Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Fuzzy Sets
Professor Charles C. Ragin

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is fundamentally a case-oriented method that can be applied to small-to-moderate size Ns. It is most useful when researchers have knowledge of each case included in an investigation, there is a relatively small number of such cases (e.g., 10-50), and the investigator seeks to compare cases as configurations. With these methods it is possible to construct representations of cross-case patterns that allow for substantial heterogeneity and diversity. This course offers an introduction to the approach and to the use of the software package fsQCA. Both the crisp (i.e., Boolean) and fuzzy-set versions of the method are presented.

Charles C. Ragin is Professor of Sociology and Political Science at the University of Arizona. He publishes in the fields of methodology, political sociology, and comparative-historical analysis. His books include The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies (which won the Stein Rokkan Prize for Comparative Research of the International Social Science Council); Constructing Social Research; What Is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Research (with Howard S. Becker); Fuzzy-Set Social Science; and Configurational Comparative Methods: Qualitative Comparative Analysis and Related Techniques (with Benoit Rihoux). In his most recent book, Redesigning Social Inquiry: Fuzzy Sets and Beyond, he presents a critique of the “net-effects thinking” that dominates much of contemporary social science, and proposes alternative analytic strategies grounded in configurational methods. Ragin also has developed software for configurational analysis of social data, Fuzzy-Set/Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA). His awards include the Donald Campbell Award for Methodological Innovation, presented by the Policy Studies Association.