

POLS 502 (23732)
Fall 2005
University of Illinois at Chicago

Dr. Brandon Valeriano
BSB 1171
W 6-8:30pm

Qualitative Research Methods

This graduate seminar seeks to enable students to create and critique work in the qualitative methods research tradition. We will explore the techniques, uses, strengths, and limitations of qualitative research methods including case studies, fuzzy sets, boolean analysis, analytical narratives, and various other methods.

The course will first focus on the philosophy of science, theory construction, theory testing, causality, and causal inference. With this epistemological grounding, the seminar will then explore core issues in case study research design, including methods of structured and focused comparisons of cases, typological research designs, case selection, process tracing, and the use of counterfactual analysis. We will also touch on archival research, interviews, and fuzzy sets/boolean analysis. Finally, we will explore the strengths and weakness of the qualitative methods explored in the course in addition to an overview of statistical and formal methods.

The goal of the course will be to construct a combined methods research program/project blending the qualitative and more common quantitative techniques. Researchers cannot afford to overlook a method that might enhance or solve research design dilemmas. This course should help researchers figure out what methods are available and how to conduct tests utilizing these methods in a true social science manner.

Course Goals

By the end of this semester, each student should be able to:

1. Understand concepts related to the philosophy of science and causality
2. Conduct a case study that conforms to social science standards
3. Undertake a Boolean/fuzzy set study
4. Understand which method is useful to answer a question or support an empirical finding

Required Books

The recent explosion in qualitative methods work means that most important articles in the field have now come out in book form. The bad news is that this means we will use quite a few books in the class. I absolutely recommend you buy the books with the double stars. Other books can be copied since I am only requiring parts of the books be read for class; but I recommend you buy the whole book if you can.

**Alexander George and Andrew Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Sciences*. MIT Press. 0262572222

Henry Brady and David Collier. *Rethinking Social Inquiry*. Rowman and Littlefield. 074251126x

**Charles Ragin. *Fuzzy Set Social Science*. University of Chicago. 0226702774

**Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton. 0691034710

**Michael Barnett. *Eyewitness to a Genocide*. Cornell University Press. 0801488672

Richard Fenno. *Watching Politicians*. IGS. 0877723230

Paul Pierson. *Politics In Time*. Princeton, 0691117152

Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave. *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge. 0521096235

Barbara Geddes. *Paradigms and Sand Castles*. University of Michigan Press. 0472068350

Office Hours and Contact Info

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Course Requirements

Participation 40%
Term Paper 40%
Short Papers 20% (10 percent each)

The Paper

For this course you will have to complete a major research paper that utilizes qualitative methods. The goal of this course to help a researcher understand when and how a qualitative method should be used. The most frequent application of qualitative methods now involves the explanation of a prior empirical finding with a form of “deep case” analysis. You should be able to explain your finding with a story. Any qualitative method discussed in class is suitable.

There are two possible paths you can take to do this paper. Advanced Ph.D. students should take a quantitative finding from their own work (dissertation or article) and explain those results in a qualitative manner. Newer graduate students should take a quantitative finding in the literature (either regression or logit) and explain that finding with qualitative methods. Typical options include a case study, typological study, interviews, surveys, counterfactual analysis, Boolean/fuzzy set test, necessary condition test, and observations.

An example of how this should be done might be in order. Ashley Leeds and other researchers have found that alliances are more reliable than thought previously. You should then investigate why an alliance is reliable. What did the leaders say about the alliance? Why might it be reliable and effective when a counterfactual hypothesis might suggest that the alliance would not hold when challenged? We can know little about Leeds’ findings until we can tell the story of her work. Is this work valid or just empirically accurate with no policy implications? You have to turn in a research design for your paper on Feb 8th.

You will have two short papers due (2-5 pages) throughout the semester. One will be to write a book review of *Eyewitness to Genocide* from the perspective of qualitative methods journal. The other paper will be to write a review of an article (2-3 pages) that uses either the fuzzy set method, counterfactual, or rational choice research designs in your field. You should be prepared to discuss your paper in class.

Participation

Participation is simply showing up and contributing to class. Either asking questions, bringing up news articles, following up on lecture points, or private conversations with the professor (if you are more comfortable with that) all count towards your participation grade. I do not take attendance and feel that missing class will be reflected on your final grade because you will miss important material.

Course Outline

1. Philosophy of Science
2. Causality
3. Research Design
4. Research Design Questions
5. Interviews and Observation
6. Case Studies
7. Case Comparisons
8. Typologies
9. Boolean/Fuzzy Set
10. Counterfactuals
11. Statistics and Qualitative Methods

Course Readings and Assignment Dates

Jan 11

Introductions and Syllabus

Jan 18

Philosophy of Science

Lakatos and Musgrave, Chapters by Popper, Lakatos, and Kuhn

Jan 25

Causality and Inference

KKV, Chapter 3

Short assignment: discuss an article in your field and pinpoint the causal mechanism

Pat James Visit 26-27

TBA

Feb 1

Research Design

KKV, Chapter 1-2

Feb 8

What is wrong with the quantitative method and KKV?

Rethinking, Chapter 1, 3, 4, 9

Research Design due

Feb 15

Observation and Interviews

Fenno, Chapters Intro, 3, 4, 5

Barnett, Entire Book

Short Paper One Due

Feb 22

Case Studies

George and Bennett, Chapter 1, 3, 4

March 1

Process Tracing

George and Bennett, Chapter 10

Case Study Comparisons and Implications

George and Bennett, Chapter 6, 8

March 8

What to do and not to do

KKV, Chapter 4-5

Geddes, Chapter 2-3

March 15

Typologies

George and Bennett, Chapter 11

Vasquez and Valeriano, Handout

Path Dependence and Time

Pierson, Chapter 1, 2, 3

March 22

Spring Break

March 29

Causal Complexity and Diversity

Ragin, Chapter 1-5

April 5

Fuzzy Set Methods

Ragin, Chapters 6-11

Valeriano, "Paths to Rivalry: Interstate Rivalry Formation and the Qualitative Comparative Method"

April 12

Rational Choice

Geddes, Chapter 5

See also

Robert Bates et al. Analytic Narratives. 1998. Princeton

April 19

Counterfactuals

Reading TBA

Short Paper Two Due

April 26

Qualitative and Quantitative Methods, Linkages, and Policy

George and Bennett, Chapter 12

Rethinking, Chapter 10, 12

Final Paper Due May 2nd