

POLS 585
GRADUATE SEMINAR IN QUALITATIVE METHODS
Spring 2006 / Wednesday 9-12 pm / TB 313

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 2:30-4pm
1/24/05

Description

This is a graduate seminar for students interested in employing qualitative methods in social, especially political, science research. By "qualitative," I refer to research designs that 1) draw on a small number of cases, 2) adopt relatively low levels of measurement, 3) do not make use of statistical tests, and 4) rely on relatively detailed knowledge of cases. It is important to note that this course focuses primarily on the *utility and design* of qualitative research. With the exception of "interviewing," the course does not focus on the tools for gathering data for such research. But this is an applied course in that I presume that an understanding of qualitative methods requires a "hands-on" application of such methods to your own research. Therefore, all written assignments involve such application.

The fact that qualitative designs do not use statistical tests does not imply some inherent opposition between quantitative and qualitative work. In many cases, qualitative research can and should follow the basic logic of mainstream quantitative research. But qualitative research, if done well, also allows us to go beyond (and thus to complement) most quantitative research in a number of ways. These include, for example: developing new theories and hypotheses; identifying causal mechanisms as well as causal effects; developing concepts and appropriate variable operationalization; assessing causation in situations where ostensibly similar cases actually differ from each other; and assessing causation in situations where the "world" does not conform to assumptions required by standard regression analysis, especially where causation is complex due to factors such as strategic interaction among key actors (and game theory is often helpful here), or situations where the same outcome results from different combinations of variables.

A word of warning: My experience is that, at least at this point in time, good qualitative research poses significant challenges and may even be more difficult than quantitative and formal, game theoretical work. Three factors may help to explain the difficulty students are now encountering: The move toward rigor in qualitative work is relatively young, and most graduate programs still don't have a course devoted explicitly to qualitative methods. As a result, the guidelines or rules of good qualitative research are, at this point, much less codified than those for statistical work. Further, qualitative researchers do not have the "clear" results generated by correlation coefficients. And finally, in-depth research on a small number of cases often leads researchers to get lost in

(admittedly) fascinating details and stories that provide little basis for knowledge accumulation.

The course is broadly divided into the following sections:

Ontology and causality: How does the world of politics actually work? Assuming that our goal is to develop explanations for political phenomena, what kinds of causality ought we to expect? What kinds of causal inferences are possible and useful? What kinds of theoretical objectives are consistent with such expectations? And more specifically, what is the state of literature regarding your particular area of interests? What are the gaps in our understanding of your question and how do those gaps influence your objectives?

Concepts and variables: It's one thing to conduct research on phenomena such as democracy, autonomy, development, veto players, corporatism, gender or racial discrimination, congressional oversight, or leadership. But it's quite another to make sure that such concepts "travel" to different cases. And perhaps most critically, it's still another to translate such concepts into measurable variables. This last step often trips students up, and not surprisingly: Qualitative researchers lack off-the-shelf data sets and are typically compelled to develop their own coding rules and to defend the validity of their operationalizations, a process that often inspires fear, insecurity, evasion, and/or mental paralysis.

Research design: Here's where the rubber really hits the road. Assuming that we're operating with a small number of cases, how do we identify and select the cases? Can we get any leverage out of a single case as opposed to several? What's the difference between a "case" and an "observation"? How do we know what kinds of observations provide us with explanatory leverage? Can we combine within-case with cross-case analysis? How can we use qualitative research designs to complement and to benefit from quantitative scholarship and/or formal models?

Data Collection - Interviewing: There are at least two challenges here. One is knowing how to "do" interviews: making contacts, asking questions that really address your core issues, putting respondents at ease, writing up notes, etc. The other, and the one we'll focus on, emphasizes the validity and reliability of information derived from interviews: How do you know that you're obtaining an accurate account of the actual chain of events? Alternatively, do you want your interviews to provide you with an accurate sense of how the relevant actors actually perceived their options and decisions?

Whenever possible, each week's methodological readings will be supplemented by illustrative articles or chapters. We'll conclude the course by reading Kathleen Thelen's book, How Institutions Evolve....., selected as co-winner of the APSA's 2005 Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award of the American Political Science Association for "the best book on government, politics, or international affairs."

