

POLI 303 Qualitative Methods

Winter 2015 - 280 SWKT - TTh 3:00 - 4:15 p.m.

Prof. Kirk Hawkins

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Office Hours: Tue, Thu 1:00pm-2:30pm

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This course is designed to enhance your toolkit of research methods by moving beyond the quantitative approach emphasized in our major to study *qualitative methods*. As you will learn, qualitative methods are basic to research and exemplify some of the same principles that undergird the quantitative approach, such as validity, reliability, and the need to test theories with data. However, they also reveal some of the weaknesses of the quantitative approach and force us to think more carefully about such questions as What constitutes a good theory? How do we discover truth? And what does it mean for something to be scientific? Qualitative methods include a fairly broad set of tools that cover roughly two areas reflected in the class: methods for *measuring variables*, and methods for *analyzing theories*. Both areas of qualitative methodology have great applicability outside of political science and are basic to much of the work you will do after graduation, whether as professionals, academics, or ordinary members of your community. Like most methods courses, the class will make use of textbook-like readings, lectures, and exercises. However, most assignments have a practical emphasis and are designed to help you improve your own research projects, and you will engage in frequent discussion and presentations. Moreover, because the class is small, you will get lots of one-on-one time with your instructor.

Prerequisites

PI Sc/POLI 200. Plus, you need a previous research project that you can build on in this class.

Materials

Readings can be found on Learning Suite under Content; a few (noted in the schedule) are available online.

Learning Outcomes

Effective Research and Analysis. Enhance your grasp of qualitative methods for doing political science, bringing it close to the level that would be taught in graduate school. In the process, gain a better grasp of the principles of scientific research.

Effective and Professional Writing. Improve your ability to write effectively for a professional audience, especially in terms of global-level structure.

Effective Oral Communication. Improve your ability to speak in small-group settings and to make formal presentations.

Critical Thinking and Analysis. Enhance your ability to critically analyze theories and methods of analysis in published research and in your own work.

Grading Policy

Grading

If needed, assignments will be curved up (never down) so that the class average is a B/B+.

Turning in assignments

Reading summaries and quizzes are due electronically at least one hour before class. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day scheduled, although I reserve the right to have you wait a few minutes so that we can use the assignments for class discussion. Reading summaries may never be turned in late without a legitimate excuse. Late exercises should be turned in to the dropbox outside 745 SWKT and will lose a half grade before 5 p.m. and another full grade for every 24 hours after. However, anything missed for a legitimate excuse can be made up without penalty.

Making up assignments

I accept legitimate excuses for tardiness and absence and allow you to turn in some assignments late without penalty—but only for legitimate excuses. These include university-sponsored events, illness, and other unpleasant events beyond your control. I cannot excuse assignments that you miss for personal reasons. If you need to miss a class for personal reasons, you should use your free days.

Assignments

Reading summaries/quizzes (25%)

For each class you are required to do the assigned readings and then to answer a series of questions I will indicate beforehand. You will need to turn in an electronic version on Learning Suite at least one hour before class. Note that the light reading load for this class is somewhat deceptive. These are mostly methods readings, and they require more attention than a typical research article. Plan on spending proportionately more time on each reading than you do in your other upper-division electives.

Teaching presentations (10%)

Twice this semester you will make a 10-minute presentation on the readings or your current research (or even better, both). The purpose of these presentations is to teach us something new about the material; thus, you should not summarize them but somehow take us beyond them by synthesizing them, explaining them in a new way, or applying them to a different topic.

Exercises (35%)

Several times this semester you will apply what you learn in class by doing outside research and then presenting the results to me as a polished written piece. Most of these assignments build on some previous research project that you've done, and which you must select at the very beginning of this semester. Those in the first half of the semester are shorter and more frequent; those in the second half of the semester are less frequent and worth proportionately more. Details follow at the end of the syllabus.

Midterm and final exam (10% and 20%)

You have a midterm and final exam on the dates indicated in the syllabus. The final exam is comprehensive. Your written summaries and class notes will provide a study guide, so keep these throughout the semester.

Online class evaluation/free days

The online course evaluation at the end of the semester provides the university and me with valuable information, so if you do the evaluation on time I compensate you by dropping your two lowest reading summaries. This allows you to miss two full days of class without penalty. Even if you don't need the help on the summaries, please do the evaluation--I need your feedback.

