

## Qualitative Research Methods

POL6/79091-001  
Fall 2010  
Class Time: Wed 5:30-8:15pm  
Classroom: Bowman 317

Professor: Joshua Stacher  
Office: 302 Bowman (office 17)  
Office Hours: M: 1:45-3:45pm  
W: 2pm-5pm  
Office Phone: (330) 672-8922  
Email: [jstacher@kent.edu](mailto:jstacher@kent.edu)

This graduate seminar is an explorative journey through Qualitative Research Methodologies, which are used in the systematic and theoretical study of politics.

The central themes invite participants to:

- 1) Consider various epistemic communities as well as distinct philosophies of social science
- 2) Improve Research Design: Cases (Small n) and With-in Case studies
- 3) Utilize Content Analysis and Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) Software
- 4) Incorporate Mixed-Methods Approaches
- 5) Weigh Ethnography and Interpretivist Frameworks
- 6) Contemplate the “Process” of Conducting Field Research

We will discuss an array of approaches. These range from the latest technological innovations used in content analysis (NVivo) to mixed methods and Wittgensteinian language games. While the weekly readings explore various approaches, seminar participants will detect the common thread for using and incorporating qualitative research methods into their graduate projects.

This seminar is designed for Ph.D. students in Political Science who are planning to take comprehensive exams, write dissertations, and reflect long afterwards about the significance of theory and methodological approaches. This course will be reading and thought-intensive. Seminars are intended to bring together advanced students for the purposes of generating new knowledge. Our gatherings should thus help all of us – including me, the seminar’s convener – learn from our engagement with the readings.

One of the highlights of this course will be the engaging, exciting, and complex reading list that has been carefully crafted to inspire different modes of thinking while challenging what we know and how we know it.

### Assessment

- 1) Weekly Participation (50% of grade): This course’s success is dependent on the consistent, sustained, and active contributions of the seminar’s participants.
  - a. Participants are expected to attend the seminar regularly in addition to reading and discussing the readings on a weekly basis.
  - b. Each week, a student is responsible for leading the discussion, which should entail providing an incisive, analytic critique of the assigned material. Students should come prepared with a set of provocative questions that will organize our meeting.

- c. Each week, two students will compose a 2/3-page synopsis of the readings that 1) lays out the main argument(s), 2) indicates what you found provocative and/or mundane, and (3) poses questions for class discussion. These discussion papers will be distributed via email to the rest of the class by **Tuesday at 12pm**. In class, on Thursday, students will make informal 10-15 minute presentations of the material that initiate focused and critical discussion of the readings.

**2) Analysis Paper (20% of grade)**

Choose the analysis of your liking. Then, discuss the method with me (tell me what it is, considering the pros and cons of the method as well as how this method helps answer the research question that you are asking). There is a 10-page maximum. This is due on **Wednesday November 17<sup>th</sup>**.

**3) Research Design (30% of grade)**

Research Design (RD)

- 1) Participants must produce a research design either for the prospectus or for a paper that they are working on. The RD should be comprehensive and include a detailed methodology section.
- 2) The RD must be submitted by 3pm on Monday December 13<sup>th</sup> between 9am-3pm.

The Research Design will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- \* Relevance to question;
  - \* Sound ordering and structuring of material;
  - \* Quality and clarity of written expression;
  - \* Effective use of evidence;
  - \* Demonstration of sound understanding of topic;
  - \* Identification of major themes and arguments.
  - \* Critical evaluation and judgment;
  - \* Range of sources used;
  - \* Insight and originality
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## Seminar & Reading Schedule

### **PART ONE:**

#### **Political Science: Where did we come from? How did we get here?**

**Week One** (September 1<sup>st</sup>): Seminar introduction, design, & expectations. The convener will lead a discussion about current methodological approaches, epistemology, ontology, mixed-methods, and interpretivism.

#### **Week Two** (September 8<sup>th</sup>): **History of the Discipline**

When and how did the classic social science disciplines emerge? How does history continue to influence the methodological traditions and divisions within political science today?

