



1st term seminar 2017-2018

Qualitative Methods: Learning by Example

(only for SPS 1st year researchers)

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3 January – 5 December 2017

Tuesdays from 15.00 to 17.00

Seminar Room 2, Badia Fiesolana

Aims

The course offers an introduction to qualitative methods in social research, which is compulsory for all first-year researchers in the EUI SPS Department. The aim of the course is to introduce researchers to state-of-the-art knowledge in qualitative research and methods, including their respective strengths and weaknesses. However, rather than focusing on one or many specific methodologies for qualitative research, the course will focus more broadly on research strategies, the added value of qualitative research, and their methodological implications. With this background philosophy, the course will draw on a range of cutting-edge *examples* in qualitative research to *learn from*. We begin with examples of published work, from which we will draw lessons that structure the course. This includes examples of our own work, so that we can provide the story behind the final finished books, and so share our own personal experiences in researching and writing our doctoral dissertations. Next, we move on to more recent examples of PhD-research, mostly taken from the SPS Department, suggested to us by

our colleagues, that use cutting-edge qualitative methods. It is our conviction that the provision skills and tools in qualitative methods is best *learned by example*, in contrast to textbook anthologies that aspire to offer a complete panorama of qualitative methods to choose from. (These are available in the EUI library, and can and should be consulted, and we do recommend many of these texts as additional reading.) We know from experience, however, that social research is first and foremost a *practice* of constant *iteration* between i) theory development, and ii) methodological validation, based on iii) an overarching research question. In the practice of social research these three dimensions of good quality research are never cast in stone and compromises have to be made as there is simply no perfect methodology or theory for any research question on offer.

Objectives

Researchers who have successfully completed this course should be able to:

- Produce well-structured qualitative research, employing cutting-edge methodological tools, drawing on a broad range of examples and other sources, including text-books;
- Make concise presentations based on serious readings of the examples provided by the course;
- Design and write brief synopses on possible research question, making explicit why the selected methodology is ‘fit for purpose’.

The course will provide researchers with the conceptual and empirical background information to enable them to write focused PhD-theses and academic articles.

Structure

The ten sessions of the workshop are designed to provide the analytical foundation and methodological tools for the practice of doing qualitative research by learning from example. The purpose of the sessions is to actively discuss, based on exemplar publications, the goodness of fit of puzzle, theory and method in empirical research. There will (usually) be a few short presentations by researchers on the readings, based on tools and templates provided. A hand-out (maximum 2 pages) by researchers taking

turns should aid to jump-starting discussions on selected examples in a structured way. These handouts should be made available to all participants 24 hours in advance.

Participation and examination

●**Attendance** at seminars is compulsory for all first-year researchers. EVERY member of the seminar is liable to be called upon to discuss ANY of the core readings in any week, as active participation in the discussion is vital to the success of the course.

●**Group Work:** All participants will be expected to join a group of 3 to prepare a kick-off presentation for the discussion of our doctoral dissertations, as well as a 2 page research synopsis and SWOT evaluation, based on the triad of research puzzle, theoretical perspective, and methodology. (Any charts or figures that should accompany the kick-off discussion should be uploaded by Monday evening at 17.00, on the day before the relevant class; the full research synopsis is due on the Thursday after class by 12:00, except for on the November 1 holiday, in which case it is due by 12:00 on Tuesday November 7th.)

●**Individual Assignments:** all participants are required to turn in the 7 research assignments (1-2 pages each), either by 17:00 on the Monday preceding class, or by 12:00 on the following Thursday, as indicated below.

