Qualitative Research Methods in Political Science

Professor: Juliana Restrepo Sanín, Ph.D.
Class meeting times: Wednesday, 11:45 – 2:45
Room: Matherly Hall 0151
Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00 to 3:00 pm. Anderson Hall room 011 and by appointment.
Contact: via Canvas

Course description and Learning goals

In this course, students will learn about different methods and techniques for collecting, analyzing, and writing qualitative methods. Since the course does not focus on "why using qualitative methods" but rather on the "how" (I.e., how to do interviews, focus groups, etc.) students are expected to have passed Conduct of Inquiry. The course is an overview of different techniques for gathering qualitative data. The course begins discussing what is arguably the backbone of qualitative research: fieldwork. We will discuss fieldwork as an overarching, and broad 'method' in political and other social sciences. These sessions will discuss how to prepare for conducting research on-site, whether in the United States, your home country, or a foreign country. We will also discuss setbacks and challenges of fieldwork and what are the best strategies to overcome them. Afterwards we will discuss different types of qualitative data collection techniques, including ethnography, interviews, focus groups, archival research, and what I call 'alternative methodologies.' Afterwards, the course will focus on qualitative research evaluation, data analysis and writing. What makes good qualitative data and research? How do you make sense of all the data that you collected? How do you use that data to test or validate your theoretical arguments? How do you write your results so that they do not -in the words of many unprepared reviewers- "sound anecdotal"? Along the way, we will discuss the ethical considerations, limitations, and requirements of qualitative research. Given that this is a course focused on data-collection techniques, the assignments are designed to put what was learned into practice. By the end of the semester the students will be better prepared to assess the best strategies for qualitative data collection for their research, assess ethical challenges in qualitative research, conduct ethnographic research and fieldwork, and prepare research protocols using different methods.

Grading and assessment

Item	Percentage	Due
IRB training	5%	January 12
Ethnography	15%	March 31
Research protocols	20% (10% each, 2 min)	Interviews: February 16
		Focus groups: February 23
		Archives: March 1
		Alternative methodologies: March 8
Final Research design	35%	April 25
Qualitative data analysis plan	10%	April 12
Engagement and participation	15%	Throughout the semester

Grading scale
>=93 A
90-92 A-
87-89 B+
83-86 B
80-82 B-
77-79 C+
73-76 C
70-72 C-
67-69 D+
63-66 D
60-62 D-
<= 60 E

Assignments

CITI training (required for IRB)

Go to https://irb.ufl.edu/index/requiredtraining.html and click on IRB 803. This will take you to UF's my training. Click on University of Florida, login using your UF credentials. This action should take you to the IRB training. Take the course if you have not taken it. This is a requirement for UF's (and any US-based academic institution) Institutional Review Board. After completing the course, you must take the final assessment and score at least 80% to pass. You should be given a certificate. Please upload this certificate as your assignment.

Ethnography

In lieu of in-person class on March 27, students will work on an ethnography report. The goal of this activity is to put into practice what you have learned about conducting ethnographic research. You can choose to do your ethnographic research on any space -it can be in Gainesville, or somewhere else if you are travelling over Spring break. The one requirement is that whatever space or situation you are writing about, you must analyze **power relations** as this is central the central topic in political science research. Write a detailed ethnographic memo based on what you have learned in class. You should not conduct formal interviews but may include details about any interactions that you may have with people while conducting your observations (but you must keep them anonymous). Include date(s), times, place(s) where you conducted your work. Ethnographies should be rich in the description of details so pay careful attention to the situations you are observing. You may include in your submission any sketches or jotted-down notes that you took while doing your work, but you should include a more reflective memo or analysis that helps you (and me) make sense of them in the future. Since we will not go through IRB approval for this work, you should not publish the information you obtained (unless it is part of your other research, and you **already** have IRB approval).

Research protocols

After learning about different techniques for data collection students will submit a research protocol. These protocols vary by subject but in short, they refer to the guidelines, questions, or procedures that will be used to conduct fieldwork, interviews, focus group, archival research, or use "alternative methodologies." Students must submit at least two protocols throughout the semester but are encouraged to submit all of them, even if they do not plan to use the specific technique in their research as this serves as practice for other projects and for evaluating qualitative research. Each protocol is due the Friday after the class on that specific topic. In addition, students will be required to serve as 'peer reviewers' for the research protocols of another student. Throughout the semester students should be prepared to discuss their research protocols and their peer reviews as we will discuss the protocols and make suggestions for improvement.

The protocols should be around 2 single-spaced pages long, but they vary in length depending on the topic.

