

## POLS 621—Qualitative Methods (Spring 2009)

Updated 3/13/09

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-2pm; by appointment

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar introduces students to the use of qualitative research methods in the social sciences, particularly as applied in the discipline of political science. The course is designed to give you a broad overview through a combination of theoretical discussion and hands-on practical experience. We begin with a review of the broad political, philosophical and ethical debates surrounding the use of qualitative methods. We then turn to questions of research design with special attention to case study research, which is widely used in political science. Following this introduction, we will spend the remainder of the semester covering the “nuts and bolts” of qualitative research: gathering data through interviews, focus groups, observation and archival research; strategies for recording, coding and analyzing qualitative data; and evaluating and presenting qualitative research. Upon completion of this course, students will have a solid foundation for employing qualitative methods in their own social science research projects.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

1. Seminar Attendance and Participation: (10%; 30 points) Class meetings will follow a seminar format (e.g. there will be few if any lectures). Regular attendance and thoughtful participation in class discussions will be integral to the success of the seminar. Students are expected to attend all seminar meetings and to complete all course assignments in a timely manner. Any exceptions must be cleared with the instructor, preferably in advance. Each student will begin the semester with a B+ for this portion of the final grade. This grade will be raised in accordance with the quality of the student's participation over the course of the semester. Missing more than one class meeting without a university-approved excuse will negatively affect this portion of the final grade. Students may consult with the instructor at any time for an assessment of participation.
2. Weekly Thought Papers: (10%; 30 points) Prior to each seminar meeting, students should prepare a one-page thought paper reflecting on issues raised in the week's reading assignment and identifying topics for further consideration. *These are not meant to be formal synthesis papers.* Rather, this is an opportunity for students to raise questions and/or make comments on the assigned material and, more importantly, to make connections between the readings and their own research interests. Thought papers should be submitted on RamCT using the assignment tool **no later than 10am on the day of class** so that we can focus on common critiques, concerns and questions during our seminar meeting. Students must submit 9 thought papers over the course of the semester.
3. Human Subjects Training: (10%; 30 points) Students will complete a web-based training program on research using human subjects through the Collaborative IRB Training Institute (CITI). This self-paced course consists of 11 basic modules. Students are required to obtain an overall score of at least 80% in order to obtain the CSU training certificate. **Due Monday February 2.**
4. Field Exercises: (30%; 45 points each) Each student will complete two field exercises associated with different techniques for gathering qualitative data. All students will complete an interview exercise then students will have a choice between a focus group or

observations exercise. For each exercise, students will plan and carry out data gathering, prepare/record data and conduct preliminary analysis. In addition, students will prepare a 3-5 page paper reflecting on their experience. Specific guidelines for each field exercise will be handed out separately. **Due March 13 and April 17.**

5. Research Proposal Project: (40%; 120 points) Over the course of the semester, students will design a research project with a substantial qualitative research component. The project will consist of several elements:
  - a. *Research Topic Write-Up*: (5%; 15 points) On **Tuesday February 17**, students will submit a 2-3 page paper via RamCT that identifies and justifies a specific research question and presents preliminary thoughts on how one might go about addressing the question. Prior to class on February 20, students will be divided into small groups and each student will prepare written comments on 3 research write-ups.
  - b. *Draft Proposal*: (5%; 15 points) On **Tuesday April 28**, students will submit a draft research proposal (10-15 pages) containing a detailed plan for carrying out a qualitative research project. Prior to class on May 1, students will be divided into small groups and each student will prepare written comments on 2 or 3 draft proposals.
  - c. *Final Proposal*: (30%; 90 points) Students will have the opportunity to revise their research proposals based on peer feedback. Final proposals will be due by **3pm Wednesday May 13**.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

The following books have been ordered for the course and should be available in the CSU bookstore:

Barbour, Rosaline. 2007. *Doing Focus Groups*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Berg, Bruce L. Berg. 2007. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, 6e*. Boston: Pearson. (Be sure to get the 6<sup>th</sup> edition).

Brady, Henry E. and David Collier, eds. 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools; Shared Standards*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Kvale, Steinar. 2008. *Doing Interviews*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Maxwell, Joseph A. 2005. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Additional readings marked with an \* will be made available electronically through RamCT. Each week, I've identified a number of recommended readings in addition to the required readings. Students are only responsible for completing the required readings. The recommended readings are provided for students who may wish to learn more about a particular topic.

