RPOS 618: Qualitative Research Methods
Fall 2017
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-3 AND by appointment, 304 Milne Hall
Class Meets Wednesdays 5:45-8:30, Lab 8:30-9:25

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. This seminar is designed to be an important step in the logic and practice of qualitative and mixed methods research.

**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

Requirements:

- 5 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%).
- 3 Research Designs (40%)
  - Choose TWO of the following three (20%)
    - Positivist qualitative research design
    - Interpretivist qualitative research design
    - Mixed-methods research design (Note: this is covered on the final week of class)
  - Final Revised Design Due December 13 (20%)
- In-class participation (10%)

Reading Materials:
The following required books are available for purchase at Mary Jane’s. In addition, there are a large number of required articles available on the course website for your convenience. 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:


**Recommended:**


**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. **Foundations of Research**

August 30: What is Qualitative Research? What is the Difference between Qualitative and Quantitative Research? Why Do Scholars Get So Worked Up About It?

**Assignment:** Write a 3-4 page reaction paper on the readings

Matthew Desmond. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City.* Crown. Recommend all, but please read at least about Arleen and Larraine (Chapters: 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 24, Epilogue, and About This Project)

King, Keohane, and Verba, *DSI.* 3-49

Brady, Collier, and Seawright, “Refocusing the Discussion of Methodology”


**Assignment:** Write a 3-4 page paper on what your favorite academic book or article is and why. Your paper should show evidence from the following readings:

- Karl Popper. “Science: Conjectures and Refutations.”

**Recommended**


September 13: How Do I Do Good (Qualitative) Work?
Assignment: Write a 3-4 page reaction paper on the readings
Patricia Strach. Commodity Politics, prospectus drafts.

Recommended:

September 20: Classes Suspended

II. How Do I Design Qualitative Research?

September 27: 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**

October 4: 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 11: 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 18: Choosing Cases
***First Research Design 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

III. Help! How Do I Do Qualitative Research?

October 25: Entering the Field and Ethical Concerns

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.


Recommended


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


November 1: 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.


Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw. Chapter 1, “Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research.”

Recommended


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

**Recommended:**


November 15: Archives and Documents

***Second Research Design 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: Archive Finder and Worldcat.

November 22: Classes Suspended

**IV. How Do I Analyze and Interpret My Data (Yes, they’re called data in qualitative research too)?**

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
Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw. Chapters 5 (“Pursuing Members’ Meanings) and 6 (“Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing”).

- Discourse and Content Analysis

- Genealogy

**Recommended**


**Resources**
http://www.content-analysis.de/software/qualitative-analysis

December 6: 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.


Patricia Strach. 2016. *Hiding Politics in Plain Sight.* Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter 2 pages 52-55 AND two of the following chapters most relevant to your own work
- Chapter 3: Cooperative Market Mechanisms—large N survey data, descriptive analysis, concept formation
- Chapter 4: Telling Stories (review)—discourse and content analysis, generating expectations
- Chapter 5: Effects—large-N survey data, effects
- Chapter 6: Defining Issues—historical, narrative case study, effects

Recommended

December 13 Final Research Design Due