Readings:

- 1) Sheldon Wolin, "Political Theory as a Vocation," *American Political Science Review* 63:4 (1969): 1062-1082.
- 2) John Gunnell, "American Political Science, and the Invention of Political Theory," *American Political Science Review* 82:1 (March 1988): 71-87.
- 3) Robert Vitalis, "Birth of a Discipline," in David Long and Brian C. Schmidt (eds.), *Imperialism and Internationalism in the Discipline of International Relations* (2005): pp. 159-181.
- 4) Alasdair MacIntyre, "Epistemological Crisis, Dramatic Narrative and the Philosophy of Science," *The Monist* 60:4 (December 1977): 453-472.

### **PART TWO:**

#### **Case Design, Comparative Historical Analysis, Content Analysis, and Process Tracing**

#### **Week Three** (September 15<sup>th</sup>): Case Design

This session outlines the logic and methods of within-case forms of analysis and typological theorizing. In particular, we will examine ways of constructing and reducing typological spaces, and how typological theorizing helps in selecting cases for within-case analysis and cross case comparisons.

Readings:

- 1) Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (The MIT Press, 2005)
- 2) Bennett, Leggold, and Unger, *Friends in Need*, pp. 24-28.

**Week Four** (September 22<sup>nd</sup>): Comparative Historical Analysis

This week's session considers substantive work in the field of comparative historical analysis. Using examples from Mahoney's research, we explore the way in which CHA assesses existing theory, develops new theory, explains general patterns, and identifies causes specific to particular cases. This session also examines applications of path-dependent analysis.

## Readings:

- 1) James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "Comparative Historical Analysis: Achievements and Agendas," in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (eds.) *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003): pp. 3-38.
- 2) Paul Pierson, "Big, Slow-Moving, and ... Invisible: Macrosocial Processes in the Study of Comparative Politics," in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (eds.): 177-207.
- 3) Kathleen Thelen, "How Institutions Evolve: Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis," in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (eds.): 208-240.
- 4) Theda Skocpol, "Doubly Engaged Social Science: The Promise of Comparative Historical Analysis," in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (eds.): 407-428.

**Week Five** (September 29<sup>th</sup>): Content Analysis

This session reviews the latest developments in the field of automated content analysis with NVivo. In this week, I intend to lead a discussion of supervised approaches. Supervised approaches are ones where the researcher has examples of the categorization that he or she hopes to retrieve from data. The session will emphasize the entire research process, including the development of coding schemes and the evaluation of predictive accuracy.

## Readings:

- 1) Po Bang, Lillian Lee, and Shivakumar Vaithyanathan, "Thumbs Up? Sentiment Classification Using Machine Learning Techniques," *Association for Computational Linguistics* (2002): 79-86.
- 2) Colaresi Monroe and Quinn, "Fightin' Words: Lexical Feature Selection and Evaluation for Identifying the Content of Political Conflict," *Political Analysis* 16:4 (2008): 372-403.
- 3) Will Lowe, "Understanding Wordscores," *Political Analysis* 16:4 (2008): 356-371.

**Week Six** (October 6<sup>th</sup>): Process Tracing

This session addresses process tracing. In addition to examining the epistemological underpinnings and practical application of process tracing, we will read the works of Sagin, Yuen Foong Khon, and Andrew Bennett to illustrate this approach. Questions you will consider include: What is the relationship between process tracing and causal mechanisms? What kinds of iterations between changes in a theory and process tracing evidence are defensible?

## Readings:

- 1) Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (The MIT Press, 2005): Preface, chapters 7 and 10).
- 2) Andrew Bennett, "Process Tracing: A Bayesian Approach," in Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Henry Brady, and David Collier (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology* (Oxford, 2008): 702-721.

- 3) McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, "Measuring Mechanisms of Conention," *Qualitative Sociology* 31 (2008): 307-31.

Examples:

- 1) Scott Sagan, *The Limits of Safety*, pp. 1-14, 45-52
- 2) Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 1-28, 51-68.
- 3) Tarrow, "Red of Tooth and Claw: The French Revolution, War, and Statebuilding," Manuscript, April 2010 Draft.

