This seminar is designed to offer graduate students in political science an opportunity to learn the skills necessary to write a research design and conduct advanced social research using primarily qualitative data. The overarching goal is to make students self-conscious about their methodological choices when conducting empirical research. The seminar begins with a discussion of issues related to the philosophy of the social sciences and then moves to the study of conceptual themes associated with research design and the use of qualitative methods. A major objective of the seminar is to write a research design that could be a first draft of the dissertation proposal.

More specifically, the following topics will be addressed:

- Research design and causal inference in the social sciences using qualitative data
- Concept formation, case selection, and concept measurement
- Working with hypotheses and theories
- Methodological issues associated with case studies and small-N analysis
• Mechanisms and models of explanation in the social sciences
• Mixed- and Multi-Method research

REQUIRED TEXTS


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be required to write four short reaction papers, two oral presentations and a research design paper.

The reaction papers must be e-mailed to the instructor one day before the scheduled class discussion (but no later than Monday 6pm). The reaction paper should, as the name implies, offer your thoughts vis-à-vis the week’s readings. The reaction paper is not to be a summary of the readings. Instead, it should, at least, a) offer constructive criticism of the material (what you like and what you don’t, and why), b) identify issues or concepts that you do not fully
understand and may need further discussion in class. *The maximum length for each reaction paper is two pages.*

**The presentations** will be a maximum of 20 minutes long, and will highlight the themes and pertinent issues raised by the selected readings for each week. The presentation should NOT be a summary of each article, but rather a synthesis that illustrates ways in which the readings speak to each other, as well as questions that can help guide discussion for the seminar. The presentation is an opportunity for students to play a leadership role in guiding the discussion for the seminar based on their analysis of the readings.

**The seminar paper** consists of a research design written to highland the concepts and techniques learned in the seminar. Students will turn in a draft around mid semester and the final, revised version at the end of the seminar. Details about the research design paper will be given later in the seminar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DUE DATE FOR DRAFT OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN PAPER: OCTOBER 15TH, DURING CLASS.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DUE DATE FOR THE REVISED PAPER: DECEMBER 17TH, 4PM.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading will be based on class participation, reaction papers, presentations, and term paper.

**CLASS TOPICS**

**September 3. Introduction to the seminar. Manifesto: For A Non-Bullshit Political Science**

Readings


• Jon Elster, “Hard and Soft Obscurantism in the Humanities and Social Sciences”, *Diogenes*, 58(1-2) 159-170, 2011.


• Jon Elster, “Tool-box or Toy-Box? Hard Obscurantism in Economic Modeling.” *Synthese* (Published online 28 July 2015)

**September 10. Philosophy of the Social Sciences: Ants, Spiders, and Bees.**


**September 17. Critical Realism, Analytic Pluralism, and Analytic Eclecticism**


• Patrick Thaddeus Jackson. *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics*. Routledge, 2011. (Chapter 4)


• Patrick Thaddeus Jackson. *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics*. Routledge, 2011. (Chapter 7)


**September 24: Methodological Individualism, Causal Mechanisms, and Causal Explanations.**

Readings:


October 1. The art of social science: How to theorize?

Readings:


October 8: Writing research designs

Readings:


October 15. Concept formation. (Draft of Research Design paper due)

Readings:


October 22. Case Study Research

Readings


- Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. (Chapter 1)

October 29. Measurement, Causal Analysis, Causal Strategies

Readings


November 5. Process Tracing: Foundations

Readings


November 12. Process Tracing: Applications

Readings


November 19. Workshop. Individual meetings with instructor

December 3. Mixed-Method Research and Causal Analysis

Readings


December 10. Wrapping Things Up: What have we learned?

Final research design is due DECEMBER 17th at 4pm.