PSC 694: Qualitative Political Analysis
Syracuse University, Spring 2020
Class: Mondays 12:45–3:30 in Eggers 100A

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Office Hours: Mondays 3:30–5:00 pm in Eggers 330 (or make an appointment)

Objectives:

This course introduces the three methodological techniques most often associated (at least in Political Science) with the qualitative label: ethnography, discourse analysis, and historiography. While geared toward politics and policy in the readings, people from any (inter-) disciplinary program are welcome.

Through a series of homework assignments, you will learn enough basics to apply each tool, in a preliminary way, to a research topic of your choice. This broad exposure will prepare you for selecting future specialized training in any of these approaches. To situate these methods within a research proposal—the final assignment—we will also query distinctions between qualitative and quantitative (as well as other) methods.

Your research design will mimic a funding proposal, as appropriate for the project (e.g., master's thesis, pilot study, or dissertation). Thus the course should be useful both to those in the early stages of graduate work and to those starting dissertations.

Assignments:

Come to each session prepared to discuss and apply the assigned readings listed in the Schedule (below). Many weeks, we read chapters in *Qualitative Methods in International Relations* [*QMIR*], ed. Klotz & Prakash (Palgrave 2008), which is readily available used (from other students in the department or through booksellers) and on reserve at Bird Library. Links to the other articles and book chapters are on Blackboard. Recommended resources provide additional examples from a variety of topics and for specialized guidance. Let me know if you find something useful so I can add it.

Also, you will regularly complete (graded and ungraded) homework that asks you to use analytical tools explained in the readings, either applied to your own research project or to assigned materials. These short papers provide an opportunity to hone your writing over time, with an eye towards improving its clarity and coherence prior to submission of the final paper.

Grades:

This course emphasizes a combination of traditional academic skills: reading, writing, and speaking. Thus I weight three main components of your course grade almost equally: participation (30%); homework (40%); paper (30%). We also pay overt attention to other key skills often implicit (and thus not taught), such as collaboration, curiosity, and humility.

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Participation: 30%

Participation requires, at minimum, regular attendance. If you anticipate missing class for officially-sanctioned reasons, let me know in advance, with supporting documentation when appropriate. Register any religious holidays via MySlice during the first two weeks of the semester, then confirm alternative deadlines for any assignments. If you are ill, please send me an email once possible, and check Blackboard for any announcements or in-class exercises that you may have missed.

Active engagement in discussion also involves more than your physical presence. At its most basic, "research" centers on asking questions, not offering opinions. How we talk also makes a huge difference – engagement entails mindfulness, listening, and respectful responses. You need these same skills to be an effective interviewer. I will ask you to identify at least one aspect of engagement that you would like to improve during the semester. See me during office hours or make an appointment if you want mid-semester feedback.

Please silence and stash phones. Because some people prefer to make notes directly on digital readings, you can use laptops or other devices in class *if* you avoid distractions. Best to use airplane mode. However, a growing literature underscores the value of taking hand-written notes, on readings and in class. Also, effective note-taking is another essential detail of employing many qualitative techniques; keep in mind that what you prefer might not be feasible in your research setting.

Practice: 40%

You will complete a series of short writing assignments, geared towards the application of various methodological approaches. In addition to four ungraded memos, you will submit four graded exercises (~10% each). Together, these "practice" activities will help you to select two tools as the essential building blocks for your research proposal.

Each assignment is due in class, as indicated in the Schedule, unless otherwise indicated. Keep in mind that these are preliminary forays into what might be completely unfamiliar techniques. Therefore, it is appropriate to have unanswered questions or incomplete results. These need not be lengthy papers—perhaps even just one concise paragraph, depending on what you have to say. Be prepared to share your insights and unresolved issues.

Late homework will not receive full credit, because these assignments inform in-class discussion, but it is *always* better to turn in something. Any ungraded homework (e.g., memos) will factor into your participation grade, otherwise same procedures apply.

Paper: 30%

The final paper will be a research design, with a strict maximum of 10 pages, in the format of a funding proposal. I will distribute guidelines and rubric early in the semester. Talk to me *before*

the due date if you anticipate difficulty meeting the submission deadline. To facilitate feedback, you will submit the final paper via TurnItIn on Blackboard. These papers will become part of the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. While I do not anticipate any plagiarism issues, note that university policies that govern academic integrity include serious sanctions for dishonesty of any sort, especially at the graduate level.

Accommodations:

If you might qualify for a disability-related accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services. After they provide you with an Accommodation Authorization Letter, we can make suitable arrangements.

Schedule

January 13: Introduction

January 20: No class—Martin Luther King, Jr., (MLK) holiday

Part 1: Research Design

January 27: Cultures of Inquiry

What distinguishes "qualitative" research? Is it inherently historical and interpretive, rather than scientific? Does it privilege induction over deduction? Can we make only certain types of inferences?

