

**PSC-694: Qualitative Political Analysis
Spring 2021**

M 12:45-3:30 PM
Online, synchronous¹

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Virtual Office Hours: Thursdays, 1-3PM, and by appointment

Course Description:

This course introduces students to qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. It combines an overview of best practices in social science research design with practical instruction regarding process tracing, interviews, ethnography, content analysis, and archival work. This course focuses on practical application, from data collection and management to analysis, and culminates with student production of original qualitative or multi-method research.

Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will:

- a. Understand the potential and limits of qualitative methods in political science.
- b. Understand the strengths and weaknesses of various qualitative methods, including process tracing, interviews, focus groups, ethnography, and archival methods.
- c. Practice implementing each of the methods listed above.
- d. Develop competence in research design using qualitative or multiple methods.
- e. Design and carry out a research project based on original qualitative data collection.

Required Texts:

Saldana, Johnny. 2016. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. 3rd Ed. Sage.

(Ebook available through SU Library) Brady, Henry and David Collier. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. 2nd Ed. Rowman & Littlefield.

Course Requirement and Grading:

Active Class Participation	30%
Exercises	40%
3 Research Roundtables (Required/Ungraded)	0%
Final Paper	30%

Class Participation is an essential part of this seminar. In class we will discuss concepts as well as practice the skills taught in the reading. Students should come to class having completed the readings, ready to contribute to discussion and participate in in-class exercises. At the end of the semester, when students present their research projects, their classmates are expected to provide meaningful verbal feedback.

Exercises accompany the readings assigned prior to each class. These exercises require you to engage with the readings and apply some of the concepts. Exercises will not be given letter grades, but will be evaluated on the basis of completion (full credit, half credit, no credit). To receive full credit, students should put forth

¹ Current course enrollment exceeds the socially-distanced capacity of our classroom. We will meet online (rather than in hybrid format) to facilitate equal participation for all students.

effort to respond to each part of the question and demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the assigned readings. Each exercise should be no more than 2-3 pages (double spaced). These exercises should be completed and submitted via Blackboard prior to class, as they will form the basis of discussion. Exercises submitted late may receive no more than half credit.

Each student will participate in three **research roundtables** detailing the progress they have made on their final paper (see below). The time allocation for each presenter will depend on the final enrollment in the class. During the first (week 3), students will present their research question and working hypotheses. During the second (week 10), students will report on their methods and data collection plan/progress. During the third, students will give a full presentation of the current status of their project, including the research question, hypotheses, source(s) of data, analysis plan, progress to date, and challenges. Following this presentation, the class will engage in a PSRW-style workshop to give feedback and suggestions to each student. Participation in the research roundtables is required to complete the course, but the roundtables themselves are ungraded. The purpose is not to present polished work, but to solicit feedback. Students who do not present will be penalized 10% on their final paper.

Students will complete the course by submitting a **final paper**. This paper should be based on analysis of original research conducted using one or more of the methods discussed over the course of the semester. There are obvious limits to what one can achieve over the course of one semester, particularly in a pandemic. While I expect that your paper includes a well-defined research question, solid concept formation, and informed hypotheses, your data collection might be circumscribed and your analysis might not lead to a definitive conclusion. My expectations are as follows:

1. Research question and hypotheses are specific and informed by the relevant literature
2. Concept formation and measurement of relevant variables is logically sound
3. Research design follows best practices of case selection and is forthright about possibility of causal claims
4. Data collection effort is reasonable under circumstances (time constraint, geographic constraint, covid constraint)
5. Analysis of data follows best principles learned in the course

This final paper is an opportunity to conceptualize and carry out a small-scale original research project. Because of time and other various constraints, it is essential that your research question and data collection plan are not overly ambitious. You need to be able to collect and analyze your data over the course of several weeks, so it is essential that you keep the scope modest. The best-case scenario is that you stumble across something interesting that you can scale up into an article- or dissertation-length project later.

