Seminar in Interpretive Methods
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PS 607, Fall 2015, Fridays 2-4:50
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Interpretive methods have made great strides in political science in recent years. Edited volumes on interpretive political science, interpretive method, and political ethnography have provided philosophical foundations, reviewed subfield research, and provided instruction in variety of methods, from discourse analysis and ethnography to visual analysis and natural language interviewing. A lively conference group (independent of the Qualitative Methods section of APSA) holds annual panels and a “Methods Café” at national and regional conferences; it also grants an annual book prize named for political theorist Charles Taylor. Sage Publications has introduced a series of short monographs on particular interpretive methods. And more. Tapping into this vibrant energy, this seminar trains graduate students in the philosophy, theory and practice of interpretive methods by engaging five methods: discourse analysis, genealogy, political ethnography, relational process/emergent causality, and actor-network theory. We will take some time with each approach, devoting a week or more to theory & method and an additional week to books and/or articles that put those methods to work (sometimes with the help of visiting faculty).

Course Requirements

This is a non-required, working seminar, in which we will study philosophies, theories and methods that ought to be useful for your research. I will work with you to design a research and writing project to address your particular needs. But, a commitment to interpretive methods in political science is also a collective project in two senses. First, although it has made great strides, interpretive methods still fall outside the mainstream of the field. So, in my experience, we have little choice but to help and support one another in our work. Second, interpretive methods raise challenging questions about social science foundations, which bind us together, regardless of exactly how we answer those questions or which methods we choose to deploy in our work. And so, as both an individual and a collective endeavor, this seminar necessitates a commitment to others as well as yourself. In that spirit, I ask you to consider all topics with equal openness and commitment. Please prepare for every class by reading all the required readings and writing a brief discussion question/comment and posting it on Canvas. Once in class, participate – ask questions of one another, clarify, go back to the readings, raise confusions, share insights. Both on-line and in-class activities will be part of your grade.

Seminar Participation (10%)

On-line Contributions. (10%) Pass/Fail (I will only let you know only in the event of a fail.)

On “Theory/Method” weeks, write one discussion question (with a specific citation to the readings) and post it on Canvas 24 hours before class.
On “At Work” weeks, identify a concrete insight from one of the work(s) under consideration that would be invisible or impossible in the absence of the method and sources used. Briefly, say why.

Post your questions/comments on CANVAS one hour before class. Be succinct!

A 15-20 Page Final Paper (80%)

In my ideal, you would take this seminar after completing the three-course methods sequence in Political Science and prior to writing a dissertation prospectus. Then the final project for everyone would be to write the methods section of your prospectus. But, students are at very different stages. So, I will work with you to tailor an appropriate project to your needs. To that end, the assignment must be completed in three stages.

- Meet with me during the first 5 weeks of class to work out a project.
- Turn in a one-page paper proposal with a bibliography and/or research strategy by Week 6.
- Turn in your final paper on December x (Wednesday of exam week).

Readings

All required readings will be posted on Canvas, except
Louise Phillips and Marianne W Jorgensen, Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method, which is available for purchase in the University of Oregon Bookstore, and
Joseph Lowndes, From New Deal to New Right, which you can purchase on-line or borrow.

You should also consider purchasing the following books from an on-line vendor:
Javier Auyero, Patients of the State: The Politics of Waiting in Argentina
Bruno Latour, Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory
William Connelly, A World of Becoming

READING AND WORK SCHEDULE

Week 1: Situating Interpretive Methods  (read prior to the first class)

Read the following from Mark Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes, Routledge Handbook of Interpretive Political Science (2016)

Bevir and Rhodes, “Interpretive Political Science: Mapping the Field,” 3-28
Bevir and Blakely, “Naturalism and Anti-Naturalism,” 31-44

If your major field is empirical read your chapter:
Cecelia Lynch, “International Relations,” 227-240
Joseph Lowndes, “American Politics,” 256-267
Lorraine Bayard de Volo, “Comparative Politics,” 241-255
If your major field is Political Theory, choose from chapters on “Idealist Legacies,” “Hermeneutics,” “Historicism,” “Pragmatist Interpretivism,” “Social Constructivism,” “Cultural Studies,” “Post-Marxism,” or “Governmentality.” (Let me know and I will make the chapter available).

