Qualitative-Interpretive Research Methods

POLS 6004 Spring 2019

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All graduate students in political science are required to take a course in quantitative methods (6001) and in research design (7004). As the newest core course in the graduate program, POLS 6004 broadens the methodological training offered by the department so that students are more fully aware of the possible approaches they might use for the Masters essay or Doctoral dissertation. (The department also offers an advanced course in quantitative methods, 6002, which may be substituted for 6004). The course introduces basic qualitative-interpretive methods and students are encouraged to supplement their training with more advanced courses available across the university.

Qualitative-interpretive approaches have a long history of use in the social sciences. In political science their use has varied by subfield and by publishing venue (i.e., journals versus books). Both comparative politics and international relations have had comparatively strong traditions, with the latter having developed an interpretive (constructivist) strain over the last decades. As a more interdisciplinary subfield, public administration has a complex history with qualitative approaches prominent but increasingly challenged by those championing quantitative methods. Despite significant exceptions like Richard Fenno’s *Home Style: House Members in their Districts* (1978), American politics has been dominated by quantitative methods—particularly when it comes to what is published in journals. However, that dominance is beginning to be challenged. (See the January 2017 *PS: Political Science & Politics* symposium on political ethnography, in which 3 of the 5 contributors are scholars working in the American subfield.) Finally, while political theory is conventionally thought of as a “non-empirical” field, theorists have always used the kinds of textual methods common to interpretive approaches and a new generation of theorists is challenging that convention—using interviews, policy texts, etc. Because 6004 is offered across subfields, students are urged to attend to practices within their major and minor subfields and to bring those perspectives into class discussion.

Of the six texts for the course, the text on fieldnotes is authored by non-political scientists (two sociologists, one folklorist); the edited text demonstrates qualitative-interpretive methods within contemporary political science across subfields; and the four specialty texts (Schaffer, Pachirat, Fujii, and Shenhav) are part of the Routledge Series on Interpretive Methods edited by Yanow and Schwartz-Shea.

Because of the breadth of qualitative-interpretive research traditions, there are inevitable tradeoffs in what can be fruitfully covered in a single semester. This is especially so when it comes to data-analytic methods, which are numerous—ranging from thematic coding to discourse analysis. For this reason, we will focus our energies on basic data generation—observation, interviewing, documents—with more limited attention to data analytic techniques. I welcome your feedback on any aspect of the course but, particularly, on the extent to which you believe it meets your subfield needs—although promoting subfield methodological pluralism is a goal of this course!
**Required Texts**


Marriott e-reserve and CANVAS readings

**Key Dates - No class**

March 10-17, Spring Break
April 17-20, WPSA Conference
April 25, Optional IRB Workshop session

**Course Requirements**

Reading and participation 30%
Hands-on assignments 70%

Multiple meanings/symbols assignment (≈ 2 pgs)
Fieldnotes assignment (≈ 7 pgs)
Interview I – A Phenomenological Interview (≈ 5 pgs)
Interview II – *in “teams”*
  - audio recording
  - transcription
  - analyses I & II
Evidence generation brainstorm (≈ 3 pgs)
Analysis assignment I (single interview) (≈ 7-10 pgs)
Analysis assignment II (two interviews) (≈ 12-16 pgs)

*I reserve the right to adapt this syllabus over the course of the semester.*

**Americans with Disabilities Act: Reasonable Accommodations for Qualified Students**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services. (www.hr.utah.edu/oee/ada/guide/faculty/)

**Wellness Statement**

Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student’s ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness - [www.wellness.utah.edu](http://www.wellness.utah.edu); 801-581-7776.
COURSE OVERVIEW  Note:  Numbers of pages of reading are estimates only.

Week 1  January 10—INTRODUCTION
What is the place of qualitative-interpretive methods in political science?

Reading:  50 pages
HAND OUT: Multiple meanings/symbols assignment

Week 2  January 17—OBSERVATION
Getting started – a skill that can be learned!

Reading:  29 + Emerson et al., 1-5 [196 pages]
DUE: Multiple meanings/symbols assignment
HAND OUT: Fieldnotes assignment

Week 3  January 24—CONCEPTS AND THEORY
Concepts are the building blocks of theory. How should these “blocks” be built? What is the role of theory in research? What constitutes “quality” in research? What role do “causality” and “generalizability” play in qualitative and interpretive studies?

