

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

CONF 812

Spring 2014

Mondays, 4:30pm – 7:10 pm

Founders Hall, room 312

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Office hours, Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 or by appointment

Metropolitan Building, room 5104A

Welcome to the course. This course will explore qualitative research design and methodologies. Some of the key themes we will focus on include: how does one frame a research project? How does one design a strategy for answering a research question? What distinguishes different qualitative methodologies? What are the challenges of conducting research across cultural and socioeconomic divides? What are the ethical challenges of conducting research in conflict zones?

Over the course of the semester we will read a number of studies that employ different qualitative methodologies and examine how these scholars set up their research designs; what methods they chose and why to answer their research questions; and what are the benefits and limitations of each methodology.

REQUIREMENTS

Participation: 20%

Short Papers: 30%

Reflection Paper: 10%

Research Project Proposal: 40%

Participation

The emphasis in this class will be on an intellectual give and take between all of us. This means that our meetings will be in the form of a seminar rather than a lecture. This of course places much responsibility on your shoulders and requires you to be responsible for doing all the readings prior to class and actively participating in class discussions. The success of the course thus depends on you coming to the seminar prepared. Participation grades will be based on frequency and quality of your involvement each week. You do not need to have something to say on every topic that comes up in discussion but rather should participate in a way that promotes and deepens the discussion. In evaluating participation, I will look for evidence that you have done the readings with sufficient attention and care and have thought about them. Discussion participation will be worth 20% of your final grade.

Short Papers

In addition to active participation in class discussions you will be required to write 3 four-page papers. The papers will analyze three of the five books we will be reading between weeks eight and twelve. In these papers you should discuss the main research puzzle the book is addressing; what kind of methodology or methodologies the author is using to unravel the research puzzle; what are the limitations and benefits of using these particular methodologies to unravel this puzzle. The short papers will be due on the day when the readings will be discussed and should be submitted electronically. Late papers will not be accepted. Each of these papers will be worth 10% of your final grade for a total of 30% of your final grade.

Reflection Paper

During the course of the semester you should attend at least one of the following: a dissertation proposal defense; a dissertation defense; a tenure-track or term faculty "job talk." The reflection paper should discuss the key research puzzle the speaker presented, the methodology that the speaker either used or proposed using to investigate the research puzzle and your assessment of whether the methodology proposed or used was appropriate given the research question the speaker was investigating. The paper should be submitted electronically. The reflection paper will be worth 10% of your final grade.

Research Project Proposal

You will also write a 15-20-page research project proposal (this page limit includes the bibliography). This proposal will explain the research puzzle you are investigating and discuss how you will go about conducting your research. Your research project proposal will include the following sections:

1. **Subject and Significance:** What is the basic problem, issue, or question that the research (dissertation) project seeks to address? Why is it important that this project be done? What substantive results do you expect will be derived from this project? How original is it in view of existing literature or projects that you or others have carried out? (Cite in your narrative the relevant literature to your topic and situate your project within the broader field to which you hope to contribute).
2. **Methods and Design:** What is the main thesis of your research (dissertation), and what are the hypotheses you are testing or assuming in your research? What is your research design, including your case selection? What qualitative methods will you use and how will they help you answer your research question? What evidence (documents, interviews, archives, or other sources) will you gather to examine your theories, hypotheses and assumptions? How will you analyze the evidence and use it to confirm or

disconfirm your claims? Does this research (dissertation) include field work? If so, briefly explain.

The preliminary 1-2-page outline of your research project proposal will be due on **February 24th**. The outline should include your proposed research question and a brief discussion of the qualitative methods you anticipate using.

The research project proposal will be due on **May 12th at 5pm**. Like other written assignments, it should be submitted electronically. The grant proposal will be worth 40% of your final grade.

Course Policies:

Late assignments or “incomplete” grades will be given only in cases of personal or family crisis. You **MUST** discuss the possibility of such arrangements with me beforehand rather than waiting until an assignment is due. Failure to turn in an assignment on time without prior discussion with me, will result in a failing grade for that particular assignment.

