Qualitative Research Methods
Political Science 285.11, Spring 2010

Monday 6:10 – 8:00pm (Monroe B 35)

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Office hours: Wednesday 2:15 - 3:35 pm or by appointment

Course Goals and Description
This course will emphasize theoretical, practical, and ethical aspects of conducting qualitative research. We will cover the basic techniques for collecting and analyzing data in the social sciences (except statistical analysis). In the beginning of the course we will focus on the protections of human subjects and the ethical aspects of using qualitative methods. Practical issues such as getting IRB approval and funding for a research project will also be covered. During the rest of the semester students will be introduced to a wide variety of qualitative techniques of data gathering such as participant observation and ethnographic field notes; survey research and questionnaires; in-depth and informal interviewing; historiographic techniques; archival research; and, field experiments. Towards the end of the semester, students will also be introduced to various methods for analyzing qualitative data such as content analysis, discourse analysis, and interpretive methods. Emphasis will be given on various ways that students can quantify qualitative data. Issues of replicability and external validity of qualitative research findings will be addressed.

Over the course of the semester GWU faculty will join us in class and discuss their work especially focusing on the lessons they learned and the challenges they faced. The final goal is to help you move from research design to project implementation, data analysis and reporting. Students will learn how to select a research site, how to “enter it,” get the most out of it and not hurt the subjects involved in the process. Each student will be required to develop a research project (which will not require travel) and spend at least two hours per week in "the field" gathering data and will present her findings in the last week of class.

Course Pre-requisites
PSC 209 is recommended.

Texts
There are 4 books, available for purchase at the GW Bookstore (or online). All books are also on reserve at Gelman Library.


Blackboard:
This course will use Blackboard for announcements and readings (see “Electronic Reserves”). I strongly encourage you to ensure you have access to Blackboard as soon as possible.

Course Requirements:
Students will carry out and write up three memos (45%). Students will make occasional presentations to the seminar (15%). At the end of the course, each student will choose between two options for the final paper (40%). Option 1: write a detailed research proposal on a topic for which field research is appropriate. Option 2: write an article draft based on the research carried out.

Learning Outcomes:
As a result of completing this course, students will:
1. Become familiar with methodological, practical, and ethical aspects of qualitative research.
2. Alert you to the advantages and disadvantages of different techniques for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data in the social sciences.
3. Compose a publishable article or a draft of their dissertation prospectus.

Class Policies
The following policies are important. Read them carefully.

Attendance
Please come to class on time. Feel free to bring a cup of coffee/tea or water, but please don’t bring food. Cell phones must be turned off. Laptop volume must be set to “mute.”

Grading
There are three components to your grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three memos</td>
<td>(45%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Presentations</td>
<td>(15%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (due May 11)</td>
<td>(40%)</td>
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Participation
You are expected to come prepared.

Late Work
Late assignments will lose one third of a full grade (e.g., from an A to a A-, to B+ etc.) for each day after the deadline.

There are only two exceptions to the late-assignment policy: illness or family emergency. If either of these circumstances applies, you must provide written documentation (such as a doctor’s note if you are ill), and you must communicate with me before the assignment is due (i.e., emailing me on the morning
the assignment is due and saying you are sick is not acceptable for avoiding a penalty). I am willing to accommodate documented requests, but you must communicate with me before the assignment is due.

**Policy on Religious Holidays:**
You should notify me during the first week of the semester of your intention to be absent from class on a day(s) of religious observance. If an assignment falls on a day you will be observing a religious holiday, we will work together to find an alternative time to complete the assignment. Please communicate with me about holidays in advance of the original due date. I do not intend to observe any religious holidays.

**Office Hours**
My office hours are Wednesday 2:15 - 3:35 pm or by appointment. Please keep email communications brief.

**Academic Integrity**
By taking this course, you are agreeing to abide by the University’s Code of Academic Integrity. It states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: [http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html](http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html)

If you are unsure about any aspect of this policy the Writing Center ([http://www.gwu.edu/~gwriter/](http://www.gwu.edu/~gwriter/)) can provide assistance on citation or other aspects of writing papers. Claiming ignorance about how or when to cite sources is not an excuse for academic dishonesty.

**Support for Students outside the classroom**

**DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)**
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: [http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/](http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/)

**UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC)  202-994-5300**
The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:
- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
  - [http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices](http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices)

**Security**
In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.
Course Schedule

Week 1 (January 11). Introduction and Overview


James Mahoney and Gary Goertz. 2006. A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research. Political Analysis 14: 227-49. [electronic reserve]


Recommended:


Assignment: Meet with advisor to discuss your research project.

Ethics

Week 2 (January 25). Protection of Human Subjects
Guest: Lee Ann Fujii
National Science Foundation. Interpreting the Common Rule for the Protection of Human Subjects for Behavioral and Social Science Research. Available at: www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/hsfaqs.jsp


Recommended:


**Getting Funding**

**Week 3 (Feb 1). Writing Up a Grant Proposal**

*Guest: Manny Teitelbaum*


Useful link: http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/grant_proposals.html

**Memo 1**: Initial project description/Draft grant proposal (post by Monday February 8 noon). A description of the research project, including a clear statement of the research question, an initial choice of field site, a description of relevant ethnographic research to be carried out, and a statement of what the researcher expects to find.

**Collecting Data**
Week 4 (February 8). Ethnography: Getting into the “Field”


Recommended:

Memo 2: draft of IRB proposal (post by Monday February 22 noon).

Week 5 (February 22). Participant Observations and Field Notes
Guest: Henry Hale


Recommended:

Memo 3: First set of field notes, interview transcripts, description of archival material, survey questionnaires, field experiment design, historiographic notes (post by April 12)

Week 6 (March 1). Surveys and Questionnaires


Useful link: http://gking.harvard.edu/vign/

Recommended:

Week 7 (March 8). Interviewing (indepth, structured, informal)
Guest: Sharon L. Wolchik


Recommended:


Week 8 (March 22). Archival Research
Guest: Elizabeth Saunders

Hope Harrison, “Inside the SED Archives,” CWIHP Bulletin


Recommended:

Week 9 (March 29). Historiographic Techniques
Guest: Marty Finnemore


Week 10 (April 5). Field Experiments


### Analyzing Qualitative Data

**Week 11 (April 12). Content Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Interpretive Methods**

**Guest: Harvey Feigenbaum**


**Memo 3 (continued):** Second set of field notes, interview transcripts, description of archival material, survey questionnaires, field experiment design, historiographic notes (post by April 19)

**Week 12 (April 19). Quantifying Qualitative Data**


**Recommended:**


Week 13 (April 26). Student Presentations

Makeup class (April 27). Student Presentations continued

Final Paper Due on May 11