## **TOPICS AND TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

1/23 Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Political/Social Science

1/30	Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research
2/6	Qualitative Research Design
2/13	Case Studies
2/20	Proposal Writing Workshop: Project Write-ups
2/27	Interviews
3/6	Recording and Coding Data
3/13	Reflections on Field Exercise I/Archival Research
3/20	No Class—Spring Break
3/27	Focus Groups
4/3	Observations
4/10	Analyzing Qualitative Research
4/17	Reflections on Field Exercise II/Q-sort
4/24	Evaluating and Presenting Qualitative Research
5/1	Proposal Writing Workshop: Draft Proposals
5/8	Revisiting Disciplinary Debates about Qualitative Methods

## WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS

### 1/23: Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Political/Social Science

Barbour, ix-xvi

\*Bennett, Andrew, Aharon Barth, and Kenneth R. Rutherford. 2003. Do We Preach What We Practice? A Survey of Methods in Political Science Journals and Curricula. *PS: Political Science and Politics* (July): 373-378.

Berg, 1-18

Brady and Collier, 3-20

\*Hochstetler, Kathryn and Melinda Laituri. 2006. Methods in International Environmental Politics. In M. Betsill, K. Hochstetler and D. Stevis (eds) *Palgrave Advances in International Environmental Politics* (London: Palgrave).

\*Neuman, W. L. 2003. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 5e. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, pp. 68-94.

\*Prakash, Deepa and Audie Klotz, eds. 2007. Should We Discard the “Qualitative” versus “Quantitative Distinction? *International Studies Review* 9: 753-770.

### Further reading:

Ackerly, Brooke A., Maria Stern and Jacqui True, eds. 2006. *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Denzin and Lincoln, eds. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3e. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Fischer, F., and Forester, J. (eds).1993. *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Gerring, J. (2001) *Social Science Methodology: A Critical Framework*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marsh, D. and G. Stoker, eds. (2002) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 2nd edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).

Sigelman, Lee and M. Elizabeth Sanders, eds. 2006. Thematic Issue on the Evolution of Political Science, in Recognition of the Centennial of the Review. *American Political Science Review* 100(4).

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### **1/30: Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research**

Assignment: Complete the CITI web-based training program for social and behavioral sciences <http://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp?language=english>. This self-paced training consists of 11 modules. Each module contains a series of short readings and a 3-4 question quiz and takes approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. You must receive an overall passing score of 80% in order to receive a CSU training certificate. E-mail or turn in a printed copy of your training certificate by 5pm Monday February 2.

Berg, 19-88; 222-238

Kvale, 23-32

\*Punch, Maurice (1998) "Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research" in N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds.) *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE), 156-184.

\*Peritore, N. P. (1990) "Reflections on Dangerous Fieldwork," *American Sociologist*, 21 (4): 359-372.

\*Woliver, L. R. (2002) "Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Interviewing," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 35 (4): 677-678.

#### Further Reading:

American Political Science Association. 2008. *A Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science*, 2e. Washington, DC: APSA. Available at <http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/ethicsguideweb.pdf>

American Sociological Association. 1999. *Code of Ethics and Policies and Procedures of the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics*. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association. <http://www.asanet.org/galleries/default-file/Code%20of%20Ethics.pdf>

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### **2/6: Qualitative Research Design**

Brady and Collier, 169-192

Maxwell, xi-116

\*Read, M., and Marsh, D. (2002) "Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods," in D. Marsh and G. Stoker (eds) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 2nd edition, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 231-248.

#### Further Reading:

Creswell, J. W. (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

King, G., Keohane, R. O., and Verba, S. (1994) *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Marshall, Catherine and Gretchen B. Rossman. 2006. *Designing Qualitative Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Van Evera, S. 1997. *A Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

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### **2/13: Case Studies**

Berg 283-302

Brady and Collier 123-168

George and Bennett 1-36; 65-126; 151-180

Further Reading:

- Gerring, John. 2004. What is a Case Study and What is it Good For? *American Political Science Review* 98 (2): 341-354.
- Mitchell, R. B., and Bernauer, T. (1998) "Empirical Research on International Environmental Policy: Qualitative Case Studies," *Journal of Environment and Development*, 7 (1): 4-31.
- Stake, R. E. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
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**2/20: Proposal Writing Workshop I**

Assignment: On Tuesday February 17, submit a 2-3 page paper via RamCT that a) identifies a specific research question, b) justifies the question in terms of its expected theoretical and/or practical contributions, and c) presents initial thoughts on how you might go about addressing the question. Students will be divided into small groups and each student will be responsible for preparing written comments on 3 research write-ups. Bring these written comments to class on February 20. During class, we will discuss a few write-ups collectively then divide into small groups for the remainder of the class session.

