

CPOL 4521
Qualitative Methods for Political Science
SPRING 2015

Instructor: Dr. Francesca Refsum Jensenius

Time and Location: Mondays 5:00-8:00pm, G336

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Office Hours: Fridays 1:00-3:00pm, G333

Overview and Objectives

This seminar introduces graduate students to the use of qualitative research methods in political science. The course is designed to give a broad overview of common methods through a combination of theoretical readings and hands-on practical exercises. We begin with a review of the main debates about the use of qualitative methods in political science in recent years. We then turn to questions of research design with special attention to small-N studies. Following this introduction, we will spend the remainder of the semester covering the nuts and bolts of qualitative research: case selection, conceptualization and measurement, thinking about causation in qualitative work and over time, data gathering through observation, interviews, focus groups, and archival research, and how to analyze and present qualitative data. Throughout the course the students will be encouraged to try out the techniques we discuss on their own research projects. The objectives for this course are for students to:

1. Gain insight into the main debates about the use of qualitative methods in political science.
2. Build solid foundations for how to employ qualitative methods in their own social science research projects.
3. Reflect on the ethical challenges and limitations of using different types of methods in social science research.

Requirements and evaluation

Research methods, and perhaps particularly qualitative methods, is often described as an “art.” Although reading theoretical pieces can give insight into how others think about their research, learning how to do good research requires reflection, discussion, and practice. This class will therefore be interactive and focused on the students’ own research projects. In addition to reading the assigned texts every week and participating actively in class discussions, students are expected to write weekly thought papers, lead the class

discussion at least once during the semester, conduct two field exercises and present on the experiences, present and produce a complete research proposal (or paper), and serve as discussant on the work of others. Contributions to class discussions and written exercises can be in English or Spanish, and I will not penalize language in evaluating your work. All written exercises are due online before midnight the Saturday before the class, exercises handed in late will only be worth half the points, and exercises handed in later than midnight the Sunday before the class will get no points. Grades will be based on the following:

Research proposal (or paper): At the beginning of the semester, each student will choose a major research project in progress (dissertation, thesis, or another research idea). Throughout the semester we will then reflect on how the topics delineated in the readings could be applicable to these research projects, and work on developing research proposals for the projects (or papers) which should include a qualitative element (field work, interviews, historical work, or text analysis):.

Research Topic Write-Up (10%): Early in the semester each student will submit a 1-3 page write-up of the project idea they have in mind. Someone else will introduce and discuss the project in class (10-15 minutes) and make suggestions for how the idea can be developed further (5% for the write-up and 5% for discussing someone else's project).

Presentation of draft proposal (20%): During the last half of the semester, everyone will hand in a draft proposal (or paper) and give a presentation of what they handed in. These presentations will be structured like conference presentations, with presentations of 10-15 minutes, discussants commenting 5-10 minutes and others getting the chance to comment (10% for the write-up, 5% for the presentation, and 5% for serving as the discussant on someone else's project).

Final product (20%): Students will have the opportunity to revise their research proposals (or papers) based on peer feedback. Final proposals will be due by May 15th.

Reading and participating (15%): Active participation is key to the success of this class. Sometimes things happen that makes it hard to come to class, and although I appreciate that you let me know if you will miss a class, I do not need an excuse or to know the reason. However, according to university regulations, those who miss more than 3 meetings will not pass the class unless they can document a medical emergency. Coming late to class will affect your participation grade, and those who show up later than 5:30pm will be noted as not present in the class.

Leading class discussion (5%): Each person will be responsible for leading the discussion of readings for one meeting during the semester. You can also choose to do it twice during the semester together with someone else. Your job is to raise questions, help clarify difficult concepts, correct mistakes (or at least offer your own opinion, when you have a different interpretation), and otherwise ensure that everyone understands the issues raised by the readings for that week.

Thought papers (10%): Prior to at least five of the seminar meetings, students should

prepare a one-page thought paper reflecting on issues raised in the week's readings. These are not meant to be summaries of readings, rather, they should be used to raise questions and/or make comments on the assigned material and, more importantly, to make connections between the readings and one's own research interests. You can get up to two points for each thought paper submitted, and you can get up to ten points during the semester.

Field exercises (20%): During the semester students should complete two field exercises associated with the techniques for gathering qualitative data. Everyone should complete an interview exercise, and in addition you can choose any other qualitative technique that you would like to try out. For each exercise, you should plan and carry out data gathering, prepare/record data, and conduct a preliminary analysis of the data. This should be summarized in a 3 page write-up that is presented in class with reflections on your experience (10 min). Specific guidelines for each field exercise will be discussed in class (5% for each write-up and 5% for each presentation).