Required Readings

The following books are required and will be available for purchase at the Emory University Bookstore. Other assigned material will be available electronically through JSTOR, eJournals, the Woodruff Library's reserves direct (c/o Qualitative Methods Seminar – POLS 506 (00P), or through the course Blackboard site..

Henry Brady, David Collier and Jason Seawright., eds.. Rethinking Social Inquiry. (Rowman and Littlefield 2004).

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

Kathleen Thelen. How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States and Japan. (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Class Requirements:

1. Active participation in seminar discussions based on effective reading of assigned readings (30%)

2. Eight weekly papers (30%). You are free to select the week/topic on which to write. These papers should apply key points of the assigned readings to your research topic. I evaluate these papers on a) how well they summarize and synthesize the core points of the assigned readings, and b) how well they apply these points to your own research (or demonstrate why the points are not applicable).

3. Research Design Paper (40%):¹ The paper should cover each of the following tasks:

- a) Specify research problem and research objectives. (The two are different).
- b) Justify the research problem in terms of real-world problem(s). Why should anyone care about this issue?
- c) Justify and specify the research problem in relation to the current stage of the development and gaps of the relevant research program, related literatures, and alternative explanations. In what theoretical literature does this research problem fit? What gap in the literature, if any, does it address?
- d) Clarify your research goals. Are you generating new hypotheses? Are you testing a hypothesis? What kind of a test is this? How
- e) Specify the independent and dependent variables.
- f) Specify and justify your case selection.
- f) Consider how variance in the variables can best be described for testing and/or refining existing theories, including generating new hypotheses. In other words, present hypotheses and expectations.

¹ Adapted and modified from Bennett syllabus, Georgetown, Spring 2004.

7) Specify the data requirements, including measurement of key variables and process tracing data for main hypotheses of interests, including alternative explanations. Address questions of measurement accuracy (validity, reliability) and precision (scale). Perhaps most critically: If you are testing an argument, how will you know if your argument is wrong?

8) Identify, if only tentatively, the data sources and gathering methods appropriate to your design (e.g. archives, interviews, surveys).

Schedule

Week 1 - Jan. 25 Overview: The Nature and Significance of Qualitative Methods

Brady, Collier and Seawright. 2004. "Refocusing the Discussion of Methodology." Ch. 1 in Rethinking Social Inquiry (RSI).

Collier, Seawright, and Munck. 2004. "The Quest for Standards: King, Keohane, and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry*." Ch. 2 in RSI

Munck, "Tools for Qualitative Research." Ch. 7 in RSI, pp. 119-121.

Tarrow. 2004. "Bridging the Quantitative-Qualitative Divide." Ch. 10 in RSI.

George and Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development, Ch. 1.

Week 2 - Feb. 1 Ontology: The Nature of Politics and Implications for Methods

Almond and Genco. 1977. "Clouds, Clocks and the Study of Politics." World Politics 29 (July): 489-522. [*JSTOR*]

Hall. 2003. "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics," Ch. 11 in Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences [*RD*]

Pierson. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." APSR 94:2 (July), pp. 257-262 only - [*eJournals*]

Avinash Dixit. 1998. The Making of Economic Policy: A Transaction-Cost Politics Perspective. (Cambridge: MIT Press), pp. 36-54. [*RD*]

Week 3 - Feb. 8 Descriptive and Causal Inference

Collier, Seawright and Munck, "The Quest for Standards," Ch. 2, in RSI.

Collier, Brady and Seawright. 2004. "Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference." Ch. 13 in RSI.

Brady, "Doing Good and Doing Better: How Far Does the Quantitative Template Get us?" Ch. 3 in RSI.

McKeown. 2004. "Case Studies and the Limits of the Statistical Worldview." Ch. 8 in RSI.

Fritz Scharpf. Games Real Actors Play: Actor-Centered Institutionalism in Policy Research, Ch. 1 (pp. 19-35) [*RD*]

King, Keohane and Verba, Designing Social Inquiry, Ch. 3.

Week 4 - Feb. 15 Causal Mechanisms

George and Bennett, "Case Studies and the Philosophy of Science," Ch. 7 in Case Studies and Theory Development.

Collier, Brady and Seawright. Pp. 252-259. RSI.

Michael Ross. 2001. "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" World Politics 53:3 (April): 325-362 [*eJournals*].

