Qualitative Research Methods
Political Science 8104, Spring 2014
Thursday 6:10 – 8:00pm (Funger 207)

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Course Goals and Description
This course emphasizes theoretical, practical, and ethical aspects of conducting qualitative research. We cover the basic techniques for collecting, evaluating, and analyzing data in the social sciences (except statistical analysis). In the beginning of the course, students are introduced to debates over the ethical aspects of using certain qualitative methods. Practical issues such as getting IRB approval and funding for a research project are also covered. During the rest of the semester students are introduced to a wide variety of techniques of data gathering such as participant observation and ethnographic field notes; survey research and questionnaires; in-depth and informal interviewing; historiographic techniques; archival research; and, field experiments. Towards the end of the semester, students are also introduced to various methods for analyzing qualitative data such as content analysis, discourse analysis, and interpretive methods. Emphasis is given on various ways that students can quantify qualitative data. Issues of replicability and external validity of qualitative research findings are also addressed.

Over the course of the semester faculty from our department as well as neighboring institutions will join us in class and discuss their work focusing on the lessons they learned and the challenges they faced while researching their topic.

A central goal of this class is to help the students move from research design to project implementation, data analysis, and reporting. Students are expected to select a research site, “enter it,” get the most out of it, and not hurt the subjects involved in the process. Each student is required to develop a research project (that will not require travel), spend at least two hours per week in "the field" gathering data, and present his/her findings in the last week of class. On top of your individual work, you will work in pairs critiquing/improving each others work during the course of the semester. Individual meetings with me are central to the class but you are also encouraged to reach out to other faculty that have expertise on the topic you are researching.

Course Outline
January 16. Introduction and Overview
January 23. Protection of Human Subjects
January 30. Writing Up a Grant Proposal
February 6. Ethnography: Getting into the “Field”
February 13. Historiographic Techniques
February 20. Participant Observations and Field Notes
February 27. Interviewing (indepth, structured, informal)
March 6. Archival Research
March 20. Surveys and Questionnaires
No class on March 27 (ISA conference)
April 3. Content Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Interpretive Methods
April 10. Field Experiments
April 17. Quantifying Qualitative Data
No class on April 24 (ASN conference)
April 29. Makeup class I. Final Presentations
April 30. Makeup class II. Final Presentations
Final Paper Due on May 11
Texts
There are 4 books, available for purchase at the GW Bookstore (or online). All books are also on reserve at Gelman Library.


Blackboard:
This course will use Blackboard for announcements and readings (see “Electronic Reserves”). I strongly encourage you to ensure you have access to Blackboard as soon as possible.

Course Requirements:
Students will carry out and write up three memos (45%). Students will make occasional presentations to the seminar (15%). At the end of the course, each student will choose between two options for the final paper (40%). Option 1: write a detailed research proposal on a topic for which field research is appropriate. Option 2: write an article draft based on the research carried out.

Memos 1 and 3 involve 3-minute presentations and require a list of specific concerns and questions you want to pose to the class about your work. Finally, a different student will be responsible for a 5 to 10 minute presentation of the reading material each week (involving a 2 page student memo emailed to everyone before class).

Learning Outcomes:
As a result of completing this course, students will:
1. Become familiar with methodological, practical, and ethical aspects of qualitative research.
2. Alert you to the advantages and disadvantages of different techniques for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data in the social sciences.
3. Compose a publishable article or a draft of their dissertation prospectus.
4. Move from being consumers to being producers of knowledge.

Class Policies
Attendance
Please come to class on time. Feel free to bring a cup of coffee/tea or water, but please don’t bring food. Cell phones must be turned off. Laptop are not necessary but if you bring them volume must be set to “mute.”