COURSE POLICIES

Class Format

Due to the classroom limitations this semester, our seminar will take place in an online, synchronous format via Zoom. While less than ideal, this format is the best option we have given limited classroom capacity. Long online sessions can be tedious; I will build in ample time for breaks. Our Zoom classroom can be accessed via Blackboard.

Zoom Etiquette

Remote learning is most effective when all participants can see each other, and therefore I require that you use a webcam for our remote sessions. If you do not have a camera or have reservations about this policy, please let me know. Please treat Zoom class as you would an in-person class: come fully clothed and be sure nothing is in view of your camera that you do not want to share. Feel free to use a virtual background to maintain privacy. In general, these sessions will not be recorded; if that changes, I will always warn you in advance of recording.

Electronics in Class

I typically do not allow electronics in class, as screens detract from the quality of discussion. While conducting the class virtually obviously complicates this issue, I ask you to restrict your screen use to class-related materials and to avoid accessing email, social media, etc. during our discussions.

Late Work

Timeliness of assignments in this class is important, as the assignments will prepare you for class discussion. I will accept late work for no more than half credit. Extensions are possible for the final paper under extenuating circumstances, but will likely require filing “incomplete” paperwork given the deadline for grade submission.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity:

Syracuse University’s Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university policy. The university policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same written work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. The presumptive penalty for a first offense by an undergraduate student is course failure, accompanied by a transcript notation indicating that the failure resulted from a violation of Academic Integrity Policy. The standard sanction for a first offense by a graduate student is suspension or expulsion. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

Disability Related Accommodations:

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498, TDD: (315) 443-1371 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Religious Observances:

SU religious observances notification and policy, found at <http://hendricks.syr.edu/spiritual-life/index.html>, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they **notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes** and by the submission deadline for flexibly formatted classes. An online notification process is available for students in **My Slice / StudentServices / Enrollment / MyReligiousObservances / Add a Notification**.

COURSE SCHEDULE

BB denotes a scanned reading available on Blackboard. All other required readings are available electronically through SU’s library.

Week 1 (2/8) What is Qualitative and Multi-Method Research?

Emmons, Cassandra and Andrew Moravcsik. 2019. “Graduate Qualitative Methods Training in Political Science: A Disciplinary Crisis,” *PS: Political Science* 53(2): 258-264.

Mahoney, James. 2010. "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research," *World Politics* 62(1): 120-147.

Ahmed, Amel and Rudra Sil. 2012. "When Multi-Method Research Subverts Methodological Pluralism—or, Why We Still Need Single-Method Research," *Perspectives on Politics* 10(4): 935-953

Exercise 1: Select and briefly describe one piece of qualitative or multi-method research that you particularly like (published or unpublished, article or book-length). What did you like most about it? What made it compelling to you?

Week 2 (2/15) Concepts and Measurement

Adcock, Robert and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research," *American Political Science Review* 95(3): 529-546.

Collier, David, Judy LaPorte, and Jason Seawright. 2012. "Putting Typologies to Work: Concept Formation, Measurement, and Analytic Rigor," *Political Science Quarterly* 65(1): 217-232.

Collier, David, Fernando Daniel Hidalgo, and Andra Olivia Maciuceanu. 2006. "Essentially Contested Concepts: Debates and Applications," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11(3):211-246.

Slater, Dan. 2013. "Democratic Careening," *World Politics* 65(4)729-63.

Exercise 2: After carefully reading the Slater piece, consider the following: what is democratic careening? Using Adcock & Collier's task list, come up with a background concept, systematized concept, and indicator for "democratic careening." The indicator may be typological/categorical, ordinal, or binary.

Week 3 (2/22) Descriptive Inference, Causal Inference, and Mechanisms

Kreuzer, Marcus. 2019. "The Structure of Description: Evaluating Descriptive Inferences and Conceptualizations," *Perspectives on Politics* 17(1): 122-139. (View [online](#) for ATI annotations)

Falletti, Tulia, and Julia Lynch. 2009. "Context and Causal Mechanisms in Political Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies* 1143-1166.