Given the importance of your active, thoughtful participation to the success of the class and your own S-CAR career, attendance at all course meetings is expected. If you must miss a class, please let me know beforehand by email. Missing more than one or two classes over the course of the semester will inevitably result in a lowered “participation” grade.

Readings will be posted on Blackboard. Here I will also post announcements and discussions, so please make sure you are registered on the site. I will also be communicating with you outside of class by email. Please make sure your GMU email account is activated and that you check it regularly.

If you have questions, concerns or ideas you would like to discuss, feel free to come to my office hours or make an appointment to meet in my office at another time. And of course we can also communicate via email.

Writing Guidelines:

Your written assignments for this class will be graded according to the criteria stated below. The relative weight given to each of these categories will vary depending on the nature of the assignment.

1. Clear and sound content, including a well-stated thesis, related points to support that thesis, and applicable, logically presented, and specific evidence; clarity of argument.
2. Depth of engagement with ideas; originality; seriousness of thought; conceptual complexity.
3. Well-organized structure; text ‘flows’ with coherent and effective transitions between and among ideas; appropriate voice, tone, and style for audience and purpose (e.g. no slang or contractions); accurate word choice.

4. Sufficient and consistent citations and documentation according to the Chicago Manual of Style (see below); adequate references; appropriate type of sources.
5. Correct mechanics including grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation.

All papers should be thoroughly proofread before being handed in and will be marked down for excessive typographical errors. Quality of writing is critical because if the writing is poor, then you are unlikely to be able to clearly communicate an argument.

Late assignments or “incomplete” grades will be given only in exceptional cases of personal or immediate family crisis. You **MUST** discuss the possibility of such an arrangement beforehand rather than waiting until an assignment is due. Failure to complete an assignment on time without prior discussion with me, will result in a failing grade for that assignment. Remember that even if you will be absent from class you should e-mail me your short papers and the final paper proposal. If you must miss a class, please let me know beforehand by e-mail.

References and Citation System:

As noted above, it is essential that your written work make proper use of references and citations. Your ability to learn from, integrate, and synthesize other sources in the context of your own argument is a large part of how your writing will be assessed. In particular, any time you use the words and ideas of another author, you must provide a reference. Whenever another author’s exact words are used, they must be set apart from your text “in quotes,” with a proper citation included.

Learning to make proper use of referencing and citation systems is part of your overall graduate education. For this class, you will be **required** to use the **Chicago Manual of Style** citations system, with in-text citations and accompanying list of references at the end of your paper. A quick guide to this system is available at: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Honor Code and Plagiarism:

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

S-CAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared

with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. S-CAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

English Language Institute:

The English Language Institute offers free English language tutoring to non-native English speaking students who are referred by members of the GMU faculty or staff. For more information contact 703-993-3642 or malle2@gmu.edu

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a free writing resource that offers individual, group, and online tutoring. For general questions and comments please contact 703-993-4491 or wcenter@gmu.edu.

READINGS

The following books are available for purchase at the Arlington Campus Bookstore. You can also find many of them at the Burton Library, the GMU library or at other libraries that are part of the university consortium. All other readings (articles and book chapters) are available on our class Blackboard site.

The following books are available for purchase:

Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013

Stephenn Gorard. *Research Design: Creating Robust Approaches for the Social Sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2013

Jeffrey T. Checkel, editor. *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013

Laleh Khalili. *Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counterinsurgencies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013

Gristine Hoglund and Magnus Oberg, editors. *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*. London: Routledge, 2011

Cerwonka, Allaine and Liisa Malkki. *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007

Jeremy M. Weinstein. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. Cambridge University press, 2006

Daniel Posner. *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*. Cambridge University Press, 2005

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

Nancy Scheper-Hughes. *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. University of California Press, 1993

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

Week One, January 27: Introduction

Rhacel Salazar Parrenas. *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001: 1-21

Elizabeth Jean Wood. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003: 31-50

Scott Radnitz. *Weapons of the Wealthy: Predatory Regimes and Elite-Led Protests in Central Asia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010: 1-14

Fotini Christia. *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012: 3-16

Week Two, February 3: Designing Research

Stephenn Gorard. *Research Design: Creating Robust Approaches for the Social Sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2013

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

Matthew B. Miles and Michael Huberman, "Drawing Valid Meaning from Qualitative Data: Toward a Shared Craft," *Educational Research*, 13:5, May 1984.

