

## POLS 506 QUALITATIVE METHODS

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Office hours: Wednesday 2-4 and by appointment

*“... ‘science’ is not a set of methods . . .; it is ultimately a commitment to explore and attempt to understand a given segment of empirical reality. The means employed in pursuing this goal should be secondary: in good science, methods are fit to the subject matter rather than subject matter being truncated or distorted in order to fit it to a preordained notion of ‘scientific method.’” (Almond and Genco, 1977)*

This is a graduate seminar for students interested in employing qualitative methods in political science research. By qualitative methods, we mean methods that involve small numbers of intensive observations, and that do not rely on statistical tests for drawing causal inferences. The course is designed to help students develop proficiency in the use of qualitative methods in two respects. The first is to understand and be able to articulate the assumptions about the political world and arguments about scientific knowledge on which qualitative approaches in political science are grounded. In other words, how do we justify research designs involving relatively small numbers of observations as good political science given the fact that such designs may limit our ability to generalize about the phenomenon being studied? In this seminar we will examine two ways of answering this question that have been developed by qualitative methodologists. One approach involves research strategies that focus on patterns in covariation among variables *across* observations. These types of qualitative research designs follow a logic similar to that employed in most mainstream quantitative research. A second approach involves a different logic of inference in which the focus is on causal processes and mechanisms *within* cases. The second goal of the course is to help students develop proficiency in conducting qualitative research. Here we will be concerned with more practical concerns, including case selection, concept development and operationalization, measurement, tracing causal processes, and techniques involved in collecting qualitative evidence or data. Overall, the goal of the seminar is help graduate students develop the methodological tools needed to pursue rigorous qualitative research for the dissertation, either as a supplement to quantitative or game theoretic approaches or as the principal research strategy.

A word of caution. If you are taking this course because you think qualitative research is less difficult than statistical or formal work, you may be in for a rude awakening. Doing good qualitative research is challenging, possibly even more challenging than doing quantitative or game theoretic work. Three factors may help to explain the difficulty graduate students often encounter with qualitative research. First, while important qualitative work on politics has been produced for a very long time, the effort to develop explicit guidelines for doing rigorous qualitative research in political science is relatively young. (Many graduate programs still do not offer courses devoted to qualitative methods.) As a result, the guidelines or rules for doing good qualitative research are less well codified than those for statistical work. As you will discover in this course, basic rules for conducting rigorous qualitative research are still being developed and debated among political scientists. Second, qualitative research does not produce the "clear" results generated by statistical measures.

Consequently, more responsibility often falls on the qualitative researcher himself or herself to justify casual claims and the strength of those claims. And finally, in-depth research on a small number of cases often leads students to get lost in (admittedly) fascinating details and stories that in and of themselves may provide little basis for generalization or knowledge accumulation. If properly focused, detailed knowledge of cases is a major strength of qualitative research; without a clear understanding of which details of a case are important and which are superfluous, students are at a high risk of being overwhelmed by the complexity of the political world and finding themselves unable to communicate how their research contributes to broader concerns or general explanations that are of interest to most political scientists.

### **Required Texts:**

Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds. *Rethinking Social Inquiry*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.

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

Additional readings will be posted on the course Blackboard site (classes.emory.edu), or are available on the web through JSTOR, eJournals on the Woodruff Library homepage, or other sites as indicated.

### **Course Requirements**

Attendance and participation (30%): All members of the seminar are expected to participate actively in seminar discussion. Attendance is mandatory. If extraordinary circumstances require that you miss a seminar session, please notify me in writing as soon as possible.

Weekly papers (30%): Each student will write six short (2-3 pp. double spaced) papers over the course of the semester. *Every student must write a paper on the readings for Weeks 5 and 6.* Otherwise you are free to select the weeks/topics on which to write. These papers should apply key points of the assigned readings to your research topic. Papers are evaluated based on 1) how well they summarize and synthesize the major points of the assigned readings, and 2) how well they apply these points to your own research (or demonstrate why the points are not applicable to your research question).

