

International Relations/Political Science

Academic year 2018-2019

Qualitative Methods in Political Science RI-SP037 - Autumn - 6 ECTS

Course Description

This course introduces first year PhD students to qualitative methods in political science. It aims to provide students with the necessary toolkit to assess how the choice of research method impacts research results, and to critically analyze how arguments are laid out and justified. First, it begins with the basics of epistemology and the philosophy of social science. Second, it covers debates on issues such as theory testing and theory formation, case selection in non-statistical research, the comparative method and the identification of causal mechanisms. Third, it presents a series of techniques for data collection and analysis, including archival research, interviewing, ethnography, and discourse analysis.

> PROFESSOR

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Syllabus

Teaching Method:

Classes are in the seminar-format. I will start by introducing the topic, so as to locate the assigned readings within the literature and broader debates. Class discussions will follow. It is therefore crucial, for discussions to be fruitful and interesting, that students arrive to class having read all the suggested articles in the reader. Some sessions will also include in-class exercises aimed at putting into practice the methods covered (interviewing, focus groups, etc.). At the end of the class, I will summarize the main points raised and on some occasions extend discussions by presenting approaches or perspectives not covered in the readings.

Method of Assessment:

1. Seminar participation (10%)

You are expected to attend each seminar and regularly participate in discussions. Having read the suggested material is essential to your good participation to seminar discussions.

2. Mid-term paper (50%) – Due by midnight on November 3

The mid-term term paper should use the literature covered in class and relate it to your own ph.d work. You could for instance focus on one of the following questions/topics: justify your choice for a specific epistemological approach; explain how you are dealing with the specific ethical issues which may occur in your research project; detail and justify your choice for a specific case selection method (or of the comparative vs. single case method); discuss the way you will be identifying causal mechanisms. These are examples, and you are welcome to propose other questions/themes for your mid-term, as long as they relate to the topics covered in class. Papers should be approximately 3500-words in length. You are expected to think independently about your possible research question for the term paper, but you should consult with me once you have proposals in mind.

4. Practical exercise (40%) – Due by midnight on December 15

Students will have to choose one of the following assignments throughout the semester:

- **Exercise 1:** Conducting an interview (which hopefully can be useful to your own research project). If you choose this option you will have to hand in to me: your interview transcript (which will include in particular your interview questions, probes, etc.), as well as a short note explaining which interview method (and why) you have been using.
- **Exercise 2:** Provide to me an account of some archival research which you will have conducted (think of all the IO archives in Geneva, the Jean Monnet Centre archives in Lausanne, etc.). This account should in particular focus on presenting the documents found, their possible biases, the way you selected information and constructed a narrative out of it.
- **Exercise 3:** Provide to me field notes which you will have collected while observing a group's behaviour. (the group can indeed be located in Geneva, think of observing IO professionals, joggers along the lake, a student association meeting, guests to an art opening, or even clubbers, for example)

General readings which you may find useful (amongst others):

- Halperin, Sandra and Heath, Oliver (2012). *Political Research. Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, eds (2015), *Process Tracing in the Social Sciences: From Metaphor to Analytical Tool*, CUP.
- Alexander George and Andrew Bennett (2005) *Case Studies and Theory Development*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (2012), *Interpretive Research Design*; Routledge Series on Interpretive Methods
- Edward Schatz, ed. (2009) *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Cambridge University Press.
- Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Course schedule:

All of the required readings will be available on the Moodle page of the course. Additional reading materials may be posted on this page (the instructor will notify the class in this case).

Introduction (September 20)

Epistemology. Facts and the ‘Truth’

- Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures*.
- Max Weber (1977) “Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy,” in Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy, eds., *Understanding and Social Inquiry*.
- Hansen, Lene, Ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies. *Gender Matters in Global Politics: A feminist introduction to International Relations*. ed. / Laura J. Shepherd. 2. ed. London: Routledge, 2015. p. 14-23.
- James Mahoney and Gary Goertz “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research.” *Political Analysis* 14: 227-249.

Qualitative Research and Ethics

- Baez, Benjamin (2002). ‘Confidentiality in Qualitative Research. Reflections on Secrets, Power and Agency’. *Qualitative Research* 2002 2: 35-58.
- ASA Code of Ethics (on-line)
- Elisabeth Jean Wood (2006) “The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones,” *Qualitative Sociology* 29(3): 373-386.
- Esseveld, Johanna and Esseveld, Ron (1992). “Which Side Are You On? Reflections on Methodological Issues in the Study of ‘Distasteful’ Social Movements”, in Diani, Mario and Eyerman, Ron (eds), *Studying Collective Action*. London: Sage, pp. 217-237.

The Comparative Method

- Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. MIT Press. Ch. 3 and Ch. 4.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1971. *Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method*. APSR, 65: 682-693.
- Sidney Tarrow (2010) “The Strategy of Paired Comparison: Toward a Theory of Practice” *Comparative Political Studies* 43(2): 230-259.
- King, Gary, Keohane, Robert O. and Verba, Sidney 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Ch. 6

In Depth Case Studies and Grounded Theory

- Flyvbjerg, Bent (2006). ‘Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research’. *Qualitative Inquiry* 12: 219-245.
- Suddaby, R. (2006) ‘What grounded theory is not’, *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(2): 633–642
- Bowen, Glenn A. 2006. ‘Grounded Theory and Sensitizing Concepts’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5(3), September 2006.