Virginia Fortna. 2004. "Interstate Peacekeeping: Causal Mechanisms and Empirical Effects." World Politics 56 (July) 481-519 [*eJournals*]

Supplementary

Jon Elster, "A Plea for Mechanisms," In Social Mechanisms, ed. by Peter Hedstrom and Richard Swedberg. (RD)

Charles Tilly. 2001. "Mechanisms in Political Processes." Annual Review of Political Science: 21-41 [*eJournal*])

Michael Ross, 1999. "The Political Economy fo the Resource Curse." World Politics (51), pp. 297-322. [*eJournals*]

Week 5 - Feb. 22 Sequences, Critical Junctures and Path Dependence

Paul Pierson. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." APSR 94:2 (July), pp. 263-266 only - [*eJournals*]

Paul Pierson. 2000. "Not Just What, but When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes." Studies in American Political Development 14 (Spring), pp. 72-92 [*eJournals*]

Thelen, "How Institutions Evolve: Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis." Ch. 6 in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, eds., Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences. [RD]

Collier and Collier. "Overview" and Ch. 1, in Shaping the Political Arena, pp. 3-39 [RD]

Supplementary:

Paul Pierson. "Big, Slow Moving, and...Invisible: Macrosocial Processes in the Study of Comparative Politics. Ch. 5 In Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, Comparative.....

Grief and Laitin. 2004. "A Theory of Endogenous Institutional Change." APSR. 98 (4): 633-652.

Week 6 - March 1 Complex Causality; Combining Methods

Qualitative Methods: (Newsletter of the APSA Organized Section on Qualitative Methods) 2:2 (Fall 2004): 1-25 [*online at apsanet.org*]

Ragin, "Turning the Tables: How Case-Oriented Research Challenges Variable-Oriented Research." Ch. 8 in RSI.

Evan Lieberman, "Nested Analysis as Mixed-Method Strategy for Cross-National Research." APSR? [RD]

Supplementary:

Todd D. Jick, "Mixing Quantitative and Qualitative Methods: Triangulation in Action." Administrative Science Quarterly 24:4 (Dec. 1979), 602-11.

Week 7 – March 8 **Concept Formation, Variable Measurement, and Typologies**

Jones. 1974. "Doing Before Knowing: Concept Development in Political Research." APSR 18: 215-228. [*JSTOR*]

Collier and Levitsky. 1977. "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research." World Politics 49:3 (April). [*JSTOR*]

Munck, "Tools for Qualitative Research." Ch. 7, in RSI, pp. 115-116.

Adcock and Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." APSR 95 (September): 529-546. [*eJournals*]

Peter Evans, "Roles and Sectors," Ch. 4 in Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation (Princeton Univ. Press, 1995). [*RD*]

Lucian Way, "Authoritarian State Building and the Source of Regime Competitiveness in the Fourth Wave: The Cases of Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine." World Politics 57 (January 2005), pp. 231-61. [*eJournals*]

Colin Elman, "Explanatory Typologies in Qualitative Studies of International Politics." International Organization 59:2 (Spring 2005), pp. 293-326 [*eJournals*].

Supplementary:

Munck and Verkuilen. 2002. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices." Comparative Political Studies 35:1 (February): 5-34. [*eJournals*].

Sartori. 1970. "Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics." APSR 64:4 (December): 1033-1053. JSTOR.

March 15 **Spring Break**

Week 8 – March 22 **The Comparative Method and Case Studies (#1)**

Lijphart. 197. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." APSR 65: 682-693 (JSTOR.)

Eckstein. "Authors Note" and "Case Study and Theory in Political Science." In Eckstein, Regarding Politics. Ch. 4, 117-176. [*RD*]

McKeown. 1983. "Hegemonic Stability Theory and 19th Century Tariff Levels in Europe." International Organization 37 (Winter): 73-91 [*JSTOR*]

Margaret M. Pearson. 2005. "The Business of Governing Business in China: Institutions and Norms of the Emerging Regulatory State." (January) 57:2, pp. 296-322 [*eJournals*]

Supplementary:

Douglass North and Barry Weingast, "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England." Journal of Economic History XLIX: 4 (December 1989), pp.803-832 [*JSTOR*]

Week 9 - March 29 The Comparative Method and Case Studies (#2)

George and Bennett, "Comparative Methods: Controlled Comparisons and Within-Case Analysis," Ch. 8 in Case Studies...

