This advanced graduate course is designed to help social science doctoral candidates gain the greatest possible value from qualitative research designs. It concentrates on case study methods, with due attention to concepts and theorizing as well as inductive reasoning. See appendix 2 for references to other qualitative methods.

**Recommended preparation:** IR 513 or POSC 500 and a course in statistics. **Requirements:** Throughout the semester the student works on two levels--studying methods in general, and developing a particular original proposal as an exercise for experimenting with the techniques. If you have already selected a topic for dissertation research, you may use it for these exercises if it is consistent with the exercise. If not, use a different topic that does fit the exercise. **Grades:** Ten percent will reflect earlier short papers and ninety percent will correspond to the final proposal. The latter should demonstrate how much you have learned from this course and will be graded accordingly as usual.

In class, members will be expected to answer questions about the required readings or exercises for that week. Three books have been ordered at the University Bookstore. Many other required readings and additional guidance are on Blackboard or available for copying. I will loan optional titles when I have them. In my office you may read a file of successful past proposals including winners of national fellowship competitions.


**I. CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND RESEARCH PROGRAMS**

1. 1/12 **Objectives, assumptions, and tips for success.**


2. 1/19  Mapping and improving concepts

1. Study:
   - J. Maxwell. 1996. *Qualitative research design*, chap. 1-4

2. Start selecting a research program and research question for your proposal exercise. Read “Recommended steps in writing your research-program essay” on Blackboard. Read 2 specialized articles or books that come the closest to answering your main research question as you think of it today. For each, draw a concept map (Maxwell chapter 3) representing the main concepts and main relations among them in the author’s arguments. A simpler diagram is better than a highly complex one for this purpose. Indicate the direction in which causality or influence is thought to run between concepts, when the author makes this clear. Record your evaluations of the study. Turn in copies of your 2 diagrams at class time.

3. Write Maxwell’s exercise 3.2, creating a first primitive concept map for your own prospective study. Pull this first try out of your own mind rather than turning to published studies or evidence. Identify one clear dependent variable or main effect to be explained. Turn it in at class. This exercise will not be graded or circulated.

3. 1/26  From naïve questions to research questions

1. Read 4 additional specialized works for the essay due next week, recording concept maps and evaluative notes on each. Report orally what you have read since last week.

2. Read KKV, chap. 1. Generate one research question using each of the techniques on pp 16-17 and turn in your list of questions at class time.

3. Complete Maxwell’s exercise 4.1, developing your research questions. Follow his six steps as faithfully as possible, and bring to class a copy of your research questions for each member. Bear in mind his wise advice that “a good set of research questions will evolve over time, after you have considered and reconsidered your broad research theme. . . Be wary of the desire to push forward before going through this process.” In this spirit prepare to pose orally at least one plea for assistance arising from this assignment.
4. 2/2  **Due: Critical essay reviewing your research program** (graded; maximum 2000 words not counting references)

First read “Recommended steps in writing your research-program essay” on Blackboard. A later draft of this essay can become part 2 of your proposal. For guidance on proposal writing, see “Writing a Proposal for an Empirical Social Science Dissertation” on Blackboard.

A. What are the program’s primary outcome (effect, dependent) variables today?
B. What are the program’s most influential theories and methods used to explain these outcome variables or solve its puzzles?
C. What are the program’s main accomplishments and most significant shortcomings to date—confusions, empirical anomalies, gaps?
D. What is your provisional research question – one sentence ending in a question mark?
E. List the 6 to 10 publications that come closest to answering this question. (In my office you are welcome to look at some outstanding past student essays.)

II. ALTERNATIVE RESEARCH DESIGNS, CASE SELECTION, AND ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES

5. 2/9  **Cross-case comparison**

1. Study:
   - KKV, causality and causal inference, 75-114
   - George and Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development*, chap. 8

2. Read 3 of the following items and prepare to summarize your assessment orally: What is the study’s main thesis? What method(s) does it illustrate? By what criteria did the author select the cases? How strong are the study’s causal inferences? What threats to causal inference can you find?


3. Graded memo: Invent an original research project using Mill’s method of difference or method of concomitant variation for purposes of causal inference. Define the method briefly, especially the logic of inference you must use. Formulate a hypothesis before selecting 2 or more historical cases of some phenomenon. Give theoretical and methodological reasons for selecting them and rejecting 2 other cases. If your favorite project does not fit this assignment, invent a different illustration, giving priority to showing that you have learned this method.

