

PLAD 812: Qualitative Methods
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Department of Politics
Spring 2009

Overview

This course addresses the theory and practice of qualitative methods for making valid causal inferences from observational data. By theory, I refer to the philosophical sources of dissatisfaction with the treatment of causality and explanatory adequacy characteristic of quantitative methods. By practice, I refer to strategies aiding the disciplined deployment of data in the absence of statistical controls.

I expect students to provide competent answers to the following questions framing the theory and practice of qualitative methods:

- What are the fundamental critiques of qualitative methods from a quantitative perspective?
- Does the field of qualitative methods have appropriate methodological responses?
- What is the relationship between quantitative analysis and empiricist philosophies of science?
- What does the critique of empiricism offered by causal realist philosophies of science tell us about the adequacy of statistical explanations?

- What implications does the critique of empiricism offered by causal realist philosophies of science have for our understanding of the obligations of an appropriate qualitative methods?
- Do qualitative methods, as presently understood, fulfill the requirements of explanatory adequacy?
- With special reference to explanatory adequacy, what are the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to qualitative methods?

Responsibilities

Weekly attendance and informed participation (including writing and distributing pre-class memos and leading discussion) are mandatory. Graded written assignments will be three five-page papers and one ten-page final paper. The three five-page papers will contain answers to the questions listed above. For the final paper, students have two options:

Option A

Write a comprehensive review of the research design of a major work (chosen in consultation with the instructor) using qualitative methods. This project entails summarizing the research design, critically evaluating that research design, and considering amendments, modifications, and extensions.

Option B

Write a research design of your proposed dissertation research. This project includes a statement of your hypotheses, a statement of alternative hypotheses, and a research plan for evaluating the relative validity of these hypotheses, including the conceptualization and operationalization of key variables, statement of case selection, and the methods used for testing hypotheses.

Weekly Reading Assignments – Tentative

January 13: Why Methods? Which Methods?

- Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, 33-59.
- Robyn Dawes, *Everyday Irrationality: How Pseudo-Scientists, Lunatics, and the Rest of Us Systematically Fail to Think Rationally*, 47-69.
- Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, chapter 4.
- Barbara Geddes, *Sand Castles and Paradigms*, chapters 1 and 3.
- James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research,” *Political Analysis* 14 (Summer 2006): 227-49.
- Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, “Qualitative Methods: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (2006): 455-76.

January 19: No Class

January 26: Causality I: Regularity Theories of Causality

- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sections 1-7.
- Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, sections 1-36, 43, 79-85.
- J.L. Mackie, “Causes and Conditions,” in E. Sosa and M. Tooley, *Causation*, pages 33-55.
- James Mahoney, “Toward a Unified Theory of Causality,” *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (April/May 2008): 412-36.

February 2: Causality II: Counterfactual and Interventionist Theories

- David Lewis, “Causation,” in E. Sosa and M. Tooley, *Causation*, pages 193-204.
- Paul W. Holland, “Statistics and Causal Inference,” *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 81 (December 1986): 945-50.
- Stephen L. Morgan and Christopher Winship, *Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research*, pages 3-50.
- James Woodward, *Making Things Happen: A Theory of Causal Explanation*, sections 1.3 - 1.5 and 2.2 - 2.3.

February 9: Causality III: Causal Mechanisms

- Russell Keat and John Urry, *Social Theory as Science*, pages 27-32.
- Richard Miller, *Fact and Method: Explanation, Confirmation, and Reality in the Natural and the Social Sciences*, pages 60-83, 135-51.
- Wesley Salmon, “A New Look at Causality,” in *Causality and Explanation*, pages 13-24.
- Peter Hedstrom and Richard Swedberg, “Social Mechanisms: An Introduction,” in Hedstrom and Swedberg, eds., *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*, 1-25.
- John Gerring, “The Mechanismic Worldview: Thinking Inside the Box,” *British Journal of Political Science* 38 (2007): 161-79.
- Morgan and Winship, *Counterfactuals and Causal Inference*, chapter 8.

February 16: Explanations Guest Lecturer: Paul Humphreys, Department of Philosophy, UVA.

