

# Fundamentals of Political Research

## Research Design and Qualitative Methods

POLI 202  
Monday 4:00-7:00 Merrill 134  
Winter 2015

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### Office Hours:

*Tête-à-têtes:* Mon. 1:00-2:30pm (description below)

*Dicta:* Thurs. 2:30-3:00pm (description below)

### Course Overview

This course is an introduction to research design and qualitative methodology. It focuses on how to conceptualize and execute empirical research projects involving qualitative research methods. The course adopts an interdisciplinary approach; readings will be drawn from across the social sciences, including politics, socio-legal studies, and anthropology. We will also travel collectively through key stages of designing and executing a research proposal.

Methodological and research-design training alongside developing substantive expertise in a chosen area constitute part of the core of one's graduate study. Whether a dissertation is grounded empirically or philosophically, the central question motivating how you conduct your inquiry will be how to choose and evaluate evidence in order to meet potential objections.

The purpose of this course is to help students develop a sophisticated, hands-on, and rigorous sense of how to ask and answer a research question that is both interesting and interests them, concerning the workings of politics, and using social-science data.

Fundamentals of Political Research is an elective course for Politics PhD students. Other students with an interest in empirical research design are welcome to enroll with permission of the instructor. It is strongly recommended that students in this course have passed at least one year of graduate coursework and are interested in formulating dissertation or funding proposals.

### Learning Objectives

The overall course goal is to expose students to the nuts and bolts of designing and executing a research proposal. The successful student will be organized; read all materials actively; spend time thinking, writing, and revising; submit assignments on time; work independently and thoughtfully; offer valuable insight and suggestions to peers; and manage time wisely.

There are several learning objectives this course aims to fulfill. Upon completing the course, you should be able to:

- Develop a research question and explain its relevance to broader audiences;
- Situate your question in a body of scholarship or at the intersection of multiple areas of scholarship;
- Understand the differences between a range of qualitative research methods and the circumstances under which one or another might be chosen; and
- Execute a research proposal using methods suitable to your inquiry.

Your skills in research design and qualitative methods will be sharpened if you successfully:

- Demonstrate active reading of the texts assigned;
- Critically evaluate your own research project and those of your peers;
- Engage in preliminary data gathering for your project; and
- Interpret findings in the context of your chosen methods.

Students should note that this course includes a practicum, where they will be building a research proposal and executing a small pilot study of their proposed research. (Students who do not plan to write an empirical dissertation, but one resting entirely on philosophical or theoretical grounds, should feel free to meet with the instructor to modify the course to meet their needs.) **In-class discussions and feedback from colleagues should be enhanced with at least one additional meeting outside class with your advisor or proposed advisor regarding your proposal.**

### **Collective Responsibilities**

In this class we will offer feedback on each other's ideas and those of various scholars. A successful learning experience requires mutual respect on the part of the students and the instructor. No one should be subject to behavior that is rude, disruptive, intimidating, or demeaning. The instructor has primary responsibility for the maintenance of academic and professional integrity.

Instructor responsibilities:

- Facilitate graduate student learning and skills development;
- Treat all students with courtesy and respect;
- Be open to constructive input from students in the course (students will complete midterm and final course evaluations); and
- Ensure that opportunities to participate are enjoyed equally by students.

Student responsibilities:

- Read materials in advance of, and attend, all class meetings;
- Submit all assignments on time;
- Give full respectful attention to those speaking;

- Provide substantial, critical, and friendly feedback to your colleagues as they develop their research proposals;
- Be open to revising and refining your project in response to peer review; and
- Participate and ask questions. Use courteous, respectful language and keep comments and questions relevant to the topic at hand.

Differences of viewpoint or concerns should be expressed in terms supportive of the learning process to create an environment in which graduate students and faculty learn to reason with clarity and compassion and to develop an understanding of the political communities in which we live, study, and interact.

### **Readings**

Required or secondary readings will be posted to the course website on eCommons [eC]. Readings may also be found using UC-Links. Updated copies of this syllabus, should it be changed, will also be posted to the course website. Use of bibliographic software, such as EndNote or Mendeley, is recommended.

The following texts may be useful for reference and consultation, and for those seeking additional exposure to academic enquiry in research design and qualitative methods.

- Box-Steffensmeier, Brady, Collier, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford, 2008.
- W. Philips Shively. *The Craft of Political Research* (9<sup>th</sup> ed). Pearson, 2012.
- Kristin Luker. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Harvard Univ. Press, 2010.
- George and Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. MIT Press, 2005.
- Becker. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago, 1998.
- Karen O'Reilly. *Ethnographic Methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Routledge, 2012.
- Bennett and Checkel. *Process Tracing*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Weiss. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press, 1994.
- Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read. *Field Research in Political Science*. Cambridge UP, 2015.

