

ECPR Summer School on Methods and Techniques
23 July-3 August 2007

Political and Policy Ethnography

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Participant-observer ethnographic methods – central among the many methods that fall under the umbrella of interpretive research methods – have been "borrowed" from sociology and anthropology into many fields in political science, including comparative governmental studies, area studies, international relations, public policy (domestic/state, regional, and local, international, EU, etc.), public administration/local government studies, organizational studies, and public law/legal studies. They are not new to political science, however, having been employed since the 1950s, if not earlier. They are useful in a wide range of settings for research questions that seek to explore the meanings of particular political practices, concepts or processes to situational actors, often in order to illuminate a wider-ranging or more theoretical issue of political concern. These might include studying how policy-makers or legislators actually think about the decisions they make and how they go about them; how workers shape their work practices and their relationships to managers; how organizational administrators implement national policies; and so on.

The course is designed for students who are about to embark on a field research project, are in the midst of conducting one, or have just come out of the field and who are thinking about, starting to or working on writing up their field notes and drafts of dissertation chapters. Students might have conducted a traditional ethnographic study or a participant-observer study – a community or an organizational study, for example; the study may have involved "shadowing" a political leader or policy-maker; it might have included formal (expert, elite or other) interviews as well. (Note: This means conversational interviewing – engaging people in talk – not administering a survey questionnaire.) Students may also have used ethnographic methods (observing, with whatever degree of participation; talking to situational members) along with reading topic-relevant documents to generate data which they are intending to analyze using other methods (e.g., discourse analysis; metaphor, category or other language-focused analysis; space analysis; and so on).

We will focus on several of the concepts and issues central to current debates about political and policy ethnography. These include:

- questions of reflexivity and positionality, especially as these bear on the generation of data, and the trustworthiness of one's truth claims;
- power and politics in the conduct of field research, especially with respect to its relational character;
- writing as method, but also reading as method – looking at one's truth claims and their evidentiary base, and the ways in which these are presented from the perspective of a prospective reader, whether situational member or colleague.
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One lecture will be devoted to situating these methods in interpretive ontological and epistemological presuppositions and the philosophies they emerge from, including how these philosophies engaged questions of knowledge and truth claims being debated at the time of their development. Throughout the course, we will be addressing what is perhaps the central question today for those doing such work: in what ways is political and policy ethnography similar to and different from participant-observer ethnographic research as done in anthropology or sociology?

Classes will be conducted as a seminar, with the exception of the opening meeting and the lecture on 26 July. Students will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and to draw links between them and their own research designs and field experiences. The final course requirement will be a draft of a conference-type paper discussing issues emerging from the research, a draft of a methods paper that might appear in a thesis/dissertation or conference panel, or some equivalent to be determined.

Course readings:

1. Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds., *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn* (Armonk, NY: M E Sharpe, 2006; **YSS** in the reading list).

2. Other journal articles, conference papers, and book chapters.

Prerequisites: A basic course in interpretive (or "qualitative") methods; some field research experience (i.e., observational, with whatever degree of participation, including conversational interviewing and/or document analysis as appropriate to the research question).

Session Outline

	Topic(s)	Details
1 Monday 23 July 11-12.30	Introduction to course [NB : this 90' lecture will also be accessible to other students]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - topic of course - course goals - overview of course schedule
2 Tuesday 24 July (3 hours)	The meanings of 'ethnography' I: Ethnography as tools; Ethnography as a sensibility	<p>An overview of ethnographic research in political science and its subfields</p> <p><u>Thought questions:</u> What is special about 'ethnography'? How is it different from "just" interviewing? What is <i>political</i> or <i>policy</i> ethnography, and how is it different from 'anthropological ethnography'? Is it thinkable to do 'textual ethnography' in political science, and if so, what does or might that mean?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> YSS, ch. 8 (Pader), 6 (Soss), and 7 (Schaffer).</p> <p>Auyero, Javier. 2006. 'Introductory note to <i>Politics under the Microscope: Special Issue on Political Ethnography I.</i>' <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 29: 257-59.</p> <p>*Salemink, Oscar. 2003. 'Introduction: Ethnography, Anthropology And Colonial Discourse.' <i>The Ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlanders: A Historical Contextualization, 1850-1990</i>, ch. 1. London: Routledge. Esp. pp. 1-16 in ms.</p> <p>*Zirakzadeh, Cyrus Ernesto. 2007. "When Nationalists Are Not Separatists: Discarding and Recovering Academic Theories While Doing Fieldwork in the Basque Region of Spain."</p>
3	The meanings of	<p><u>Thought questions:</u> Are there special characteristics of</p>