Maxwell 117-158

- \*Przeworski, Adam and Frank Salomon. 1995. Social Science Research Council. The Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applicants to the Social Science Research Council. Available at [http://fellowships.ssrc.org/art\\_of\\_writing\\_proposals/](http://fellowships.ssrc.org/art_of_writing_proposals/)
- \*Locke, Lawrence F., Waneen Wyrick Spirduso and Stephen J. Silverman. 2000. *Proposals that Work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 149-156; 173-180.
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**2/27: Interviews**

Berg 89-143

- \*Goldstein, K. 2002. Getting in the Door: Sampling and Completing Elite Interviews. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 35 (4): 669-672.
- Kvale 1-22; 33-100; 136-145
- \*Weiss, R. S. (1995) *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press, pp. 15-38.

Further Reading:

- Rubin, Herbert J. and Irene S. Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Feldman, M. S., J. Belland M. T. Berger. 2003. *Gaining Access: A Practical and Theoretical Guide for Qualitative Researchers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Fontana, A. and J. H. Fry. 2003. The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
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**3/6: Coding and Analyzing Qualitative Data**

Barbour 115-144

Berg 303-339

Emerson et al. 142-168

- \*Gibbs, Graham. 2007. *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 105-142.
- \*Hajer, Maarten A. 2006. Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning. In *Words Matter in Policy and Planning: Discourse Theory and Method in the Social Sciences*, edited by M. van den Brink and T. Metzke. Utrecht: Netherlands Graduate School of Urban and Regional Research, pp. 65-74. Available at [http://www.maartenhajer.nl/images/stories//20080204\\_MH\\_wordsmatter\\_ch4.pdf](http://www.maartenhajer.nl/images/stories//20080204_MH_wordsmatter_ch4.pdf)
- Kvale ,101-119.
- \*Symposium: Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis. *Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section on Qualitative Methods*. 2(1): 15-39.

Further Reading:

- Aberbach, J. D. and B. A. Rockman (2002) "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 35 (4): 673-676. Available from <[www.apsanet.org](http://www.apsanet.org)>.
- Coffey, A., and Atkinson, P. (1996) *Making Sense of Qualitative Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Miles, M. B., and Huberman, A. M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis, Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 16-89.
- Strauss, A., and Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory, 2nd edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

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**3/13: Reflections on Field Exercise I and Archival Research**

Assignment: *Field Exercise #1 Due*

Berg 239-282

- \*Neuman, W.L. 2003. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 5e*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, pp. 402-437.
- \*Prior, Lindsay. 2008. Repositioning Documents in Social Research. *Sociology*. 42(5): 821-836.
- \*Thies, Cameron. 2002. A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations. *International Studies Perspectives*. 3: 351-372.

Further Reading:

- Hill, Michael R. 1993. *Archival Strategies and Techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications
- Prior, Lindsay. 2003. *Using Documents in Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Hodder, Ian. 2003. The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture. In *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, N. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, eds. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

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**3/27: Focus Groups**

Barbour 1-115

Berg 144-170

- \*Greenbaum, Tom. 2008. The Case Against Internet Focus Groups. *MRA Alert Newsletter*, April. Available at <http://www.groupsplus.com/pages/case2.htm>.
- \*Turney, Lyn and Catherine Pocknee. 2005. Virtual Focus Groups: New Frontiers in Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 4(2): 32-43.
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Further Reading:

- Morgan, David. 1996. Focus Groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 22: 129-152.  
Kidd, Pamela S. and Mark B. Parshall. 2000. Getting the Focus and the Group: Enhancing Analytical Rigor in Focus Group Research. *Qualitative Health Research*. 10(3): 293-308.
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**4/3: Observations**

Berg 171-215

Emerson et al. 1-141; 211-216

- \*Symposium: Field Research. 2004. *Qualitative Methods: Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section on Qualitative Methods* 2(1): 2-14.