➢ Memo 1 due in class.

o Brooke Ackerly, "Feminist Curb Cutting," *QMIR*.
o Pauline Rosenau, "Into the Fray," Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions (Princeton 1992), pp. 3-24.
o Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, "The *Science* of Social Science," *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton 1994), pp. 3-33.
o Daniel Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation* (Westview 1991), pp. 1-9.

February 3: Core Concepts

What research questions we ask, and how we ask them, depends in part on our key concepts. The definition of these concepts also shapes subsequent decisions about methodology. In turn, choices about methodology can shape the definition of concepts.

➢ Memo 2 due in class.

- o Giovanni Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," *American Political Science Review* 64 (4), December 1970: 1033-53.
- o Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "The Imperialism of Categories: Situating Knowledge in a Globalizing World," *Perspectives on Politics* 3 (1), March 2005: 5-14.
- o Anna Leader, "Thinking Tools," *QMIR*.
- o Robert Adcock and David Collier, "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research," *American Political Science Review* 95 (3), September 2001: 529-46.

February 10: Case Studies

Some people equate qualitative methods with case study analysis, but nothing inherent in comparison determines the number of cases or how we analyze those cases. What do you seek to achieve through comparison, what it is that you will compare, and how many cases should you select?

- o Benedict Anderson, "Frameworks of Comparison," *London Review of Books* 38 (2), 21 January 2016: 15-18.
- o Audie Klotz, "Case Selection," *QMIR*.
- o Dan Slater and David Ziblatt, "The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison," *Comparative Political Studies* 46 (10), October 2013: 1301-27.
- o James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research," *American Political Science Review* 98 (4), November 2004: 653-69.

Part 2: Classic Qualitative Tools

February 17: Ethnography (I)

Political scientists, thanks to (mis-) reading Clifford Geertz, typically think of ethnography as a tool of observation used by anthropologists to produce "thick descriptions" of "natives" in "villages." This caricature inadequately characterizes the practices of anthropologists or the scope of their research. How might we need to adapt (or correct our understandings of) ethnography in order to apply it in political settings? In what ways does it matter that participant-observation requires relationships with the people we research?

- ➢ Homework 1 due in class.

- o Clifford Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," in *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow and William Sullivan (California 1979), pp. 225-41.
- o Hugh Gusterson, "Ethnography," *QMIR*.
- o Andrea Louise Campbell, "Family Story as Political Science: Reflections on Writing *Trapped in America's Safety Net*," *Perspectives on Politics* 13 (4), 2015, 1043-1052.

February 24: Ethnography (II)

Along with participant-observation, interviewing is a core tool of ethnography—but also widely used in other types of fieldwork. We will cover commonalities in the use of interviews for diverse purposes and some of the distinctive challenges that face researchers in specific settings.

➢ Homework 2 due in class.

o Symposium, "Fieldwork, Identities, and Intersectionality," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42 (2), April 2009: 287-328 – read the Editors' Introduction and the contribution(s) most relevant to your own research.
o David Morgan, "Focus Groups as a Qualitative Method," in *Focus Groups in Qualitative Research* 2nd ed. (Sage 1997), pp. 8-18.
o Wendy Luttrell, "'Good Enough' Methods for Life-Story Analysis," in *Finding Culture in Talk: A Collection of Methods*, ed. Naomi Quinn (Palgrave Macmillan 2005), pp. 243-268.

March 2: Discourse Analysis [I]

Reflecting various strands of theorizing, diverse approaches to textual and non-textual analysis fall under the rubric of discourse. We sample a few here to get a sense of this range.

o John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Viking 1973), pp. 45-64, and video.
o Iver Neumann, "Discourse Analysis," *QMIR*.
o Kevin Dunn, "Historical Representations," *QMIR*.
o Michael Jones and Mark McBeth, "A Narrative Policy Framework: Clear Enough to be Wrong?" *Policy Studies Journal* 38 (2), May 2010: 329-53.

March 9: Discourse (II)

Analysts can use both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data from a wide array of verbal and written sources. Rather than defending one or the other approach, we concentrate on bridging the divide between discourse analysis and content analysis.

➢ Homework 3 due in class.

o Ronald Jepperson and Ann Swidler, "What Properties of Culture Should We Measure?" *Poetics* 22 (4), June 1994: 359-71.
o Peg Hermann, "Content Analysis," *QMIR*.
o Susan Thomson, to be determined and posted on BB. Optional: attend talk on March 10.

March 16: No class—Spring Break

March 23: No class—International Studies Association meeting

In lieu of class, complete basic Institutional Review Board (IRB) certification & submit a copy of the CITI confirmation in my mailbox (100 Eggers) prior to next class. If you have already completed this basic IRB training, you do not need to repeat, just submit your current certification.

> Go to the Assignments tab for details and the link. You should allocate a few hours for this task (i.e., reading modules on human subject research and then taking short multiple choice tests). This certification, valid for a few years, will enable you to apply for IRB approval for research involving interviews (either this summer or later).