Tentative Course Outline

The fundamentals

Week 1 (January 19): Introduction

- Methods in political science.
- Introduction to objectives, syllabus and plan.

Week 2 (January 26): Recent debates about qualitative methods

King, G., Keohane, R. O., and Verba, S. (1994). *Designing social inquiry: scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J (chapter 1).

Laitin, D. D. (1995). The Qualitative-Quantitative Disputation: Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. *American Political Science Review*, 89(2):454–456.

Mahoney, J. and Goertz, G. (2006). A tale of two cultures: Contrasting quantitative and qualitative research. *Political Analysis*, 14(3):227–249.

Goodwin, J. and Horowitz, R. (2002). Introduction: The methodological strengths and dilemmas of qualitative sociology. *Qualitative Sociology*, 25(1):33–47.

Law, J. (2004). *After method: Mess in social science research*. Psychology Press (chapters 1 and 2).

- **Activity:** Examples of research designs, expectations of the structure of the proposals, and presentations of research ideas.

Other recommended readings:

Gerring, J. (2001). *Social science methodology: a criterial framework*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York.

Geddes, B. (2003). *Paradigms and sand castles: theory building and research design in comparative politics*. Analytical perspectives on politics. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.

Brady, H. E. and Collier, D. (2004). *Rethinking social inquiry: diverse tools, shared standards*. Rowman Littlefield, Lanham, MD.

Ragin, C. C. (2008). *Redesigning social inquiry: fuzzy sets and beyond*. University of Chicago Press., Chicago.

Week 3 (February 2): Research Design

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. B. (2010). *Designing qualitative research*. Sage.

George, A. L. and Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. BCSIA studies in international security. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass (chapter 4).

King, G., Keohane, R. O., and Verba, S. (1994). *Designing social inquiry: scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J (chapter 4).

Seawright, J. and Gerring, J. (2008). Case selection techniques in case study research a menu of qualitative and quantitative options. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2):294–308.

- **Activity:** Discussion of research ideas.

Week 4 (February 9): Small-N studies

Gerring, J. (2007). Case study research. *Principles and Practices*. Cambridge (pp. 17–63).

George, A. L. and Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. BCSIA studies in international security. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass (chapter 1).

Bennett, A. and Elman, C. (2006). Qualitative research: Recent developments in case study methods. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 9:455–476.

Collier, D. and Mahoney, J. (1996). Insights and pitfalls: Selection bias in qualitative research. *World Politics*, 49(01):56–91.

- **Activity:** Discussion of research ideas.

Week 5 (February 16): Causality in a qualitative context

Elster, J. (1989). *Nuts and bolts for the social sciences*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge ; New York. Jon Elster. ill. ; 23 cm (chapter 1 on mechanisms).

Mahoney, J. (2008). Toward a unified theory of causality. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(4/5):412–436.

Fearon, J. D. (1991). Counterfactuals and hypothesis testing in political science. *World politics*, 43(02):169–195.

Mahoney, J. (2000). Strategies of causal inference in small-n analysis. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 28(4):387–424.

- **Activity:** Exercises on causality and discussion of research ideas.

Week 6 (February 23): Concepts and measurements

Sartori, G. (1970). Concept misformation in comparative politics. *American Political Science Review*, 64(4):1033–1053.

Collier, D. and Levitsky, S. (1997). Democracy with adjectives: Conceptual innovation in comparative research. *World Politics*, 49(3):430–451.

Gerring, J. (1999). What makes a concept good? a criterial framework for understanding concept formation in the social sciences. *Polity*, pages 357–393.

Adcock, R. and Collier, D. (2001). Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research. *American Political Science Review*, 95(3):529–546.

- **Activity:** Exercises on concept formation and measurement.

Talking to people

Week 7 (March 2): Field work and participant observation

Symposium: Field Research (2004). *Qualitative Methods Newsletter*, 2 (1): 2–15.

Scoggins, S. E. (2014). Navigating fieldwork as an outsider: Observations from interviewing police officers in china. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 47(02):394–397.

Wood, E. J. (2007). Field research during war: Ethical dilemmas. In *New Perspectives in Political Ethnography*, pages 205–223. Springer.

Wedeen, L. (2010). Reflections on ethnographic work in political science. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13:255–272.

Vrasti, W. (2008). The strange case of ethnography and international relations. *Millennium-Journal of International Studies*, 37(2):279–301.

- **Activity:** Sharing experiences from field work and presentations of field exercises.

