

POS 4931: Research Methods
Professor Leslie Anderson

Note: This course is still in the queue for being assigned its own number.

Purpose of the Course

This is a course on learning how to do research. It is one of the most exciting classes you will take at UF. It is open to any undergraduates interested in research and also fulfills the research seminar requirements for undergraduate students who are writing an honors thesis. We will learn to use four methods of collecting qualitative data: focus groups, in-depth interviews, archival research and participant observation. We have two texts, Flick, from which you will read 4 chapters and Schrag, from which you will read 2 chapters. The reading is a combination of works on the research methods themselves and other books that exemplify the use of these methods. This is a chance to learn what doing research looks like and at least one undergraduate student got a summer job doing research based on having taken this course!

This syllabus in its current version is the result of a lot of student input from classes in 2021 and 2022. I put the syllabus and the new readings (Ebner and Mares) on the screen and got their input about the ordering of the methods we cover and about how much reading to assign. I have gotten a lot of help here. Thank you to my previous students!

Requirements

You are expected to do all of the required reading and attend class. I expect a high level of participation from each of you. You will do a research assignment related to your honors thesis. You may use any one of these methods for your research assignment. The bulk of the work in this class is not in the reading but in the research. The more you put into the research, the better you will do and the more you will learn. If the class is progressing well and students need a research day for travel, a focus group or extensive interviews we can accommodate those needs by cancelling class for a day or two. This would come in the second half of October or early November.

I also ask you to be a reviewer for one other student and to give that student feedback on her/his project.

Grading:

60% of your grade is based upon your research assignments, upon class attendance, and upon participation. You will have a final paper on your project, which is worth 40% of your grade.

books

These books are available for purchase at the UF book store and are on reserve at the main library. You can also buy them online. Take note of how much you are reading before you buy. I would love for you to own each of these books, but I know some are on a tight budget. You are

reading 5 chapters from Flick, 4 from Schrag, only 1 chapter and the appendices from Monroe, and only 4 chapters and the appendices from Mares. You are reading only 2 chapters from Ebner, but you need access to the entire book because I want you to read the last 2 pages of each chapter. You are reading all of Press and Cole, all of Anderson and all of Tsing or Fenno or Geertz, depending on which I use.

Flick, Uwe, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* Use Edition 6, (2018) if you can or use Edition 5 (2014).

Schrag, Zachary M. *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research*, Princeton, 2021

Mejias and Banaji, *Better Brexit for Young People*, London, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), 2017 This is a 40-page paper that I have uploaded to Canvas

Press, Andrea and Cole, Elizabeth, *Speaking of Abortion*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999

Mares, Teresa, *Life on the Other Border: Farmworkers and Food Justice in Vermont*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2019. This book is also available as an ebook from the Perlego library. The first month of your subscription is free.

Anderson, Leslie, *The Political Ecology of the Modern Peasant*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1994. Available as an e copy for free on Project MUSE

at: <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/102642>

Monroe, Kristen, *The Hand of Compassion*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004

Ebner, Michael R., *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011

book chapter: Jessica Allina-Pisano, "How to Tell an Axe Murderer: An Essay on Ethnography, Truth and Lies," in Edward Schatz, ed, *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009

recommended reading:

Seth Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farm Workers in the United States*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2013.

A resource for you is a series of free subscriptions that you have as a member of the UF community. One is to the New York Times, one to the Wall Street Journal and one is to The Economist. Use this link, if you wish to access a free subscription to the Economist.

<https://businesslibrary.uflib.ufl.edu/wsj/nyt/economist/freesubs>

Class date**Reading**

August 24 first class: pass out syllabus.

Part I: Focus Groups

August 29 Flick, Chap on Focus Groups. In Edition 5 it is Chapter 17; in Edition 6 it is Chapter 16 (Start thinking now about your project and what research you want to do for this course)

August 31 no class I am at the American Political Science Association annual meeting

September 5-7 Better Brexit Read the entire paper and the 2 appendices

September 12-14 Press and Cole, entire book. We will stop here and discuss this method. There are enormous differences between the kinds of focus groups that Mejias and Banaji use versus the kinds of focus groups Press and Cole use. We need to discuss the versatility and challenges of this method

Note: we may need one more day on this method. Previous classes of students have felt this was the hardest method of all, but they very much wanted to do this method. So, they have asked me to put the method first on the syllabus and teach it first. I have now done so and within the first few days of class you will know how to do this method. If you want to use this method, start now. It will take you all semester to get this method going. But if you succeed you will love the method, previous students did.

Part II: In-depth Interviews

September 14 Flick, Chapter 16 in Edition 5 (2014) and Chapter 15 in Edition 6 (2018)

September 19-21 Mares, Introduction and Chapter 1

October 26-28 Mares, Chapter 4, Section 1 only: WIC: From Door-to Door Delivery to EBT
Mares Chapter 5 and the Conclusion
Mares Appendix 1 and 2

October 3-5 Anderson, entire book

October 10-12 Flick, Using Narrative Data. In Edition 5 it is Chapter 18; in Edition 6 it is Chapter 17.

Monroe, read one entire chapter, plus Appendix A and B. Read Margot or Otto or John or Irene or Knud. Prepare to summarize

the interview with the person you pick because others in the class may not have read the same chapter you read

Part III: Archival Research

October 17-19 Schrag, Chapters 1,2,3 and 9

October 24-26 Ebner, Introduction and Chapter 1: Squad Violence
Then also read the last two pages of each chapter. These serve as his conclusion for each chapter. Unfortunately, there is no methods appendix for this book, so we need to talk in class about what methods he used.

Part IV: Participant Observation and Ethnography

October 31- November 2 Flick, Chapter 20 in Edition 5; Chapter 19 in Edition 6

November 7 Allina-Pisano, “How to Tell and Axe Murderer”
After we finish discussing Allina-Pisano, we will step back and discuss this method

Part V: Individual Projects

Beginning November 9 Individual project discussion and presentation

here we need to assign a specific date for each presentation

Part V: Analyzing Qualitative Data

November 28-30 Flick Chapter 28 in both Edition 5 and 6
Using technology to analyze your qualitative data lies beyond the scope of this course but you have another semester to work on your honors thesis. I want to introduce you to what software packages are out there so you can consider using technology to analyze the data you have collected this semester.

December 7 Final paper due
There is no final exam in this class. Your final project is a written presentation of your oral class presentation in November. I will clarify this assignment further in class