Collier, David, Henry Brady, and Jason Seawright. 2010. "Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology." Chapter 9 in *Rethinking Social Inquiry*

Brady, Henry. 2010. "Data-Set Observations versus Causal Process Observations: The 2000 US Presidential Election," Chapter 12 in *Rethinking Social Inquiry*

Dunning, Thad. 2010. "Design-Based Inference: Beyond the Pitfalls of Regression Analysis?" Chapter 14 in *Rethinking Social Inquiry*

Research Roundtable 1: Come to class with your research question and 2-5 hypotheses. Consider: does your project rest on descriptive or causal inference? Begin to brainstorm some types of data that could provide inferential leverage for your project. What kinds of things would you need to observe to find support for your hypotheses?

Week 4 (3/1) Case Selection and Small-N Inference

BB George, Alexander and Andrew Bennett. 2004. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Chapter 3: "The Methods of Structured, Focused Comparison."

Gerring, John. 2008. "Case Selection for Case Study Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Techniques," in Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*

Snyder, Richard. 2001. "Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36(1): 93-110.

MacLean, Lauren. 2010. *Informal Institutions and Citizenship in Rural Africa*. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 1.

Berry, Marie. 2017. "Barriers to Women's Progress After Atrocity: Evidence from Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Gender & Society* 31(6): 830-853.

(Optional, example of sub-national variation) Goldberg, Ellis, Erik Wibbels, and Eric Mvukiyehe. 2008. "Lessons from Strange Cases: Democracy, Development, and the Resource Curse in the US States," *Comparative Political Studies* 41(4-5): 477-514.

Exercise 3: Compare and contrast the case selection strategies employed by MacLean and Berry. Consider: what possibilities and limitations governed case selection? What strategy did each employ? To what extent do these case comparisons facilitate causal leverage? To what extent is each analysis threatened by selection bias or omitted variable bias?

Week 5 (3/8) Coding and Content Analysis

Saldana, Johnny. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers, 3rd Ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Reading Notes: the entire book is assigned, but you should skim the sections less relevant to you, i.e., coding of visual sources (in Chapter 2), coding methods of less interest to you (in Chapter 3), and parts of chapters 4 and 5 that are less commonly used in political science.

Kluver, Heike, and Hana Back. 2019. "Coalition Agreements, Issue Attention, and Cabinet Governance," *Comparative Political Studies* 52(13-14): 1995-2031.

Exercise 4: Select a body of 5-10 short texts. These could be op-eds, thematically-linked emails, listicles, transcripts of YouTube videos—anything. Write an analytic memo, conduct a round of first-cycle coding, and use your coding to elaborate a "theory" of your items.

Week 6 (3/15) Process Tracing and Historical Analysis

Collier, David. 2011. "Understanding Process Tracing," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44(4): 823-830.

Bennett, Andrew. 2010. "Process Tracing and Causal Inference," Chapter 10 in *Rethinking Social Inquiry*

Slater, Dan and Erica Simmons. 2010. "Informative Regress: Critical Antecedents in Comparative Politics," *Comparative Political Studies* 43(7):886-917.

Ricks, Jacob I. and Amy H. Liu. 2018. "Process-Tracing Research Designs: A Practical Guide," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51(4): 842-846.

Pozansky, Michael. 2019. "Feigning Compliance: Covert Action and International Law," *International Studies Quarterly* 63:72-84. Read also the methodological supplement.

Exercise 5: Consider Pozansky's piece, and the diagram of his causal argument in the supplement. What evidence does he use to support his argument? What kind of evidence could have undermined it? Methodologically, why was it important to include the additional cases in the supplement?

Week 7 (3/22) Interviews

Mosely, Layna. 2013. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press (E-book). Read the introduction and chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5. Review any other chapters that may be relevant for your own work.

Cyr, Jennifer. 2015. "The Pitfalls and Promise of Focus Groups as a Data Collection Method," *Sociological Methods and Research* 45(2): 231-259.