### **Website**

The following materials will be available on the course website:

- This syllabus, and any changes made thereto (these will also be announced in class);
- Important handouts;
- Additional required and secondary readings and materials.

### **Evaluation**

Your final grade will be based on the following:

- Research proposal of 10-12 double-spaced pages due Thurs. March 19, 10:00 a.m. via email to mmassoud+202@ucsc.edu and to Prof. Massoud's office (50%)
- In-class presentation or discussant of final research proposal (15%)
- Attendance and participation in all class sessions, including preparation of assignments; writing weekly reading syntheses; and serving as friendly reviewers, discussion facilitators, presenters, and discussants (35%)

### **Class Format**

Class time will be devoted in part to discussing the written materials produced by members of the class. The purpose of these discussions is for you to provide and receive **critical, constructive, and friendly** feedback. Please be present and engage as an active participant.

### **Academic integrity**

In this course, abide by the values of honesty, respect, and civility. Read and understand the university's policies on academic integrity:

[http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic\\_integrity/index.html](http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/index.html).

Plagiarism is copying ideas or words that are not your own and attributing them to yourself. All cases of plagiarism are offensive and will be prosecuted per university policy.

### **Accessibility and Disabilities:**

If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please submit an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to Professor Massoud **within the first two weeks of the quarter**. You may submit these outside of class (e.g., office hours) to ensure anonymity. Contact DRC at 831-459-2089 (voice), 831-459-4806 (TTY), or <http://drc.ucsc.edu> for more information on the requirements or process.

### **Office Hours**

*Tête-à-têtes:* Please sign up in advance outside my office door for a 15-minute appointment during the tête-à-têtes period. Space is limited to six students per week. Sign up sheets will generally be posted one-to-two weeks in advance. Come prepared with specific questions or issues you would like to discuss.

*Dicta:* Dicta is a short walk I lead with students (weather permitting) to discuss issues related to the course or other matters related more generally to your academic, employment, and life goals. Come prepared with questions or issues you would like to discuss with your peers and me. As in legal judgments, dicta are information relevant to our course and to your education, but they may be extraneous to your final mark. Space is limited to eight students per week. Please sign up in advance outside my office door and meet outside my office (154 Merrill Annex) on Thursday at 2:30pm. **Note: A graduate-student-only dicta will be held on Monday, February 23, 2015.**

While I cannot guarantee availability, I will do my best to accommodate students by appointment if you have course or teaching obligations during both tête-à-têtes and dicta.

### **Narrative evaluations**

Special circumstances determined by the professor may warrant explication of a grade. In those cases a student will receive a narrative evaluation. If you would like to request a narrative, please inform Professor Massoud in writing during the first week of the quarter.

*The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus as necessary to meet the educational needs of this course.*

**POLI 202 (rev. 1/7/15)**  
**Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments\***

\* This schedule is subject to change. Announcements will be made in class and updates will be posted to the course website.

**Note: All written assignments are due before 5pm on the Saturday before class meets.**

**1. Monday, January 5**

Introduction to research design, qualitative methods, and the course

- Read the syllabus, assignment sheets, and UCSC Academic Integrity Policy
- Be able to answer the following questions:
  - What concepts interest you, and what are your research and teaching interests?
  - How might you design a feasible research project to achieve some of those interests?
  - What are your goals this quarter and timeline for completion?
- Prepare a statement of research and teaching interests, challenges you face, plans you have to overcome these challenges, and concrete goals you hope to achieve before the end of the quarter.

**2. Monday, January 12**

Theoretical questions and the research process

- King, Keohane, and Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry* (1994), 3-33.
- Brady, Collier, and Seawright. "Refocusing the Discussion of Methodology." In Brady and Collier, ed. *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (2004), 3-20.
- Michael Watts. "The Holy Grail. In Pursuit of the Dissertation Proposal." UC Berkeley Institute for International Studies.
- Przworski and Salomon. *The Art of Writing Proposals*. Social Science Research Council.
- Tamir Moustafa. "Introduction." In *The Struggle for Constitutional Power: Law, Politics, and Economic Development in Egypt*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007.
- Optional: David A. Freedman. "On Types of Scientific Enquiry: The Role of Qualitative Reasoning." In Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, ed. *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford Univ. Press, 2008.
- Optional: Denzin and Lincoln. "Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research." In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage, 2000.
- Optional: *UCB Dissertation Proposal Workshop*. UC Berkeley Institute for International Studies, 2001.