Research design paper (40%): A qualitative research design paper of approximately 25 pages will be due at the end of the semester. The development of this paper will occur in several steps. A brief (2-3 pp.) memo identifying the research question or general area of interest on which your research design paper will focus and a short bibliography of the most important published work in that area of which you are aware is due before our second seminar meeting (Jan. 31). Next, I would like to meet with each student before week 5 (February 21) to discuss your research interests. A 3-5 page proposal that briefly describes the topic of the research design, including its theoretical and substantive importance, outlines the basic logic of the design, and provides a provisional bibliography will be due for the 8th seminar meeting (March 21). The final research design paper will be due on Monday, May 7.

Your paper should address each of the following questions:

1. What is the research question or puzzle the project addresses and how does it relate to the existing literature on the topic? What gaps in the literature will your research address? (no more than 20-30% of paper)
2. What are the project's objectives and how do they relate to the state or stage of development in the literature on this subject? (i.e., theory testing, theory or hypothesis generating, conceptual development, etc.)
3. What type of qualitative research design are you proposing? How does the design fit into the design strategies we have discussed during the semester?
4. If you are proposing to test theory, are you employing cross-case or within case analysis? What are the main hypotheses you are proposing to test? If proposing within case analysis, what causal process predictions are implied by the theory (or theories) you will be testing? Be clear about how you will determine if a theory or hypothesis is *wrong*.
5. What are the cases? Explain and justify your case selection. Why have you chosen these cases?
6. What are the independent and dependent variables?
7. How do you intend to operationalize and measure your variables? Do you anticipate measurement problems? How will these be addressed?
8. What are your data sources (interviews, archives, etc) ? Do you anticipate difficulties in gaining access to these sources? If so, how might you address these problems?
9. What are the main strengths and limitations of this research design? How do you intend to address or deal with the weaknesses in your design?
10. What are the anticipated findings? What significance will these findings have for scholars in the field? For real-world problems? Why should anyone care about this research?

## Seminar Schedule and Readings

### 1. Introduction (Jan. 24)

### 2. The Distinctive Contributions of Qualitative Methods (Jan. 31)

George and Bennett, *CSTD*, Ch. 1.

Brady and Collier, *RSI*, Ch 1, 2, 10.

### 3. Ontology and Method in Political Science (Feb. 7)

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

Richard Fenno, "Watching Politicians: A Research Perspective." Introduction to Fenno, *Watching Politicians*.

Peter Hall, "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research" Chap 11. in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer.

Paul Pierson. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review*, 94 (June): 251-267.

Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Chaps. 1, 7.

### 4. Research Goals and Strategies (Feb. 14)

George and Bennett, *CSTD*, Chaps. 3, 4

Harry Eckstein, "Author's Note" and "Case Study and Theory in Political Science" in Eckstein, *Regarding Politics*, Ch. 4, pp. 117-176.

Arend Lijphart. 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method" *American Political Science Review* 65 (September): 682-693

James Mahoney, "Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis" in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer.

Readings on theory in students' areas of interest to be selected in consultation with instructor.

## 5. Causal Inference Based on Cross-Case Analysis (Feb. 21)

King, Keohane and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, Chaps. 3, 4.

Brady and Collier, *RSI*, Chap. 2 (review)

George and Bennett, *CSTD*, Chap. 8.

James Fearon. 1991. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science" *World Politics* 43 (January): 169-95.

Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement and Regime Dynamics in Latin America*, "Overview," pp. 3-23.

Readings on theory in students' areas of interest to be selected in consultation with instructor.

## 6. Causal Inference Based on Within-Case Analysis (Feb. 28)

George and Bennett, *CSTD*, Chaps. 9, 10

Brady and Collier, *RSI*, Chap. 13

Timothy McKeown. 1983. "Hegemonic Stability Theory and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Tariff Levels in Europe." *International Organization* 37(1): 73-91.

Readings on empirical work in students' areas of interest to be selected in consultation with instructor.

## 7. Case Selection (March 7)

King, Keohane and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, Chap. 4.

Ronald Rogowski, "How Inference in the Social (but Not the Physical) Science Neglects Theoretical Anomaly," Chap. 5 in Brady and Collier, *RSI*.

Brady and Collier, *RSI*, Ch. 6.