University Policies

Honor Code

In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university. Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university's expectation, and every instructor's expectation in class, that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

Sexual Harassment

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education and pertains to admissions, academic and athletic programs, and university-sponsored activities. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment of students by university employees, other students, and visitors to campus. If you encounter sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to your professor or contact one of the following: the Title IX Coordinator at 801-422-2130; the Honor Code Office at 801-422-2847; the Equal Employment Office at 801-422-5895; or Ethics Point at <http://www.ethicspoint.com>, or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours).

Student Disability

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (UAC), 2170 WSC or 422-2767. Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified, documented disabilities. The UAC can also assess students for learning, attention, and emotional concerns. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures by contacting the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-285 ASB.

Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings/Assignments due
T Jan 06 Tuesday	Introduction and syllabus	
Th Jan 08 Thursday	What do we mean by qualitative method?	<p>Syllabus</p> <p>Freedman, David A. "On types of scientific enquiry: The role of qualitative reasoning." In <i>The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology</i>, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier.</p> <p>Research question exercise</p>
T Jan 13 Tuesday	Process tracing	<p>Bennett, Andrew and Alexander L. George. 2001. "Case studies and process tracing in history and political science: Similar strokes for different foci." Chapter 4 in <i>Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations</i>, eds. Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, pp. 137-66. READ PP. 137-53 ONLY</p> <p>Brady, Henry, "The 2000 U.S. Presidential election," In <i>Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards</i>, eds. Henry E. Brady and David Collier, pp. 267-71.</p>
Th Jan 15 Thursday	Case studies	<p>Gerring, John. 2004. "What is a case study and what is it good for?" <i>American Political Science Review</i>. 98 (2): 341-54.</p> <p>Van Evera, Stephen. 1997. "What are case studies? How should they be performed?" <i>Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science</i>, pp. 49-88.</p>
M Jan 19 Monday	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday	
T Jan 20 Tuesday	Consultation with Prof. Hawkins	
Th Jan 22 Thursday	Case selection	<p>Mahoney and Goertz, Chapter 11</p> <p>Process tracing exercise</p>
T Jan 27 Tuesday	Comparative historical analysis, critical junctures, path dependency	<p>Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Increasing returns, path dependence, and the study of politics." <i>American Political Science Review</i>. 94 (June): 251-67.</p> <p>Collier, Ruth Berins and David Collier, "Overview" <i>Shaping the Political Arena</i>, pp. 3-23</p>
Th Jan 29 Thursday	Comparative historical analysis, critical junctures, path dependency	<p>Mahoney, James, and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "Comparative Historical Analysis: Achievements and Agendas," In <i>Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences</i>, ed. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, pp. 3-15 ONLY, and skim to get the definition/attributes .</p> <p>Mahoney, James, "Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis" in <i>Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences</i>, ed. Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, pp. 337-72.</p> <p>Katzenstein, Peter, "Introduction," <i>Small States in World Markets</i>, pp. 17-38.</p>
T Feb 03 Tuesday	Counterfactuals	<p>Fearon, James D. 1991. "Counterfactuals and hypothesis testing in the social sciences." <i>World Politics</i>. 43 (2): 169-95.</p>
Th Feb 05 Thursday	Descriptive inference	Case study design
T Feb 10 Tuesday	Principles of scientific measurement	<p>Review concepts of accuracy, precision, validity, and reliability on Wikipedia or whatever other source you like. Use the statistical or psychometric versions of these concepts.</p>
Th Feb 12 Thursday	Concepts and measurement	<p>Hawkins, Kirk. 2009. "Is Hugo Chavez populist? Measuring populist discourse in comparative perspective." <i>Comparative Political Studies</i>. 42 (8): 1040-67.</p>
M Feb 16 Monday	President's Day Holiday	

