

**SABANCI UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**POLS 531  
Qualitative and Textual Research Methods  
Spring 2021**

Instructor: Berk Esen  
Office: FASS 2137  
E-mail: besen@sabanciuniv.edu  
Office Hours: TBA  
Class Hours: F: 4.40-7.30

This course provides an introduction for graduate students to qualitative research methods in political science and international relations. Its aim is to prepare students for a research career in political science and international relations. The first part entails a general discussion on the methods of research inquiry. More specifically, we will discuss how to formulate a research question, to engage in deductive and inductive reasoning and to conceptualize. We will then review the main techniques of qualitative research, including case study, comparative methods, process tracing, interviews, focus groups and discourse analysis. We will then conclude by reviewing some potential ethical issues in qualitative research.

**GRADING**

**Class Attendance and Participation %30**

Students are expected to do the required readings before class each week and then participate to class discussions. The assigned readings for each week are listed in the course schedule below. Although I will shortly summarize the weekly content, most of our class time will be allocated to discussion of the weekly topic. This is a discussion-centred course that requires your regular participation. Students should also send the instructor 1-2 questions that they derive from the readings before the session each week.

**Response Paper % 10**

Some weeks include exemplary studies that use the method discussed on that week. The exemplary pieces are listed at the bottom of each week a specific method is discussed. You are expected write a short analytical paper (1-2 pages) that discusses how and why a particular method was employed by that study and what evidence was collected in the end. The purpose of this memo is to critical engage the research design of the study in question and discuss how the author made use of that method and whether this was a justifiable choice. This assignment needs to be handed in before class on the week the article will be discussed.

**Method Assignments % 30**

Students are expected to formulate a clear research question and formulate a hypothesis that addresses this question. This abstract (500-750 words) should include an empirical puzzle

chosen by the student and provide a basic summary of the research project. Once the student chooses a topic, he or she will not be able to change it.

Students are expected to design a study by using one or a combination of the following methods to address the research question (1000 words): discourse and textual analysis, case study, comparative method, process-tracing. Make sure to explicitly note both the advantages and limitations of these methods as applied to your project. Feel free to discuss how you can overcome these limitations.

Students are expected to design a study by using one or a combination of the following methods (1000 words): fieldwork, interview, mixed methods and archival/historical work. Make sure to explicitly note both the advantages and limitations of these methods as applied to your project. Feel free to discuss how you can overcome these limitations.

### **Research Proposal/Paper % 30**

Students are expected to write a research proposal (7000-8000 words) on the question they picked for the first assignment. A good research proposal should explain what the proposed research seeks to investigate embedded within the existing scholarship; what the main hypotheses and alternative explanations are and how the investigator will collect empirical evidence to test these hypotheses. Students are free to include their previous assignments into this final document, though the proposal should be more comprehensive than these individual assignments.

In case you are at thesis-writing stage, you have the option to write an empirical paper that includes a detailed methodology section. If you choose this option, make sure to operationalize your question, formulate a hypothesis, and discuss alternative explanations in your paper before the empirical part.

All assignments are expected to be completed individually, though with prior approval you may work with a co-author in your final assignment in case you write a research paper.

### **Week 1 Introduction**

Gustafsson, K., & Hagström, L. (2018). what is the point? teaching graduate students how to construct political science research puzzles. *European political science*, 17(4), 634-648.

Grofman, Bernard. *Political Science as Puzzle Solving*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001. Chapter 1 "Introduction," pp. 1-11.

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 14-19.

Weber, Max. *Science as a Vocation*. From H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Translated and edited), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, pp. 129-156, New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.

Keohane, R. O. (2009). Political science as a vocation. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 42(2), 359-363.

### **Week 2 Overview of the Field**

Gerring, J. (2017). Qualitative methods. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20, 15-36.

Mahoney, James. 2010. "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research." *World Politics* 62(1): 120-147

Brady, Henry, David Collier, and Jason Seawright. 2010. "Introduction to the Second Edition: A Sea Change in Political Methodology" and "Refocusing the Discussion of Methodology." Introduction and Chapter 1 in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (hereafter *RSI*), pp. 1-32.

Monroe, K. R. (2005). *Perestroika!: The raucous rebellion in political science*. Yale University Press. pp. 9-11; 525-547

### **Week 3 Conceptualization and Typologies**

Sartori, Giovanni. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review* vol.64 no.4 (December 1970): 1033-1053.