Schedule

The seminar takes place on **Tuesdays from 15.00 to 17.00**, in Seminar Room 2 at the Badia, and will run from **3 October to 5 December**. The full list of seminar sessions is the following:

Session 1:	Tuesday, 3 October	(15.00 – 17.00)	Seminar Room 2
Session 2:	Tuesday, 10 October	(15.00 – 17.00)	Seminar Room 2
Session 3:	Tuesday, 17 October	(15.00 – 17.00)	Seminar Room 2
Session 4:	Tuesday, 24 October	(15.00 – 17.00)	Seminar Room 2
Session 5:	Tuesday, 31 October	(15.00 – 17.00)	Emeroteca
Session 6:	Tuesday, 7 November	(15.00 – 17.00)	Seminar Room 2
Session 7:	Tuesday, 14 November	(15.00 – 17.00)	Seminar Room 2
Session 8:	Tuesday, 21 November	(15.00 – 17.00)	Seminar Room 2
Session 9:	Tuesday, 28 November	(15.00 – 17.00)	Seminar Room 2

Session 10: Tuesday, 5 December (15.00 – 17.00) Seminar Room 2

Literature

Alongside a number of key readings, 9 dissertations have been selected for intense study during the course of the seminar. Each Dissertation will be presented and analysed by a group of three doctoral researchers from the seminar. As described above, they will prepare a kick-off presentation due at 17:00 the day before class, and a research synopsis and SWOT analysis to be distributed on the Thursday after class (by 12:00).

Session 1 (3 October): Introduction

In the first introductory workshop, the overall philosophy of the course and its requirements will be presented by the professors, based on their own research experience, struggles and tribulations in practicing qualitative – comparative institutional – research. Social explanation as practice: defining a puzzle, where to look for explanation, delineating important dimensions and factors to be taken seriously, and how to validate evidence. Handouts will be provided as templates to make the first assignment based on the following week's reading.

Required: There is no required reading for the first week. Come prepared to pick your dissertation for the kick-off presentation, research synopsis, and SWOT analysis.

Recommended:

Van Evera, S. (1997) *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York.

Bob Hancké, *Intelligent Research Design: A Guide for Beginning Researchers in the Social Sciences*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994.

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, "The Importance of Research Design in Political Science," *American Political Science Review*, 89, 2 (1995): 475-481.

Recommended Review from Prof. Stefano Bartolini's Seminar, *Introduction to the Logic of Comparative Research*:

Peter A. Hall, "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research," in J. Mahoney, D. Rueschemeyer, (eds), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 373-404.

Class Handout: Van Evera/Hancké Questionnaire

Session 2 (10 October): What qualifies as a good research puzzle and why, and what does good qualitative research offers beyond explanation?

Required Readings:

Fritz W. Scharpf, *Crisis and Choice in European Social Democracy*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991, chapters 1,2,12, pp. 3-37, 245-275.

Recommended for Review:

Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 34-84.

Research Assignment 1 (due Monday 17:00):

Fill out the van Evera/Hancké Questionnaire for Scharpf

Session 3 (17 October): Research Design

Required:

Ellen M. Immergut, "The Rules of the Game: The Logic of Health Policy-Making in France, Switzerland and Sweden," in S. Steinmo, K. Thelen & F. Longstreth (eds), *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 57-89.

Ellen M. Immergut, *Health Politics: Interests and Institutions in Western Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, chapter 2, pp. 34-79.

Recommended Review:

Daniele Caramani, *Introduction to the Comparative Method with Boolean Algebra*, London, Sage: 2009.

Recommended:

James Mahoney, "The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences," *Sociological Methods and Research*, 41, 4 (2012): 570-97.

Research Assignment 2 (due Monday 16 October, 17:00):

Fill out the Truth Table, Universe of Cases for Immergut

Session 4 (24 October): Literature review – turning a chore into an advantage for your own research

Anton Hemerijck, *The Historical Contingencies of Dutch Corporatism*, Dphil Thesis, Tilburg University, Tilburg, 1992, Chapter 1, “Corporatism: a Prime Minister’s Nightmare,” pp. 1-24, Chapter 4, “The Historical Lacuna in Studies of Modern Corporatism,” pp. 61-117.

Recommended Review:

Giovanni Sartori, “Guidelines for Concept Analysis,” in G. Sartori (ed.), *Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis*, London, Sage, 1984, pp. 15-85.