T Feb 17 Tuesday	Monday Instruction	
Th Feb 19 Thursday	Midterm exam - in class	
T Feb 24 Tuesday	Concepts and measurement	Gerring, John. 1999. "What makes a concept good? A criterial framework for understanding concept formation." <i>Polity</i> . 31 (3): 357-93.
Th Feb 26 Thursday	Concepts and measurement	Concepts exercise
T Mar 03 Tuesday	Textual analysis: content analysis	Neuendorf, Kimberly A. 2002. "Defining content analysis." Chapter 1 in <i>The Content Analysis Guidebook</i> , pp. 1-25. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
Th Mar 05 Thursday	Textual analysis: qualitative interpretation ("discourse analysis")	Hawkins, Kirk. Chapter 3, first half. Zúquete, José Pedro, "The missionary politics of Hugo Chavez," <i>Latin American Politics and Society</i> . 50: 91-121.
T Mar 10 Tuesday	Historical method, archival research	Ian Lustick. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problems of Selection Bias" <i>American Political Science Review</i> 90 (September): 605-618. Hawkins, Kirk A. 2003. "Sowing Ideas: Explaining the Origins of Christian Democratic Parties in Latin America." In <i>Christian Democracy in Latin America: Electoral Competition and Regime Conflicts</i> , eds. Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully. READ ONLY PP. 78-92 PLUS TWO CASE STUDIES.
Th Mar 12 Thursday	Textual analysis	Textual analysis exercise
T Mar 17 Tuesday	Interviews	Hochschild, Jennifer. "Conducting intensive interviews and elite interviews." Paper from <i>Workshop on Interdisciplinary Standards for Systematic Qualitative Research</i> , eds. Michele Lamont and Patricia White, pp. 124-28. National Science Foundation. Available at https://www.uab.edu/education/ci/images/earlychildhoodedu/ISSQR_workshop_rpt.pdf Rathbun, Brian C. "Interviewing and qualitative field methods: Pragmatism and practicalities." In <i>The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology</i> , ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, pp. 685-701. Focus especially on practical advice in pp. 695-99.
Th Mar 19 Thursday	Historical method, archival research	Historical/archival research
T Mar 24 Tuesday	IRB	Do the IRB tutorial at http://orca.byu.edu/IRB/irbtutorial.php (click under Compliance=>IRB=>Collaborative IRB Training Initiative); bring copy of certificate to class
Th Mar 26 Thursday	Consultation with Prof. Hawkins	
T Mar 31 Tuesday	Field research/ethnograph hy	"Symposium: Field Research." <i>Qualitative Methods</i> 2 (Spring 2004). Read contributions by Lieberman, Howard and Lynch. Available at: http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/uploadedFiles/moynihan/cqrm/Newsletter2.1.pdf Hawkins, Kirk A. and David R. Hansen. 2006 "Dependent Civil Society: The Círculos Bolivarianos in Venezuela." <i>Latin American Research Review</i> .
Th Apr 02 Thursday	Interviews	Interview exercise
T Apr 07 Tuesday	Boolean algebra	Ragin, Charles, Chapters 6 and 7, <i>The Comparative Method</i> , pp. 85-124.
Th Apr 09 Thursday	Boolean algebra	Boolean algebra

T Apr 14 Tuesday	Last day; course evaluation	Final case study (worth twice as much as other exercises)
W Apr 15 Wednesday	Exam Preparation Day	
Th Apr 16 Thursday		
F Apr 17 Friday	Final Exam: 280 SWKT 3:00pm - 6:00pm	
T Apr 21 Tuesday		

Assignment Descriptions

Research question exercise

Due: Thursday, Jan 08 at 3:00 pm

In one, double-spaced page, present the research question you will answer in this class, one that you have already tried to answer in a paper somewhere else. Do so by (a) introducing the broad topic, (b) showing why there is a puzzle or problem (here is where you state the question), and (c) saying what answer you previously found. Make certain somewhere to reaffirm the scholarly significance and real-world importance of your question/answer.

Include citations to at least two, high-quality sources that clarify or buttress your claims.

Hint: consider revising the introduction to your previous paper for this assignment, making certain that you still fulfill the requirements here.

Note: you may not be able to apply this research question to all of the assignments this semester. When that happens, adapt your question as best as you can, or consider temporarily turning to a different question.

Process tracing exercise

Due: Thursday, Jan 22 at 2:59 pm

Objective

You should understand how to use process tracing to identify causal processes.

Assignment

Go to <https://eads.usaid.gov/gbk/data/explore.cfm>. This provides data about US foreign aid to a variety of countries. Choose a country that interests you. Select “obligations” under transaction types and “economic” under assistance categories. Choose 10 years in the time span. Click on “Get Data.” Choose “Show constant dollars” when you see the results. Note changes over time.

Your job is to explain those changes or lack of change. The quantitative approach to doing this would be to identify features of your country that can be measured numerically—say, its level of democracy or its poverty level—and then observe a correlation between those numbers and the level of aid for your country and similar numbers for other countries (perhaps over a time span). Instead, we wish to process-trace the causal influences.

