

PhD Course: Qualitative Research Methods

PhD in Social and Political Sciences AY 2022-23

Instructors:

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12 sessions

1. Objectives and content

The course explores qualitative methodologies and their application to research in the social sciences. The course exposes students to the theoretical principles underlying qualitative approaches and discusses the questions that can be addressed with these methodologies. At the same time, it aims at familiarizing the students with the concrete application of qualitative methodologies, giving them the opportunity to experience for themselves the strengths and weaknesses of such approaches.

The course, therefore, will entail traditional lectures, the discussion of scholarly papers built upon qualitative approaches, and examples conducted with these methodologies. It will confront students with the methods for analysing text data, derived from public speeches, conversations, or interviews, field notes and visual data.

The course has been design as a working seminar. During the course students will complete 3 non – assessed assignment whereby students will collect their own data for the purpose of qualitative analysis and will carry out the analysis themselves.

2. Evaluation

The evaluation is composed of:

- 100% a “research proposal-type” paper. The paper should incorporate (i) a literature review and research question to be investigated with qualitative methods; (ii) the description of the qualitative research design (iii) the description of the data collection tools and analysis to be undertaken. The assignment will be submitted to the instructor after the end of the course.

The material for the classes will be slides, scholarly papers, and chapters of methodology textbooks. The syllabus details the compulsory methodological readings. On Blackboard, prior to each class, the instructor will upload (i) cases taken from both scholarly papers and policy documents (ii) additional readings.

The sessions are structured so that in the first half we will discuss the assignments and in the second half a new topic.

3. Detailed syllabus

Session	Date	Content	Readings
1	02/02/2022 10.15-11.45 Compagni	<p>Introduction to qualitative research and methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epistemological issues • Basics of qualitative research: inductive thinking and theory building, the principle of triangulation, relationship to deductive thinking and quantitative methods 	<p><u>Useful sources</u> Silverman D (2008) “What is qualitative research?” in <i>Interpreting Qualitative Data</i>, Sage (chapter 2) Gephart R (1999) Paradigms and research methods.</p>
2	02/02/2022 12.00-13.30 Compagni	<p>Research design (I)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a conceptual framework and framing research questions in qualitative studies • Typologies of research design: Case-studies, process and historical studies <p><i>Launch of Assignment 1: “Generating a research question” (to be submitted on 08/02/2022, midday)</i></p>	<p><u>Useful sources (research questions)</u> Booth, Wayne C., G.G. Colomb and J.M. Williams (2003) Chapter 4: From questions to problems, <i>The Craft of Research</i>, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press: 40-71. Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland. (2005) Chapter 7: Asking questions, <i>Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis</i>. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company: 144 – 167.</p> <p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed (research questions)</u> Bell, M. C. (2020). Located Institutions: Neighborhood Frames, Residential Preferences, and the Case of Policing. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>, 125(4), 917-973. Wiedner, R., & Mantere, S. (2019). Cutting the cord: Mutual respect, organizational autonomy, and independence in organizational separation processes. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 64(3), 659-693.</p> <p><u>Useful sources (research design)</u> Yin R (2018) “Designing case studies” in <i>Case study research and applications</i> 6th Edition (chapter 2) Bennett, A., & Elman, C. (2006). Complex causal relations and case study methods: The example of path dependence. <i>Political analysis</i>, 14(3), 250-267. Bennett, A., & Elman, C. (2006). Qualitative research: Recent developments in case study methods. <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>, 9, 455-476. (extra reading)</p> <p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed (research design)</u> Blee, K. (2013). How options disappear: Causality and emergence in grassroots activist groups. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>, 119(3), 655-681.</p>

			Pavone, T., & Stiansen, Ø. (2021). The Shadow Effect of Courts: Judicial Review and the Politics of Preemptive Reform. <i>American Political Science Review</i> (process tracing – focus on design)
3	09/02/2022 10.15-11.45	Feedback & class discussion on <i>Assignment 1: “Coming up with a research question”</i>	
4	09/02/2022 12.00-13.00	<p>Collecting verbal data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practice of interviewing: semi-structured interviews, elite interviews, narrative interviews • The practice of collecting verbal exchanges: conversations, focus groups, decision-making and deliberative processes <p><i>Launch of Assignment 2: Generating an interview protocol and conducting an interview (to be submitted on 15/02/2022, midday)</i></p>	<p><u>Useful sources</u></p> <p>Flick U. (2014) “Collecting verbal data ” (chapter 15) - “Interviews” (chapter 16) - “Focus groups” (chapter 17) in <i>An Introduction to Qualitative Research</i>, Sage</p> <p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed (interviews)</u></p> <p>Anteby, M., & Holm, A. L. (2021). Translating Expertise across Work Contexts: US Puppeteers Move from Stage to Screen. <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 86(2), 310-340.</p> <p>Parkinson, S. E. (2013). Organizing rebellion: Rethinking high-risk mobilization and social networks in war. <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 107(3), 418-432.</p>
5	16/02/2022 10.15-11.45	Feedback & class discussion on <i>Assignment 2 “Generating an interview protocol and conducting an interview”</i>	
6	16/02/2022 12.00-13:30	<p>Mixed methods studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typologies of research designs • Data collection combinations 	<p><u>Useful sources</u></p> <p>Creswell, J. W. & Clark PVL (2011). <i>Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research</i>. United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Chapter 3 and 6</p> <p>Lieberman E. (2005) Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research- <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 99(3); 435-452</p> <p>Mele V & Belardinelli P: (2019) Mixed Methods in Public Administration Research: Selecting, Sequencing, and Connecting. <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i>, 29, 2, 334–347 (extra reading)</p> <p><u>Examples will be provided in class</u></p>
7	22/02/2022 10.15-11.45	<p>Conducting fieldwork:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting in: Identifying the research site, negotiating access, ERB procedures • Collecting real-time data: participant observation, field notes and ethnographic interviews • Getting out: exit the site 	<p><u>Useful sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barley, S. R. (1990). Images of imaging: Notes on doing longitudinal field work. <i>Organization science</i>, 1(3), 220-247. • Loafland, Snow, Anderson, Loafland, Loafland (2004). Thinking topics <i>In Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis Loafland (chapter 6)</i>