<p>Wednesday 25 July (3 hours)</p>	<p>'ethnography' II: Ethnography as 'product'— writing as method; reading as method</p>	<p>ethnographic writing that distinguish it from other genres of research writing? Do these have any bearing on the trustworthiness of the researcher's claims?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Golden-Biddle, Karen and Locke, Karen. 1993. "Appealing Work: An Investigation in How Ethnographic Texts Convince." <i>Organization Science</i> 4: 595–616. Richardson, Laurel. 1994. "Writing: A Method of Inquiry." In <i>Handbook of Qualitative Research</i>, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 516–29. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. *Yanow, Dvora. 2007. "Reading as Method." In Ed Schatz, ed., <i>Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power</i>, ms. YSS, chs. 15 (Bevir), 16 (Lynch).</p> <p><u>Supplemental readings:</u> any of the entries in list C below.</p>
<p>4 Thursday 26 July (3 hours)</p>	<p>Participant-observer ethnography as an interpretive science: A history and philosophy of physical-natural and social science</p>	<p><u>Thought questions:</u> What kinds of ontological and epistemological presuppositions or claims do ethnographic methods rest on? How are these different from positivist presuppositions?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> YSS, Introduction and chs. 1 (Yanow), 2 (Hawkesworth), 3 (Adcock), 21 (Pachirat), 22 (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea).</p> <p><u>Supplemental readings:</u> any of the entries in list A below.</p>
<p>5 Friday 27 July (3 hours)</p>	<p>The relational character of ethnographic research: Problematics of dual identities in the field and other issues in</p>	<p><u>Thought questions:</u> What is involved in "accessing" the research field? How does one manage one's own identity, in all its aspects, in the field? What is entailed in being a researcher at the same time that one is an observer (with whatever degree of</p>

	<p>the researcher-participant relationship</p>	<p>participation)?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p>Gans, Herbert. 1976. "Personal Journal: B. On the Methods Used in This Study." In <i>The Research Experience</i>, ed. M. Patricia Golden, 49–59. Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock.</p> <p>Feldman, Martha S., Bell, Jeannine, and Berger, Michele Tracy, eds. 2003. <i>Gaining Access</i>. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira.</p> <p>*Wilkinson, Claire. 2007. "Positioning 'Security' and Securing One's Position: The Researcher's Role in Investigating 'Security' in Kyrgyzstan." In <i>Field work in difficult environments: Discussing the divergence between theory and practice</i>, eds. Caleb Wall and Peter Mollinga. Berlin: Lit Verlag (forthcoming July).</p> <p>Golde, Peggy, ed. 1986. <i>Women in the field</i>, 2nd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.</p> <p>Lewin, Ellen and Leap, William L., eds. 1996. <i>Out in the field: Reflections of lesbian and gay anthropologists</i>. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.</p> <p>Warren, Carol A. B. 1988. <i>Gender issues in field research</i>. Thousand Oaks: Sage.</p> <p><u>Supplemental readings:</u></p> <p>Diane Bell, Pat Caplan, and Wazir Kahan Karim, eds. 1993. <i>Gendered Fields: Women, Men and Ethnography</i>. NY: Routledge.</p> <p>Manda Cesara. 1982. <i>Reflections of a Woman Anthropologist: No Hiding Place</i>. New York : Academic Press.</p> <p>Rosaldo, Michele and Lamphere, Louise. 1974. <i>Woman, Culture, and Society</i>. Stanford: Stanford University Press.</p>
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<p>6 Monday 30 July (3 hours)</p>	<p>How native is a 'native' ethnographer? Positionality and power – Reflexivity in the field and on the page; Evaluative "standards" for interpretive research – The questions of "rigor" and objectivity, "reliability" and "validity."</p>	<p><u>Thought questions:</u> What makes ethnographic (and other forms of interpretive) research trustworthy? How does researcher power shape the <i>political</i> character of the research?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Narayan, Kirin. 1993. "How Native is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" <i>American Anthropologist</i> 95: 671-86. YSS, chs. 13 (Shehata), 4 (Yanow), 5 (Schwartz-Shea). *Timothy Pachirat, 2007. "The <i>Political</i> in Political Ethnography: Reflections from an Industrialized Slaughterhouse on Perspective, Power, and Sight." In Ed Schatz, ed., <i>Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power</i>, under review.</p>
<p>7 Tuesday 31 July (3 hours)</p>	<p>The role of documentary evidence in political ethnography.</p>	<p><u>Thought questions:</u> Political ethnography involves not only observing (with whatever degree of participating) and talking, but also locating and reading research-relevant documents. What are some of the issues that arise concerning this aspect of the research?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> YSS, chs. 9 (Weldes), 10 (McHenry), 12 (Brandwein).</p> <p><u>Optional:</u> YSS, chs. 19 (Ginger), 18 (Maynard-Moody and Musheno).</p>
<p>8 Wednesday 1 August (3 hours)</p>	<p>Drafting chapters and conference papers. Possible additional discussion: Doing field research in conflict settings.</p>	<p>Writing laboratory.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2006. "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones." <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 29: 373-86. Belousov, Konstantin <i>et al.</i> 2007. "Any Port in a Storm: Fieldwork</p>

