

PLSC 50901: Qualitative Methods
Department of Political Science
University of Chicago

Winter 2013
Time: Monday 9-12
Room: Pick 506
Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00-4:00 pm and by appt.

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Course Description

This course examines small-N research designs and methods for engaging in qualitative research. We will discuss concept formation, case selection, comparative case studies, process-tracing, combinations with other methods, and the virtues and limitations of different approaches to theory development and causal inference. We will then consider and work with some of the tools that are often associated with qualitative research, including ethnography, interviews, archival work, and multi-methods combinations.

The goal of this course is help you figure out where and why qualitative research is appropriate to a research question and how to most competently engage in this research when it is appropriate. 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. 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 ongoing or nascent MA thesis or dissertation. To enhance the workshop environment of the course, several sessions will involve current PhD students and postdocs coming to class to share their experiences and their projects.

Students who have taken PLSC 30500 will gain the most from this class: because of the quarter system's time constraints, I assume a certain degree of background knowledge about research design, causality, and measurement. Many of the topics we discuss are worth an entire course of their own, so by necessity we will only be skimming over a vast intellectual area. This course is therefore something of a survey that can hopefully guide your research and future coursework. 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. The readings mix methodological and substantive research. 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, both of which require a research paper and a series of intermediate assignments building up to the paper.

Research Technique Options

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

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. This quarter I will be learning with you as I explore archival and primary sources for my own research.

#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 and 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 a background tracking down and talking to people as you move forward in your research: learning by doing is essential.

The fieldwork paper should explain how the project fits into existing literature and describe the findings as well as any limitations and ongoing 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 20% of your grade.

For pointers, I recommend reading H. Russell Bernard. 2002. 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.

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 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? At the end of the day, 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 (Week 10). Depending on course size, each presentation will range from 10 to 20 minutes, with Powerpoint available if you prefer. If there is a large enrollment, we may break this up over the last couple of weeks. The presentation will account for 10% of your grade.

Final paper. You need to turn in a final summary paper of approximately 20-25 pages (double-spaced, paginated, 1-inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman) due on March 20, 2013, which is the Wednesday of finals week. The paper will account for 35% of grade. It should build on your research design justification by dealing with the specific issues identified above for each option.

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 bringing readings to class.

I aim to be responsive to 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

These are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op.

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

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (MIT Press, 2005)

John Gerring, *Case Study Research* (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

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

James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 2003)

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

Week 1/January 7: 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:
<http://www.stanford.edu/~dlaitin/papers/Cpapsa.doc>

Smith, Rogers M. 2007. "Systematizing the Ineffable: A Perestroika's Methods for Finding a Good Research Topic." *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research* 5, 1.:
<http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/uploadedFiles/moynihan/cqrm/Newsletter5.1.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.brynmawr.edu/socialwork/GSSW/schram/ianshapiro.pdf>

Wood, Elisabeth. "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones," *Qualitative Sociology*, 2006, 29, pp. 373-386.
<http://web.mnstate.edu/robertsb/445/EthicalChallenges%20of%20Field%20Research%20in%20Conflict%20Zones.pdf>

Week 2/January 14: Concept Formation and Theory Development

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

Goertz, Gary, *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), Chapter 2 "Structuring and Theorizing Concepts"*

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

Bevir, Mark, and Asaf Kedar. "Concept Formation in Political Science: An Anti-Naturalist Critique of Qualitative Methodology." *Perspectives on Politics* 6, no. 03 (2008): 503–517.

George and Bennett chap 1, 6, 11

King et al, pp. 46-63

Brady and Collier, chapter 5, and pp. 126-140

Elman, Colin. "Explanatory Typologies in Qualitative Studies of International Politics," *International Organization* 59 (2005), pp. 293-326

Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, "When Nationalists are Not Separatists: Discarding and Recovering Academic Theories While Doing Fieldwork in the Basque Region of Spain," in Edward Schatz, ed., *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*, chapter 4, pp. 97-118*

Week 3: Case Selection: Promise and Pitfalls

Rescheduled session due to MLK Day: Wednesday afternoon, January 23, 1:30-4:20 pm (room TBD)

King, Keohane, and Verba, chapters 4 and 6

Geddes, Barbara, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," *Political Analysis* 2 (1990), pp. 131-50

Collier, David, and James Mahoney, "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research," *World Politics* 49 (October 1996), pp. 56-91

Gerring, chapters 2, 3, 5

Brady and Collier, pp. 140-159

George & Bennett, chapter 4

Mahoney, James, "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research," *World Politics* 62:1 (January 2010).

Research Topic Due via email by 5 pm on Friday, January 25

Week 4/January 28. Process-Tracing and Causal Mechanisms

King, Keohane, and Verba, chapter 3

Brady and Collier, 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.*

Collier, David. 2011. "Understanding Process Tracing." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44 (04): 823-830.

Hedstrom, Peter, and Richard Swedberg. "Social Mechanisms: An Introductory Essay." In *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*, edited by Peter Hedstrom and Richard Swedberg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.*

Elster, Jon. "A Plea for Mechanisms." In *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social*

Theory, edited by Peter Hedstrom and Richard Swedberg, 45–73. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)*

Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, chapter 11.

George and Bennett, chapter 10

Gerring, chapter 7

Beck, Nathaniel. “Is Causal-Process Observation an Oxymoron?” *Political Analysis* 14, no. 3 (June 20, 2006): 347–352. doi:10.1093/pan/mpj015.

