1. Anderson(2009): mass politics is an important bridge connecting micro- and macro-level.

Example:

**Institutional approach:**

Definition:

1. March & Olsen (2006):
   1. A relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances.
   2. Assumption:
      1. Institutions create elements of order and predictability.
      2. The translation of structures into political action and action into institutional continuity and change are generated by comprehensible and routine processes.
2. North (1998): Institutions as formal and informal rules that influence behavior by means of constraints and incentives (self-enforcing equilibria).
   1. Levi(2002): establishes the actual and principal players, their goals, and their preferences while also illuminating the effective rules of the game, constraints, and incentives.

Strategy:

1. Capoccia & Kelemen(2007): critical junctures, analyzing a relative short period of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agents’ choice will affect the outcome of interests.   
   The unit of analysis is institutional setting.   
   The time horizon is relatively short comparing to the entire path-dependent process; the longer CJ is, the more possible a policy can be affected by reemerging structure.   
   The goal of the analysis is to find re-equilibration in the institutions, and how power asymmetries lead to that.
   1. Single CJ analysis: counterfactual analysis to test theoretical/historical consistency; or theory-guided narrative, to integrate cases that cannot be explained by one model.
   2. Compared CJ analysis: cross-sectional; longitudinal(compare the criticalness)
2. March & Olsen(2007):
   1. Relationship: distinguish institutional rules and its behavioral realization in a particular instance(Apter 1991); or tense between the development of common political institution and the protection of cultural diversity.
   2. Dynamic: focus on elements of institutional design(single actor/conflicts);external shocks; learning process
   3. New institutionalism: more supplement than rejecting other theories.
3. Shepsle(2006): Rational choice institutionalism
   1. Structural institution: Institutions shape the preference and opinion of politicians(and selectorates) on political choices
   2. Unstructured institution: collective actions, role of leadership, and cooperation
4. Tsebelis(1990): Nested game in institutions: regard institutions as the rule makers of the game, and actor can play more than one game simultaneously.
5. Bates(1998): analytic narrative.
   1. Connect rational choice with historical contextual analysis.
   2. Levi(2009): Deal with possibility of multiple equilibria and selection, persistence, and transformation process towards the solution that arise in particular times and places.
   3. Process; Levi(2009): Analytic narratives involve choosing a problem or puzzle, then building a model to explicate the logic of the explanation and to elucidate the key decision points and possibilities (also contingency and possibility for multiple equilibria; context matters), and finally evaluating the model through comparative statics and the testable implications the model generates (logical, confirmation [by data] and generalizability).
6. Sait(1938): historical contingency: magical

Advantage:

1. Capoccia & Kelemen(2007): CJ analysis accounts for counterfactual cases; can identify the negative cases; can focus on the important actors, moments and choices, while omitted the less relevant contextual details.
2. Levi(2009): Bates(1998) analytic narratives: offer textual evidence to strategic

Disadvantage:

1. March & Olsen(2007): CJ underestimate the incremental steps
2. Shepsle(2006): for rational institutionalism
   1. The limitation of rationality
   2. Behavioral economics: individuals are cognitively constrained
   3. Transaction/exchange needs costs
   4. Give historical dependence and contextualized aspect to RC (Analytical narrative, Bates et al 1998)

Example: Fish (2006)