

2nd term, Academic Year 2026-2027

Bayesian Inference for Qualitative Research

Time and Place: Monday 11:00-13:00, Seminar Room 2

Given by: **Tasha Fairfield**

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Bayesianism provides a logically rigorous and intuitive framework for inference to best explanation that governs how we should revise our views about which hypothesis is more plausible, given our relevant prior knowledge and the evidence we find during our research. Bayesianism is enjoying a revival across many fields, and it offers a powerful tool for improving inference and analytic transparency in qualitative research.

This interactive course introduces the principles of Bayesian probability, with applications to single case studies (within-case analysis), comparative case studies (cross-case analysis), and multi-method research that draws on both qualitative evidence and quantitative data. Participants will learn how to construct well-articulated rival hypotheses to compare, systematically assess the inferential weight of qualitative evidence, avoid common cognitive biases that can lead to sloppy reasoning, and evaluate which hypothesis provides the best explanation through Bayesian updating. The course will also address key aspects of research design. Throughout, we will work with examples and exercises drawn from a wide range of published social science research to give participants hands-on practice applying Bayesian techniques. Upon completing the course, participants will be able to read qualitative research more critically, evaluate whether and to what extent the evidence presented supports the authors' conclusions, and apply Bayesian principles in their own research.