Qualitative Methods in Political Research
POL2505H
Winter 2014
Wednesdays, 10-12, UC255

This course introduces qualitative methods and approaches, considering the trade-offs involved in choosing one approach, method, technique, or type of evidence over another approach, method, technique, or type of evidence.

After briefly reviewing positivist and interpretivist research traditions, we cover the ideal-typical and practical use of specific qualitative methods such as interviewing, archival research, ethnography, counterfactuals, and discourse analysis. Examples come from political science research and speak directly to political science research.

Because much is learned by doing, this course has a significant “hands-on” component.

Readings

Books: Available at Bob Miller Bookroom (180 Bloor W., north side, west of Avenue Rd., lower level)
- Layna Mosley, ed., Interview Research in Political Science (Cornell, 2013)

Other Readings: Journal articles are accessible via the U of T library electronic holdings. Scanned readings are available via the Portal.

Additional Readings: Readings listed as “additional” may or may not be available electronically or from the U of T libraries. It is your responsibility to plan ahead and coordinate with other students to ensure access to additional readings. (You are required to use additional readings when you give your scheduled in-class presentation.)

Assignments

Participation and Engagement (15%): Please come to seminar come having read and thought about the readings. The quality of the experience depends in large part on your preparation. I am more interested in the quality, than in the quantity or frequency, of your participation. Having said this, if you are usually silent, it may leave me guessing how well you’re engaging the material.

Presentation (15%): Offer a short (5-7 minutes) presentation that provokes discussion on a given week’s topics. You will be marked on the degree to which you: 1) provide stimulating questions/critiques while minimizing summaries of the readings; 2) consider interconnections among the assigned readings; 3) consider links to other weeks’ readings; 4) integrate discussion of some of the additional readings into your presentation. A sign-up sheet will be circulated at the first class meeting.
Double Critique of Public Presentation (25%): Attend a public lecture/colloquium/presentation in which a single scholar discusses her/his empirical research about politics. The presentation should last at least 30 minutes. (Contact me with questions about what qualifies.) Write a report (2400-2700 words; provide a word count) that: 1) briefly summarizes the presentation, 2) critiques it from a positivist perspective, providing suggestions for further research, and 3) critiques it from an interpretivist perspective, providing suggestions for further research. Due on February 5. Late submissions are penalized 2% per calendar day.

Hands-on Assignments (45% = 2 x 22.5%): Choose any two of the below. Make your choice in writing by January 30. Your choice must explicitly justify—with regard to your intellectual and professional development—your selection. Once approved, further changes require my written approval. The assignments themselves are due April 2 (except the archive and participant observation assignments; see below). Late submissions are penalized 2% per calendar day. Details will follow in the first weeks of classes.

- **Review Essay:** Write an essay that critically reviews the literature on one of the following topics: configurational analysis, ethics and the ethics review process, focus group research, or archival work. I will provide a list of readings for each topic. The essay should be about 2500 words, demonstrating close familiarity with the literature and offering an original argument about the literature.
- **Discourse analysis:** Choose a body of written work (e.g., a newspaper over a specific period of time, a set of speeches) and analyze the language, metaphors and/or symbols used therein. What political “work” do such language, metaphors, and/or symbols do? Your analysis should be about 2500 words.
- **Interview:** Conduct a semi-structured or in-depth interview with a person of your choosing on a topic of your choosing about politics. The interview should last at least 45 minutes. Submit a full, verbatim written transcript of the interview, a typed version of notes taken during and after the interview, and a write-up analysis (the analysis will be about 2200 words) that discusses the extent to which your interview allowed you to answer your research question(s). Be specific about what worked well and what, in retrospect, you should have done differently. This option may require Ethics Review approval.
- **Archival work.** If you have access to original documents that you would like to evaluate/analyze, you may choose this exercise. Students submit a full, typed version of their notes, as well as a write-up analysis that discusses the extent to which your archives allowed you to answer your research question(s). Be specific about what worked well and what, in retrospect, you should have done differently. If this requires travel outside of the GTA, you may submit your work by August 1, 2014. (May count as 2 assignments. Contact me for details.)
- **Participant observation.** If you would like to practice being a participant observer in a “natural” setting, choose this assignment. Students submit a full, typed version of their fieldnotes, as well as a write-up analysis that discusses the extent to which your experience allowed you to answer your research question(s). Be specific about what worked well and what, in retrospect, you should have done differently. Participant observation will likely require a proposal to the Ethics Review Board, which takes time. If you choose this option, the work for this assignment will be due on August 1, 2014. (May count as 2 assignments. Contact me for details.)
- **Other qualitative exercise:** If you would prefer to get your hands “dirty” trying another qualitative method (e.g., focus groups), please contact me.