		Difficulties in Dangerous and Crisis-Ridden Settings." <i>Qualitative Research</i> 7: 155-75.
9 Thursday 2 August (3 hours)	Analyzing ethnographic data: The relationship between theory and data.	<u>Thought questions:</u> With generated data in hand, what are different ways of analyzing them? Can we make a case for textual ethnography? <u>Readings:</u> Tilly, Charles. 2006. "Afterword: Political Ethnography as Art and Science." <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 29: 409-12. Narayan, Kirin. 1993. "How Native is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" <i>American Anthropologist</i> 95: 671-86 (reprise). YSS, chs. 17 (Schmidt), 20 (Yanow), 11 (Oren), 14 (Jackson).
10 Friday 3 August (3 hours)	Student presentations of final work.	Order of presentations to be arranged before class.

Background readings: The course will presume familiarity with interpretive methodological arguments as articulated in books and articles such as:

A. Interpretive philosophies and the critique of positivism:

Edelman, Murray. 1964. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Edelman, Murray. 1977. *Political Language*. New York: Academic Press.

Clifford Geertz, 1973, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books. Esp. ch. 1.

Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, eds., 1979/1985, *The Interpretive Turn*, 1st/2nd eds. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Charles Taylor, 1971, "Interpretation and the sciences of man." *Review of Metaphysics* 25: 3–51. Reprinted in *Understanding and Social Inquiry*, ed. Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy, 101–31. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press; and *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, 25–71. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Hawkesworth, M. E. 1988. *Theoretical Issues in Policy Analysis*. Albany: SUNY Press, Part I.
- Hiley, David R., Bohman, James F., and Shusterman, Richard, eds. 1991. *The Interpretive Turn*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Polkinghorne, Donald E. 1983. *Methodology for the Human Sciences*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Polkinghorne, Donald E. 1988. *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*. Albany: SUNY Press.

B. On representation and truth claims:

- Clifford, James and Marcus, George E., eds. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Golden-Biddle, Karen and Locke, Karen. 1993. "Appealing Work: An Investigation in How Ethnographic Texts Convince." *Organization Science* 4: 595–616.
- Golden-Biddle, Karen and Locke, Karen. 1997. *Composing Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Richardson, Laurel. 1994. "Writing: A Method of Inquiry." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 516–29. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Van Maanen, John. 1986. *Tales of the Field*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

C. Political or policy ethnographies (not necessarily traditional or self-described ethnographies), such as:

- Blau, Peter. 1963 [1953]. *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Crozier, Michel. 1964. *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Goodsell, Charles T. 1988. *The Social Meaning of Civic Space*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Gusfield, Joseph R. 1981. *The Culture of Public Problems: Drinking-Driving and the Symbolic Order*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kondo, Dorinne K. 1990. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lin, Ann Chih. 2000. *Reform in the Making*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Linder, Steven. 1995. "Contending Discourses in the Electric and Magnetic Fields Controversy." *Policy Sciences* 28: 209–30.
- Lipsky, Michael. 1980. *Street-Level Bureaucracy*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Luker, Kristin. 1984. *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Mitchell, Timothy. 1991. *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (textual ethnography)
- Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. *Rule of Experts*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (textual ethnography)
- Orr, Julian. 1996. *Talking About Machines: An Ethnography of a Modern Job*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Pader, Ellen J. 1993. "Spatiality and Social Change: Domestic Space Use in Mexico and the United States." *American Ethnologist* 20: 114–37.
- Paley, Julia. 2001. "Making Democracy Count." *Cultural Anthropology* 16: 135–64.
- Schmidt, Ronald, Sr. 2000. *Language Policy and Identity Politics in the United States*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Singerman, Diane. 1995. *Avenues of Participation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Stein, Sandra J. 2004. *The Culture of Education Policy*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Swaffield, Simon. 1998. "Contextual Meanings in Policy Discourse: A Case Study of Language Use Concerning Resource Policy in the New Zealand High Country." *Policy Sciences* 31: 199–224.
- Van Maanen, John. 1978. "Observations on the Making of a Policeman." *Human Organization* 32: 407–18.
- Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2004. *Talking About Politics: Informal Groups and Social Identity in American Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Yanow, Dvora. 1996. *How Does a Policy Mean? Interpreting Policy and Organizational Actions*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.