

CONF 812 -- QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Spring 2009

Mondays, 7:20 pm–10:00 pm,

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Truland Room 638; Office hours by appointment

This course explores qualitative research design, including epistemology, the process of case selection, various qualitative methodologies, as well as issues likely to emerge in the process of conducting research. In addition to material on research design and methodology, reading assignments include several monographs that employ different qualitative methodologies. Class discussion of these texts in the second half of the course will focus on how the authors generated a research question; how they set up their research designs; what methods they employed and why to answer their research questions; whether they achieved their goals; and the benefits, limitations, ethics, and politics of each approach. Throughout the course class sessions will include attention to hands-on qualitative research activities.

Assigned Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the Arlington Campus Bookstore. All readings should be accessible through the GMU's library databases, e-reserves/reserves, through websites indicated on the syllabus, or through the course Ning site.

- Hardy, Cynthia and Nelson Phillips. 2002. *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Mahmood, Cynthia. 1996. *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (Available electronically.)
- Nordstrom, Carolyn. 2004. *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-first Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Polleta, Francesca. 2006. *It was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Posner, Daniel. 2005. *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ross, Marc Howard. 2007. *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weinstein, Jeremy M. 2006. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Course Requirements and Deadlines

Course Participation: 20%

The emphasis in this class will be on an intellectual give and take among us all. Class meetings will be in seminar form rather than lecture. This requires students to be responsible for completing all the readings prior to class, preparing to engage in class discussion, and actively participating. Assessment will be based on both frequency and quality of participation; high quality participation promotes and deepens class discussion and offers evidence of significant engagement with the readings. **Participation will be assessed throughout the term.**

“Interviewing Researchers” Project: 15%

During the first weeks of the course, you will conduct a brief exploratory interview (half hour) with a qualitative researcher in order to learn how s/he approaches research design and methodology. You should be prepared to discuss in class what you learned about qualitative research and what you experienced through conducting an interview. You will write a short paper (4-5) that brings your interview findings and experience into dialogue with one or more course readings. **Due Friday, March 6 by 5:00 pm.**

Two Short Analytic Papers: 20% (10% for each paper)

In the second half of the course, each student will write 2 short (4 pages each) analytic papers. Each paper will offer an analysis of one of the assigned monographs: Posner, Mahmood, Skocpol, Weinstein, Ross, Polletta, Nordstrom. We will determine together who will write on which book in order to assure that at least one paper is written on each. In these papers you should discuss the main research puzzle addressed in the book; the methodology used to unravel the puzzle; the limitations and benefits of using these methodologies. **The short papers are due at the beginning of class on the day when the readings will be discussed. Late papers will not be accepted.**

Research Proposal Portfolio: 45%

At the end of the term you will submit a portfolio of materials that reflect your progress toward a proposal for a research project using qualitative methods. The portfolio will contain four items. 1) Statement of the Problem and the Purpose of the Research (6-8 pages). This document will identify a question or puzzle that intrigues you and the aims or purpose of the research project you hope to carry out in order to answer the question or solve the puzzle. You will need to refer to the literature that gives rise to this puzzle/question and discuss the contribution you hope to make through research. You should pick a research area of interest to you (e.g., your dissertation research topic). 2) Research Design and Significance (6-8 pages). This document follows on the previous and describes in detail the qualitative methods to be used to investigate the research question underpinning the project and should pay particular attention to how you selected your case and methods. 3) Poster Display of Research Proposal. You will construct a poster explaining your proposed research. 4) Reflections toward a Research Proposal (6-8). More details will be provided in class. The portfolio should contain revised versions of Parts 1-3 and 4. **Due dates are as follows: Part 1--February 27th; Part 2—April 17th; Part 3—May 4; and Part 4 as part of the entire portfolio--May 11th.**

Schedule of Topics, Readings, Activities, and Assignments

WEEK 1: January 26 - Introduction

--Brainstorm on Interviewing Researchers Project--

WEEK 2: February 2 - Overview of the Field and Basic Approaches

von Wright, Georg Henrik. *Explanation and Understanding*. Cornell University Press, 1971, 1-33.

Taylor, Charles. "Interpretation and the Science of Man," in P. Rabinow and W.M. Sullivan, editors, *Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look*.

Weber, Max. "Objectivity in Social Sciences and Social Policy,"
http://www.molsci.org/research/publications_pdf/Objectivity_Essay.pdf

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 3-33.

Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. 1973, (pp. 3-32).

and **one** overview chapter distributed in class from the following texts:

Punch, Keith. *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. London: Sage, 2005. (Chapter 8, "Design in Qualitative Research.")

Cresswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. London: Sage, 1998. (Chapter 4, "Qualitative Traditions of Inquiry")

Robson, Colin. *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers 2nd ed.* Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002. (Chapter 6, "Flexible Designs")

--Class Activity on Interviewing--

WEEK 3: February 9 - Strategies for Case Selection I

Flyvbjerg, Bent. "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research," *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 2, April 2006, 219-245.

Del Casino Jr., Vincent J., "Decision-Making in an Ethnographic Context," *Geographical Review*, vol. 91, no. 1/2, January-April 2001, 454-462.

Lofland, John, David A. Snow, Leon Anderson, Lyn H. Lofland. "Starting Where You Are" and "Evaluating Data Sites." In: *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Wadsworth Publishing, 2005.

Stacey, Judith. "Can There be a Feminist Ethnography?" In: *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, Sherma Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds. New York: Routledge, 111-119.