## **Part Three: Crossing Over? Interpretivism**

**Week Seven** (October 13<sup>th</sup>): Introducing Interpretivism

This week's meeting considers the foundational literature in Interpretivism. We will examine epistemology as well as how it varies from economic-based social science.

Readings:

- 1) Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973): pp.
- 2) Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973): pp.
- 3) Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, "Interpretive Analytics," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). (Chapter 5)

**Week Eight** (October 20<sup>th</sup>): Wittgenstein and Ordinary Language-Use Analysis

This session introduces participants to Ludwig Wittgenstein's thought and its relationship to ordinary-use language methods. We will focus on how these approaches can be used in ethnographic and analytical research. We will consider the following questions: What is the "value added" of concentrating on language? Why is understanding language as an activity important. How can social scientists grapple with the issue of intention?

Readings:

- 1) Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice: On the Significance of Ludwig Wittgenstein for Social and Political Thought* (University of California Press, 1972): Chapter 8.
- 2) Wittgenstein, *The Philosophical Investigations* (Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe) (Blackwell Publishers, 2001) paragraphs 1-33, paragraph 154, pages 194-195.
- 3) Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, (New York: Harper, 1965): 17-20.
- 4) Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice: On the Significance of Ludwig Wittgenstein for Social and Political Thought* (University of California Press, 1972): 274-279.

**Week Nine** (October 27<sup>th</sup>): Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

This week's objective is to introduce participants with an introduction to three different modes of discourse analysis. We will learn to "read" texts while becoming familiar with contemporary thinking about interpretation, narrative, and social construction. The seminar's participants will conduct a discourse analysis, what the underlying assumptions of such analysis are, and how this technique can be used to advance political inquiry.

Readings:

- 1) Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, and Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited, with an introduction by Bouchard (Cornell University Press, 1977), "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," pp. 139-164.
- 2) Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1* (New York: Vintage): pp. 1-35, and 92-114.

**Week Ten** (November 3<sup>rd</sup>): Reading Signs

This session focuses on the ways that ethnographers interpret political imagery. Participants will learn about semiotic analysis and will gain a hands-on knowledge of how to 'read' images including political iconography, advertisements, and cartoons, to name a few. Questions to bare in mind: "What needs to be known in order to make interpretations cogent? How does one understand the relationship between an image and the concepts it might represent?"

Readings:

- 1) Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* ("The World of Wrestling," "Soap Powders and Detergents," "Operation Margarine," "Toys," "Myth Today," pp. 109-159.
- 2) Dvora Yanow, "How Built Spaces Mean: A Semiotics of Space," in Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (eds.) *Interpretation and Method* (M.E. Sharp, 2006).
- 3) Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (University of Chicago Press, 1999): Chapter 1, 3, & 4.

**Week Eleven** (November 10<sup>th</sup>): Ethnography and Ethnographic Examples

This session invites participants to consider ethnographic methods. It covers the promises and pitfalls of the method, specifies how ethnography differs from other kinds of fieldwork, and suggests ways in which ethnographers can grapple with truth claims. It also exposes participants to debates among ethnographers, discusses the role of ethnography in the context of multi-method research, and deals with issues of causality and generalizability.

Readings:

- 1) Ed Schatz, "Ethnographic Immersion and the Study of Politics," in Schatz (ed.), *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power* (University of Chicago Press, 2009): 1-23.
- 2) Samer Shehata in Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (eds.) *Interpretation and Method* (M.E. Sharp, 2006)
- 3) Timothy Pachirat, "The Political in Political Ethnography" Reflections from an Industrialized Slaughterhouse on Perspective, Power, and Sight," in Schatz (ed.) *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power* (University of Chicago Press, 2009):
- 4) Lisa Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Power, and Performance in Yemen* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2008).

## **PART FOUR:**

### **In the Field**

#### **Week Twelve** (November 17<sup>th</sup>): Interviewing

This week's seminar will consider interactive forms of data collection. We will primarily focus on interviewing, discussing the different types of interviews that researchers might conduct, how they can prepare for interviews, how to write questions, how to conduct interviews, and how to follow up after an interview. In particular, we will examine focus groups, participant observation, and structured and snowballing interview techniques. We will also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and examine ways of prioritizing data that has been collected.