*Note: No class on Monday, January 19 (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday)*

### **3. Monday, January 26**

Case studies and case selection

- George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, pp. 3-37, 67-88. MIT Press.
- Seawright and Gerring. "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research." *Political Research Quarterly* 61 (2): 294-308, 2008.
- Lynette Chua. "Pragmatic Resistance, Law, and Social Movements in Authoritarian States." *Law & Society Review* 46 (4): 713-748, 2012.
- Optional: Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *American Political Science Review* 65 (3): 682-693, 1971.
- Optional: Barbara Geddes. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2 (1): 131-150, 1990.
- Optional: Collier and Mahoney. "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research." *World Politics* 49 (1): 56-91, 1996.

### **4. Monday, February 2**

Comparative, historical, and archival research

- Edgar Kiser and Michael Hechter. "The Role of General Theory in Comparative-Historical Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 97 (1): 1-30, 1991.
- Marita Sturken. "Absent Images of Memory: Remembering and Reenacting the Japanese Internment." *Positions* 5 (3): 687-707.
- Alejandro Portes. "Latin America's Class Structures: Their Composition and Change during the Last Decades," *Latin American Research Review*. 20:3 (1985), 7-39.
- Kristin Luker. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences* (Ch. 9). Harvard Univ. Press, 2010.
- Optional: James Mahoney, "Comparative Historical Methodology" *Annual Review of Sociology* (2004) 81-101.
- Optional: Ian S. Lustick, "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *American Political Science Review* 90, 3 (1996): 605-618.
- Optional: David Collier, "Comparative Historical Analysis: Where Do We Stand?" *APSA Comparative Politics Section Newsletter* 9 (Winter 1998): 1-2, 4-5.
- Optional: Ann Laura Stoler. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton University Press, 2009.

## **5. Monday, February 9**

Situating your project in a local context: Field research, observation, and ethnography

- Clifford Geertz. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.” In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books, 1973.
- Benjamin L. Read, “More Than an Interview, Less Than Sedaka: Studying Subtle and Hidden Politics with Site-Intensive Methods.” In Allen Carlson, et al., ed. *Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010, 145-61.
- Kristin Luker. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences* (Ch. 8). Harvard Univ. Press, 2010.
- James Ferguson. *The Anti-Politics Machine* (Preface, Introduction, Epilogue). Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990.
- Optional: Richard Fenno, Jr., “Observation, Context, and Sequence in the Study of Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 80, 1 (March 1986): 3-15.

*Note: No class on Monday, February 16 (President’s Day Holiday)*

## **6. Monday, February 23**

Ethics and Identity in Qualitative Research

- Familiarize yourself with UCSC human subjects procedures at <http://officeofresearch.ucsc.edu/orca/irb/index.html>.
- Maurice Punch, “Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research.” In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage, 1994, pp. 83-97.
- Ivy Goduka. “Ethics and Politics of Field Research in South Africa.” *Social Problems* 37 (3): 329-340, 1990.
- Elisabeth Jean Wood, “The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones,” *Qualitative Sociology* 29:3 373-86, 2006.
- Optional: Bost and de Vries. “Bureaucracies of Mass Deception: Institutional Review Boards and the Ethics of Ethnographic Research.” In Charles L. Bosk and Raymond G. de Vries, ed. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 595, 249-63 (2004).
- Optional: Lee Ann Fujii. “Shades of Truth: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence.” *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (2): 231-241, 2010.
- Optional: Nigel Barley. *The Innocent Anthropologist: Notes from a Mud Hut*. Waveland, 2000.

## **7. Monday, March 2**

### Interviews

- Schaffer, Frederic Charles. 2006. "Ordinary Language Interviewing." In *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*, eds. Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Leech, et al. "Symposium: Interview Methods in Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 663-688, 2002 (seven short articles)
- David M. Engel. "The Oven Bird's Song: Insiders, Outsider, and Personal Injuries in an American Community." *Law & Society Review* 18 (4): 551-582.
- Halliday and Schmidt. "David Engel and 'The Oven Bird's Song.'" In *Conducting Law and Society Research: Reflections on Methods and Practices*, ed. Simon Halliday and Patrick Schmidt. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009.
- Re-read: Kristin Luker. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences* (pp. 167-89). Harvard Univ. Press, 2010.

## **8. Monday, March 9**

Presentations of five proposals and critical feedback (five discussants)

- In advance of class, read each student's draft proposal and prepare comments and questions for discussion.
- If you are an in-class proposal presenter, you will provide feedback on your discussant's proposal outside of class this week.

## **9. Monday, March 16**

*If-I-Knew-Then-What-I-Know-Now* Roundtable on Designing Research, Choosing and Using Methods, Analyzing Data, and Writing Up (Steve Araujo, Sandra Harvey, Omid Mohamadi, Charles Olney)

- Zigerell, "Rookie Mistakes: Preemptive Comments on Graduate Student Manuscripts," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 142-146, 2013.

## **10. Thursday, March 19**

Final proposals due no later than 10:00am via email and to 154 Merrill College.

Have a relaxing spring break. Go see a film – and dance – at least once.