D. Collier and J. E. Mahon, “Conceptual ‘Stretching’ Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis,” *American Political Science Review*, 87 (1993), pp. 845-855.

Research Assignment 3 (Due 23 October 17:00): Make an active outline on Hemerijck

Research Assignment 4 (Due 26th October, 12:00): Research Puzzle (researchers own research)

Session 5 (31 October): Research Puzzles in Action

Yannis Karagiannis, *Preference Heterogeneity and Equilibrium Institutions: The Case of European Competition Policy*, EUI thesis 2007, chapters , pp. 2,3,4, pp. 28-120.

Magnus Gregor Schoeller, *Explaining Political Leadership. The Role of Germany and EU Institutions in Eurozone Crisis Management*, EUI thesis 2016, chapters 1-4, pp. 21-72

Recommended Review:

David Collier, Henry E. Brady and Jason Seawright, “Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology,” in H. E. Brady and D. Collier (eds), *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004, pp. 161-199.

Session 6 (7 November): Research Design in Action

Charlotte Haberstroh, *The Politics of Equal Opportunities in Education: Partisan Governments and School Choice Reform in Sweden, England, and France, 1980-2010*, PhD Thesis, European University Institute, Florence, 2016, chapters 1-2, pp. 1-52.

Jennifer Erickson, *Dangerous Trade*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2015, chapters 1-2, pp. 1-43.

Recommended Review:

“Symposium: Case Selection, Case Studies, and Causal Inference,” *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research* 6, 2 (2008): 1-16.

Research Assignment 5 (Due 9 November, 12:00): Truth Table/Universe of Cases (researchers’ own research)

Session 7 (14 November): Literature Review and Multi-Method Triangulation in Action

Tarik Abou-Chadi, *Competing for Change: How Electoral Competition Affects Party Positions, Issue Evolution and Policy Change in Advanced Democracies*, PhD Thesis, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, 2015, chapter 1, pp. 1-47.

Marco Valbruzzi, *Government Alternation in Western Europe: A Comparative Explanation*, PhD Thesis, European University Institute, Florence, 2017, chapters 1-2, pp. 1-34.

Recommended Review:

Abhishek Chatterjee, “Ontology, Epistemology, and Multimethod Research in Political Science,” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 20 (2011): 1-27.

Research Assignment 6 (Due 16 November, 12:00): Active Outline of Literature Review (researchers’ own research)

Session 8 (21 November): From Dissertation to Book

Joseph Lacey, *Centripetal Democracy: Democratic Legitimacy and Regional Integration in Belgium, Switzerland and the European Union*, PhD Thesis, European University Institute, Florence, 2015, Part One, pp. 1-76.

Recommended Review:

Stefano Bartolini, “On Time and Comparative Research,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 5, 2 (1993): 131-167.

Paul Pierson, “Not Just What, but When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes,” *Studies in American Political Development*, 14 (2000): 72-92.

Session 9 (28 November): Research Experiment and Field Work

Valentina di Stasio, *Why Education Matters to Employers: A Vignette Study in Italy, England and the Netherlands*, PhD Thesis, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 2014, Chapters (3), 4 & 6, pp. (77-126), 127-158, 217-240.

Max Schaub, *Cooperation under Threat: The Mobilizing Force of Ethnic Competition*, PhD Thesis, European University Institute, Florence, 2016, Chapter 3, pp. 109-141.

Recommended Review:

Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Alan H. Barton, "Qualitative Measurement in the Social Sciences: Classification, Typologies, and Indices," in D. Lerner and H. D. Lasswell (eds), *The Policy Sciences*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1951, pp. 155-192.

"Symposium: Field Experiments and Qualitative Methods," *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research*, 6, 2 (2008): 17-43.

Research Assignment 7 (Due 23 November): develop a pilot project to pre-test the empirics of your dissertation's preliminary research design and methods

Session 10 (5 December): Conclusion and feedback: What have learned by example?