			<p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bernstein, E. S. (2012). The transparency paradox: A role for privacy in organizational learning and operational control. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 57(2), 181-216 • Ho, C. J. (2021). Benevolent Policies: Bureaucratic Politics and the International Dimensions of Social Policy Expansion. <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 1-16.
8	22/02/2022 12.00-13.30	<p>Analyzing qualitative data (I)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comparative case studies • grounded theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ coding practices through softwares (download Atlas.Ti) <p><i>Launch of Assignment 3: Coding an interview text (to be submitted on 1/03/2023, midday)</i></p>	<p><u>Useful sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eisenhardt K.M. (1989) “Building Theories from Case Study Research”, <i>The Academy of Management Review</i>, Vol. 14, No. 4 pp. 532-550 • Locke K. (2001) “Grounded theory’s research practices” in <i>Grounded Theory in Management Research</i>, Sage, (chapter 4) • Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. <i>Organizational research methods</i>, 16(1), 15-31. <p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hallen, B. L., & Eisenhardt, K. M. (2012). Catalyzing strategies and efficient tie formation: How entrepreneurial firms obtain investment ties. <i>Academy of Management Journal</i>, 55(1), 35-70. (read methodology section) • Gioia, D. A., Thomas, J. B., Clark, S. M., & Chittipeddi, K. (1994). Symbolism and strategic change in academia: The dynamics of sensemaking and influence. <i>Organization science</i>, 5(3), 363-383.
9	02/03/2022 10.15-11.45	<p><i>Feedback & class discussion on Assignment 3 “Coding an interview text”</i></p>	
10	02/03/2022 12.00-13.30	<p>Analyzing qualitative data (II)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • process research 	<p><u>Useful sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Langley A. (1999) “Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data”. <i>The Academy of Management Review</i> Vol. 24, No. 4 pp. 691-710 <p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cappellaro, G., Compagni, A., & Vaara, E. (2021). Maintaining strategic ambiguity for protection: Struggles over opacity, equivocality, and

			absurdity around the Sicilian Mafia. <i>Academy of Management Journal</i> , 64(1), 1-37.
11	09/03/2022 10.15-11.45	<p>Textual Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framing analysis, rhetorical analysis, discourse analysis • Recent trends in textual analysis: a back-to-back comparison with quantitative textual analysis; limitations and opportunities 	<p><u>Useful sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairclough, N., Fairclough I. (2015). “Textual analysis” in Bevir, M. And Rhodes R:A. <i>Routledge Handbook of Interpretive Political Science</i>, Routledge (chapter 13) <p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lefsrud and Meyer (2012). Science or science fiction? Professionals’ discursive construction of Climate Change. <i>Organization Studies</i> • Barry et al (2009). Obesity Metaphor: How Beliefs about the causes of obesity affect support for public policy. <i>The Milbank Quarterly</i> • Kahl and Grodal (2016). Discursive strategies and radical technological change: multilevel discourse analysis of the early computer. <i>Strategic Management Journal</i> <p>Other examples will be provided in class</p>
12	09/03/2022 12.00-13.30	<p>From the field to the scholarly output:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process of writing up qualitative papers • The process of going through the review process • Being on the reviewer’s side <p>Wrap up – Q&A</p>	

4. Non- assessed assignments

During the course of the classes, students will be asked to produce 3 assignments. While these assignments are not formally marked, they are extremely valuable to understand the real process of collecting and analysing qualitative data. A brief overview of each assignment is detailed below. Prior to each class, the instructors will upload on the Blackboard folder the detailed instructions for each assignment. During the class (date of discussion) you will be asked to make a 5-minute presentation of your work.

Assignment 1: Coming up with a research question

Topic: Each of you will elaborate a research question amenable to be addressed through qualitative methods. To be able to formulate a research question you will also conduct a brief literature review identifying main gaps that need to be addressed.

Assignment 2: Generating an interview protocol and conducting an interview

Topic: Based on the RQ elaborated in assignment 1, each of you will elaborate an interview protocol and explain the choice of interviewee. On the basis of the interview protocol you will conduct an interview with a suitable interviewee and transcribe it.

Assignment 3: Coding an interview texts.

Topic: Each of you will be assigned an interview transcript and will be asked to analyse the text through coding techniques. On the date of the discussion you will work as a group to generalize the individual interview codes.