Research Design

The final assignment for this course will be the research design of a project using qualitative methods. Students are welcome to **revise** a previous research design. However, 1) they must let me know that they will be using work previously submitted for another class, 2) include a 1-page memo detailing the changes and revisions you made for the Qualitative methods final, and 3) include original work based on the Qualitative Methods course. Failure to comply with these requirements will significantly affect the grade and may result in failing the course.

The final research design project must include a detailed explanation of the qualitative methods that that will be used. You must include research protocols that you anticipate using if you were to conduct the research proposed. If your research design includes fieldwork, interviews, or focus groups you must include a careful explanation of the research sites, why they were chosen from a theoretical perspective, who your research participants will be and why, how do you plan on recruiting, whether you anticipate needing research assistance in your field site and what qualifications they need.

For interviews include: recruitment methods, include a questionnaire or a list of topics that you want to discuss with your participants, explain who do you want to talk to and why (you do not need to include specific names but a broad description of who your participants might be and why their testimony is important for your research project), you should also discuss potential challenges, including ethical, that you may encounter and how you plan to address them.

If you plan to conduct focus groups, you must include information about the number of participants, how many groups do you plan to include, conditions for participating and any decision regarding participant eligibility, exclusion, and whether you plan to divide focus groups participants according to specific characteristics.

If your research design includes archival data, you must include detailed information about the archives and the collections you will visit. In this case, you must include precise names and locations, as well as a description of the materials available in said archive. You must also include whether you need special permissions to access the archive.

Given that 'alternative methodologies' include a wide array of different techniques, you must discuss them with me in advance so we can decide what types of information you must include.

Regardless of the data-collection technique you will use, your research design must include a data-analysis plan, explaining how you are going to organize, classify, code, and analyze the data you will collect.

As a class exercise, you are encouraged to be ambitious and creative about your research plan. If you had no money constraints, what do you think you would have to do to answer the question that your research seeks to answer? At the same time, you should be realistic about what is feasible in a reasonable time.

Peer Review

This is a pass/fail assignment. I will assign peer reviews for the research protocols. If your peer submits a research protocol, you will be asked to discuss it in the following class.

Engagement and participation

As a graduate seminar, participation and engagement are mandatory. You should read the assignments every week and be prepared to discuss them in class, bring questions, and critically engage with the authors. Even if I do not call you out, I can tell when students have not done the work or are distracted on their computers during class and that will be reflected on their final participation and engagement grade.
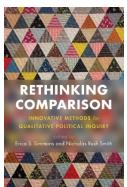
Books and materials

Required: (We will read these two books in full)

Highly recommended

(We will read a couple of chapters from these books. Most are available at the Library. However, they are excellent resources for qualitative research, and I highly recommend you consider getting them)

Attendance

For successfully passing this course, your participation and engagement are <u>mandatory</u>. Students must be prepared to discuss the readings and other materials listed for that day. If you are sick, please stay home but notify the instructor (see full policy below). Excused absences are consistent with university policies and require appropriate documentation.

Communications

Please let me know of any issues you have with the class or that can be affecting your academic performance. If you have questions, you are encouraged to schedule office hours. Please use Canvas for all communications with me and allow 24 hours for me to respond. I only check my email during regular business hours and days: Monday through Friday from 9 to 5.

Policy on Late and Make-up Work:

Barring exceptional circumstances, due dates are final. Assignments will be marked down 1 point for each day late, starting at 11:59 pm on the due date. If you turn an assignment in at 12:05 am, that counts as a full day late. Discuss things with your professor if you have any difficulties turning in assignments on time. Make-up work will only be accepted for excused absences as per university policy.

Grade Return Timing:

Please allow two weeks after you turn in an assignment to receive grades and feedback.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the professor.

Class schedule

Subject to change. Most up-to-date version on Canvas

January 10 - Introduction

SPSA Meeting **– No class**

Let me know if you are taking the comps or attending SPSA this semester.

Assignments

- Complete training for IRB (5% of your final grade).
- Read the syllabus.
- Prepare answers for next class discussion:
    - Briefly describe your research project (could be your dissertation if you are at that state, or an idea for a paper or dissertation)
    - Are you planning to use qualitative methods? If so, what methods and techniques do you think you will use?
    - Are there any specific methods you would like to learn about?
    - Have you used qualitative methods in the past? What was your experience like? What challenges did you encounter?

