

POS 6707

Qualitative Research Methods in Political Science

20 | credits

NOTE: This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see UF's "[Academic Policies and Resources](#)" web page.

General Information

Meeting days and times: Tuesdays

Class location: Anderson 215 (Conference room)

Instructor:

Name: Dr. Juliana Restrepo Sanín

Office Building/Number: Anderson Hall 011

Phone:

Email: jsanin@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Thursday, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm or by appointment

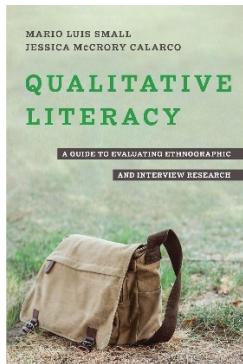
Course Description

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.

Course Materials

Required: (We will read this book in full)

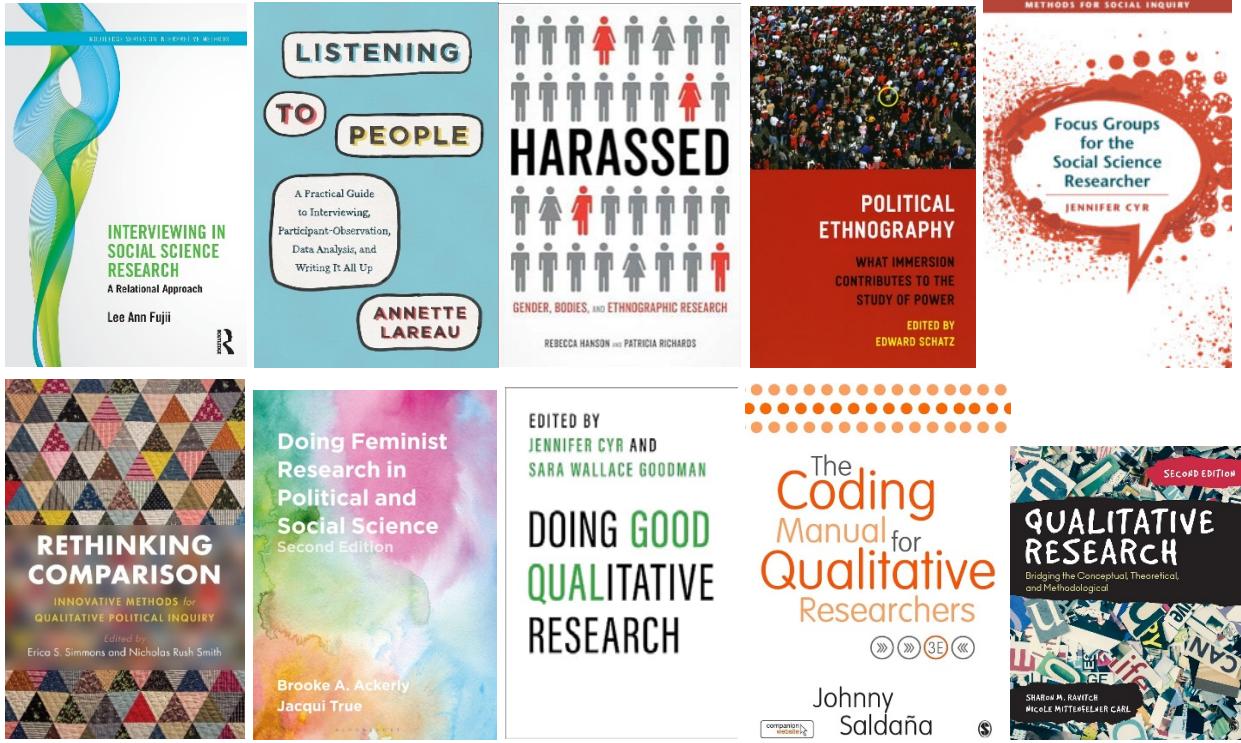


We will read several chapters of these books:



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)



Other materials will be available through canvas.

Graded Work

Graded Components

Item	Percentage	Due
IRB training & application	5%	January 12
Ethnography	15%	March 31
Research protocols	20% (10% each, 2 min)	<p>Interviews: February 16</p> <p>Focus groups: February 23</p> <p>Archives: March 1</p> <p>Alternative methodologies: March 8</p>
Final Research design	35%	April 25

Qualitative data analysis plan	10%	April 12
Engagement and participation	15%	Throughout the semester

Assignments

CITI training & IRB application

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 part 1 of your assignment.

Part 2: On April 21 we will work on your class project IRB application. Please make sure to bring a laptop (Tablets or phones will not work). You do not need to submit the application, we are just going to start working on it, so you are familiar with the process.

Ethnography

Throughout the semester, students will work on an ethnography, but they will have the week before Spring Break as well as Spring Break to more fully work on it. 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 space must be one that you are unfamiliar with. For example, it cannot be an ethnography of your church or a sports team.