Kreuzer, M. (2019). The structure of description: Evaluating descriptive inferences and conceptualizations. *Perspectives on Politics*, 17(1), 122-139.

Collier, D., LaPorte, J., & Seawright, J. (2012). Putting typologies to work: Concept formation, measurement, and analytic rigor. *Political Research Quarterly*, 65(1), 217-232.

Goertz, G. (2006). *Social science concepts: A user's guide*. Princeton University Press. Ch. 3

Ziblatt, Daniel. "Of Course Generalize, But How? Returning to Middle Range Theory in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Association-Comparative Politics Newsletter* 17.2 (2006): 8-11.

Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2002). Elections without democracy: The rise of competitive authoritarianism. *Journal of democracy*, 13 (2), 51-65.

### **Week 4 Discourse and Content Analysis**

Jennifer Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999): 242-43.

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.). (2015). *Methods of critical discourse studies*. Sage. Ch.1

Aydin-Düzgüt, S., & Rumelili, B. (2019). Discourse analysis: Strengths and shortcomings. *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace*, 8(2), 285-305.

Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage publications. Ch.2

Wodak, R. (2015). *The politics of fear: What right-wing populist discourses mean*. Sage. Ch. 3

### **Week 5 Case Study and Selection Bias (1<sup>st</sup> assignment due)**

John Gerring. "What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?" *American Political Science Review* (2004), 98 (2): 341-354

Collier, David, and James Mahoney. "Insights and pitfalls: Selection bias in qualitative research," *World Politics* (1996), 49(1): 56-91.

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98 (2004), pp. 653-669.

Seawright, Jason and John Gerring, "Case-Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (2008), pp. 294-308.

Geddes, Barbara. "How the Cases you Choose Affect the Answers You Get." *Political Analysis* 2 (1990): 131-149.

Belge, C. (2016). Civilian victimization and the politics of information in the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. *World Pol.*, 68, 275 -306

### **Week 6 Comparative Method**

Lijphart, Arend. "The Comparable Cases Strategy in Comparative Research." *Comparative Political Studies* (1975): 158-177.

George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. Mit Press. Ch. 8

Falleti, T. G., & Mahoney, J. (2015). The comparative sequential method. *Advances in comparative-historical analysis*, 211-239.

Tarrow, S. (2010). The strategy of paired comparison: toward a theory of practice. *Comparative political studies*, 43(2), 230-259.

Slater, Dan, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2013. "The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison." *Comparative Political Studies* 46(10): 1301–27.

Lisa Blaydes. "How Does Islamist Local Governance Affect the Lives of Women? A Comparative Study of Two Cairo Neighborhoods," *Governance*, 27, 3 (July 2014).

### **Week 7 Macro-Historical Comparisons, Critical Junctures, and Path Dependency**

Lieberman, Evan S. "Causal Inference in Historical Institutional Analysis: A Specification of Periodization Strategies." *Comparative Political Studies* 34.9 (2001): 1011-1035. (read until 1024)

Pierson, Paul. *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. pp. 17-53.

Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "Complex Causal Relations and Case Study Methods: The Example of Path Dependence," *Political Analysis* 14 (3), 2006: 250-267

Giovanni Capoccia and R. Daniel Kelemen, "The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism," *World Politics* 59(3), 2007: 341-369

Dunning, T. (2017). Contingency and Determinism in Research on Critical Junctures: Avoiding the "Inevitability Framework". *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research*, 15(1), 41-47.

Slater, D., & Soifer, H. D. (2020). The Indigenous Inheritance: Critical Antecedents and State Building in Latin America and Southeast Asia. *Social Science History*, 44(2), 251-274.

### **Week 8 Process Tracing and Causal Mechanisms (2<sup>nd</sup> assignment due)**

Collier, D. (2011). Understanding process tracing. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(4), 823-830.

Grzymala-Busse, A. (2011). Time will tell? Temporality and the analysis of causal mechanisms and processes. *Comparative Political Studies*, 44(9), 1267-1297.

Bennett, A., & Checkel, J. T. (Eds.). (2015). *Process tracing*. Cambridge University Press. ch 1

Ricks, J. I., & Liu, A. H. (2018). Process-tracing research designs: A practical guide. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 1-5.