Module I – Qualitative Data Collection Techniques

January 17 – Fieldwork 1

- Stories from the field. P 1-123
- Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2009. "Field Research." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, edited by Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, 1st ed., 123–46. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199566020.003.0005.
- Read one of the "Publications to which this fieldwork contributed" in the chapters read from *Stories from the field*.

January 24 – Fieldwork 2

- Stories from the field. P. 127-221
- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2009. *Killing Neighbors Webs of Violence in Rwanda*. Cornell University Press. Ch. 1. Conducting Fieldwork in the Aftermath of War and Genocide. p. 23-44.
- Read one of the "Publications to which this fieldwork contributed" in the chapters read from *Stories from the field*. You can also read one of the empirical chapters from Killing Neighbors.

January 31 – Fieldwork 3

Fieldwork protocol due February 2

- Stories from the field. P. 225-368
- https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2017/06/05/the-ethics-of-fieldwork-preparedness/
- Hanson, Rebecca, and Patricia Richards. 2019. *Harassed: Gender, Bodies, and Ethnographic Research*. Oakland, California: University of California Press. Chapter 2.

February 7 – Ethnography

- Kubik, Jan. 2009. "Ethnography of Politics: Foundations, Applications, Prospects." In *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/P/bo7995019.html.
- Simmons, Erica S., and Nicholas Rush Smith. 2019. "The Case for Comparative Ethnography." *Comparative Politics* 51 (3): 341–59. https://doi.org/10.5129/001041519X15647434969920.
- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2015. "Five Stories of Accidental Ethnography: Turning Unplanned Moments in the Field into Data." *Qualitative Research* 15 (4): 525–39. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114548945.
- Stroup, David R., and J. Paul Goode. 2023. "On the Outside Looking In: Ethnography and Authoritarianism." *Perspectives on Politics* 21 (4): 1162–77. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592722004182.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Second Edition*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/W/bo12182616.html.

Recommended:

- Hanson, Rebecca. 2019. "The Gendered Dynamics of Urban Ethnography: What the Researcher's 'Location' Means for the Production of Ethnographic Knowledge." In *Urban Ethnography*, 16:173–92. Research in Urban Sociology. Emerald Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1047-004420190000016013.
- Schatz, Edward, ed. 2009. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/P/bo7995019.html.

February 14 – Interviews

Interview protocol due February 16

- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2018. *Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach*. 1 Edition. Routledge Series on Interpretive Methods. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. Chapter 2 – Building working relationships. (I recommend the whole book)
- Symposium: Interview Methods in Political Science." 2002. PS: Political Science and Politics 35, no. 4: 663-688.
- Kristensen, Guro Korsnes, and Malin Noem Ravn. 2015. "The Voices Heard and the Voices Silenced: Recruitment Processes in Qualitative Interview Studies." Qualitative Research 15 (6): 722–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114567496.
- Natow, Rebecca S. 2020. "The Use of Triangulation in Qualitative Studies Employing Elite Interviews." *Qualitative Research* 20 (2): 160–73. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794119830077.
- Soest, Christian von. 2023. "Why Do We Speak to Experts? Reviving the Strength of the Expert Interview Method." *Perspectives on Politics* 21 (1): 277–87. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592722001116.

February 21 - Focus groups

Focus group protocol due February 23

- Cyr, Jennifer. 2019. *Focus Groups for the Social Science Researcher*. Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3 – Preparing for the focus groups (I recommend the whole book. It is available for download at UF Library)
- Cyr, Jennifer. 2016. "The Pitfalls and Promise of Focus Groups as a Data Collection Method." *Sociological Methods & Research* 45 (2): 231–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124115570065.
- Lindsey, Summer. 2022. "Social Preferences: Measuring Private, Public, and Group Preferences through Focus Groups." *Perspectives on Politics*, November, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592722003218.
- Wilkinson, Sue. 1998. "Focus Groups in Feminist Research: Power, Interaction, and the Co-Construction of Meaning." *Women's Studies International Forum* 21 (1): 111–25. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(97)00080-0.

Recommended
- Kook, Rebecca, Ayelet Harel-Shalev, and Fany Yuval. 2019. "Focus Groups and the Collective Construction of Meaning: Listening to Minority Women." *Women's Studies International Forum* 72 (January): 87–94. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2018.12.004.

February 28 – Archival research

Archival Research protocol due March 1.

