

Washington University  
Department of Political Science

**Collection and Analysis of Qualitative Data**

**L32 491**

Spring 2014

Seigle Hall 204, MW 2:30-4 pm

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Seigle Hall 239; 5-5830  
Office Hours: W 10-11:30 & by appt.

This course will cover basic techniques for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing qualitative data. You will select a research project, collect appropriate qualitative data, and conduct a preliminary analysis. You will learn how to gather and analyze several types of qualitative data, including participant observation and open- and closed-ended interviews. In addition, you will evaluate and analyze primary data collected by others, including oral histories, archival records and interview transcripts. We will consider the advantages and disadvantages of non-randomly collected data, such as those gathered through ethnographic and archival methods. We will assess the utility of building statistical datasets from such data, and you will learn the basic techniques of using computer programs for qualitative data. Assignments that focus on different aspects of collection and analysis are designed to help you produce research papers as final projects.

**Requirements.** Each student will develop a research proposal that specifies a question to be studied; a review of relevant literature; a detailed research design; data sources; methods to analyze the data. Each component will be a separate written assignment, and the components will eventually be compiled to produce the final research paper.

The class is structured as a seminar. Attendance is mandatory.

**Assignments.** There are several assignments for the class; most of these build toward a major research project. If you complete the assignments satisfactorily, your final paper will be more than half-written by mid-April.

**Assignment #1: A 2-3 page preliminary proposal** on the topic you wish to study. You do not have to know exactly what data you will be using at this time, but it must be qualitative in nature. We will discuss your proposals in class, offering feedback and suggestions.

**Assignment #2: Working together, select a site for participant observation** (e.g., a classroom, meeting, political rally, etc.) Without consulting each other, observe and record the events at the site. After you have written up your observations, write a 3-5

page paper \*together,\* exploring the ways in which your data collection converged and/or diverged. Discuss how these differences may affect the study.

**Assignment #3: Write a 3-4 page research blueprint** explaining the project's conceptual focus, empirical data to be gathered, and a draft of questions to be used to guide data collection. By this point you will have decided on the type of data to be used in your study.

**Assignment #4: Develop an open-ended interview protocol** to administer to two individuals who are relevant to your final project **OR conduct more intensive participant observation OR collect archival data** relevant to your project. Transcribe the data into computer-analyzable form.

**Assignment #5: Write a 3-5 page literature review** relevant to your question and data. Discuss how your work contributes to existing research.

**Assignment #6: Final research project.** Write a 12-15 page paper using the methods and approaches you have learned in the class. Build up the paper from the assignments.

### **Readings (most available on Ares)**

Wayne Booth et al., *The Craft of Research*.

Glen Elder et al., *Working with Archival Data*.

Robert Franzosi, *Quantitative Narrative Analysis*.

Matthew Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*. 2nd ed.

Robert Weiss, *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*.

Sudhir Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day*.

William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society*.

The password is "sunita"

### **Class Schedule and Readings**

#### **Part 1. Introduction to Qualitative Data as a Resource**

13 January: *Introductory class*

15, 22 January: *Understanding the nature of qualitative data*  
Miles and Huberman, ch. 1, 2

27, 29 January: *Research design and qualitative data*  
Booth et al., ch. 1, 6, Miles & Huberman, ch. 3

3, 5 February: *Classic and Contemporary Ethnography*  
Whyte, Introduction and Part I, Venkatesh, ch. 1-4

**Assignment #1 due 10 February**

**Part 2: Understanding and Choosing Qualitative Data**

10, 12 February: *Participant Observation*  
Whyte, Part II, III, and Appendix  
[Choose site for Assignment #2]

17, 19 February: *Interviews*  
Weiss, ch. 1-5  
[Presentations on Assignment #2]

24, 26 February: *Narratives*  
Franzosi, ch. 1, 2; Griffin article

**Assignment #2 due 26 February**

3, 5 March: *Archives*  
Elder, ch. 1-3; additional reading TBA

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**SPRING BREAK**  
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**Part 3: Collecting and Analyzing the Data; Preliminary Analysis**

17, 19 March: *Structuring the project*  
Booth et al., ch. 6-11, Miles & Huberman ch. 4, 5

**Assignment #3 due 19 March**

24, 26 March: *Participant Observation and Interviews*  
Venkatesh, ch. 4-8, Weiss, ch. 6, 7

31 March, 2 April: *Narratives and Archives*  
Franzosi, ch. 3, 4, Elder et al., ch. 4, 5

#### **Part 4: Further Analysis and Writeup**

7, 9 April: *Drafting the final project*  
Booth et al., ch. 12-14, 16

**Assignment #4 due 9 April**

14, 16 April: *Writing the literature review*  
Examples of literature reviews (Ares)

21, 23 April: *Analyzing and presenting the data*  
Booth et al., ch. 15, 17, Miles & Huberman ch. 6-8, 10

**Assignment #5 due 23 April**

**Assignment 6 (Final Research Project) due on last day of finals week**