

Seminar: Intermediate Qualitative Methods

1st Term, Academic Year 2026-2027

Mondays, 9.00-11.00 (Seminar Room TBA, Badia Fiesolana)

First Seminar Session: 28.09.26

Last Seminar Session: 07.12.26

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Description

This seminar is an intermediate/advanced class on qualitative methods; it builds upon but goes beyond the SPS introductory qualitative methods course. We begin – Part I - with two sessions on ethics, an issue foundational for the use of any method. We explore both its multiple meta-theoretical foundations (de-ontological / consequentialist / feminist / post-colonial / relational) and its varying practice across qualitative and quantitative-computational methods and experimental designs.

In Part II – the seminar’s core – we drill down and explore the contours and debates over a selection of key qualitative methods. These include sessions on field work and multi-sited approaches; interpretive interview methods (relational, life history, ethnographic); discourse textual methods (genealogical, critical, post-structural); and advanced process methods (Bayesian process tracing, practice tracing, following methods).

We conclude – Part III – by zooming back out from particular methods. One session thus explores the debate over research transparency and its implications for all qualitative methods. Our last meeting then zooms out to the level of practice, with researchers debating their operationalization of a qualitative method/topic in a half-day workshop.

The seminar is worth 20 credits.

Learning Outcomes

- An understanding of the varying links between the theory and practice of research ethics and your choice and ethical use of a particular method/design.
- For the key qualitative methods – field work and multi-sited approaches; interpretive interview methods; discourse textual methods; advanced process methods - an appreciation of the method’s content, its strengths and weaknesses, and its philosophical and ethical foundations.
- An understanding of transparency in its various meta-theoretical flavours and its growing importance for all qualitative methods.

Format

The class will be run as a seminar, where debate and discussion are the norm. For Sessions 2 - 9, response memos – prepared by 1-2 researchers for each session – will inform and guide our debates. At the beginning of each session, we will use these memos, as well as input from other seminar participants to craft a ‘bottom up’ agenda for that day’s topic and readings.

For session 10 – our brainstorming workshop - researchers take ownership of a particular qualitative method (post-structural discourse analysis, say) or topic (the ethics of on-line ethnography, for example), which are then debated and critiqued in 30-minute slots. The raw material for the workshop will be an 8-10 page essay – which is typically an elaboration of an earlier response memo.

Syllabus

A full syllabus will be posted by 11 September 2026.