



**Masterclass on Field Research:
Theoretical, Methodological, Ethical and Practical Issues**

Workshop, 3rd term 2017-2018

Mentoring Professor: **Diego Gambetta**

Instructors:

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Course Description

The masterclass will address the main theoretical, methodological, ethical and practical aspects of field research. We will deal with field research as one part of research projects that have the aim of explaining social and/or political phenomena. We will discuss a variety of potential contributions that field research can make to social and political research and will survey exemplary studies that have integrated field research in their designs. We will cover different techniques for data collection that can be employed in the field and address ethical and political issues related to techniques that involve human subjects. We will cover the main practical aspects to take into consideration before, during and after field trips to maximize the gains from field trips (assuming time and financial limitations) and guarantee basic security conditions for both researchers and interlocutors. Given our own field experiences, we will bring insights from fieldwork in both rural and urban settings and from research projects with different research goals. While the content of the masterclass will be relevant for every researcher planning to conduct fieldwork, the course will be largely informed by research in conflict studies and urban poverty. Content and discussions will be based both on scholarly literature and actual fieldwork experiences of both speakers and participants.

Schedule

Monday 14 May 2018, 14.30 – 18.30
Tuesday 15 May 2018, 14.30 – 18.30
Wednesday 16 May 2018, 14.30 – 18.30
Thursday 17 May 2018, 14.30 – 18.30
Friday 18 May 2018, 14.30 – 18.30

(Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana)
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(Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana)

Background Readings

In order to derive the greatest possible benefit from this masterclass, you would be well advised to read (some of) the following orienting texts beforehand. All of them are exemplary applications of field research to the study of social and political phenomena. Reflecting the area of expertise of the instructors, these texts have been selected from the fields of urban poverty and civil conflict.

Auyero, Javier, and Debora Alejandra Swistun. *Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Bourgois, Philippe. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Wood, Elisabeth J. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Roessler, Philip. *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Course Outline

Day 1: Introduction & Contributions of Field Research

Wood, Elisabeth J. “Field Research.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, edited by Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, 123–46. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Small, Mario Luis. “Causal Thinking and Ethnographic Research.” *American Journal of Sociology* 119, no. 3 (November 1, 2013): 597–601.

Taylor, Charles. “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man.” *The Review of Metaphysics* 25, no. 1 (1971): 3–51.

Wedeer, Lisa. “Ethnography as Interpretive Enterprise.” In *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*, edited by Edward Schatz, 75–94. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Day 2: Data Collection in the Field

Part 1: Interviews, Focus Groups/Memory Workshops

Weiss, Robert S. *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press, 1995. [Chapter 1]

Fujii, Lee Ann. *Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach*. New York: Routledge, 2017. [Chapter 1]

Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren M. Maclean, and Benjamin L. Read. “Interviews, Oral Histories, and Focus Groups.” in *Field Research in Political Science. Practices and Principles*, 190–233. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Part 2: Oral Histories, Participant Observation & Field Notes

Observation Exercise

For this session we ask participants to do the follow exercise before the course. We will use the input from this to inform the discussion on observation and field notes taking. This exercise provides a relatively brief way to acquire a sense of what participant observation in ethnographic fieldwork is like, and to evaluate its strengths and limitations as a method.

Go to the EUI cafeteria (in Badia) and carry out a 30 minutes (minimum) observation. Observe and record movements, interactions, sights, sounds, spatial arrangements, and anything else that strikes you. Be an observer only – do not interview anyone. Describe as much as you can about the setting. Write down your observations on the spot, then write up a longer version immediately afterward. You should spend at least twice as long writing up field notes as you did observing, perhaps longer.

Readings

Bernard, H. Russell. "Participant Observation." In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Fifth Edition., 256–90. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Second Edition. 2 edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. [Chapters 1 & 3]

Bernard, H. Russell. "Field Notes and Database Management." In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Fifth Edition., 291–304. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010.

Day 3: Research Design

Part 1: Ethnographic Research Design

Philippe Bourgois. "The moral economies of homeless heroin addicts: confronting ethnography, HIV risk, and everyday violence in San Francisco shooting encampments." *Substance Use and Misuse* 33, no. 11 (September 1998)

Stuart, Forrest. "Becoming 'Copwise': Policing, Culture, and the Collateral Consequences of Street-Level Criminalization." *Law & Society Review* 50, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 279–313.

Part 2: Multi-Method Research Design involving Field Research

Seawright, Jason. *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. [Chapters 1 & 2]

Small, Mario Luis. "How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37, no. 1 (2011): 57–86.

Day 4: The Politics and Ethics of Field Research

Guest Speaker: **Elisabeth J. Wood (Yale University)**

Part 1: Presentation of Current Research by E. J. Wood and Conversation with Students

Part 2: Ethical and Political Issues in Field Research & Safety in the Field

Fujii, Lee Ann. "Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45, no. 4 (October 2012): 717–23.

Wood, Elisabeth J. "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones." *Qualitative Sociology* 29, no. 3 (2006): 373–86.

Cronin-Furman, Kate, and Milli Lake. "Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, April 2018, 1–8.

Goffman, Alice. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014. [Chapters 1 & 2]

Day 5: Getting to the Field

Part 1: Practicalities & Challenges of Fieldwork

Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren M. Maclean, and Benjamin L. Read. "Preparing for Fieldwork." In *Field Research in Political Science. Practices and Principles*, 82–118. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Hsueh, Roselyn, Francesca Refsum Jensenius, and Akasemi Newsome. "Fieldwork in Political Science: Encountering Challenges and Crafting Solutions: Introduction." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47, no. 2 (April 2014): 391–93.

Part 2: Presentations by Students

Simone Cremaschi. SPS | 4th year.

Trust and rapport

"Gaining trust in the field. Tales from the ghettos of West African agricultural workers in Italy"

Krzysztof Krakowski. SPS | 3rd year.

Political and practical challenges

"Challenges studying interethnic relations. Experience from Kyrgyzstan."

updated 04.05.2018