George and Bennett, "The Congruence Method," Ch. 9 in Case Studies...

James Mahoney. 2001. "Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis." Ch. 10, in Comparative Historical Analysis ... [RD]

Timothy Frye, "Introduction" to Brokers and Bureaucrats: Building Market Institutions in Russia, (Univ. of Michigan Press, 2000) [RD].

Richard Doner, Ch. 1 of The Tasks of Development... ms. draft

Supplementary:

James Fearon. 1991. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science." World Politics 43: 169-195. (JSTOR.)

Kurt Weyland, "Theories of Policy Diffusion: Lessons from Latin American Pension Reform," World Politics 57 (January 2005), pp. 262-295 [*eJournals*]

Week 10 – April 5 Case Selection, Observations and Units of Analysis

George and Bennett, "Phase One: Designing Case Study Research," Ch. 4 in Case Studies...

Barbara Geddes. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." [*JSTOR*]

Collier, Mahoney and Seawright. 2004. "Claiming Too Much: Warnings About Selection Bias." Ch. 6 in RSI.

Munck,. 2004. "Tools for Qualitative Research." Ch. 7 in RSI, pp. 105-114.

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz. 2004. "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research." APSR 98:4 (November): 653-669 [*eJournals*]

Richard Doner, Bryan Ritchie, and Dan Slater. "Systemic Vulnerability and the Origins of Developmental States: Northeast and Southeast Asia in Comparative Perspective," International Organization 59:2 (Spring 2005), pp. 327-362 [*eJournals*].

Supplementary:

Richard Snyder. 2001. "Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method." Studies in Comparative International Development 36:1 (Spring 2001): 93-110. (JSTOR)

Collier and Mahoney. 1996. "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research." World Politics 49 (October): 56-91 (JSTOR)

Week 11 - April 12 Process Tracing and Causal Process Observations

Bennett and George. "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation," Ch. 10 in Case Studies...

Hall. "Aligning Ontology and Methodology..." Ch. 11, pp. 391-399.

Henry Brady. 2004. "Data-Set Observations versus Causal-Process Observations: the 2000 U.S. Presidential Elections." Appendix in RSI.

Randall Strahan and Dan Palazzolo. 2004. "The Gingrich Effect." Political Science Quarterly 119(1): 89-114. [*eJournals*]

Robert Bates et al., "Conclusion," in Analytic Narratives,

Week 12 – April 19 Interviewing (With Profs. Strahan, Wickham, and Carrubba)

"Logic of Sampling," Chapter 6 of Louise H. Kidder, Charles M. Judd, with Eliot R. Smith. Research Methods in Social Relations, 1991 .

"Practical sampling," Chapter 9 of Louise H. Kidder, Charles M. Judd, with Eliot R. Smith. Research Methods in Social Relations, 1991 ..

Rubin and Rubin, "Choosing Interviewees and Judging What They Say," Ch. 4, in Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (Sage 1995); see also pp. 42-48 [.

"Symposium: Interview Methods in Political Science," Political Science and Politics (December 2002), 35(4):663-688 .

Supplementary:

Herbert M. Kritzer, "The Data Puzzle: The Nature of Interpretation in Quantitative Research," AJPS, 40.1 (February 1996), 1-32.

Donald N. McCloskey, "The Rhetoric of Economics," J. of Economic Literature, 21 (June 1983), 481-517.

Hammer and Wildavsky, "The Open-Ended, Semistructured Interview: An (Almost) Operational Guide" in Wildavsky, Craftways: On the rganization of Scholarly Work

Michael Quinn Patton. Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990), pp. 162-86, 199-276.

Patrick Biernacki and Dan Waldorf. "Snowball Sampling." Sociological Methods and Research 10(2) (November 1981): 141-64.

Steiner Kvale. InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing. Chapter 10. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1996.

Joel D. Aberbach, James D. Chesney and Bert A. Rockman. 1975. "Exploring Elite Political Attitudes: Some Methodological Lessons." Political Methodology 2:1-27.

Kellee Tsai. Back Alley Banking. Pp. 276-278.

Week 13 – April 26 Evaluating an Example

Kathleen Thelen, How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States and Japan. (Cambridge Univ. Press 2004).