Beck, Nathaniel. “Causal Process ‘Observation’: Oxymoron or (Fine) Old Wine.” *Political Analysis* 18, no. 4 (September 21, 2010): 499–505. doi:10.1093/pan/mpq023.

Collier, David, Henry E. Brady, and Jason Seawright. “Outdated Views of Qualitative Methods: Time to Move On.” *Political Analysis* 18, no. 4 (September 21, 2010): 506–513. doi:10.1093/pan/mpq022.

Research journal entry due.

Week 5/February 4. Comparative-Historical Analysis: Path-Dependence and Temporality

Pierson, Paul. 2001. “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, And the Study of Politics.” *American Political Science Review* 94: 251-267.

Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, chapters 1, 5, 10

Elster, Jon, Robert H. Bates, Avner Greif, Margaret Levi, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, and Barry Weingast. “Rational Choice History: A Case of Excessive Ambition.” *The American Political Science Review* 94, no. 3 (September 2000): 685. doi:10.2307/2585842.

Aminzade, Ronald. 1992. “Historical Sociology and Time.” *Sociological Methods and Research* 20, 4: 456-480.

Abbott, Andrew. “Transcending General Linear Reality.” *Sociological Theory* 6, no. 2 (1988): 169. doi:10.2307/202114.

Grzymala-Busse, Anna. “Time Will Tell? Temporality and the Analysis of Causal Mechanisms and Processes.” *Comparative Political Studies* 44, no. 9 (September 1, 2011): 1267–1297. doi:10.1177/0010414010390653.

Slater, Dan, and Erica Simmons. “Informative Regress: Critical Antecedents in Comparative Politics.” *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 7 (July 1, 2010): 886–917. doi:10.1177/0010414010361343.

Buthe, Tim. Taking Temporality Seriously: Modeling History and the Use of Narratives as

Evidence,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 96, No. 3 (September 2002), pp. 481-493.

Research journal entry due.

Week 6/February 11. Multi-Method Research

Laitin, David D. “The Perestroika Challenge to Social Science.” *Politics & Society* 31, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 163–184. doi:10.1177/0032329202250167.

Flyvbjerg, Bent. “A Perestroika Straw Man Answers Back: David Laitin and Phronetic Political Science.” *Politics & Society* 32, no. 3 (September 1, 2004): 389–416. doi:10.1177/0032329204267290.

Brady and Collier, chapter 14

Dunning, Thad. 2008. [Natural and Field Experiments: The Role of Qualitative Methods](#). *Qualitative Methods* 6 (2).

[“Symposium: Multi-Methods Work, Dispatches from the Front Lines,”](#) *Qualitative Methods*, Spring 2007, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 9-27.

Lieberman, Evan S. “Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research.” *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 03 (2005): 435–452. doi:10.1017/S0003055405051762.

Rohlfing, Ingo. “What You See and What You Get Pitfalls and Principles of Nested Analysis in Comparative Research.” *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 11 (November 1, 2008): 1492–1514. doi:10.1177/0010414007308019.

Sekhon, Jasjeet S. 2004. “Quality Meets Quantity: Case Studies, Conditional Probability, and Counterfactuals.” *Perspectives on Politics* 2(02): 281–293.

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. doi:10.1017/S1537592712002836.

Research journal entry due.

Week 7/February 18. Archives and Historiography

Guest: Lindsey O’Rourke, Ph.D student in political science

Selections from O’Rourke dissertation

Greenstein, Fred I. and Richard H. Immerman, "What Did Eisenhower Tell Kennedy About

Indochina? The Politics of Misperception," *Journal of American History*, v. 79, no. 2 (September 1992).

Lustick, Ian. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *APSR* 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

Cameron G. Thies, "A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations," *International Studies Perspectives* 3(4), November 2002, 351–372.

Trachtenberg, chapters 3,5,6,7. The Appendices are invaluable, and his website has much more: <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/trachtenberg/>

Lieberman, Evan. "Bridging the Qualitative-Quantitative Divide: Best Practices in the Development of Historically Oriented Replication Databases." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (2010): 37-59 [skim]

Research journal entry due.

Research Design Justification due.

Week 8/February 25. Interviews and Fieldwork Preparation

Guests: Morgan Kaplan, Ph.D student in political science; Marie-Eve Reny, postdoc in political science; Adam Ziegfeld, postdoc in political science

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

Teresa Odendahl and Aileen M. Shaw, "Interviewing Elites," in Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 299–316.*

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.

"Symposium: Interview Methods in Political Science." 2002. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35: 663-688.

"Symposium on Field Research," APSA-QM: Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section on Qualitative Methods, 2(1), spring 2004, pp. 2-14
<http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/uploadedFiles/moynihan/cqrm/Newsletter2.1.pdf>

Hertel, S., Singer, M.M., Van Cott, D.L. (2009). "Field Research in Developing Countries: Hitting

the Road Running.” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42(2): 305-309

Research journal entry due.

Week 9/March 4. Ethnography and Participant Observation

Guest: Nick Smith, Ph.D student in political science

Chapter of Nick Smith’s dissertation

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation Of Cultures*. Basic Books, 1977, chapter 1, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture” (pp. 3-32), and chapter 15, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight” (pp. 412-454)*

James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (Yale 1985), chapter 1 “Small Arms Fire in the Class War” pp. 1-27, chapter 5 “History According to Winners and Losers,” pp. 138-183*[

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

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge. [Ch. 1 and 2.*

Emerson, R., Fretz, R. and Shaw, L. (1995). “Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing.” (in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 142-168.)*

Research journal entry due.

Week 10/March 11. Student Research Presentations

March 20: Final paper due.