- Jörg Friedrichs and Friedrich Kratochwil (2009) “On Acting and Knowing: How Pragmatism Can Advance International Relations Research and Methodology.” *International Organization* 63(4): 701-731.

Causal Mechanisms and Process Tracing

- Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel. *Process-tracing. From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Read chapter 3 ‘Mechanisms, process and the study of International relations’ and chapter 10 ‘Beyond metaphors: standards, theory, and the ‘where next’ for process-tracing’
- Mahoney, James. 2010. After KKV. The New Methodology of Qualitative Research. *World Politics* 62, no. 1 (January 2010), 120–47
- Littoz-Monnet, Annabelle ‘Expert knowledge as a Strategic Resource: International Bureaucrats and the Shaping of Bioethical Standards, *International Studies Quarterly*, 2017, Issue 3 (for an example of the use of process-tracing)

Interviewing: Semi-structured and in-depth Interviewing

B. Leech, ‘Asking Questions: Techniques for Semi-structured Interviews’, *Political Science and Politics* 35:4 (2002), pp. 665-668.

- D. Richards, ‘Elite Interviewing: Approaches and Pitfalls’, *Politics* 16:3 (1996), pp.199-204.
- Layna Mosley, ed. (2013) *Interview Research in Political Science*. Chapter 1, pp. 1-30.
- Legard, Robin and Keegan, Jill (2003). ‘in-Depth Interviews’, in Ritchie, Jane and Lewis, Jane (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage (chap. 6, pp. 138-169).

For this class two students will practice ‘elite interviewing’ in class (20 min long interview) and others will take note of the interview. The interview will then be discussed in view of answering the following questions: what questions may have led the interviewee to talk ‘more’, what questions potentially led to biased responses, how to deal with deception, how to interpret responses, etc.

Mid-term paper, due by November 3 (midnight)

Focus Groups, Questionnaires

- Liamputtong, Pranee (2011). *Focus Group Methodology. Principles and Practice*. London: Sage, ch. 3-5 (pp. 31-86).
- Finch, Helen and Lewis, Jane (2003). "Focus groups", in Ritchie, Jane and Lewis, Jane (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage (chap. 7, pp. 170-198).
- Morgan, D. (2002). Focus group interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium, & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context & method* (pp. 141-159). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Barbour, R. S., & Kitzinger, J. (1999). *Developing focus group research: Politics, theory and practice* (pp. 1-20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

During this session, we will conduct a practical exercise, and students will be ‘used’ as a focus group (observing people discussing an issue. guided discussion)

Ethnography

- Vrsti, Wanda (2008). "The Strange Case of Ethnography and International Relations". *Millenium: Journal of International Studies* 37: 279-201.
- Wedeen, Lisa (2010) "Ethnographic Work in Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 255-272
- Emerson, Robert M., Fretz, Rachel I. and Shaw, Linda L. (2011). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, ch. 1 and 5.
- Zirakzadeh, C. E. (2009) 'When nationalists are not separatists: Discarding and recovering academic theories while doing fieldwork in the Basque region of Spain', in: E. Schatz (ed) *Political ethnography: What immersion contributes to the study of politics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 97-118

Further reading if you are preparing for field work:

Christopher B. Barrett and Jeffrey W. Cason (2010) *Overseas Research: A Practical Guide*. New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 6-26, 43-50, 82-89, 102-119. Ebook available at: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/graduateinstitute/docDetail.action?docID=10382521>

Archival Research

- Quirk, Joel (2008). "Historical Methods", in Reus-Smit, C. and Snidal, D. (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ian Lustick (1996) "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *American Political Science Review* 90: 605-18.
- Greenstein, Fred I. and Richard H. Immerman. 1992. "What Did Eisenhower Tell Kennedy About Indochina? The Politics of Misperception," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 79, No. 2

For this session two students who will have chosen exercise 2 (see assessment method above) will make a short presentation (15 min) on their 'archival findings' trying to assess them critically in view of which sources they examined and how they interpreted them.

Discourse Analysis

- Herrera, Y. M., & Braumoeller, B. F. (2004). Symposium: Discourse and content analysis. *Qualitative Methods*, 2(1), 15-19.
- Jennifer Milliken. 1999. The study of discourse in IR: a critique of research and methods, *European Journal of International Relations*. 5(2): 225-54
- Hansen, Lene. Discourse analysis, post-structuralism and foreign policy, *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*. ed. / Steve Smith; Amelia Hadfield; Tim Dunne. 2. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. p. 94-109.

Coding

- Saldaña, Johnny (2009). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. London: Sage, pp. 149-191.
- Odena, Oscar (2013). "Using Software to Tell a Trustworthy, Convincing and Useful Story". *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 16(5): 355-372.
- "Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing", Ch 6 from Emerson et al *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*.

Validity and Generalizability in Qualitative Research

- Schofield, Janet Ward (2002). 'Increasing the Generalizability of Qualitative Research', in Huberman, A. Michael and Miles, Matthew B. (eds). *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 171-204
- White, Clarissa, Woodfield, Kandy and Ritchie, Jane (2003). 'Reporting and Presenting Qualitative Data', in Ritchie, Jane et Lewis, Jane (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage, ch. 11.
- Pouliot V. 2007. "Subjectivism": towards a constructivist methodology. *Int. Stud. Q.* 51(2):359–84
- Maxwell, Joseph A. (2002). 'Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research', in Huberman, A. Michael and Miles, Matthew B. (eds), *The Qualitative Research Companion*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 37-64.

Conclusion

Practical exercise, due by December 20 (midnight)