Michener, Jamila. 2020. "Power from the Margins: Grassroots Mobilization and Urban Expansions of Civil Legal Rights," *Urban Affairs Review* 56(5): 1390-1422.

Complete human subjects training through [CITI](#) (if you have not already) prior to conducting interviews.

Exercise 6: Think of any question you find interesting that could be answered by talking to people (it does not need to be a political science—or even academic—question). Write interview questions that could elicit that information and make a list of the types of people you would ideally want to ask. Then, find people and ask the questions (SAFELY, either to people in your bubble or remotely). Shoot for at least 3 subjects. Write a reflection of the process: which questions worked best? Why do you think that was? How did you feel in the role of interviewer? How did your respondents react to you?

Week 8 (3/29) Ethnography

Boswell et al. 2018. "State of the Field: What can Political Ethnography Tell us About Anti-Politics and Democratic Disaffection?" *European Journal of Political Research* 58: 56-71

Wedeen, Lisa. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13. pp. 255–272.

BB Pachirat, Timothy. 2010. "The Political in Political Ethnography: Dispatches from the Kill Floor." In Schatz, Edward, ed. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapter 6.

Simmons, Erica and Nicholas Rush Smith. 2017. "Comparison with an Ethnographic Sensibility," *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 50(1): 126-130.

Hummel, Calla. 2018. "Bribery Cartels: Collusive Corruption in Bolivian Street Markets," *Latin American Research Review* 53(2):217-230.

*If you are considering undertaking an ethnography, you should purchase Emerson, Fretz and Shaw's *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*.

Exercise 7: Choose an event or activity to attend (virtually or socially distanced) as an ethnographer. The event could be any type of activity with social or political importance in which you can safely participate. Stay for at least an hour, take notes, and write an ethnography. Your ethnography should include thick description and analysis of norms, codes of conduct, ritual, or deeper meaning of behavior. Consider how you can describe behavior in ways that reveals some important element of culture, human behavior, or broader societal power dynamics

Week 9 (4/5) Archival and Primary Source Documents

Lustick, Ian. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *American Political Science Review* 90: 605-18.

Trachtenberg, Marc. 2006. *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method*. Chapters 3-5.

Gaikwad, Nikhar, Veronica Herrera and Robert Mickey. "Text-Based Sources: Final Report of QTD Working Group II.1" December 2018.

Sweet, Rachel. 2020. "Bureaucrats at War: The Resilient State in the Congo," *African Affairs* 119(475): 224-250.

Exercise 8: Think of a research question (something you've already worked on would be best), and imagine what kinds of primary source documents might be able to help you answer that question. Make a list. Look for an archive or repository—digital or physical—that might have those types of documents. Increasing numbers of archives are digitized, and those that are physical often have digitally accessible lists of holdings. Learn as much as you can about this archive and its holdings, and match potentially helpful documents to the list you came up with.

Week 10 (4/12) Managing Qualitative Data + Ethics of Data Collection

*BB*Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren M. MacLean, and Benjamin Read. 2015. *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4.

Jacobs, Alan et al. (2021) "The Qualitative Transparency Deliberations: Insights and Implications," *Perspectives on Politics* (online, first view)

Read the "[Managing Data](#)" section of Syracuse's QDR website.

Note if your data collection is solely for this class, your project is not "designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge" and does not need IRB approval. If you were to expand this project into a publishable form based on interaction with human subjects, you would need to submit an IRB protocol and complete the training through *CITI*.

Week 11 (4/19):

Research Roundtable 2: Methods and Data Collection – Present (or re-present) your research question and hypotheses. State your chosen method and present a clearly defined data collection plan. Report on any progress you have made with initial data collection, and bring any questions or anticipated challenges moving forward.

Week 12 (4/26) No class – one-on-one meetings

Week 13 (5/3) Research Roundtable 3 (part 1)

Week 14 (5/10) Research Roundtable 3 (part 2)