March 30: Historiography (I)

Political scientists often take for granted that method for historians means the construction of narratives, based especially on primary sources found by digging around musty archives. Very often we receive no training before going off to "do" historical cases, leaving us woefully unprepared. We start with epistemological contrasts.

o Watch "The Umbrella Man" (5 min. video linked on BB).
o Ian Lustick, "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *American Political Science Review* 90 (3), September 1996: 605-18.
o Paul Pierson, "Not Just What, but When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes," *Studies in American Political Development* 14 (1), Spring 2000: 72-92.
o Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Kelemen, "The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism," *World Politics* 59 (3), April 2007: 341-69.

April 6: Historiography (II)

One of the main criticisms of quantitative methods is their reliance on correlation, from which some analysts (too quickly) infer causal significance. Qualitative researchers often stress that their methods better capture causal connections by focusing on processes. Yet capturing processes can be extremely difficult. How can we analyze the sequencing of change, rather than relying upon static structures or behavioral outcomes? We explore three popular approaches: path dependency, process tracing, and genealogy.

➢ Homework 4 due in class.

o Anna Grzymala-Busse, "Time Will Tell? Temporality and the Analysis of Causal Mechanisms and Processes," *Comparative Political Studies* 44 (9), September 2011: 1267-97.
o Jeffrey Checkel, "Process Tracing," *QMIR*.

- o Srdjan Vucetic, "Genealogy as a Research Tool in International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 37 (3), July 2011, 1295-1312.

Part 3: Mixing Methods

April 13: Reassessing Boundaries

What makes for successful mixing? Is there a fundamental difference between qualitative and quantitative (or formal methods) that needs to be bridged? Or are there other rationales for combining analytical techniques?

➤ Memo 3 due in class.

- o Sharlane Nagy Hesse-Biber, Mixed Methods Research: Merging Theory with Practice (Guilford 2010), ch.3.
- o Evan Lieberman, "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research," *American Political Science Review* 99 (3), August 2005: 435-452.

April 20: Boundary-Crossing Methods

Mixing methods often involves using a complementary combination of qualitative and quantitative tools. However, some researchers attempt to merge them, such as QCA, while other techniques, such as agent-based modeling (ABM) and network analysis, do not even fit into such dichotomies.

➤ Memo 4 due in class.

- o Axel Marx, Benoît Rihoux, and Charles Ragin, "The Origins, Development, and Application of Qualitative Comparative Analysis," *European Political Science Review* 6 (1), 2014: 115-142.
- o Matthew Hoffmann, "Agent Based Modeling," *QMIR*.
- o Roger Gould, "Uses of Network Tools in Comparative Historical Research," in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (Cambridge 2003), ch.7

April 27: Mini-Workshops

Based on thematic clusters, you will share draft proposals in small groups. You should then channel this feedback into revisions as you finalize the proposal for submission.

May 4: Papers due via TurnItIn link on Blackboard

Contact me in advance if you anticipate trouble meeting this deadline. We can negotiate either a short extension or a formal incomplete.

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Practice: Memos and Homework

<u>Memo 1</u>

Select a research topic which will be the focus for your subsequent assignments. It can be a general question that interests you – perhaps what you wrote about in your admissions essay, an issue that you are exploring in another course, or a tentative dissertation idea. If you are new to doing independent research, you might start with one of your favorite books or authors.

First, tell me a little about what goals – personal, practical, scholarly – underpin your research topic. What assumptions – ethical, intellectual, emotional – do you bring to it? Do you have any experiences related to this topic? Do not provide a general autobiography; rather, reflect upon how various experiences and agendas may influence your research agenda.

Then consider Ackerly's notion of "curb cutting": can you think of a similar experiment that would sensitize you to other perspectives on your topic? If you can implement it, tell me what you did and whether it worked. If not, tell me about an experience that prompted you to re-think a basic assumption.

Do not worry if your topic is still broad. If you are torn between two possibilities, tell me something about both, and what draws you to each. If you've got more than two interests, narrow it down to two or figure out a way to combine some of them. A great resource is Lisa Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science* (any edition, available in Bird Library), especially her chapter on "Getting Started."

<u>Memo 2</u>

Select one core concept at the heart of your research topic. (If you were undecided in Memo 1, now is the time to make a definitive choice.) Some of you may have already identified theories or specific propositions that you wish to explore; others may be doing preliminary reading in other courses to identify relevant literature. Focus here on selecting a concept, not theories or hypotheses – we will get to that soon enough.

Briefly map out the ways in which this concept is applied, either within a literature you know or by an author whose work you are using. Is the core meaning of the concept contested? For instance, there may be many terms that you might say are essentially the same notion. Or are there multiple variants within a larger consensus? Perhaps there are a lot of adjectives used alongside a core concept. Go through as many of the steps outlined in the readings (e.g., Leander or Adcock and Collier) as you think appropriate.