#### Readings:

- 1) Susan Short, Ellen Perecman, and Sara Curran, "Focus Groups (Chapter 5) in Ellen Perecman and Sara Curran (eds.) *A Handbook for Social Science Field Research: Essays and Bibliographic Sources on Research Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 2006).
- 2) Joe Soss, "Talking our way into Meaningful Explanations: A Practice-Centered View of Interviewing for Interpretive Research," (Chapter 6) in Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, *Interpretation and Method* (M.E.. Sharp, 2006)
- 3) Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (eds) *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method* (Thousands Oaks, CA) Sage Publications, 2002):
  - a. Teresa Odendahl and Aileen Shaw, "Interviewing Elites," pp. 299-316.
  - b. Patricia Adler and Peter Adler, "The Reluctant Respondent," pp. 515-535.
- 4) "Participant Observation"
- 5) Ben Read, Lauren MacLean, and Melani Cammett, "Symposium: Field Research: How Rich? How Thick? How Participatory?" *Qualitative Methods* 4:2 (2006): 9-18.

#### **Week Thirteen** (November 24<sup>th</sup>): **No Meeting** – Thanksgiving Break

#### **Week Fourteen** (December 1<sup>st</sup>): Field Research

This session offers a general overview of data collection and the different forms it can take. We will review non-interactive forms of data collection including making observations, reading newspapers, books, and articles; obtaining documents and/or data from government agencies or ministries, NGOs, etc. We then discuss strategies for finding documents in archives and through FOIA requests. We will conclude this semester's work by discussing the challenges and opportunity that conducting field research presents.

#### Readings:

- 1) David Collier, "Data, Field Research and Extracting New Ideas at Close Range, APSA – CP newsletter 10:1 (1999): 1-6.
- 2) Shelia Carapico, Hanine Clark, Amaney Jamal, David Romano, Jillian Schwedler and Mark Tessler, "The Methodologies of Field Research in the Middle East," *PS: Political Science and Politics* XXXIX: 3 (2006): 417-441.
- 3) Nora Care Schaeffer and Stanley Presser, "The Science of Asking Questions," *Annual Review of Sociology* 29: (2003): 65-88.

- 4) Beth Leech and Kenneth Goldstein contributions, "Symposium: Interview Methods in Political Science," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35:4 (2002): 663-672.
- 5) Julia Lynch, "Tracking Process while in the Field," in *Symposium: Field Research, Qualitative Methods* 2:1 (2004): 10-15.

**Week Fifteen** (December 8<sup>th</sup>) In the Archives

This session will discuss the archival research while highlighting the different challenges each environment (US vs. foreign) entails. We will review the different aspects and strategies for capturing data collected such environments such as scanning, copying, picture-taking, rewriting verbatim.

Readings

- 6) Victoria Johnson, Melissa Wilde, and Simone and Polilo, Essays in "From the Achieves: Innovative Use of Data in Comparative Historical Research," *Trajectories: Newsletter of the Comparative Historical Section of ASA* 19:2 (2008): 1-9.
- 7) Ellen Pader, "Seeing with an Ethnographic Sensibility: Explorations beneath the Surface of Public Policies," (Chapter 8) in Yanow and Schwarz-Shea (eds.) *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn* (M.E. Sharp, 2006).
- 8) Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006): 217-255
- 9) National Security Archive Website (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/>). Please read the section on FOIA requests.

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**There are a lot of books on the syllabus so please plan ahead if you intend to use Inter-library loan. I also plan to place many of the readings on blackboard or WebCT.**

## **Have a Productive Semester!**

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**University, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Political Science Notes & Disclaimers:**

- 1) Help: If you are having problems with this course, the evaluations, or the readings, I urge you to come to my office hours. If those times are not convenient for you, please call my office (330-672-8922) or email me ([jstacher@kent.edu](mailto:jstacher@kent.edu)) and I will gladly schedule an appointment to suit your schedule. Whatever you do, **DO NOT** wait until it is too late to get help from the seminar's convener.
- 2) Kent Emails: I will occasionally need to contact you by email. Since you are all given "kent.edu" emails when you matriculate, I will keep all professional work emails directed at this account. It is your responsibility to check your kent.edu account regularly for announcements, supplementary readings, and general information.
- 3) Accessibility Services: University policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services (contact 330-672-3391

or visit [www.kent.edu/sas](http://www.kent.edu/sas) <<http://www.registrars.kent.edu/disability/>> for more information on registration procedures).

