

PLSC 50901: Qualitative Methods and Research Design
Department of Political Science
University of Chicago

Winter 2015
Time: Monday 9-12
Room: Pick 506
Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00-4:00 pm and by appt.

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Course Description

The goal of this course is to explore when qualitative methods are appropriate for a research question and how to competently engage in such research. The requirements include both careful thinking about methodological issues and a practicum that forces students to get their hands dirty with fieldwork or archival research. All of the topics we discuss are worth an entire course of their own, so by necessity we will be skimming over a vast intellectual area. Instead of trying to cover everything, we will focus on qualitative research designs (and their potential combination with other methods). Each week's reading will combine methodological and applied work.

You will be pursuing your own research in dialogue with the class. I assume that students have active research interests that they can use to hit the ground running. This is a way of yoking the course to your MA thesis or dissertation. You will present your work at the end of the quarter. The combination of a heavy reading load and your own original research is demanding: you should not take this course if you cannot make it a top priority.

Students who have taken PLSC 30500 will gain the most from this class: because of the quarter system's time constraints, I must assume a certain degree of background knowledge about research design, causality, and measurement. Readings may change and if they do I will be sure to let you know. As part of the Department of Political Science's methods offerings, priority in enrollment will be given to Ph.D students in the department.

Course Requirements

Participation in class discussion is essential for a successful seminar. Students are expected to have carefully done all of the required reading and to be prepared to discuss it in detail. Participation will account for 20% of your grade.

Practicum. Students must do applied, hands-on qualitative research. I expect you to choose a research topic and pursue it over the course of the quarter. We will discuss your research in class and treat the course in part as a collaborative workshop. You have two research technique options within this practicum, both of which require a research paper and a series of intermediate assignments building up to the paper. Careful and thorough papers that end up with a non-finding are perfectly acceptable.

Research Technique Options for Practicum

#1. Primary Sources. This assignment requires you to delve into a research topic that is characterized by both a substantial historiographical literature in history and political science and accessible sources. You must identify the state of the debate in extant research and then use primary sources – private papers, government documents, oral histories, etc - to adjudicate between contending theoretical or methodological schools.

The primary sources paper should present a thorough overview of the state of the debate. It should identify key questions and then bring to bear primary sources to help fill this gap. A model here can be found in Trachtenberg's revisionist account of the origins of US policy toward Japan prior to World War II. This option requires you to quickly immerse yourself in the Regenstein Library, meet with our excellent librarians, and assess what hard sources are available on your topic in Chicago, through inter-library loan, and online.

My standards for grading will be very high if you choose this option, since a comfortable sojourn in the Regenstein is not particularly taxing compared to the fieldwork option.

#2. Fieldwork. This course requires you to do sustained interview work in Chicago on a topic broadly related to politics. You must identify the state of the debate in extant research and then use field interviews, ethnography, and participant observation to add new insights. I expect you to invest 3-4 hours a week tracking down interviewees, spending time at field sites, doing interviews, and writing up field notes. Chicago is an incredibly rich research site, on everything from political party organization to international finance to urban poverty. If you want to do interviews over the phone or Skype I am open to this, but you should talk with me about it first. I cannot emphasize enough how useful it is to have experience tracking down and talking to people. Learning by doing is essential.

The fieldwork paper should explain how the project fits into existing literature and describe the findings as well as limitations and unanswered questions. Use specific examples, quotations, photographs, or anything else from the field experience that you think helps to support your argument. If the project did not work as intended, explain why and discuss future fieldwork possibilities. The more detail, the better. I also want an explicit discussion of research ethics and human subjects issues.

Components of the Practicum

Research journal. Every week – starting due week 4 and ending due week 9 – I want a 2-3 page overview of your work process during the previous week. The aim is for you make steady progress on your project while reflecting on the process. If you are doing the fieldwork option, issues discussed could include - who did you call? How did you try to figure out which organizations to contact? How did interviews go? What problems are you running into? Have any surprises struck you yet?

