GOV 385L Research Methods and Qualitative Analysis in Social Science

Spring 2012 – Tuesday 9:30am-12:30pm – Batts 1.104

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Course description

This graduate seminar introduces the analytic tools used in empirical political science research. We will focus on the methods of non-quantitative work, although we will also consider how scholars integrate qualitative and statistical analysis. The relevant material for understanding "qualitative methods" is vast. This class offers a sampler of prominent techniques and works, not a comprehensive survey of the field. Readings and discussions will focus on case selection, historical research, multi-method approaches, and fieldwork. Due to time constraints, ethnography and interviewing techniques will receive less attention.

Students taking the course are expected to arrive promptly, prepared for a lively discussion. Each week we will have two kinds of readings to discuss. The first will be the main texts, which I have selected in advance, covering research methods and qualitative analysis. The second type of reading, which we will turn to in the last hour of each week's seminar, will be an article-length text of research (it can be a scholarly article, a book chapter, or something else) selected by a student in the class. Led by the student who chose the material, we will critique the text. This exercise will give enable us to assess the benefit of our other readings for evaluating works of interest. For a few seminar sessions, noted below, there will no choice of the week.

I consider full-time graduate study sixty hours of work per week; a seminar comprises fifteen hours of that load. Students should expect to spend an average of twelve hours per week on the readings and assignments, plus three hours in class. If at any time you feel you are devoting more than an average of fifteen hours per week to the seminar, or if you are experiencing extraordinary difficulty, come see me. At the end of the syllabus, I offer some suggestions on effective reading.

Grading and Assignments

Participation in first half of semester, 25%; Participation in second half of semester, 25%; Three book reviews, 30% total; Exam (May 1), 20%

Participation: A = 25/25; B = 22/25; C = 19/25. Students who play an active and respectful role in advancing discussion and show a careful understanding of the readings will receive an A in participation. Students who answer appropriately when called upon and periodically contribute without prompting will receive a B in participation. Students who appear unprepared for class or do not meaningfully advance seminar discussions will receive a C in participation.

Over the course of the semester students will write three 1200-word book reviews. At least one of the reviews must cover one of the example texts assigned for the class (marked with an * below.) At least one the reviews must be on a book the student has not previously read and that is not a required text for this course. Reviews on books assigned in class are due no later than 9am the day **prior** to the class in which the book will be discussed. For example, a review of Thad Dunning's *Crude Democracy* would need to be submitted by 9am Monday, March 5.

Reviews should follow the style of *Perspectives on Politics*, the discipline's primary forum for book reviews. As the *Perspectives* editor instructs prospective reviewers, reviews should "(1) carefully describe the central features of the book's analysis and the logic and structure of its argument, and (2) assess the book's contributions to its field(s) and the relevant theoretical literatures in this domain, and identify its major shortcomings and/or special contributions." Each review will be worth ten points and graded based on the standards used in the field of evaluate published book reviews. An "A" review will be ten points. An "A-/B+" review will be nine points. A "B/B-" review will be eight points. A "C" review will be seven points.

There will be one, closed-book no-notes exam. It will be structured as a mock preliminary exam. Unlike in actual preliminary exams, however, I will present beforehand a list of questions from which the actual exam questions which be drawn. The exam will consist of two questions relating to research methods and qualitative analysis. Students will have four hours, from 9:30am until 1:30pm on Thursday, May 1, to compose their answers, on their own computers, and email them to me. Each question will be graded on a 10-point scale: a "passing" answer will be worth ten points, a "low pass" eight points, and a "failing" answer five points.

Books for purchase

Note: These texts are available from the University Co-Op or Amazon.com at the following link: http://www.amazon.com/Qualitative-Methods/lm/RW9L2YLAEEUT3

*Catherine Boone, *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010, 2nd ed.).

