COURSE SYLLABUS

Qualitative Methods and Research Design

Instructor:
Erin Jenne, PhD
Associate Professor, IRES
Central European University
Fall 2012
4 Credits (8 ECTS Credits)

Course Description:
This course is designed for students who are beginning their dissertation projects. The aim of the course is to give students the tools to conceptualize their theses in terms of research questions and design, methodology, data collection and qualitative analysis. In doing so, this course focuses more narrowly on the issues, problems, and strategies related to “small-N” qualitative research, for the most part setting aside the techniques of large-N statistical analysis, which are best taught in a separate course. Students will read and discuss texts related to theory formation and hypothesis testing; creating proxies and measurement; descriptive and causal inference; longitudinal, comparative and case study research; field data collection; working with texts and analyzing qualitative data; and, finally, dissertation write-up. Throughout the course, we will not avoid issues of epistemology—how we know what we know and how to adjudicate competing “truth” claims. However, since this course is intended as a practicum for conducting “normal” social science, we will set aside or bracket many of the epistemological and ontological debates in order to learn techniques for researching and analyzing social phenomena on a practical level. This course is divided into four main parts focusing on the following topics: (1) the goals of social science and elements of research design; (2) selection and application of different methodologies for conducting research; (3) collection of primary and secondary data on the field; and (4) analysis and synthesis of qualitative data in the dissertation-writing process.

Aims
The course’s main aim is to provide students with a sound understanding of:

1) Methodologies, ontologies, theories/approaches, and epistemologies
2) The linkages between empirics and theory in social science
3) Principles of case selection in small-N qualitative research
4) Trade-offs between qualitative and quantitative research
5) The role of scope conditions and levels of analysis in research design
6) Theory-formation and hypothesis-testing
7) Concept formation and measurement

Learning Outcomes
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

✓ Identify their central research question (CRQ)
✓ Situate their research question in the relevant literature(s)
✓ Formulate a theoretically-interesting argument
✓ Select an appropriate method or methods best suited for addressing the CRQ
✓ Apply the method(s) to the students’ research project
✓ Identify the relevant “universe” of cases and units of analysis (UOA)
✓ Assess the empirical support for the students’ argument
✓ Prepare an executable research plan
Course Requirements:

Four Assignments 30%. Students will periodically be given a short assignment that will be due at 10 a.m. the day of the following seminar. Assignments will pertain to the readings for that week and, as a general rule, will ask students to provide illustrations of how they might apply the principles of research design and various methods discussed that week to their own research project. Students will be expected to work either individually or in a group and should come to class prepared to discuss and critique the assignments/readings for that seminar.

Research Paper 40%. This is the main requirement for the course. The paper will serve as an important exercise in how to design a social science research proposal and will hopefully serve as the basis of the dissertation prospectus that will be submitted in June. For those who plan to conduct empirical research in their dissertations, the paper should contain (1) the central research question(s), (2) the literature and/or debate it seeks to address, (3) the argument or theory/hypotheses, (4) the methodology to be used in the project, (5) case selection criteria, and (6) a plan for data collection and analysis that will serve to answer the research question(s). For those who are conducting political theory projects, the paper should contain (1) the central question, (2) an explanation for why this question is interesting and important, (3) a description of the question is—empirical, normative, conceptual, interpretive, or some mixture of these, (4) an explanation of how the question will be answered—including a literature review, a discussion of the method(s) to be used, and why this method is appropriate, and (5) an account of how the project will be broken down into manageable units. Students should consult with me about their paper at least once during the semester.

Class Participation 30% (15% attendance and class participation; 15% presentation). Students will be expected to attend all the seminars and contribute to class discussions. Students will also be expected to give a five minute presentation of their work during one of the seminars (the presentation makes up half of the participation grade). Since I will be keeping speakers to strict time limits, it pays to time the presentation in advance.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Beginning the Research Project

September 17: Central Research Question (CRQ)


Further Readings:


**September 20: Literature Review**


Short readings TBA

**Further Readings:**


**Week 2: Elements of Research Design**

**September 24: Theories and Hypotheses**


**Further Readings:**


September 27: Concepts and Measurement


Further Readings:

Assignment #1: Draft 3 sample CRQs. They should be no more than one-two sentences each. For one of the CRQs, outline a major theory or debate in the field that the CRQ speaks to and explain the importance of this question to that theory or debate. Why should people in the field care about the answer to this question? The assignment should be no more than one page in length. Due 10 a.m., October 1.

Week 3: Causal Mechanisms

October 1: Causality and Processes


Further Readings:

**October 4: Sequences, Critical Junctures, and Path Dependence**


Further Readings:
METHODS

Week 4: Case Selection and Single Case Studies

October 8: Units of analysis (UA), Universe of Cases (UC), and Selecting Cases for Analysis


Further Readings:
Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, “Phase One: Designing Case Study Research,” in George and Bennett (eds.), *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (MIT Press, 2005), Chapter 4.