- Carl Hempel, “The Function of General Laws in History,” in M. Martin and L. McIntyre, *Readings in the Philosophy of Science*, 43-53.
- Paul W. Humphreys, “Scientific Explanation: The Causes, Some of the Causes, and Nothing but the Causes,” in P. Kitcher and W. C. Salmon, eds., *Scientific Explanation*, 283-305.
- Miller, *Fact and Method*, pages 16-55, 86-105.
- David Waldner, “Transforming Inferences into Explanations: Lessons from the Study of Mass Extinctions,” in N. Lebow and M. Lichbach, eds., *Theory and Evidence in Comparative Politics and International Relations*, chapter 6.
- James Mahoney, Erin Kimball, and Kendra L. Koivu, “The Logic of Historical Explanation in the Social Sciences,” *Comparative Political Studies* 2008.

February 23: Explanations in the Social Sciences

- Charles Taylor, Interpretation and the Science of Man, in Fred Dallmayr and Thomas McCarthy, eds., *Understanding and Social Inquiry*, pages 101-121.
- Alisdair MacIntyre, Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible? in Alan Ryan, ed., *The Philosophy of Social Explanation*.
- Jon Elster, *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, chapters 1-3, 9-12.
- Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Social Science*, chapters 2 and 4 (through page 99 only).
- Alan Ryan, “Problems and Methods in Political Science: Rational Explanation and Its Limits,” in Ian Shapiro et al., eds., *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics*.

March 2: No Class

March 9: In Defense of Qualitative Methods

- Vaughan McKim, “Introduction,” and Stephen Turner, “Net Effects: A Short History,” and David Freedman, “From Association to Causation via Regression,” all in Vaughn R. McKim and Stephen P. Turner, eds., *Causality in Crisis? Statistical Methods and the Search for Causal Knowledge in the Social Science*, pages 1-19, 23-44, and 113-57.
- Henry E. Brady and David Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, chapters 1-4, 6-7, 9, 12-13, and appendix.
- Peter Hall, “Aligning Methodology with Ontology,” in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis*.

March 16: Case Studies and Causal Inference

- Donald Campbell, “Degrees of Freedom and the Case Study,” *Comparative Political Studies* 8 (1975): 178-93.
- John Gerring, *Case Study Research* chapters 1-5 and Epilogue.
- Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, chapters 1, 3-6, 8-9.

March 23: Cross-Sectional Designs

- Charles Ragin, *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*, chapters 1-5.
- Jason Seawright, “Testing for Necessary and/or Sufficient Causation: Which Cases are Relevant?” *Political Analysis* 10 (2002): 178-93.
- Jasjeet S. Sekhon, “Quality Meets Quantity: Case Studies, Conditional Probability, and Counterfactuals,” *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (June 2004): 281-93.
- James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, “The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research,” *American Political Science Review* 98 (November 2004): 653-70.

March 30: Comparative Longitudinal Studies

- James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, chapters 1-4, 9-11.
- David Collier and Ruth Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, chapter 1.
- David Waldner, *State Building and Late Development*, chapters 1 and 10.
- Evan Lieberman, “Causal Inference in Historical-Institutional Analysis,” *Comparative Political Studies* 34 (November 2001): 1011-1035.

April 6: Process Tracing

- George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, chapters 9-10.
- Gerring, *Case Study Research*, chapters 6 and 7.
- Robert Bates, et. al., *Analytic Narratives* 10-18, 148-90, 231-36.
- Clayton Roberts, *The Logic of Historical Explanation*, chapters 6-8, 11-12.

April 13: Mixed Methods

- Michael Coppedge, “Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories: Combining Large N and Small in Comparative Politics,” *Comparative Politics* 31 (July 1999): 465-76.
- Evan Lieberman, “Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research,” *American Political Science Review* 99 (August 2005): 435-452.
- Nicholas Sambanis, “Using Case Studies to Expand Economic Models of Civil War,” *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (June 2004): 259-279.
- David Laitin, “Comparative Politics: The State of the Sub-Discipline,” in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, eds., *Comparative Politics: The State of the Discipline*.

April 20: Concept Formation

- Larry Laudan, "Conceptual Problems," *Progress and Its Problems: Towards a Theory of Scientific Growth*, chapter 2.
- James Johnson, "Conceptual Problems as Obstacles to Progress in Political Science," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15 (2003): 87-115.
- David Collier and John Gerring, eds., *Concepts and Method in Social Science*, pages tba.
- Gary Goertz, *Social Science Concepts: A Users Guide*, chapters 1-4.

April 24: Qualitative Methods & Social Science Methods

- John Gerring, *Social Science Methods* **2nd edition** ms will be distributed. Prof. Gerring will lead this session. Note the special day and time (3:30 - 6:00).