Supplements:


6. 2/16

**Alternative single-case designs for theoretical goals**

1. Study:


   • Seawright and Gerring 2008. Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options. *Political Science Quarterly* 61: 294-308

2. Study 3 works-- the first two papers plus 1 more of your choice--and prepare to report orally on them. What is the study’s main thesis? What research design does it illustrate and how effectively does it exemplify that method? How good or bad is the result?

   Least likely case study: E. L. Morse. 1970. *Foreign Policy and Interdependence in Gaullist France*, chap. 5 on monetary policy


3. Turn in a memo (to be graded) presenting original illustrations of any two of these five designs, referring to actual historical cases. Don’t forget the Big Lesson. For each illustration, formulate a hypothesis first and only then select a single case that, if studied, is likely to generate that type of contribution. Again the top priority is on showing you have learned the method rather than applying it to your favorite subject, should there be any conflict between the two.


7. 2/23 More on threats to valid causal inference and remedies in qualitative designs (selection bias, too few observations, endogeneity, reciprocal causation)

1. Study the following and prepare to explain the pitfalls they identify:
   - KKV 1994, pp. 115-230
   - Maxwell 2005, chap. 5 and 6 (methods & validity)

2. In a graded memo due at class time, briefly define the problem identified by KKV on the following pages and invent one possible social science example of each remedy they suggest. Do not take your examples from previous literature. Think of concrete historical cases that could be included in a research design to solve this type of problem. You might have to read a little about a candidate case to know whether it would in fact illustrate this remedy.
   - (p. 140) selecting observations to insure variation in the explanatory variable,
   - (p. 141) selecting a range of values of the dependent variable (retrospective contrast),
3. Increasing observations by theorizing more implications. Study D. Campbell. 1975. “‘Degrees of Freedom’ and the Case Study.” *Comparative Political Studies* 8: 168-93. Rpt. in D. Campbell. 1988. *Methodology and Epistemology for Social Science*. (Note the parallel techniques in KKV, 217-28.) Write a one page graded memo illustrating how you could use Campbell’s recommendation to ask yourself what other implications your theory ought to have (predictions of other effects) in a single case study, and to keep a box score for each implication.

4. Recommended supplement: *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, ed. H. Brady and D. Collier (2005) offers a comprehensive critique of this advice from KKV, from the standpoint of quantitative as well as qualitative methods.

8. 3/1  Within-case techniques: process-tracing and counterfactual argument

1. Process tracing and causal inference
   a. George and Bennett 2005, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, ch. 7
   
   b. A. C. Doyle, The Adventure of Silver Blaze, the last 15 pages of D. Collier. 2011. Teaching Process Tracing: Examples and Exercises. Write a description in your own words of what Sherlock Holmes did to resolve the mystery, as an example of process tracing for causal inference. Take it to class.
   
   
   
   e. Read D. Collier. 2011. Teaching Process Tracing: Examples and Exercises, Exercise 3 on Tannenwald, then write your answers to the questions (skip #4) and take them to class for discussion.
   
   
h. Read Collier 2011 Teaching Process Tracing, Exercise 4 on Bennett, write your answers and take them to class for discussion. Plus how does Goemans use process tracing?

i. Write a one-page proposal for an original project that would use process tracing for causal inference. Pick a research question, imagine three competing hypotheses to answer it, and imagine some specific evidence (causal-process observations) that the project should search for, to confirm or eliminate hypotheses. Send by email; pass/fail.

j. Recommended supplement: L. Martin, 1992. Coercive Cooperation. chs. 1 and 6 (EC sanctions during Falklands war)

2. Counterfactual argument
   - Write two brief original illustrations of counterfactual arguments about a single case that might strengthen a causal claim about a subject. Follow the guidelines above for choosing convincing counterfactual arguments. Send by email; (pass/fail).

9. 3/8 Structured focused comparison and typologies

1. Study:
   - George and Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences, chap 3 and 11 (chaps 4-6 are recommended for later study)
   - Additional recommended exemplars:
     - A. George and Smoke. 1974. Deterrence and American Foreign Policy
2. Graded memo: Invent a proposed research project by creating a simple typological theory deductively (as explained by George and Bennett) and use this framework to identify at least 3 cases for research. How does this design differ from one using the method of difference?

3. Work on your final proposal. With your research question and research program in mind, draft a first outline of the empirical methods section of your project proposal (building blocks 3, 4 and 5 in “Writing a Proposal . . .” on Blackboard). Select at least one research design from the menu in 515 part II, for attacking your main research question, citing cases you are currently considering. You may change your mind later. Turn in by email.