- Lee, Alexander. 2022. "The Library of Babel: How (and How Not) to Use Archival Sources in Political Science." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 2 (3): 499–526. https://doi.org/10.1561/115.00000038.
- Obert, Jonathan. 2021. "Comparing Complex Cases Using Archival Research." In *Rethinking Comparison: Innovative Methods for Qualitative Political Inquiry*, 1st ed., 129–51. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108966009.
- Kim, Diana S. 2022. "Taming Abundance: Doing Digital Archival Research (as Political Scientists)." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 55 (3): 530–38. https://doi.org/10.1017/S104909652100192X.
- Kim, Diana. 2024. "Locating and Working with Historical Data". In *Doing Good Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press. *This book is due to be published by February 16. I will do my best to scan and upload the book in time for this class. However, the publisher already pushed the publication date once and it might do so again.*

March 6 – Alternative methodologies

Alternative methodologies protocol due March 8

- Ferhani, Adam, and Jonna Nyman. 2023. "What Does Security Look like? Exploring Interpretive Photography as Method." European Journal of International Security: 1–23.
- Jägerskog, Ann-Sofie. 2020. "Making Possible by Making Visible: Learning through Visual Representations in Social Science." http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-178924 (October 24, 2022).
- Kudaibergenova, Diana T. 2019. "The Body Global and the Body Traditional: A Digital Ethnography of Instagram and Nationalism in Kazakhstan and Russia." Central Asian Survey 38 (3): 363–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2019.1650718.
- Glazier, Rebecca A., and Morgan Paige Topping. 2021. "Using Social Media to Advance Community-Based Research." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54 (2): 254–58. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096520001705.

March 13 – Spring Break

No Class

Module II – Assessing Qualitative Research

March 20 What makes 'good' qualitative research?

- Qualitative Literacy. 2022. Small & Calarco.

March 27 – Conduct Ethnography

No Class – ECPR Joint sessions meeting

Ethnography due on March 31

Analyzing and writing qualitative data

April 3 – Analyzing qualitative data 1

- Lareau, Annette. 2021. *Listening to People: A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up.* Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press. Chapter 8 – Data analysis: thinking as you go.
- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2018. *Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach.* 1 Edition. Routledge Series on Interpretive Methods. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. Ch. 5 – I have my data, now what?
- Ravitch, Sharon M., and Nicole Mittenfelner Carl. 2020. *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological.* 2nd edition. Los Angeles London New Delhi Singapore Washington DC Melbourne: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Saldana, Johnny. 2016. The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers. Sage. Third Edition. Ch. 1 – An introduction to codes and coding. P. 1-42.

April 10 – Analyzing qualitative data 2

Data analysis plans Due April 12

The first three readings for this week are from a book that is due to be published by February 16. I will do my best to scan and upload the book in time for this class. However, the publisher already pushed the publication date once and it might do so again. If the publication date is further delayed, I will find different readings for this week. Please check the class Canvas for announcements.

- Srivastava, Prachi, and Nick Hopwood. 2009. "A Practical Iterative Framework for Qualitative Data Analysis." International Journal of Qualitative Methods 8 (1): 76–84. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800107.
- Rucks-Ahidiana, Zawadi. 2024. Content Analysis. In *Doing Good Qualitative Research.* Oxford University Press.
- Singh, Prerna. 2024. Comparative Historical Analysis. In *Doing Good Qualitative Research.* Oxford University Press.
- Holmes, Carolyn E., Meg K. Guliford, Mary Anne S. Mendoza-Davé, and Michelle Jurkovich. 2023. "A Case for Description." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, November, 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096523000720.

April 17 – Writing qualitative research 1

- Yanow, Dvora, ed. 2009. "Dear Author, Dear Reader: The Third Hermeneutic in Writing and Reviewing Ethnography." In *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*, 275–302. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/P/bo7995019.html.
- Lareau, Annette. 2021. *Listening to People: A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press. Chapter 9 – Writing: becoming clearer about your contribution.
- Ravitch, Sharon M., and Nicole Mittenfelner Carl. 2020. *Qualitative Research: Bridging the Conceptual, Theoretical, and Methodological*. 2nd edition.: SAGE Publications, Inc. Chapter 10 – Writing and Representing Research.

April 24 - Writing qualitative research 2 & Class evaluation

Class evaluation

Final research design due April 25

Class policies & University Resources

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for

credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that violate this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor. The use of ChatGPT and other similar AI tools is a violation of academic integrity. If I suspect that you are using these tools for your class work, I will report you for violating the University's academic integrity policies.

Online Evaluation:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students here.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Technology

For succeeding in this class, you need to have access to Canvas. Please consult these guides if you

are unsure about how to use this application:

For Canvas: https://elearning.ufl.edu/keep-learning/quickstart-guide-for-students/

Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are:

(1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.