Turner, Victor. "Social Dramas and Ritual Metaphors." In: *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press.

Johnson, Jeffrey C., Christine Avenarius, and Jack Weatherford, "The Active Participant-Observer: Applying Social Role Analysis to Participant Observation," *Field Methods*, 18 (2), May 2006, 111-134.

Recommended:

Robert K. Yin. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003, especially chapter 3.

--Brainstorm on Research Proposal Project--

February 16 - Strategies for Case Selection II

Collier, David and James Mahoney, "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research," *World Politics*, 49, 1996, 59-91.

Geddes, Barbara. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answer You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," *Political Analysis*, no. 2, 1990, 131-50.

Lieberson, Stanley. "Small Ns and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases," *Social Forces*, 70 (2), December 1991, 307-20.

Skocpol, Theda and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22 (2), April 1980, 174-97.

Ragin, Charles, "Using Comparative Methods to Study Diversity," in *Constructing Social Research*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1994.

Recommended:

Lijphart, Arend, "The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research," *Comparative Political Studies*, 8, 1975, 158-77.

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

--Check-in on Interviewing Project--

February 23 – Discourse Analysis in Social Research

Hardy, Cynthia and Nelson Phillips. *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*.

Recommended: Catherine Kohler Riessman, "Introduction: Locating Narratives" and "Theoretical Contexts" (1-24) in *Narrative Analysis: Qualitative Research Methods Series*, Sage, 1993. (e-reserves)

--*Brief Presentations on Research Proposal*--

****February 27: Statement of the Problem and Research Aims due by 5:00 pm****

March 2 – Data Collection Techniques

Knodel, John. "The Design and Analysis of Focus Group Studies in Social Science Research," in David Morgan, editor, *Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art*, pp. 35-50.

Devereaux, Stephen and John Hoddinott, "Issues in Data Collection," in Stephen Devereaux and John Hoddinott, editors. *Fieldwork in Developing Countries*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993, 25-40.

Selections from Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein, editors, *Handbook of Interview Research*, Sage, 2002 including Carol Warren, "Qualitative Interviewing," 83-101; John Johnson, "In-Depth Interviewing," 103-119; Patricia Adler and Peter Adler, "The Reluctant Respondent," 515-535; Teresa Odenhal and Aileen Shaw, "Interviewing Elites," 299-316; and Anne Ryen, "Cross-Cultural Interviewing," 335-54.

--*Class Activity on Data Acquisition and Analysis*--

****March 6 – "Interviewing Researchers" Paper Due by 5:00 pm****

March 9 – No Class. Spring Break

March 16 – Single Case Study I

Posner, Daniel. *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*.

--*Review of "Interviewing Researchers" Project*

March 23 - Single Case Study II

Mahmood, Cynthia. *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants*.

Mahmood, Cynthia. "Anthropology from the Bones: A Memoir of Fieldwork, Survival, and Commitment." *Anthropology and Humanism* v. 33.1/2: 1-11.

Recommended:

DeWalt, Kathleen M. and Billie DeWalt. *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Field Notes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Fife, Wayne. *Doing Fieldwork: Ethnographic Methods for Research in Developing Countries and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Winchatz, Michaela R., "Fieldworker or Foreigner? Ethnographic Interviewing in Nonnative Languages," *Field Methods*, 18 (1), February 2006, 83-97.

--Check-in on Research Proposal Design--

March 30 - Comparative Case Study I

Skocpol, Theda. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*.

OR

George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Sciences*. MIT Press, 2005, chapter 10.

Hall, Peter A. "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research," in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Mahoney, James. "Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis," in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Recommended:

Mahoney, James. "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology," *Theory and Society*, 29, 2000, 507-548.

--Brief Presentation of Research Design--

April 6 -- Comparative Case Study II

Weinstein, Jeremy. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*.

OR

Ross, Marc Howard. *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*.

Recommended:

Comparative case analysis material TBA

--Brief Presentation of Research Design--

April 13 – Discourse-based Research

Polleta, Francesca. *It was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics*.

Recommended:

Buthe, Tim. "Taking Temporality Seriously: Modeling History and the Use of Narratives as Evidence," *Amer. Political Science Review*, 93.3, September 2002, 481-93.

Feldman, Martha S. *Strategies for Interpreting Qualitative Data*. Sage, 1995.

Griffin, Larry J. "Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology," *Amer. Journal of Sociology*, 98.5, March 1993, 1094-1133.

****April 17 – Research Design and Significance due by 5:00 pm****

April 20 – Qualitative Research in a Globalizing World

Nordstrom, Carolyn. *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-first Century*.

Recommended:

Hays-Mitchell, Maureen. "Danger, Fulfillment, and Responsibility in a Violence-Plagued Society," *Geographical Review*, January-April, 2001.

--Check-in on Research Proposal Posters--

April 27 – Participatory Action Research and Evaluation Research

Robson,

Coutin, Susan and Susan F. Hirsch, "Naming Resistance: Ethnographers, Dissidents, and States." *Anthropological Quarterly* 71.1:1-17, 1998.

Hirsch, Susan F. "Feminist Participatory Research on Legal Consciousness." *Practicing Ethnography in Law: New Dialogues, Enduring Methods*. J. Starr and M. Goodale (eds.). New York: Palgrave, 2002.

May 4 - Research Project Proposal Presentations

May 11 – No Class: Final Research Project Proposals Due by 5:00 pm