This seminar covers the research process from its design to final analysis, focusing on qualitative and mixed-methods research. That is, we look at how to collect, analyze, and interpret data outside of or in addition to statistical techniques. Throughout the course, we will look at questions of methodology to understand the important differences within qualitative research and between qualitative and quantitative frameworks. Students should come away from the course with an understanding of: (1) what qualitative research is and how it fits in the broader discipline of political science; (2) the logic of qualitative and mixed methods research design; (3) the nuts and bolts of conducting qualitative research; and (4) how to analyze the results. Though no course can be the definitive answer to “how do I write my dissertation,” this seminar is designed to be an important step in the logic and practice of qualitative and mixed methods research. **Prerequisites: POS 516 and POS 517 or the equivalent.**

**Prior to starting the course, you must complete the online human subjects training. You may have done this already in POS 516, if not please see:**

[http://www.albany.edu/research/compliance/Training.htm#IRB](http://www.albany.edu/research/compliance/Training.htm#IRB)

Requirements:
- 6 Weekly Assignments. You may choose which particular week you would like, but please keep in mind you may only write on the topic for any given week and only one paper per week (50%).
- Research Design: Design a practical, dissertation-size research project (40%)
  - Literature Review: Due in class October 11
  - Rough Draft: Due in class November 15
  - Final Design: December 6
- In-class participation (10%)

Reading Materials:
The following required books are available for purchase at Mary Jane’s along with the starred (*) recommended reading material. In addition, there are a large number of required articles available on the course website (eres) for your convenience (password: strach). Please note, you are responsible for the articles listed even when they are not posted or posted incompletely. If you have trouble accessing a document, please contact me.

**Required:**
Class Participation:
This class is a hands-on approach to conducting research. Most days when you come to class, there will be a research question and teams listed that will work together to solve it. You’ll need to come prepared having done the reading and having thought enough about it to apply the material to many different scenarios.

I. Introduction to the Process of Research
August 30: How Do I Do Research?
Patricia Strach. *Commodity Politics*, various drafts of prospectus.

II. Qualitative Research and Political Science

September 6: Social Science Research and the Qualitative/Quantitative Divide
**Assignment:** Write a 3-4 page reaction paper on the readings
Karl Popper. “Science: Conjectures and Refutations.”
King, Keohane, and Verba, *DSI*. 3-49
Brady, Collier, and Seawright, *RSI*. (15-32)
Bartels, *RSI*. (83-88)
McKeown, “Case Studies and the Limits of the Quantitative World View.”

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*Recommended:*


Recommended


September 13: Interpretive and Critical Approaches
Assignment: Write a 3-4 page reaction paper on the readings

King, Keohane, and Verba, DSI. 36-43 (review).

Recommended

III. Questions, Contributions, and the Limits of Qualitative Research (Case Studies)

September 20: Cases to Develop Concepts, Models, Theories, or Typologies
Assignment: Choose a particular research question of interest to you. Write a 3-4 page paper on how you would use cases to develop concepts, models, or theories. Incorporate the authors below.


**Recommended:**

- **Theory Development**

- **Models and Concepts**

- **Typologies**

**September 27: Cases to Analyze Causal Mechanisms and Conjunctions**

**Assignment:** Choose a particular research question of interest to you. Write a 3-4 page paper on how you would use cases to analyze causal mechanisms and conjunctions. Incorporate the authors below.

**Recommended**

**October 4: Cases to Analyze History--Timing and Sequence, Process & Narrative**

**Assignment:** Choose a particular research question of interest to you. Write a 3-4 page paper on how you would use cases to analyze history. Incorporate the authors below.

- Process Tracing
  Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett. “Process Tracing and Historical Explanation.” (Chapter 10)

Recommended:
  Theda Skocpol, "Why I am a Historical-Institutionalist," Polity 28 (Fall 1995): 103-6.

October 11: Choosing Cases
**7-10 Page Literature Review Due**
Assignment: Choose a particular research question of interest to you and create a research design involving case studies. Write a 3-4 page paper laying out your question, your design, and justifying your case selection. Your paper should show evidence in the design and justification from the following authors.

Recommended
IV. The Practice of Qualitative Research

October 18: Entering the Field

**Assignment:** Choose a particular research question of interest to you. Write a 3-4 page paper on the steps you would take to prepare to collect your data. Include a timeline. Take into account the experiences of the authors below and be realistic on how your project would look similar or different from theirs.

- Symposium by Evan Lieberman, Marc Howard, and Julia Lynch on Fieldwork in Qualitative Methods Newsletter.

**Recommended**


October 25: Participant Observation

**Assignment:** Choose a particular research question of interest to you and design a practical study involving participant observation. Write a 3-4 page paper describing your question, your design, and your observations on what it is like to conduct participant observation. Your paper should show evidence in the design and analysis from the following authors.


Recommended


November 1: Classes Suspended

November 8: Interviews and Focus Groups

Assignment: Choose a particular research question of interest to you and design a practical study involving either interviews or focus groups. Write a 3-4 page paper describing your question, your design, and your observations on what it is like to conduct interviews or a focus group. Your paper should show evidence in the design and analysis from the following authors.

- Interviews


- **Focus Groups**

- **Integrating interviews and focus groups**

**Recommended:**

November 15: Archives and Documents

***Research Design Drafts Due***

**Assignment:** Choose a particular research question of interest to you and design a practical study involving archival research (note, the New York State Library has some good archives to poke around in). Write a 3-4 page paper describing your question, your design, and your observations on what it is like to conduct archival research. Your paper should show evidence in the design and analysis from the following authors.


**Recommended:**
The following databases (accessible through UAlbany library) will help you identify where collections are housed: Archives USA and Worldcat.

November 22: Classes Suspended
V. Analysis and Interpretation

November 29: Analysis, Interpretation, and Results
Assignment: Choose a particular research question of interest to you and design a practical study involving discourse/content analysis. Write a 3-4 page paper describing your question, your design, and your observations on what it is like to conduct discourse or content analysis. Your paper should show evidence in the design and analysis from the following authors.

- Moving from Raw Data to Results

- Discourse and Content Analysis

- Genealogy

- Interpretive Limits

Recommended

December 6: Final Papers Due

Recommended Reading: Multi-method Research
Assignment: Choose an article or study (largely qualitative or quantitative) that you find particularly compelling. What would multiple methods add to the project? How would you go about doing it? Your paper should show evidence from the following authors.

Andrew Bennett and Bear Braumoeller. “Where the Model Frequently Meets the Road: Combining Statistical, Formal, and Case Study Methods.”


**Recommended**


Information and advice on:

Dissertation Proposals in Political Science

Craig Parsons, Oregon, HOW TO FIND A GOOD DISSERTATION
http://www.uoregon.edu/~rmitchel/gradprogram/tip_diss_choose_write.htm
Peter Hall, Harvard, Tips for Writing a Dissertation
http://www.engl.niu.edu/wac/psdiss.html

Doing Dissertations in Politics: A Student Guide
http://www.routledgepolitics.com/books/Doing-Dissertations-in-Politics-isbn9780415246866

Dissertation Proposals in General

University of Minnesota, Dissertation Calculator (excellent resource for timeframe impaired)
http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/disscalc/

Starting a Dissertation Project

University of North Carolina, Dissertations

Proposals in general

Adam Przeworski and Frank Salomon, The Art of Writing Proposals
http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new_publication_3/%787a9cb4f4-815f-de11-bd80-001cc477ec70%7D.pdf

Don Thackrey, University of Michigan, Proposal Writer's Guide
http://www.research.umich.edu/proposals/pwg/pwgcontents.html