Your analysis should focus on power relations as this is central the central topic in political science research. 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). Your assignment consists of several ethnographic memos and notes or sketches that you took while visiting the place. The memos should be longer, more reflective (we will discuss them in class). Make sure to include dates, times, and place where you conducted your work. You must conduct at least three visits to the place, though that will not be enough to reach saturation (would probably get you a C). I recommend at least five visits, so start planning early.

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 they must include a short (1-2 paragraph) explanation answering the following questions: what is the research goal? What do you expect to gain from using this specific method? How does the method help you answer your research question?

The rest of the protocol should be dedicated 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. 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) Provide a word file with track changes so I can assess the work you have done for this class, 3) include a 1-page memo detailing the changes and revisions you made for the Qualitative methods final as well as a rationale for those changes, and 4) 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 should include a clear research question, in-depth review of existing scholarly research, a proposed theory or general argument, as well as the methods that you will use.

The research design must clearly explain how qualitative methods and the specific techniques (interviews, ethnography, focus groups, etc.) contribute to the research project (i.e. why using qualitative methods and not quantitative?)

The final research design project must include a detailed explanation of the qualitative methods that will be used. You must include research protocols that you anticipate using if you were to conduct the research proposed. You can use the previously submitted research protocols but you must revise them based on feedback. Please make sure to use track changes for the revisions. 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.

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 in their final participation and engagement grade.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Number Grade
A	100-93
A-	92.4-89.5
B+	89.4-86.5
B	86.4-82.5
B-	82.4-79.5
C+	79.4-76.5
C	76.4-72.5
C-	72.4-69.5
D+	69.4-66.5
D	66.4-62.5
D-	62.4-59.5
E	59.4-0

Class schedule

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

Introduction

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

- Engle Merry, Sally. 2016. “Cultural Dimensions of Power/Knowledge: The Challenges of Measuring Violence against Women.” *Sociologie Du Travail* 58 (4): 370–80.
- Gerring, John. 2017. “Qualitative Methods.” Annual Review of Political Science 20 (1): 15–36. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-092415-024158>.
- Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. 2006. “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research.” *Political Analysis* 14 (3): 227–49.

Assignment Due: Complete CITI Training

Module I – Qualitative Data Collection Techniques

Tuesday, January 20, 2026 – What makes ‘good’ qualitative research?

Read: Qualitative Literacy. 2022. Small & Calarco in full

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 – Fieldwork

Fieldwork protocol due Friday, January 30

- 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>.
- 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.
- Stories from the field. Selected Chapters TBD.
- Read one of the “Publications to which this fieldwork contributed”

Tuesday, February 3, 2026 – 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>.
- 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/S1047-004220190000016013>.

Tuesday, February 10, 2026 – Interviews

Interviews protocol due Friday, February 13

- 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>.

Tuesday, February 17, 2026 – Archival Research

Invited guest speaker

Archival research protocol due Friday, February 20

- 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.*

Tuesday, February 24, 2026 – Focus Groups

Focus groups protocol due Friday, February 27

- 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>.
- 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](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(97)00080-0).
- 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>.

Recommended:

- 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>.

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 – Alternative Methodologies and the use of AI

(some of these readings might change)

Alternative Methodologies protocol due Friday, March 6

- Diana Kapiszewski, Lauren MacLean, and Lahra Smith. “Digital Fieldwork Opportunities and Challenges.” Ch. 28 In: Doing good qualitative research.
- Ferhani, Adam, and Jonna Nyman. 2023. “What Does Security Look like? Exploring Interpretive Photography as Method.” European Journal of International Security: 1–23.
- 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>.

Tuesday, March 10, 2026 – No Class

Tuesday, March 17, 2026 – Spring Break

Ethnography due Sunday, March 22nd

Analyzing and writing qualitative data

Tuesday, March 24, 2026 – 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. Ch. 9 - Methods and Processes of Data Analysis.
- Saldana, Johnny. 2016. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Sage. Third Edition. Ch. 1 – An introduction to codes and coding. P. 1-42.

Tuesday, March 31, 2026 - Analyzing Qualitative Data

Cyr, Jennifer, and Sara Wallace Goodman, eds. 2024. Doing Good Qualitative Research. Oxford University Press. Chapters: 29. Reading closely, 31. Content Analysis, 32. Qualitative Social Network Analysis, 33. Process Tracing.

Tuesday, April 7, 2026 – Introduction to Nvivo

Please make sure you have access to Nvivo through UF Apps. More information available here:
<https://info.apps.ufl.edu/>

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 – Writing Qualitative Research

- 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.
- Wallace Goodman & Cyr. 2024. “Publishing Qualitative Research.” In *Doing good qualitative research*.

Tuesday, April 21, 2026 - IRB Application workshop & class evaluation

Procedure for Conflict Resolution

Any classroom issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact Dr. Benjamin Smith (bbsmith@ufl.edu, [352.392.0262](tel:352.392.0262)). Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester. Issues that cannot be resolved departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office (<http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu>; [352-392-1308](tel:352-392-1308)) or the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu>; [352-392-1261](tel:352-392-1261)).