RPOS 618: Qualitative Research Methods
Fall 2018
August 27, 2018

Professor Patricia Strach
pstrach@albany.edu
Office Hours: Thursday 4-5 AND by appointment, 304 Milne Hall
Class Meets Thursdays 5:45-8:30, Lab 8:30-9:25, Husted 217

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: https://www.albany.edu/orrc/compliance-training.php**

Requirements:
- 5 Weekly Assignments (50%). 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.
- 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 6 (20%)
- In-class participation (10%)

Incomplete Policy (From the Graduate Bulletin): A tentative grade given only when the student has nearly completed the course but due to circumstances beyond the student’s control the work is not completed on schedule. The date for the completion of the work is specified by the instructor. The date stipulated will not be later than one month before the end of the session following that in which the Incomplete is received. The grade I is automatically changed to E or U unless work is completed as agreed between the student and the instructor.

Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Documented Disabilities (From the DRC): Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring
accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 130, 518-442-5490, DRC@albany.edu). That office will provide me with verification of your disability and will recommend appropriate accommodations.

**Academic Integrity:** Violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated.

- For more on the University’s standards for students, please see: [https://www.albany.edu/studentconduct/standards_of_academic_integrity.php](https://www.albany.edu/studentconduct/standards_of_academic_integrity.php).
- For help with specific resources, please see: [https://library.albany.edu/infolit/integrity](https://library.albany.edu/infolit/integrity)

**Reading Materials:**
The following required books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore. 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 for Qualitative Methods:**


Recommended for writing

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

Virginia Eubanks, Automating Inequality
King, Keohane, and Verba, DSI. 3-49

Brady, Collier, and Seawright, “Refocusing the Discussion of Methodology”
^Alasdair MacIntyre, “Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible” from After the Self-Images of the Age

Recommended
Bartels, “Some Unfulfilled Promises of Quantitative Imperialism”
McKeown, “Case Studies and the Limits of the Quantitative World View.”

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


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


September 13: How Do I Do Good (Qualitative) Work?

**Assignment:** Write a 3-4 page reaction paper on puzzles and problems with reference to at least one puzzle in academic research (can be from my work that you’re already reading, *Hiding Politics*, or it can be from anything else you’re reading) and how you’d frame your own puzzle.


We’ll be talking about how to move research from idea to finished project. Please see examples from my own work below.

Patricia Strach. *Commodity Politics*, prospectus drafts.


**Recommended:**


II. How Do I Design Qualitative Research?

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**

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**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**


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**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.


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

***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
Cool resource on cases: http://methods.sagepub.com/Cases

III. Help! How Do I Do Qualitative Research?

October 18: Entering the Field and Ethical Concerns
Assignment: Choose a particular research question of interest to you. Write a 3-4 page IRB protocol following the guidelines from the University at Albany.

http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2015/05/how-a-grad-student-uncovered-a-huge-fraud.html#

Recommended


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


Accusations of Alice Goffman’s Dishonesty. http://pastebin.com/BzN4t0VU
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.

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

**Recommended**


November 1: 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 8: 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.

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

November 15: 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.

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

Recommended

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

November 22: Classes Suspended Thanksgiving

November 29: 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 (review only) 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
“The Road Less Traveled: An Agenda for Mixed-Methods Research” PS: Political Science
Andrew Bennett and Bear Braumoeller. “Where the Model Frequently Meets the Road: Combining Statistical, Formal, and Case Study Methods.”


December 6: Conclusions
**Final Research Design Due, Presentations in Class**