For the primary sources option, issues discussed could include: what private papers or archival collections did you get access to? How are meeting with Reg bibliographers going? Are you having trouble replicating the primary source access of the works you are engaging with? The

more detail, the better (who did you call, when? What are the names of the primary sources you are working with? etc). I should also be able to ask you to confirm that you actually did most of the things you claim. Turning in all of these journal entries with satisfactory depth and detail will account for 15% of your grade.

For pointers, I recommend reading H. Russell Bernard, “Field Notes: How Take Them, Code Them, Manage Them” Chapter 14 of *Research Methods in Anthropology. Qualitative and Quantitative approaches*, 3rd edition, 365-89. Altamira Press, 2002.

Research topic. At the end of Week 3 (5 pm CST on that Friday), you must email me a 3-page summary of your basic research question and which option you have chosen to pursue. This is a prerequisite for continuing in the course. **If you do not have a clear topic that seems workable by the end of Week 3, I recommend dropping the course.**

Research design justification. At the beginning of class on Week 7, you must hand in a 6-page (double-sided, 12 point font, 1-inch margins) paper justifying your research design while engaging with the readings we have done in class so far. Why is the design of your research productive in terms of concept formation, theory development, and/or inference? Why did you choose a particular case or set of cases? What gaps in the literature does it help to fill? What are the limitations of your research design? What can your evidence do – and, just as importantly, not do? Why should I find your case selection and research methodology compelling? This will account for 15% of your grade.

Presentation. You will be required to give an overview of your project in the final course meeting of the quarter (Weeks 9 and 10). Depending on course size, each presentation will range from 15 to 25 minutes (including Q&A), with Powerpoint available if you would like. The presentation will account for 15% of your grade.

Final paper. You need to turn in a hard copy final paper. It should be approximately 25 pages (double-spaced, paginated, 1-inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman, printed 2-sided), and is due by 5 pm CST on March 18, 2015, the Wednesday of finals week. The paper will account for 35% of grade.

Electronic Etiquette

I request that students not use their cell phones during class for any reason. This will allow more focused discussion and intellectual exchange. Laptops should only be used if this will facilitate actively engaging with readings in class.

I aim to be responsive to appropriate email from students. However, please do not expect an answer to your question any sooner than 48 hours after it is sent. Last-minute email questions and requests are bad for everyone involved. I prefer that students use office hours rather than email for asking substantive questions.

Books for Purchase

Henry Brady and David Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry 2nd ed.* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2010)

Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton University Press, 1994)

Adria Lawrence, *Imperial Rule and the Politics of Nationalism: Anti-Colonial Protest in the French Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2013)

James Mahoney, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development: Spanish America in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985)

Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History* (Princeton University Press, 2006)

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on the Chalk e-reserves site. Other readings will be linked to with a URL, available through the Library's electronic databases, or drawn from our required books.

Academic Integrity

This is the University of Chicago's Academic Integrity statement:

“It is contrary to justice, to academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit the statements or ideas of work of others as one's own. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University's disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously. Proper acknowledgment of another's ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is expected. In particular, if any written or electronic source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source should be identified by author, title, and page number, or by website and date accessed. Any doubts about what constitutes "use" should be addressed to the instructor.”

If you have questions, ask me and/or consult Charles Lipson's *Doing Honest Work in College* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Any violations of university standards will be automatically referred to higher authorities.

Course Schedule

I. January 5. Introduction to Course and Overview of Research Ethics

Guests: UChicago IRB staff to discuss ethics and human subjects

Laitin, David. 2002. “Comparative Politics: The State of the Sub-discipline,” in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, eds. Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner. (New York: Norton), 630-659. Online version can be found at:

https://web.stanford.edu/group/laitin_research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Cpapsa.pdf

Shapiro, Ian. 2002. "Problems, Methods, and Theories in the Study of Politics, or What's Wrong with Political Science and What to Do about It." *Political Theory* 30, 4: 596-619.:
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3072623>

Peter Hall. "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research." In James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapter 11, pp. 373-404.*

Ahmed, Amel, and Rudra Sil. "When Multi-Method Research Subverts Methodological Pluralism—or, Why We Still Need Single-Method Research." *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 04 (2012): 935–953.