If you have not taken Qualitative Methods with Parsons, you ought to read Yanow, “Thinking Interpretively,” 5-26; and Yanow, “Neither Rigorous or Objective? 67-88 in Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds., Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn (available from me or one of the other students)

PART I. Language, History, Politics

Week 2: Discourse Analysis

Louise Phillips and Marianne W Jorgensen, Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method, entire
Ernesto Laclau, “Why do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics,” 36-46
Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Social Strategy, chapter 3 (which lays out their theorization of hegemony and how discourses are fixed, challenged, and changed over time)

Additional:
Hannah Pitkin, Wittgenstein and Justice, selections
David Howarth, Aletta Norval, Yannis Stavrakakis, eds., Discourse Theory and Political Analysis (Manchester, 2000).
Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough, Political Discourse Analysis
Mark Bevir, “How Narratives Explain,” in Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, Chapter 15
Lisa Weeden, “Conceptualizing Culture,” APSR 96(4), 2002
Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy, Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction, skim entire (think of it as a resource)

Week 3: Discourse Analysis at Work

Lene Hansen, Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War (Routledge, 2006), entire

Additional:
Victoria Hattam, In the Shadow of Race: Jews, Latinos, and Immigrant Politics in the US
Victoria Hattam and Joseph Lowndes, “From Birmingham to Baghdad: The Micropolitics of Partisan Identification, in Gerald Berk, Dennis Galvan and Victoria Hattam, eds., Political Creativity: Reconfiguring Institutional Order and Change,
Fred Schaeffer, Democracy in Translation: Understanding Politics in an Unfamiliar Culture (Cornell, 2000)
Carol Cohn, “Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals,” Signs 12:4 (Summer 1987), 687-718

**Week 4: Genealogy**

Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pages 139-64.
Michel Foucault, History of Sexuality, Vol 1, 51-131.
Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, 104-125

*Additional:*
Colin Koopman, Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity

**Week 5: Genealogy & Discourse Analysis at Work (with Joe Lowndes’s participation)**

Joseph Lowndes, From New Deal to New Right, entire
Primary sources to be distributed

*Additional:*

**PART II. Political Ethnography**

**Week 6: Political Ethnography**


R.M. Emerson, R.I Fretz, and L.L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Field Notes*, second edition, chapter 1, 2, and 5

Claudio Benzercry and Gianpaolo Baiocchi, “What is Political about Political Ethnography: On the Context of Discovery and Normalization of an Emergent Field”

*Additional:*


Clifford Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures (Basic Books, 1973), chs 1 & 15


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**Week 7: Political Ethnography at Work (with Erin Beck’s participation)**


Field notes and correspondence with advisors to be distributed

*Additional:*


Empirical Chapters in Schatz, ed., *Political Ethnography* and the special issues of *Qualitative Sociology*

David Mosse, “The Making and Marketing of Participatory Development”


Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds, Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (Yale, 2013)

**PART III. Interpretive Explanation: Naturalism Revisited**

**Week 8: Relational Process and Emergent Causality**

For a comparison with mechanical causality (or positivist process tracing), read David Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44, No. 4 (2011): 823-30
Mustafa Emirbayer, “A Manifesto for a Relational Sociology” *Theory and Society* 103:2 (September 1997), 281-317

**Additional:**
Andrew Abbott, “From Causes to Events,” chapter 6 of *Time Matters*, 183-205

**Week 9: Actor Network Theory**

Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, entire

**Suggested and available on line or Canvas:**

**Additional:**

**Week 10: Relational Process, Materiality and ANT at Work**
Gerald Berk, “The Magnetron and the State: Practicing Technological Rivalry in World War II,” under review at Theory and Society

Additional:
Bruno Latour, The Pasteurization of France