Ashutosh Varshney. 2001. "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond." *World Politics* 53 (April 2001): 362-398.

Richard Doner, Brian Ritchie, and Dan Slater. 2005. "Systemic Vulnerability and the Origins of Developmental States: Northeast and Southeast Asia in Comparative Perspective." *International Organization* 59(2): 327-361.

Readings on empirical work in students' areas of interest to be selected in consultation with instructor.

**SPRING BREAK No seminar meeting March 14**

## 8. Evaluating a Major Qualitative Study (March 21)

Peter Gourevitch, *Politics in Hard Times: Comparative Responses to International Economic Crises*. Cornell University Press, 1986.

## 9. Concept Development and Measurement (March 28)

Charles O. Jones. 1974. "Doing Before Knowing: Concept Development in Political Research." *American Journal of Political Science* 18 (February): 215-228.

John Gerring. 1999. "What Makes a Concept Good? A Criterial Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences." *Polity* 31 (Spring): 357-393.

James Mahoney, "Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis" in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer. (review)

Robert Adcock and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review*. 95 (September): 529-546.

Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*, Chap. 4, "Roles and Sectors."

Richard Fenno. 1977. "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration." *American Political Science Review* 71 (September), pp. 883-889 *only*.

## 10. Process tracing (April 4)

Bennett and George, *CSTD*, Chap. 5, 92-99 *only*.

Peter Hall, "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research" Chap 11. in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, (review pp. 391-399, *only*).

Henry Brady, "Data Set Observations versus Causal-Process Observations: The 2000 U.S. Presidential Election," Appendix to Brady and Collier, *RSI*, pp. 267-271.

Richard Fenno. 1986. "Observation, Context and Sequence in the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review* 80 (March): 3-15.

Randall Strahan, "Thomas B. Reed: The Responsible Partisan as Speaker," Chap. 4 in Strahan, *Leading Representatives*.

Justin Crowe. 2007. "The Forging of Judicial Autonomy: Political Entrepreneurship and the Reforms of William Howard Taft." *Journal of Politics* 69 (February): 73-87.

## 11. Interviewing (April 11)

Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, Chap. 4 "Choosing Interviewees and Judging What They Say," and Chap. 10, "What Did You Hear? Data Analysis."

Dean Hammer and Aaron Wildavsky, "The Open-Ended, Semistructured Interview: An (Almost) Operational Guide" in Wildavsky, *Craftways: On the Organization of Scholarly Work*, pp. 57-101.

Joel Aberbach and Bert Rockman. 2002. "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35 (December): 673-676.

Randall Strahan and Daniel Palazzolo. 2004. "The Gingrich Effect." *Political Science Quarterly* 119 (Spring): 89-114.

Student presentations on progress on research designs

## 12. Participant Observation and Field Research/ Negotiating the IRB Process (April 18)

Richard Fenno, "The Political Scientist as Participant Observer," Chap. 3 in *Watching Politicians*.

"Symposium: Field Research." *Qualitative Methods* 2 (Spring 2004). Read contributions by Lieberman, Howard and Lynch. Available online at: <http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/Newsletter/Newsletter2.1.pdf>

Melani Cammett. 2006. "Political Ethnography in Deeply Divided Societies." *Qualitative Methods* 4 (Fall): 15-18.

Read over the submission requirements for submitting a research proposal to Emory's IRB and complete the process for certification for conducting Social/Humanist/Behavioral research involving human subjects by the April 18 seminar meeting. <http://www.emory.edu/IRB/> (The certification process involves reading and answering questions from a series of nine online "modules." Expect this to take about 1.5 - 2 hours.)

### **13. Using Archival and Historical Evidence / Conclusion/ Final Research Design Presentations (April 25)**

Bennett and George, *CSTD*, Chap. 5, pp. 99-105 *only*.

Ian Lustick. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problems of Selection Bias" *American Political Science Review* 90 (September): 605-618.

Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Chaps. 1, 7 (review).

David Mayhew, *America's Congress*, Introduction, Chap. 2, pp. ix-xiv, 29-70.

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." *Political Analysis* 14: 227-249.

***Final Research Design Paper Due Monday, May 7.***