*Thad Dunning, *Crude Democracy: Natural Resource Wealth and Political Regimes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it Can Succeed Again* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

*David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Steven Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

*Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (New York: Verso, 2009).

Week 1, January 17

Introduction: Why study methods?

In-class film: *Shattered Glass* (2003)

Week 2, January 24

Methods and theory: What do political scientists do?

Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation" [1918], 1-21.

Steven Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 1–88 (read), 89–128 (skim).

Atul Kohli, Adam Przeworski, and Theda Skocpol's sections in "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium," *World Politics* 48(1), October 1995, 1–2, 16-21, 37–49.

Ian Shapiro, "Problems, Methods, and Theories in the Study of Politics, or What's Wrong with Political Science and What to Do about It," *Political Theory* 30(4), August 2002, 596–619.

Anne Norton, "Political Science as a Vocation," in Ian Shapiro, Rogers M. Smith, and Tarek Masoud, eds., *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 67–82.

Choice of the week: Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* (New York: Harper, 2005), 115–145 ("Where have all the criminals gone?").

Week 3, January 31

Case selection: What can we learn from a small number of examples?

John Stuart Mill, "Of the Chemical, or Experimental, Method in the Social Sciences," from *A System of Logic* [1843], http://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/mill/sol/sol.b06.c07.html .

Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," in James A. Stimson, ed., *Political Analysis*, vol. 2 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 131–150.

David Collier and James Mahoney, "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research," *World Politics*, 49(1) October 1996, 56–91.

James Mahoney, "Strategies of Causal Inference in Small-N Analysis," *Sociological Methods and Research*, 28(4) May 2000, 387–424.

David Waldner, *State Building and Late Development* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 1–18.

Benjamin Smith, *Hard Times in the Lands of Plenty: Oil Politics in Iran and Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 1–14.

Choice of the week: TBD by student

Week 4, February 7

The quantitative critique:: How can statistics inform qualitative research?

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Choice of the week: TBD by student

Week 5, February 14

The rebuttal: What are the advantages of qualitative research?

Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010, 2nd ed.), xiii–xviii (skim), 1–26, 33–63 (skim), 101–110, 125–199, 247–311.

Choice of the week: TBD by student

Week 6, February 21

The post-modern critique: What kind of knowledge should we be accumulating?

Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it Can Succeed Again* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Samer Shehata, *Shop Floor Culture and Politics in Egypt* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009), 128–182.

Choice of the week: TBD by student

Week 7, February 28

Multi-method research: What do we gain (or lose) by mixing approaches?

David D. Laitin, "The Perestroikan Challenge to Political Science," *Politics & Society*, 31(1), March 2003, 163–184

Bent Flyvbjerg, "A Perestroikan Straw Man Answers Back: David Laitin and Phronetic Political Science," *Politics and Society*, 32(3), September 2004, 389–416.

Evan S. Lieberman, "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research," *American Political Science Review*, 99(3) August 2005 , 435–452.

Ingo Rohfling, "What You See and What You Get: Pitfalls and Principles of Nested Analysis in Comparative Research," *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(11) November 2008, 1492–1514.

Lisa Wedeen, "Concepts and commitments in the study of democracy," in Shapiro, Smith, and Masoud, eds., *Problems and Methods*, 274–306.

Choice of the week: TBD by student

Week 8, March 6

Last day to submit first book review

An example of multi-method research

Thad Dunning, *Crude Democracy: Natural Resource Wealth and Political Regimes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Choice of the week: TBD by student

SPRING BREAK. NO CLASS ON MARCH 13.

Week 9, March 20

"Process tracing": How do political scientists establish causality within cases?

Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 2005), ix–xv, 3–36, 67–169, 181–262.

Choice of the week: TBD by student

Week 10, March 27

Nuts and bolts of historical research: What do historians do?

David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 131–186.

Cameron G. Thies, "A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations," *International Studies Perspectives* 3(4), November 2002, 351–372.

Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), vii–x, 1–168, 169–255 (skim).

