The term "case study" appears every now and then in the title of software engineering research papers. However, the presented studies range from very ambitious and well organized studies in the field, to small toy examples that claim to be case studies.

Case studies are conducted in several fields of research, e.g. social science, political science, and economics. They focus on phenomena in their context, especially when the boundary between the phenomenon and its context is unclear. This is particularly true in software engineering, where the interaction between technical, organizational and 'people' issue are impossible to separate, and hence case study is feasible research method in software engineering.

This presentation aims to clarify what constitutes a case study that fulfils scientific criteria of good research, and how it can be applied to software engineering research. It gives an overview of available practical guidelines for case study research in software engineering, based on experience from conducting such studies. Those wanting to prepare for the lecture may read the following paper:

Runeson, P., Höst, M.: Guidelines for Conducting and Reporting Case Study Research in Software Engineering. Empirical Software Engineering 14(2), 131–164 (2009)
http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10664-008-9102-8