Grading
Three memos (45%)
Class Presentations (15%)
Final Paper (due May 11) (40%)

Late Work
Late assignments will lose one third of a full grade (e.g., from an A to a A-, to B+ etc.) for each day after the deadline. There are only two exceptions to the late-assignment policy: illness or family emergency. If either of these circumstances applies, you must provide written documentation (such as a doctor’s note...
if you are ill, and you must communicate with me before the assignment is due (i.e., emailing me on the morning the assignment is due and saying you are sick is not acceptable for avoiding a penalty). I am willing to accommodate documented requests, but you must communicate with me before the assignment is due.

Policy on Religious Holidays:
You should notify me during the first week of the semester of your intention to be absent from class on a day(s) of religious observance. If an assignment falls on a day you will be observing a religious holiday, we will work together to find an alternative time to complete the assignment. Please communicate with me about holidays in advance of the original due date. I do not intend to observe any religious holidays.

Academic Integrity
By taking this course, you are agreeing to abide by the University’s Code of Academic Integrity. It states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html

If you are unsure about any aspect of this policy the Writing Center (http://www.gwu.edu/~gwriter/) can provide assistance on citation or other aspects of writing papers. Claiming ignorance about how or when to cite sources is not an excuse for academic dishonesty.

Support for Students outside the classroom
DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to:
http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300
The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:
- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
  http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices

Security
In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.
Course Schedule

January 16. Introduction and Overview
James Mahoney and Gary Goertz. 2006. “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research,” *Political Analysis* 14: 227-49. [electronic reserve]

Recommended:

**Assignment:** Meet with advisor to discuss your research project.

Ethics of Research

January 23. Protection of Human Subjects

**Guest:** Cortni Romaine, Office of Human Research, GWU
https://humanresearch.gwu.edu/faqs

National Science Foundation. Interpreting the Common Rule for the Protection of Human Subjects for Behavioral and Social Science Research. Available at: www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/hsfaqs.jsp

Relevant website that presents a consent template specifically for qualitative research:
http://www.who.int/rpc/research_ethics/informed_consent/en/

Recommended:


Make sure you complete the human subject protection training called COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI) by January 30. You can find the link here: http://humanresearch.gwu.edu/collaborative-irb-training-initiative-citi

### Getting Funding

**January 30. Writing Up a Grant Proposal**


Useful link: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/grant-proposals-or-give-me-the-money/

**Memo 1:** Initial project description/Draft grant proposal (post by February 6 noon). A description of the research project, including a clear statement of the research question, an initial choice of a field site, a description of relevant ethnographic research to be carried out, and a statement of what the researcher expects to find. Prepare a short presentation (handout or powerpoint).

### Collecting Data

**February 6. Ethnography: Getting into the “Field”**

**Guest: Maggie Paxson**


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February 13. Historiographic Techniques

Guest: Evgeny Finkel


February 20. Participant Observations and Field Notes


Recommended:

Memo 3a: First set of field notes, or interview transcripts, or description of archival material, or survey questionnaires, or field experiment design, or historiographic notes, or interview schedule (post by noon on February 27). Prepare a short presentation (handout or powerpoint).

February 27. Interviewing (indepth, structured, informal)

Guest: Sharon Wolchik

Recommended:

March 6. Archival Research
Guest: Eric Grynaviski
Hope Harrison, “Inside the SED Archives,” CWIHP Bulletin [electronic reserve].

Recommended:

March 20. Surveys and Questionnaires
Guest: Rachel Stein
Useful link: http://gking.harvard.edu/vign/

Recommended:

April 3. Content Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Interpretive Methods
April 10. Field Experiments

Guest: Eric Kramon


Memo 3b: Field notes, interview transcripts, description of archival material, survey questionnaires, field experiment design, historiographic notes due on April 10. Prepare a short presentation (handout or powerpoint).

Memo 3c: Second set of field notes, interview transcripts, description of archival material, survey questionnaires, field experiment design, historiographic notes (post by April 17)

Analyzing Qualitative Data

April 17. Quantifying Qualitative Data

Guest: Yon Lupu


Recommended:


**Presentations**

**April 30. Makeup class I. Final Presentations**


**Final Paper Due on May 15**