Reading: 112 + Schaeffer [200 pages]
Nothing due, working on Fieldnotes assignment

Week 4  January 31—INTERVIEWING
Varieties of interviewing; Designing interview research; What difference does researcher identity make?

Reading:  59 + Fujii [151 pages]
DUE: Fieldnotes Assignment
HAND OUT: Interview I - A Phenomenological Interview

Week 5  February 7—ANALYSIS I
What are the basics? Close reading, Coding and memoing, Word-based content analysis; What are the possibilities? Visual methods, Varieties of discourse analysis (Handout)

Reading:  76 pages
Nothing due, working on Interview I

Week 6  February 14—ETHNOGRAPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
Are “ethnography” and “participant observation” different? How are these approaches used in political science? To what extent do they overlap with “field research”?

Reading:  52 + Pachirat [211 pages]
DUE: Interview I - A Phenomenological Interview
Week 7 **February 21—ANALYSIS II**
Narrative and Story Analysis, Value-Critical Policy Analysis, Metaphor and Category Analysis, and Collective Memory

Reading: **121 + Shenhav [197 pages]**
HAND OUT: Interview II (instructions) & team formation!

Week 8—**February 28—TBD**

Reading: TBD
*Nothing due, working on Interview II*

Week 9 **March 7—DOCUMENTS and ARCHIVAL RESEARCH**
How should we understand documents? How do we locate them? Which ones are relevant? What about other artifacts? What narratives can we analyze in such texts?

Reading: **40 pages**
*Nothing due – working on Interview II*
HAND OUT: Generating evidence through documents

Week 10 **March 14—SPRING BREAK:** Please note the due dates below for transcription and Analysis I. The sooner the transcription is completed, the sooner you can start on Analysis I.

Week 11 **March 21—CASE STUDY RESEARCH**
GUEST LECTURE Professors Juliet Carlisle and Phillip Singer

Reading: TBD but about **50 pages**
**DUE:** Interview II – evidence of its completion, i.e., fieldnotes, audio file
HAND OUT: Analysis I

Week 12 **March 28—[COMPARATIVE] CASE STUDY RESEARCH – HISTORICAL AND OTHERWISE**

Reading: TBD but about **100 pages**
**DUE:** Interview II – Transcription (at the latest)
**DUE:** Generating evidence through documents

Week 13 **April 4—MIXED METHODS, MULTIPLE METHODS, MULTI-METHOD**
What are the differences?

Reading: **18 pages**
**DUE:** Analysis I
HAND OUT: Analysis II
Week 14  **April 11—RESEARCH ETHICS**

*Reading: 87 pages*

Nothing due, working on Analysis II

Week 15  **April 19—NO CLASS, WPSA CONFERENCE**

To make up for this missed class session, on **Thursday, April 25**, I will do an optional IRB workshop during class time, i.e., taking you through an IRB application that a Political Science doctoral student successfully completed.

Week 16  **Finals Week:** Thursday April 25 – Wednesday May 1

**DUE:** Wednesday, May 1, noon: Analysis II

**NOTE:** I need your Analyses II to be on time--so that I can finish grading them by May 10—before departing on an extended vacation.

**COURSE DETAIL**

Readings are available in texts, on e-reserve, or through CANVAS

Week 1  **January 10—INTRODUCTION** (50 pgs, plus skim)

What is the state of qualitative-interpretive methods and methodologies in political science?


Further reading
*Qualitative Inquiry* [DOI online,] 1-21. [Annotation: Re graduate education: Do you have an example yet?]

Michael T. Gibbons, Diana H. Coole, Elisabeth Ellis, and Kennan Ferguson. Wiley-Blackwell 
Publishers. [Annotation: “Interpretive social science” has a long history!]

Yanow, Dvora. 2014. Thinking Interpreatively: Philosophical Presuppositions and the Human Sciences. In 
[Annotation: Understand the sources and history of interpretive social science.]


Week 2 January 17—OBSERVATION (29 pages + 167 Emerson et. al = 196)
Getting started – a skill that can be learned!