Now, go to <https://dec.usaid.gov>. This is the database of all government documents pertaining to US foreign aid. These are mostly produced by the US aid agency, USAID. Search in the upper-right box for the same country for which you now have data on US aid. Then narrow your results by looking only at “Program Planning” documents under document type. These are the documents that set the main U.S. strategy for a given country. Then limit your publication dates to the desired years. You should now have a more-manageable set of perhaps 150 documents. If you scroll through them, you can pick out a few that relate to your particular country, rather than to a given region or issue. These will often say things like “performance report” or “country assistance strategy” or “annual report.” USAID keeps changing the names and the time frames of these documents. Read through key sectors of these documents that address reasons for aid levels. Identify evidence that helps explain large changes in the aid levels to your country. If there are no large changes, identify evidence that explains the continuity. Write a 3-page report where you provide a brief table of US aid

levels for the past 10 years and summarize your key evidence that explains the patterns in those levels.

Case study design

Due: Thursday, Feb 05 at 2:59 pm

Using the criteria you've learned in class, select a single case that helps you answer your research question, then write up a description/justification of the study in roughly four double-spaced pages. You do not need to do a full-blown study now (this comes next), but you *do* need to do enough research to know about the case and why it is appropriate; thus, this assignment will feel a bit more like a research proposal than a research paper. Your write-up will need to remind the reader of your question, justify the selection of the case (in terms of both general methodological principles and the causal mechanisms you are testing), and describe the case in enough detail that I can appreciate your decision and understand the boundaries of your case.

Concepts exercise

Due: Thursday, Feb 26 at 3:00 pm

Assess the central concept in your research question (presumably the concept underlying your dependent variable) using Gerring's criteria. How you approach this task is up to you, whether you simply state your favorite definition and assess it, or whether you first highlight a couple of definitions to show which one is best. But for this assignment, I ask that you assess another scholar's definition rather than your own. Somewhere at the beginning of your paper, make certain to restate your research question and to clarify its relationship to the concept you are assessing. Take as much space as you need. Note that you will need to read and reference a few outside sources that define your concept.

Textual analysis exercise

Due: Thursday, Mar 12 at 2:59 pm

Perform a textual analysis that collects data useful for answering your research question; you can do a content analysis or a qualitative analysis. Summarize your results in just three double-spaced pages, including any tables/quotes. In your write-up, you should remind us of your research question, present a description and justification of your method, describe and justify your sample, and give the actual findings and their relevance to your question. Make certain that you select an appropriate text or set of texts to analyze, whether primary or secondary documents, and that you choose the best method for analyzing these texts; that is, let the question determine the method, not the other way around. Avoid overdoing it on this assignment; just pick one piece of your question and analyze a reasonable set of the available texts. For most qualitative analyses, one or two texts will be enough for this assignment, while for content analyses you will probably need more.

Historical/archival research

Due: Tuesday, Mar 24 at 2:59 pm

Verify a crucial piece of data in your case study by locating and drawing evidence from at least two different historical sources. These source must be secondary or primary documents.

Write up your results in no more than two double-spaced pages. As in other assignments, use the first paragraph to remind the reader of the research question, including a reference to the case study and the causal mechanisms at stake, thus helping the reader understand why the evidence that follows is crucial.

Interview exercise

Due: Thursday, Apr 02 at 2:59 pm

Spend at least thirty minutes interviewing someone with first-hand knowledge of your topic, asking them for information that will serve as data to answer your question. Make certain to *record* the interview and to *take notes* during the interview. (You can avoid recording the interview only if the topic is sensitive and you have a good reason to expect you will not receive honest answers; however, you will need to come up with comparable work, for example, by doing a second interview). You will turn in three things: (1) a printed, verbatim transcript of the interview, (2) retyped notes that you wrote during the interview, and (3) up to two, double-spaced pages summarizing the key findings as they relate to your question. In your summary of results, you should remind the reader of your research question and justify your choice of interview subject(s).

Note: You will probably need to schedule this interview at least a week in advance.

Boolean algebra

Due: Thursday, Apr 09 at 2:59 pm

Using either the assigned article from Linz and Stepan or a suitable piece of research on your own topic, assess their empirical claims using Boolean algebra. That is, decide on variables, construct a truth table, and do the “math” to summarize what the data do or don’t show us. Then write up a short accompanying text that summarizes and contextualizes your results.

Final case study (worth twice as much as any other exercise)

Due: Tuesday, Apr 14 at 2:59 pm

Use process-tracing to do the case study proposed in your previous assignment, then write up the results. There is no page limit; just do what it takes to make your argument. Whereas the previous assignment was more like a research proposal, this will feel more like a research paper. If you can apply your empirical work from early in the semester (or even to redo some of it), this will greatly enhance your study and should be included in the write-up. As with previous assignments, take time in the first paragraph to remind me of your research question, the theory/causal mechanisms at stake, and why this case is such a good test of the theory. Also, make clear what the boundaries of your case are.