II. January 12. Concept Formation

Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." *The American Political Science Review* 64(4): 1033–1053.

Brady and Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, pp. 132-140.

Bevir, Mark, and Asaf Kedar. "Concept Formation in Political Science: An Anti-Naturalist Critique of Qualitative Methodology." *Perspectives on Politics* 6, no. 3 (2008): 503–517.

David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (April 1997) pp. 430-451

Schedler, Andreas. 2001. "Measuring Democratic Consolidation." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36(1): 66–92.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. 2002. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 51–65.

Coppedge, Michael et al. 2011. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(02): 247–67.

III. January 19. NO CLASS: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Note: Research Topic due by 5 pm Friday at end of Week 3. Use your time for this week nailing down the topic and reading ahead for January 26's class, which has a large reading load.

IV. January 26. Case Selection and Small-N Inference

King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, chapters 4 and 6.

Lieberman, Evan S. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 03 (2005): 435–452.

Brady and Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, pp. 140-159.

Snyder, Richard. 2001. "Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36(1): 93–110.

James Mahoney, *Colonialism and Post-Colonial Development*, ALL.

Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *The American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529–45.

Research journal entry due.

V. February 2. Process Tracing

King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, chapter 3.

Brady and Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, chapter 10.

Bennett, Andrew, "Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective," in Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 702-21.*

Bennett, Andrew, and Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Process tracing: from philosophical roots to best practices." In Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel, eds. *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chapter 1 .*

Adria Lawrence, *Imperial Rule and the Politics of Nationalism*, ALL.

Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chapters 7 ("A Theory of Selective Violence") and 9 ("Empirics II: Microcomparative Evidence").* Skim Chapter 7 to become familiar with core argument/predictions.

Research journal entry due.

VI. February 9. Interviews and Focus Groups

Elisabeth Wood. "Field Methods." In Charles Boix and Susan Stokes (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. 2007.*

Rubin, H. and Rubin, I. (1995). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. chapters 4-5*

Morgan, D. L. (1996). "Focus Groups." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22: 129-152.

Paul R. Brass, *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence*.

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pages 20-31, Chapter 3 (“Theft of an Idol”).*

Thachil, Tariq. 2011. “Embedded Mobilization: Nonstate Service Provision as Electoral Strategy in India.” *World Politics* 63(03): 434–69.

Fujii, Lee Ann. 2010. “Shades of Truth and Lies: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence.” *Journal of Peace Research* 47(2): 231–41.

Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. 2013. “Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War.” *American Political Science Review* 107(03): 418–32.

Research journal entry due.

VII. February 16. Ethnography

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation Of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1977), chapter 1, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture” (pp. 3-32).*

Wedeen, Lisa. “Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, no. 1 (2010): 255–272.

Schatz, Edward, ed. 2009. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2009), Introduction (Schatz, “Ethnographic Immersion and the Study of Politics”).*

James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, ALL.

Fenno, Richard. 1978. Appendix -Notes on Method: Participant Observation. From *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Little, Brown, and Company, 249-295.*

Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2012. Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective. *American Political Science Review* 106 (03): 517–532.

Research journal entry due.

Research Design Justification due.

XIII. February 23. Archives and Historiography

Lustick, Ian. 1996. “History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias,” *American Political Science Review* 90: 605-18.

Wohlforth, “A Certain Idea of Science: How International Relations Theory Avoids the New Cold War History,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1999), pp. 39-60

Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History*, chapters 3 and 5, skim chapter 4.

Saunders, Elizabeth N. 2009. "Transformative Choices: Leaders and the Origins of Intervention Strategy." *International Security* 34 (2): 119–161.

Yarhi-Milo, Keren. 2013. "In the Eye of the Beholder: How Leaders and Intelligence Communities Assess the Intentions of Adversaries." *International Security* 38 (1): 7–51.

Carson, Austin. "Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Competition and Escalation Management in the Korean War." *International Organization* (forthcoming). (Chalk course documents)

Research journal entry due.

IX. March 2. Student Research Presentations

Research journal entry due.

X. March 9. Student Research Presentations

March 18: Final paper due by 5 pm CST (hard copy to box outside my office)