Further reading

Scott, Susie, Tamsin Hinton-Smith, Vuokko Härma and Karl Broome. 2012. The Reluctant Researcher: Shyness in the Field. *Qualitative Research* 12: 715-734. 16 [Annotation: Useful if you are shy—though we all may feel shy in the field.]


Week 3 January 24—CONCEPTS AND THEORY (112 + Schaffer = 200)
Concepts are the building blocks of theory. How should these “blocks” be built? What is the role of theory in research? What constitutes “quality” in research? What role do “causality” and “generalizability” play in qualitative and interpretive studies?


Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*, 2nd edition: read the following section introductions (19)

- Part I. Meaning and Method, 1-3, 3
• Part II. Generating Data, 147-60, 11
• Part IV. Re-Recognizing the Human Sciences Through Interpretive Methodologies, 421-25, 5


**Further reading**


Shaw, James A., and DeForge, Ryan T. 2014. Qualitative Inquiry and the Debate Between Hermeneutics and Critical Theory. *Qualitative Health Research* 24 (11):1567-1580. **[Annotation: This has a “debate” but also a section on assessing quality of research.]**


Suddaby, Roy. 2006. What Grounded Theory Is Not. *Academy of Management Journal* 49 (4):633–642. 9 **[Annotation: If you are going to do grounded theory, you must cite the version you will use; the founders split and went in different philosophical directions.]**


Week 4 January 31——INTERVIEWING (59 + Fujii = 151 pages)
Varieties of interviewing; Designing interview research; What difference does researcher identity make?


Roulston, Kathryn J. 2010. Interviews used in Qualitative Research (pp. 16-28). In Chapter 1 from *Reflective Interviewing: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 12 [Note: This is a subsection of the chapter entitled, Asking Questions and Individual Interviews]

[Annotation: SKIM; use for brainstorming types of interview questions.]

Further reading

Kristensen, Guro Korsnes, and Ravn, Malin Noem. 2015. The Voices Heard and the Voices Silenced: Recruitment Processes in Qualitative Interview Studies. *Qualitative Research* 15 (6): 722-737. [Annotation: Haven’t read this one yet but asks a key question for anyone doing interviews.]


Week 5  **February 7—ANALYSIS I** (76 pages)
What are the basics? Close reading, Coding and memoing, Word-based content analysis;
What are the other possibilities? Visual methods, Varieties of discourse analysis
(Handout), Process tracing (see week 10), etc. See Table I-1, p. xxiii, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2014!

Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  **28**

Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds., 2nd edition, *Interpretation and
Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*, 255-66,
Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.  **9**

Danjoux, Ilan. 2014. Don’t Judge a Cartoon by Its Image: Interpretive Approaches to the
Study of Political Cartoons. In Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds.,
2nd edition, *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the
Interpretive Turn*, 353-367. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.  **14**

Research Methods Texts Construct Political Science. *Political Research
Quarterly* 55 (2): 457-86—skim focusing on pages 462-6!  **5**

Morse, Janice M. 1994. Emerging From the Data: Cognitive Processes of Analysis in
Qualitative Inquiry. In J. Morse (Ed), *Critical Issues in Qualitative Research* 23-43.

Discourse Analytic Techniques, Reference List ON CANVAS

Further reading
Vindola-Padros, Cecilia, and Johnson, Ginger A. 2014. The Narrated, Nonnarrated, and the Disnarrated:
Conceptual Tools for Analyzing Narratives in Health Services Research. *Qualitative Health
Research* 24 (11):1603-1611.  **6.5**

Morse, Janice M. 2001. Types of Talk: Modes of Responses and Data-Led Analytic Strategies. In P.
Munhall (Ed). *Nursing Research: A Qualitative Perspective*. (3rd ed). (pp. 565-578). Sudbury:
Jones & Bartlett.  **13**

Week 6  **February 14 ETHNOGRAPY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE** (52 + Pachirat = 211)

Pachirat, Timothy. 2018. *Among Wolves: Ethnography and the Immersive Study of
Power*. New York: Routledge.  **159**

Khan, Shamus. 2018. The Subpoena of Ethnographic Data. *Sociological Forum* DOI:
10.1111/socf.12493. 1-11.  **10**

Ethnography and Participant Observation: Political Science Research in this “Late
Methodological Moment.” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 50 (1), 1-9.  **9**
[Annotation: Entire symposium on canvas: 3 symposium contributions from
the American field, including Professor Curry, 1 from IR and 1 from
Comparative; comments from Ed Schatz (comparative politics) and Evelyn
Brodkin (public administration).]