Choice of the week: TBD by student

Recommended reading: Ian S. Lustick, "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *American Political Science Review* 90(3), September 1996, 605–618.

Week 11, April 3

Change of venue: We will convene at 9:30am in the lobby of the LBJ Library for an introduction by Senior Archivist Regina Greenwell

An example of archival research

Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (New York: Verso, 2009).

Choice of the week: none

Week 12, April 10

Interviewing and fieldwork: How do we collect information from people?

Guest visit by Professor Glenn Frankel, Director of the UT School of Journalism

Anne Hull, "Storytelling Techniques," unpublished memo.

Glenn Frankel, "A Short Journey From Friend to Foe; Cities Linked by Attack Shared Hopes for Peace," *Washington Post*, April 14, 2002

Teresa Odendahl and Aileen M. Shaw, "Interviewing Elites," in Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method* (Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 299–316.

Patricia Adler and Peter Adler, "The Reluctant Respondent," in Gubrium and Holstein (eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research*, 515–535.

Evan S. Lieberman, "Introduction: The Promise and Pitfalls of Field Research" and "Preparing for Field Research *APSA-QM: Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section on Qualitative Methods* 2(1), spring 2004, 2–7.

Marc Morje Howard, "Obtaining and Recording Data," *APSA-QM* 2(1), spring 2004, 7–10.

Julia Lynch, "Tracking Progress While in the Field," *APSA-QM* 2(1), spring 2004, 10–15.

Recommended online exercise: Complete the IRB course for Group 1: Social/Behavioral Research.
http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/training/index.html

Choice of the week: none

Week 13, April 17

Last day to submit second book review

Examples of in-depth fieldwork (1).

Guest visit by Professor Boone

Catherine Boone, *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Choice of the week: none

Week 14, April 24

Last day to submit third book review

Examples of in-depth fieldwork (2).

David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

Choice of the week: TBD by student

Week 15, May 1

Exam

Suggestions on Effective Reading

Graduate students have the seeming luxury of being able to spend large amounts of time reading texts. This work, however, should be as arduous as it is enjoyable. Letting information flit through your synapses, passive reading, can be a pleasant way to pass the time while basking in the glow of self-edification. Actually making sense of that information – and retaining those reactions for discussion a week later – can pose a stiffer challenge. Given the amount of reading we will do in this course, I recommend spacing out the readings in reasonable increments. Thoughtful reading takes time and energy. It is less taxing and more productive to read over several days than to compress all the reading into a couple of nights.

Next, think about what you are reading during the process; if you find yourself turning pages numbly, take a break, and then refocus on the author's chain of thought. When reading look for the author's argument and the evidence she uses to support it: What is the main claim she makes? With whom is she disagreeing? Then consider your reactions to the author's work: Does this make sense to you? Why or why not? What are the weaknesses of the argument?Jot down thoughts you want to raise in class. **Use highlighters only as a supplemental tool.** Write your reactions to the text in the margins. Then archive your notes, such as by keeping a log on your computer – a useful way for returning to the information later when you are preparing for comps or composing a dissertation prospectus.

At some point after you have read, taken notes, and organized your notes, set them aside and see if you can summarize the author's argument in a few sentences. You may then want to take five minutes and write down this summary, particularly if you are reading several different texts in a given week. Remember that the goal of close reading is not just to have touched the pages, but to be able to say something about the material and evaluate it.

Suggestions on Effective Writing

Read "Fussy Professor Starbuck's Cookbook of Handy-Dandy Prescriptions for Ambitious Academic Authors or Why I Hate Passive Verbs and Love My Word Processor."
http://people.stern.nyu.edu/wstarbuc/Writing/Fussy.htm

I am grateful to Professor Charles Kurzman of the UNC-Chapel Hill Sociology Department (http://kurzman.unc.edu/teaching/) for linking to Professor Starbuck's Cookbook.