Course Policies

*Office hours:* If you have questions about the readings, about the discussion, or about the assignments, office hours are best. No appointment is needed. Occasionally, I announce in advance that office hours are cancelled. If you cannot make office hours but would like to meet, email me to schedule a mutually agreeable alternative time.
Email: Email is great, but extended conversations will be conducted face to face. I generally reply to email inquiries within 3 days. If you do not receive a reply within this period, resubmit your question(s). Please consult the syllabus and other course information BEFORE submitting inquiries by email.

Keep copies: Students are strongly advised to keep rough and draft work and hard copies of their assignments before submitting them. Keep them until the marked assignments have been returned.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with accordingly. For further clarification and information, please see the University of Toronto’s policy on Plagiarism at http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html. This course uses Turnitin.com, a web-based program to deter plagiarism. Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University’s use of Turnitin.com are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Extensions: On rare occasions, extraordinary circumstances justify an extension. I discuss possible extensions during office hours, not via email. If you cannot make office hours, email me to schedule an alternative time. I consider such circumstances until one week before the due date. After that, I discuss extensions only if a student has an official note from a doctor or from the University.

Missed Assignments: If, due to an emergency, you miss an assignment without receiving my prior consent, you may make up the assignment only with a note from the university or a physician. You must contact me within 48 hours of the missed assignment for me to consider any documentation.

Accessibility Needs: The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility as soon as possible.

Course Outline

Week 1 (January 8): Introduction
- Peter Hall, “Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research,” chapter 11 from James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- Jonah Lehrer, “The Truth Wears Off: Is There Something Wrong with the Scientific Method?” The New Yorker, 13 December 2010

additional

Week 2 (January 15): Positivism
- Brady and Collier, ed., start - 199
- Edward Schatz, ed., chapter by Allina-Pisano
additional

- Martin Hollis & Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding in International Relations* (Oxford, 1991), ch. 3
- George Thomas, “The Qualitative Foundations of Political Science Methodology,” *Perspectives on Politics* 3(4), 2005: 855-866

**Week 3 (January 22): Interpretivism**

- Terrence Ball, “Deadly Hermeneutics; or SINN and the Social Scientist,” in Terrence Ball, ed., *Idioms of Inquiry: Critique and Renewal in Political Science* (State University of New York, 1987), pp. 95-112
- Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973), chapter 1, chapter 15
- Edward Schatz, ed., chapters by Wedeen, Pachirat

additional

- Charles Taylor, “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 25(1), September, 1971: 3-51
- Martin Hollis & Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding in International Relations* (Oxford, 1991), ch. 4
- “Symposium: Interpretivism,” *Qualitative Methods Newsletter of APSA* 1:2 (Fall 2003)
Week 4 (January 29): Concepts

***HANDS-ON ASSIGNMENT SELECTIONS DUE TODAY***


Additional
- Mauro Calise & Theodore J. Lowi, Hyperpolitics: an Interactive Dictionary of Political Science Concepts (Chicago, 2010)

Week 5 (February 5): Cases and Case Selection

***DOUBLE CRITIQUE ASSIGNMENT DUE TODAY***

- Edward Schatz and Elena Maltseva. “Assumed to be Universal: The Leap from Data to Knowledge in the American Political Science Review.” Polity 44.3 (2012): 446-472.