Further reading


Kurowska, Xymena. 2014. Practicality by Judgement: Transnational Interpreters of Local Ownership in the Polish-Ukrainian Border Reform Encounter. *Journal of International Relations and Development* 17: 545–565. 20 [Annotation: Ethnography in IR! Kurowska has contributed to Brent Steele’s edited books.]


Feldman, Martha S., Bell, Jeannie, and Berger, Michelle Tracy. 2012. *Gaining Access: A Practical and Theoretical Guide for Qualitative Researchers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press. [Access!]


McCorkel, Jill A. and Myers, Kristen. 2003. What Difference Does Difference Make? Position and Privilege in the Field. *Qualitative Sociology* 26 (2): 199-231. 32 [Annotation: Haven’t read this one but it addresses a key issue re identity and the subjects we choose to research.]
[Annotation: She articulates and complicates the traditional view of insider/outsider field identities.]


Week 7 February 21—ANALYSIS II (121 + Shenhav = 197 pages)
Narrative and Story Analysis, Value-Critical Policy Analysis, Metaphor and Category Analysis, and Collective Memory


Further reading

[Annotation: Key update to interpretive framing.]


[Annotation: Hermeneutics!]


Week 8 February 28—TBD

Week 9 March 7—DOCUMENTS and ARCHIVAL RESEARCH (40)
How should we understand documents? How do we locate them? Which ones are relevant? What about other artifacts? What narratives can we analyze in such texts?


Peruse:


The “Wayback Machine” – a web crawler that archives webpages including 150 billion sites! [http://archive.org/web/web.php](http://archive.org/web/web.php) According to Wikipedia, “The Wayback Machine is a digital time capsule created by the Internet Archive, a non-profit organization, based in San Francisco, California. It is maintained with content from Alexa. The service enables users to see archived versions of web pages across time, which the Archive calls a ‘three dimensional index’.”

Further reading


Week 10 March 14—SPRING BREAK
Week 11 March 21—CASE STUDY RESEARCH (TBD but about 50 pgs)
GUEST LECTURE: Professors Juliet Carlisle and Phillip Singer

Week 12 March 28—[COMPARATIVE] CASE STUDY RESEARCH – HISTORICAL AND OTHERWISE (TBD but about 100 pgs)

Week 13 April 4—MULTIPLE METHODS, MIXED METHODS, MULTI-METHOD (18 pages)
What are the differences?


Further reading


Week 14 April 11—RESEARCH ETHICS (87 pages)


Further reading
Ellis, C. 2007. Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives: Relational Ethics in Research with Intimate Others. Qualitative Inquiry 13, 3-29. 26

Week 15 April 18—WPSA Annual Conference

Week 16 April 25—Optional IRB Workshop

Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine, and Yanow, Dvora. 2016. Encountering Your IRB 2.0: What Political Scientists Need to Know. PS: Political Science & Politics 49 (2), 277-86. 9

Academic Honesty and Dishonesty
Academic honesty is expected. An act of academic dishonesty will result in a course grade of E and a recommendation of additional disciplinary action. In the event of suspected academic dishonesty, I may substitute a quiz, examination, or assignment for the work in question.

These are my guidelines concerning what constitutes a violation of ethical standards for course work. Any of these violations will be considered academic dishonesty and treated as such. These guidelines are in addition to any University-wide guidelines concerning academic honesty or dishonesty that may be in effect.

1. Cheating. The giving or receiving of any unauthorized assistance on any academic work.
2. Plagiarism. Presenting the language, structure or ideas of another person or persons as one’s own original work.
3. Falsification. Any untrue statement, either oral or written concerning one’s own academic work, work of another student, or the unauthorized alteration of any academic record.
4. Original work. Unless specifically authorized by the instructor, all academic work undertaken in a course must be original; i.e., it must not have been submitted in a prior course or be submitted in a course being taken concurrently.