October 11: Most-likely, Least-likely, and Deviant Cases


E. L. Morse, *Foreign Policy and Interdependence in Gaullist France* (Princeton University Press, 1973), chapter 5 on monetary policy. [least-likely case]

Further Readings:
Week 5: Small N-Analysis

October 15: The Comparative Method


Further Readings:
October 18: Applications


Further Readings:

Assignment #2: For one of the CRQs from the first assignment, describe a theory or argument that “answers” the question. (You should be able to convey the theory in no more than a few sentences.) Explain how you would test the argument by outlining three hypotheses that derive from the theory/argument. Identify one or two concepts in your theory and outline how you would measure it. This assignment should be 1-2 pages long. Due 10 a.m., October 22.

Week 6: Longitudinal and Historical Analysis

October 22: Process-Tracing and Longitudinal Analysis


Further Readings:
Further Readings:


October 25: Comparative Historical Analysis

James Mahoney, “Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis,” in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds) Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences (Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapter 10 (pp. 337-372).


Further Readings:

Week 7: Medium-N Case Analysis

October 29: Typological Theory with Medium-N


Further Readings:

November 1: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)

Invited Speaker: TBA


Further Readings:
Week 8: Large-N Analysis

November 5: Regression Analysis and Other Techniques

Invited Speaker: TBA

Further Readings:

November 8: Mixed Methods and Nested Analysis


Further Readings:

Assignment #3:
(1) Draw a causal schema for your argument, including all the major concepts/variables and the relationships between them. Explain it in words and describe the causal process(es) that underlie your argument. This should be no more than one page long.
(2) If your project is empirical, identify your units of analysis, the universe of cases to which your theory applies, and the case(s) that you will analyze in your project and why (the “why” is your justification--or criteria--for case selection). If you have a political theory project, outline in as much detail as possible what you will analyze, how you will conduct your analysis (including the method you will use), and what are your units of analysis. This should be no more than one page long. Due 10 a.m., November 12.

Week 9: Network Analysis and Discourse Analysis

November 12: Network Analysis
Invited Speaker: TBA

Further Readings:

November 15: Discourse Analysis

Invited Speaker: TBA

Further Readings:
David Howarth and Jacob Torfing (eds.), Discourse Theory in European Politics (Palgrave, 2005), pp. 1-32, 316-349.
Ruth Wodak and Teun A. van Dijk (eds.) Racism at the Top: Parliamentary Discourses on Ethnic Issues in Six European States (Klagenfurt, Austria: Drava Verlag, 2000), chapters 2, 5, and 6.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Week 10: Planning the Research and Applying for Fellowships

November 19: Planning the Research


Further Readings:

**November 22:** Writing Proposals and Fund-Raising


Barry Weingast, “Structuring Your Papers (Caltech Rules).”

Further Readings:

**Week 11: Conducting Field Research**

**November 26:** Ethnographic Research

*Invited Speaker: TBA*

Further Readings:

**November 29:** Elite Interviewing and Survey Research

*Invited Speaker: TBA*

Further Readings:


**Week 12: Analyzing Data and Writing up Results**

*December 3: Descriptive and Causal Inference*


**Further Readings:**


*December 6: Analyzing Data and Writing up Cases*


**Further Readings:**


Supplementary Readings

Epistemology, Ontology, Methodology
Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (University of Chicago, 1962).
Peter Hall, “Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics,” in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.), Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences (Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapter 11.

General Qualitative Methods Texts
James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.), Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences (Cambridge University Press, 2003).
Janet M. Box-Steppensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology (Oxford University Press, 2008).
Howard W. Becker, Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about your Research while You’re Doing It (University of Chicago Press, 1998).
Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, Qualitative Data Analysis, (Sage Publications, 1994).

Archival Research


James M. Goldgeier, “Training Graduate Students in Conducting archival Research,” NewsNet (October 2004) [Describes GWU Cold War summer school program teaching students how to use Russian and U.S. archives in the study of foreign policy and IR]


**Interpretivism**


**Counterfactual Analysis**


**Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Design**


Survey Research/Preparing Questionnaires/Focus Groups


David L. Morgan, “Focus Groups as a Qualitative Method,” *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (Sage Publications, 1997), pp. 7-17.


Writing the Dissertation


Academic Resources

See my website, [www.erinjenne.blogspot.com](http://www.erinjenne.blogspot.com) for a list of useful academic resources (will be updated on an ongoing basis).


Academic Writing and Publishing

PhD Careers in Political Science