

Preparatory Workshop: Introduction to Qualitative Methods – Philosophy, Ethics, Interviews and Ethnography

September Programme, Academic Year 2021-2022

Monday, 27 September, 15.00-17.00 (Refectory, Badia Fiesolana)

Tuesday, 28 September, 15.00-17.00 (Refectory, Badia Fiesolana)

Wednesday, 29 September, 15.00-17.00 (Theatre, Badia Fiesolana)

Thursday, 30 September, 15.00-17.00 (Theatre, Badia Fiesolana)

Instructors:

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[Caitlin Procter](#), Part-Time Professor, Migration Policy Centre

Description

This 8-hour workshop introduces researchers to some basics of qualitative analysis. It focuses on the multiple philosophical bases of qualitative methods, ethical questions that arise in qualitative work, and introduces interviews and ethnography as qualitative research tools. By the end of the workshop, researchers should appreciate why philosophy and ethics matter in both the conceptualization and execution of qualitative methods; they should also understand the basics of interview methods and ethnography. The workshop is strongly recommended for researchers with little or no prior experience with qualitative methods as it prepares them to participate effectively in the compulsory 'Introduction to Qualitative Methods' taught in the second term. Researchers should take this workshop in the same academic year as they will attend the compulsory course.

Format

Each two-hour session will consist of a 90-minute lecture, followed by 30 minutes of debate and discussion. Researchers should read the required reading prior to class, and prepare for the discussion by considering the 'Discussion Questions' listed for each session.

Workshop Readings

With one exception, all readings are available as E-Books or E-Journals through the EUI Library (see direct hyperlinks below). For the EU Commission document on research ethics, simply click on the link.

Workshop Topics & Readings

Session I - 27 September: Philosophy of Social Science

della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating, Editors, *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) – Chapter 2. ([E-Book](#))

Hall, Peter, "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics," in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Editors, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) – Chapter 11. ([E-Book](#))

Discussion Questions

- What is positivism? What is interpretism? How do they differ?
- How do philosophical starting points influence our thinking about cause, theory, data, ethics, and methods?
- What is cause?
- What are the differences among normative, problem-solving theory and critical theory?

Session II - 28 September: Research Ethics

European Commission, DG Research and Innovation, "[Ethics in Social Science and Humanities](#)" (Brussels: European Commission, October 2018).

Cronin-Furman, Kate and Milli Lake, "Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51/3 (July 2018): 607-614. ([E-Journal](#))

Discussion Questions

- What are ethics and what roles do they play at different points in the research process?
- What are the ethical standards that social scientists must observe when producing and collecting data for their research?
- Do these standards need to be updated or modified given one's research context – elite interviews of Commission bureaucrats in Brussels; versus a field experiment in Sierra Leone; versus fieldwork among Roma in Hungary?
- Are the ethical aspects of your thesis finished or just beginning when the EUI Ethics Committee approves your ethical framework?

Session III - 29 September: Interviewing

Mosley, Layna, Editor, *Interview Research in Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013) – Introduction, Chapter 3. ([E-Book](#))

Discussion Questions

- What are the main types of interview techniques?
- How would you conduct an interview ethically?
- How does one deal with lies and dissimulation when interviewing?
- How do your gender, nationality, status, and interview questions affect the interview process?

Session IV – 30 September: Ethnography

Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren MacLean and Benjamin Read, *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) – Chapter 7. ([E-Book](#))

Gusterson, Hugh, "Ethnographic Research," in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash, Editors, *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) – Chapter 7. ([E-Book](#))

Discussion Questions

- What is ethnography and how does it differ from, say, conducting a case study?
- What matters more to an ethnographer: Interviews or participant observation?
- How does a researcher decide what is ethical when she is working ethnographically?
- What roles do access and positionality play in ethnography?