Luker, Kristin. *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Infoglut*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Week Three, February 10: Case Selection

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

Recommended: James Mahoney, "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

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

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

Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answer You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," *Political Analysis*, 2, 1990: 131-50

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

Stanley Lieberson, "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

Theodore Meckstroth, "'Most Different Systems' and 'Most Similar Systems': A Study in the Logic of Comparative Inquiry," *Comparative Political Studies*, July 1975: 133-77

Week Four, February 17: Ethnography

Bent Flyvbjerg, "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research," *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12:2, April 2006: 219-245 (on Blackboard)

George E. Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: the Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 1995: 95-117 (on Blackboard)

Vincent J. Del Casino Jr., "Decision-Making in an Ethnographic Context," *Geographical Review*, 91: ½, January-April 2001: 454-462. (on Blackboard)

John Lofland, David A. Snow, Leon Anderson, Lyn H. Lofland. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Wadsworth Publishing, 2005, chapters 1 and 2 (on Blackboard)

Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books, 1973, "Thick Descriptions: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," (chapter 1), 3-32 (on Blackboard)

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

Cynthia Hardy and Nelson Phillips. *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*. Sage Publications, 2002, v-87

Margaret D. LeCompte and Jean J. Schensul. *Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research*. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 1999

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

Week Five, February 24: Process Tracing

Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013

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

Larry J. Griffin, "Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology*, 98:5, March 1993: 1094-1133

Tim Buthe, "Taking Temporality Seriously: Modeling History and the Use of Narratives as Evidence," *American Political Science Review*, 93:3, September 2002: 481-93.

Week Six, March 3: Participant Observation

Allaine Cerwonka and Liisa H. Malkki. *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007

Jeffrey C. Johnson, Christine Avenarius, and Jack Weatherford, "The Active Participant-Observer: Applying Social Role Analysis to Participant Observation," *Field Methods*, 18:2, 2006: 111-133 (on Blackboard)

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

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

Week Seven, March 10: No Class. Spring Break

Week Eight, March 17: Process Tracing

Jeffrey T. Checkel, editor. *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013

Week Nine, March 24: Case Study

Daniel Posner. *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005

Week Ten, March 31: Mixed Method Approaches

Laleh Khalili. *Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counterinsurgencies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013

Week Eleven, April 7: Ethnographic Approaches

Nancy Scheper-Hughes. *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993

Week Twelve, April 14: Comparative Case Study

Jeremy M. Weinstein. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. New York: Cambridge University press, 2006

Week Thirteen, April 21: Field Research

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

Selections from Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein, editors, *Handbook of Interview Research*, Sage 2002: 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 (on Blackboard)

John Knodel "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*: 35-50 (on Blackboard)

Week Fourteen, April 28: Field Research in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings

Chapters from Gristine Høglund and Magnus Oberg, editors. *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*. London: Routledge, 2011

Lee Ann Fuji, "Shades of Truth and Lies: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 50:6, November 2013: 231-241 (on Blackboard)

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

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

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

Week Fifteen, May 5: Ethics of Field Work and Summing Up

Elisabeth Jean Wood, "The Ethical Challenges of Field Work in Conflict Zones," *Qualitative Sociology* 29, 2006, 373-386 (on Blackboard)

Konstantin Belousov et al., "Any Port in the Storm: Fieldwork Difficulties in Dangerous and Crisis-Ridden Settings," *Qualitative Research* 7:2, 2007: 155-175 (on Blackboard)

Jonathan Goodhand, "Research in Conflict Zones: Ethics and Accountability," *Forced Migration Review*, 8, 2000, 12-15 (on Blackboard)

A.B. Zwi et al, "Placing Ethics in the Centre: Negotiating New Spaces for Ethical Research in Conflict Situations," *Global Public Health: An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice*, 1:3, October 2006: 264-277 (on Blackboard)

Final Research Project Proposals Due on May 12th, 5pm.