Bennett, A., & Checkel, J. T. (Eds.). (2015). *Process tracing*. Cambridge University Press. ch. 6

### **Week 9 Interview and Focus Groups.**

Mosley, Layna, ed. 2013. "Just Talk to People?": Interviews in Contemporary Political Science." In Mosley, ed., *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, p. 1-28.

Tansey, O. (2007). Process tracing and elite interviewing: a case for non-probability sampling. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 40(4), 765-772.

Rivera, Sharon Werning, Polina M. Kozyreva, and Eduard G. Sarovskii. "Interviewing Political Elites: Lessons from Russia." *PS: Political Science and Politics* vol. 35 no.4 (December 2002): 683-688.

Cyr, Jennifer. "The pitfalls and promise of focus groups as a data collection method." *Sociological Methods & Research* 45, no. 2 (2016): 231-259.

Stanley, L. (2016). Using focus groups in political science and international relations. *Politics*, 36(3), 236-249.

Schwedler, Jillian. "The Third Gender: Western Female Researchers in the Middle East." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39.3 (July 2006): 425-428

Sugiyama, N. B., & Hunter, W. (2013). Whither Clientelism? Good Governance and Brazil's Bolsa Família Program. *Comparative Politics*, 46 (1), 43-62.

### **Week 10 Ethnography, Fieldwork and Participant Observation**

Gillespie, A., & Michelson, M. R. (2011). Participant observation and the political scientist: Possibilities, priorities, and practicalities. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 44(2), 261-265.

Schatz, E. (2009). Ethnographic immersion and the study of politics, and What kind(s) of ethnography does political science need? In Schatz, E. ed., *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. University of Chicago Press, 1-22, 303- 318.

Wood Elisabeth. (2009). Field Research." In Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics. eds. Carles Boix and Susan Stokes. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 123-146.

Lisa Wedeen, "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 13 (May 2010), pp. 255-272

Scott, J. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987, chapter 6

### **Week 11 – Natural Experiments**

Dunning, T. (2007). Improving causal inference: Strengths and limitations of natural experiments. *Political Research Quarterly*. 1-12

Paluck, E. L. (2010). The promising integration of qualitative methods and field experiments. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 628 (1), 59-71.

Kocher, Matthew A., and Nuno P. Monteiro. 2016. "Lines of Demarcation: Causation, Design-Based Inference, and Historical Research." *Perspectives on Politics* 14(4): 952-975.

Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529-545.

### **Week 12 Multi method research**

Lieberman, E. S. (2005). Nested analysis as a mixed-method strategy for comparative research. *American political science review*, 435-452.

Sil, R., & Katzenstein, P. J. (2010). Analytic eclecticism in the study of world politics: Reconfiguring problems and mechanisms across research traditions. *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(2), 411-431.

Ahmed, A., & Sil, R. (2012). When multi-method research subverts methodological pluralism—or, why we still need single-method research. *Perspectives on Politics*, 935-953.

Dunning, Thad. "Improving Process Tracing. The Case of Multi-Method Research." *Process Tracing. From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (2015): 211-236.

Eibl, M. F., Hertog, S., & Slater, D. (2019). War makes the regime: regional rebellions and political militarization worldwide. *British Journal of Political Science*.

### **Week 13 Historiography and archival work (Third assignment due)**

Lustick, Ian. (1996). "History, historiography, and political science: Multiple historical records and the problem of selection bias," *American Political Science Review* 90: 605-618.

Levy, J. S. (1997). Too important to leave to the other: history and political science in the study of international relations. *International Security*, 22(1), 22-33.

Thies, Cameron. "A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations." *International Studies Perspectives* 3:4 (2002), pp. 351-372.

Bowen, Glenn. (2009): "Document analysis as a qualitative research method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9 (2): 27-40.

Kirshner, J. (2007). *Appeasing bankers: Financial caution on the road to war*. Princeton University Press. Ch. 6

#### **Week 14 Ethics**

L. R. Woliver (2002), "Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Interviewing," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 677-678

Wanda Pillow (2003) Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16:2, 175-196

Elisabeth Wood (2006) "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones," *Qualitative Sociology* 29 (3): 373-386.

Loyle, C. E., & Simoni, A. (2017). Researching under fire: Political science and researcher trauma. *PS, Political Science & Politics*, 50(1), 141-5.