Additional
- Charles Ragin and Howard Becker, eds., What is a Case? (Cambridge UP, 1992), introduction
- Jason Seawright and John Gerring. “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options.” Political Research Quarterly (June 2008) 61 (2): 294-308
• Jason Seawright, John Gerring. “Case selection techniques in case study research - A menu of qualitative and quantitative options.” Political Research Quarterly (June 2008) 61 (2): 294-308
• David Collier and James Mahoney, “Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research,” World Politics 49, 1996: 56-91
• Harry Eckstein, “Case-Study and Theory in Micro-Politics,” in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, eds., Handbook of Political Science, vol. 7 (Addison-Wesley, 1975), 79-138
• Robert K. Yin, Case Study Research: Design and Method (Sage, 1994), 99-146.
• Adam Przeworski & Henry Teune, The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry (Interscience, 1970)
• Gary Goertz, “Assessing the trivialness, relevance, and relative importance of necessary or sufficient conditions in social science.” Studies in Comparative International Development 41(2), 2006: 88-109

Week 6 (February 12): What might “Taking History Seriously” Mean?
• Kathleen Thelen, “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics, Annual Review of Political Science 2, June 1999: 369-404
• Ian Lustick, “History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias,” American Political Science Review 90, 1996: 605-618
• Theda Skocpol and Margaret Sommers, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry,” in Social Revolutions in the Modern World (Cambridge, 1994), 72-98

Additional
• Andreas Schedler, “Mapping Contingency,” in Ian Shapiro and Sonu Bedi, eds., Political Contingency: Studying the Unexpected, the Accidental, and the Unforeseen (New York University Press, 2007), pp. 54-78
• James Mahoney, “Path-Dependent Explanations of Regime Change: Central America in Comparative Perspective.” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36(1), spring 2001: 111-141

**February 19: Reading Week**

**Week 7 (February 26): Ethnography**
• Edward Schatz, ed., chapters by Schatz, Kubik, Pachirat, Walsh, Yanow (skim chapters by Bayard de Volo, Jourde, Schatzberg, Arias)

*Additional*
• Edward Schatz, ed., chapters by Zirakzadeh, Wood
• Renato, Rosaldo. 1986. “From the Door of His Tent: The Fieldworker and the Inquisitor.” In James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (California, 77-97)
• Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. “Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing,” in their *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago, 1995), 142-168

**Week 8 (March 5): Interviewing I**


Additional
- Robert Dingwall, “Accounts, Interviews and Observation,” in Gale Miller and Robert Dingwall, eds., Context and Method in Qualitative Research (Sage, 1997), 51-64
- James P. Spradley, The Ethnographic Interview (Wadsworth, 1997)
- Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin, Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (Sage, 2005)

Week 9 (March 12): No class this week.

Week 10 (March 19): Interviewing II
- Mosley book, remaining chapters
- Mosley book, appendix of sample materials

Additional

Week 11 (March 26): Discourse Analytic Approaches
- David Howarth, Aletta Norval, Yannis Stavrakakis, eds., Discourse Theory and Political Analysis (Manchester, 2000), introduction

Additional
• Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Minnesota, 1999)
• Neil Lunt, “A Note on Political Science and the Metaphorical Imagination,” *Politics* 25(2), May 2005: 73-79
• Kathy Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull, *Oh, Say, Can You See? The Semiotics of the Military in Hawai‘i* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999)
• Peter K. Manning, *Semiotics and Fieldwork* (Sage, 1987)
• Peter K. Manning, *Semiotics and Fieldwork* (Sage, 1987)

**Week 12 (April 2): Multiple Methods**

***HANDS-ON ASSIGNMENTS DUE IN CLASS TODAY***

• Joseph A. Maxwell. “Using Numbers in Qualitative Research.” *Qualitative Inquiry* (July 2010) 16 (6): 475-482
additional

- Frieder Wolf, “Enlightened Eclecticism or Hazardous Hotchpotch? Mixed Methods and Triangulation Strategies in Comparative Public Policy Research,” *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* April 2010 vol. 4 no. 2 144-167
- James Mahoney and Gary Goertz. “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research.” *Political Analysis* (Summer 2006) 14 (3): 227-249