III. COLLECTING EVIDENCE AND AND STRENGTHENING DESCRIPTIVE INFERENCES

This part provides brief initial exposure and further references to selected techniques of observation and classification. These techniques are not detailed in real proposals, but they are used during the conduct of the research.

10. 3/22 Interviewing. Study either A or B depending on your interests.


B. Interviewing average people

 quotations; also relevant for interviewing elites); M. Patton. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3d ed., chap 7.

11. 3/29  Making descriptive claims more rigorous and enhancing accumulation: operational definitions and ordinal indicators

1. Study:
   - E. Babbie. 1992. *The practice of social research*, 6th ed., pp. 126-146, if you have not read or do not recall basic ideas about levels of measurement and operationalization.
   - KKV, pp. 34-71 & 150-168

2. Read these 3 exemplars to get an understanding of how qualitative studies have attempted to make descriptive claims more rigorous. How did the author create operational definitions and ordinal scales to classify evidence? How transparent, precise and reliable is each indicator? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this form of measurement?


Other examples:
R. L. Butterworth. 1976. Managing interstate conflict, 1945-74: data with synopses, pp. 481-98. An example of a coding manual for creating both quantitative and qualitative data for questions such as “which type of powers exercised leadership in conflict management?” “how wide was agreement in the international organization on the management actions it took?” “what was the strongest action it took?”


S. Haggard and S. Maxfield. Winter 1996. The political economy of financial internationalization in the developing world. *International Organization* 50:35-68. 4 ordinal indicators for a country’s level of financial openness, whose scores are summed to create an interval scale.

3. Graded exercise due at class: Create 2 original ordinal scales to measure any two concepts that could vary by degrees (your own inventions, not quoted from others). Your memo should define each concept generally, and then create an
operational definition for it. The latter should define the possible categories or values of your scale, and include rules telling your research assistants how to sort evidence into these categories. Give a real concrete example that illustrates each scale category. Anticipate at least two situations that will fall along the border between categories, and spell out how to classify them, since otherwise your assistants will rely on private intuitions, which might vary from one to the other and contaminate your data. You will not be able to do this assignment well without spending some time working with raw evidence.

12. **4/5 Individual consultations.** Now that you have a more concrete sense of alternative methods, revise and turn in a preliminary draft of parts 1, 2, and 3 of your proposal, stating the adjusted research question and how your project will add to the research program. Then improve the preliminary outline of your methods section and bring the outline as well to your meeting with me.

13. **4/12 Using archival evidence and writing history**
   - J. L. Gaddis. 2002. *The Landscape of History*, chaps. 1, 3 and 6. Copy this into your browser: [http://library.usc.edu/uhltbin/cgisirsi/x/0/0/5?searchdata1=3471718{CKEY}](http://library.usc.edu/uhltbin/cgisirsi/x/0/0/5?searchdata1=3471718{CKEY})
   - Sample archives recording the end of the Cold War in Europe. See The National Security Archive, briefing book 293, read documents 3, 4, 15 and 18. [http://www.gwu.edu/%7Ensarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB293/index.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/%7Ensarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB293/index.htm)
   - George and Bennett, *Case Studies*, pp. 92-105

### IV. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSALS

**Classes 14 & 15**

Your final proposal is due not later than 2 May 2012. Please follow the guidance in “Writing a Proposal” on Blackboard. This paper should be less than 3,500 words in length apart from notes and references. Please provide a word count. In grading it I will place the greatest weight on the second half after the literature critique—the methods. You will circulate your first draft for comments during the seminar, and will have the option of revising it in light of those suggestions.

Note: Students requesting academic accommodations based on disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.
Appendix 1. Other textbooks and practical advice


Becker, H. 1996. *Tricks of the Trade: Thinking about your Research while Doing It*

Appendix 2. Additional interpretivist references

The term “qualitative” is used by diverse scholars who come from different philosophical fundamentals. Assuming some prior exposure to these debates, this seminar works within what could be called pragmatic positivism, the mainstream in the USA. This inclusive position will be discussed briefly at the outset. This seminar does not attempt to teach how to use methods that regard themselves as alternatives to this mainstream. Sociology 520 is recommended as an alternative or supplement. Here are a few additional references.


D. Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds. 2006. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Armonk, N.Y.:

M. E. Sharpe.