- 4) Registration Requirement: The official registration deadline for this course is January 31, 2010. University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule (using Student Tools in FlashFast) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.
- 5) Administrative Policy and Procedures Regarding Student Cheating and Plagiarism:

*Condensed Version*

Cheating and plagiarism constitute fraudulent misrepresentation for which no credit can be given and for which appropriate sanctions are warranted and will be applied.

The university affirms that acts of cheating and plagiarism by students constitute a subversion of the goals of the institution, have no place in the university and are serious offenses to academic goals and objectives, as well as to the rights of fellow students.

"Cheat" means to intentionally misrepresent the source, nature, or other conditions of academic work so as to accrue undeserved credit, or to cooperate with someone else in such misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

1. Obtaining or retaining partial or whole copies of examinations, tests or quizzes before these are distributed for student use;
2. Using notes, textbooks or other information in examinations, tests and quizzes, except as expressly permitted;
3. Obtaining confidential information about examinations, tests or quizzes other than that released by the instructor;
4. Securing, giving or exchanging information during examinations;
5. Presenting data or other material gathered by another person or group as one's own;
6. Falsifying experimental data or information;
7. Having another person take one's place for any academic performance without the specific knowledge and permission of the instructor;
8. Cooperating with another to do one or more of the above;
9. Using a substantial portion of a piece of work previously submitted for another course or program to meet the requirements of the present course or program without notifying the instructor to whom the work is presented; and
10. Presenting falsified information in order to postpone or avoid examinations, tests, quizzes, or other academic work.

“Plagiarize” means to take and present as one’s own a material portion of the ideas or words of another or to present as one’s own an idea or work derived from an existing source without full and proper credit to the source of the ideas, words, or works. As defined, plagiarize includes, but is not limited to:

- a. The copying of words, sentences and paragraphs directly from the work of another without proper credit;
- b. The copying of illustrations, figures, photographs, drawings, models, or other visual and nonverbal materials, including recordings of another without proper credit; and
- c. The presentation of work prepared by another in final or draft form as one's own without citing the source, such as the use of purchased research papers.

#### **Academic Sanctions**

The following academic sanctions are provided by this rule for offenses of cheating or plagiarism. Kent campus instructors shall notify the department chairperson and the student conduct office each time a sanction is imposed. Regional campus instructors shall notify the regional campus dean and the student conduct officer each time a sanction is imposed. Regional campus student conduct officer shall notify the Kent student conduct office each time a sanction is imposed by a regional campus Instructor. The following academic sanctions are provided by this rule for offenses of cheating or plagiarism. In those cases the instructor may:

1. Refuse to accept the work for credit; or
2. Assign a grade of "F" or zero for the project, test, paper, examination or other work in which the cheating or plagiarism took place; or
3. Assign a grade of "F" for the course in which the cheating or plagiarism took place; and/or;
4. Recommend to the department chair or regional campus dean that further action specified in the rule be taken. The department chairperson or regional campus dean shall determine whether or not to forward to the academic dean or to the vice president for the extended university a recommendation for further sanction under this rule.

#### **Academic Appeals**

The general principle that applies to the following procedures is that an appeal is directed to the administrative level immediately above the unit from which the appeal emanates.

Appeals are limited to the following reasons:

- a. The decision is arbitrary or unreasonable,
- b. The decision resulted from a procedural error,
- c. The decision is not in accordance with the facts presented,
- d. New information is available which may suggest modification of the decision.

For complete policy and procedure go to [www.kent.edu/policyregister\\_3342-3-01.8](http://www.kent.edu/policyregister_3342-3-01.8).