Further Reading:

- Fenno, Jr., Richard F. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.  
Geertz, Clifford. 1973. The Balinese Cockfight. In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.  
Iannello, K.P. 1992. *Decisions without Hierarchy: Feminist Interventions in Organization Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge.  
Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson and Lyn. H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.  
Neuman, William L. 2003. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 5e. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, pp. 363-401.  
Rabinow, Paul 1977. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley: University of California Press.  
Angrosino, M.V. and K.A. Mays de Perez. 2003. Rethinking Observation: From Method to Context. In *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, eds. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
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**4/10: Causal Analysis in Qualitative Research**

Brady and Collier 105-121

George and Bennett 181-262

- \*Steinberg, Paul F. 2007. Causal Assessment in Small-N Policy Studies. *The Policy Studies Journal* 35 (2):181-204.

- \*Tetlock, Philip E., and Aaron Belkin. 1996. Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological and Psychological Perspectives. In *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological and Psychological Perspectives*, Tetlock and Belkin (eds.). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1-38.

Further Reading:

- Miles, M. B., and Huberman, A. M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis, Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 50-286; Appendix.  
Coffey, Amanda and Paul Atkinson. 1996. *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.  
Rihoux, Benoit and Charles Ragin, eds. 2008. *Configurational Comparative Methods: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.  
Lebow, Richard Ned. 2000. What's So Different about Counterfactuals? *World Politics* 52: 550-

#### **4/17: Reflections on Field Exercise 2/Q-method**

Assignment: *Field exercise #2 due*

\*Durning, Dan. 1999. The transition from traditional to postpositivist policy analysis: A role for Q-methodology. *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management* 18 (3): 389-411.

\*Barry, John, and John Proops. 1999. "Seeking Sustainability Discourses with the Q Methodology." *Ecological Economics* 28 (3):337-45.

#### Further Reading

Burns, M. & Cheng, A. S. (2007). Framing the need for active management for wildfire mitigation and forest restoration. *Society & Natural Resources*, 20, 245-259.

Steelman, T. A. & Maguire, L. A. (1999). Understanding participant perspectives: Q-methodology in national forest management. *Journal of Policy Analysis and management*, 18, 3, 361-388.

Webler, T., Tuler, S. & Kruger, R. (2001). What is a good public participation Process? Five perspectives from the public. *Environmental Management*, 21, 3, 435-450.

Brown, Steven R., Dan W. Durning, and Sally Selden. 1999. "Q Methodology." In *Handbook of Research Methods in Public Administration*, ed. G. J. Miller and M. L. Whicker. New York: Marcel Dekker.

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#### **4/24: Evaluating and Presenting Qualitative Research**

Berg 340-366

Kvale 120-135

\*Richards, Lyn and Janice M. Morse. 2007. *User's Guide to Qualitative Methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 189-226.

\*Rubin, Herbert J. and Irene S. Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 2e. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 246-273.

#### Further reading

Emerson et al. 169-210

Miles, Matthew B., and A. Michael Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis, Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. 298-306.

Silverman, David and Amir Marvasti. 2008. *Doing Qualitative Research: A comprehensive guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

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#### **5/1: Proposal Writing Workshop II**

Assignment: Submit a draft proposal outlining a research project with a significant qualitative component to your peer review group by Wednesday at 5pm. Come prepared to discuss and offer constructive feedback on two proposals.

#### Readings:

\*Locke, Lawrence F., Waneen Wyrick Spirduso and Stephen J. Silverman. 2000. *Proposals that Work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, pp. 3-23; 63-81; 101-117.

Review Maxwell, 117-158

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**5/8: Revisiting the Debates about Qualitative Methods in Social Science**

Brady and Collier book, 195-266.

\*Klandermans, Bert, Suzanne Staggenborg and Sidney Tarrow. 2002. Conclusion: Blending Methods and Building Theories in Social Movement Research. In *Methods of Social Movement Research*, ed. By B. Klandermans and S. Staggenborg. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 314-350.

\* Tickner, J. Ann. 2006. Feminism meets International Relations: Some methodological issues. In *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*, B. A. Ackerly, M. Stern and J. True, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 19-41.

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**5/14: Research Proposals due by noon**