Week 8 (March 9): Interviews

Woliver, L. R. (2002). Ethical dilemmas in personal interviewing. *Political Science & Politics*, 35(04):677–678.

Mosley, L. (2013). *Interview Research in Political Science*. Cornell University Press (pages 1–44).

Leech, B. L. (2002). Asking questions: techniques for semistructured interviews. *Political Science & Politics*, 35(04):665–668.

Fujii, L. A. (2010). Shades of truth and lies: Interpreting testimonies of war and violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 47(2):231–241.

- **Activity:** Practice interview techniques and presentations of field exercises.

Week 9 (March 16): Elite interviews

Peabody, R. L., Hammond, S. W., Torcom, J., Brown, L. P., Thompson, C., and Kolodny, R. (1990). Interviewing political elites. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 23(03):451–455.

Berry, J. M. (2002). Validity and reliability issues in elite interviewing. *Political Science & Politics*, 35(04):679–682.

Mosley, L. (2013). *Interview Research in Political Science*. Cornell University Press (chapters 10 and 4).

- **Activity:** Practice interview techniques and presentations of field exercises.

Week 10 (March 25 in Sala de Juntas, G336): Narratives and focus groups

Jovchelovitch, S. and Bauer, M. W. (2000). Narrative interviewing. *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound*, pages 57–74.

Judith Moyer (1993). Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History. Available at [URL] http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/itoralHistory.html#INTRO

Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K. M., Guest, G., and Namey, E. (2005). Qualitative research methods: a data collectors field guide, pages 51–76.

Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research*, volume 16. Sage.

Kidd, P. S. and Parshall, M. B. (2000). Getting the focus and the group: enhancing analytical rigor in focus group research. *Qualitative health research*, 10(3):293–308.

- **Activity:** Practice interview techniques and presentations of field exercises.

Taking time seriously**Week 11 (April 6 in computer lab, G103): Process Tracing, critical junctures, and path dependence**

Pierson, P. (2004). *Politics in time: history, institutions, and social analysis*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J (chapter 1).

George, A. L. and Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. BCSIA studies in international security. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass (chapter 10).

Collier, D. (2011). Understanding process tracing. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(04):823–830.

Capoccia, G. and Kelemen, R. D. (2007). The study of critical junctures: Theory, narrative, and counterfactuals in historical institutionalism. *World Politics*, 59(03):341–369.

- **Activity:** Guest lecture on the use of the software ATLAS.

Week 12 (April 13 in Sala de Juntas, G336): Using historical sources

Trachtenberg, M. (2009). *The craft of international history: A guide to method*. Princeton University Press (chapters 2 and 5).

Thies, C. G. (2002). A pragmatic guide to qualitative historical analysis in the study of international relations. *International Studies Perspectives*, 3(4):351–372.

- **Activity:** Presentations of draft proposals and field exercises.

Analyzing text and speech

Week 13 (April 20 in Sala de Juntas, G336): Content analysis and discourse analysis

Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Sage (chapters 1 and 6).

Neumann, I. B. (2008). Discourse analysis. In Klotz, A. and Prakash, D., editors, *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: a Pluralist Guide. Research methods series.*, chapter 5, pages 61–77. Palgrave Macmillan.

Florian Schneider (2013). How to Do a Discourse Analysis. Available at [URL] <http://www.politicseastasia.com/studying/how-to-do-a-discourse-analysis/>

- **Activity:** Presentations of draft proposals and field exercises.

Wrapping up

Week 14 (April 27 in Sala de Juntas, G336): Multi-method approaches

Coppedge, M. (1999). Thickening thin concepts and theories: combining large n and small in comparative politics. *Comparative Politics*, pages 465–476.

Box-Steffensmeier, Brady, Collier, Collier, and Elman (2008). Qualitative and multimethod research: Organizations, publication, and reflections on integration.

Paluck, E. L. (2010). The promising integration of qualitative methods and field experiments. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 628(1):59–71.

Chauchard, S. (2014). Can Descriptive Representation Change Beliefs about a Stigmatized Group? Evidence from Rural India. *American Political Science Review*, 108:403–422.

Fried, B. J., Lagunes, P., and Venkataramani, A. (2010). Corruption and inequality at the crossroad: a multimethod study of bribery and discrimination in latin america. *Latin American Research Review*, 45(1):76–97.

- **Activity:** Presentations of draft proposals and field exercises.

Week 15 (May 4 in Sala de Juntas, G336): Summing up

Readings TBD.

- **Activity:** Presentations of draft proposals and field exercises.