

17.878

Qualitative Research: Design and Methods

Regina Bateson

bateson@mit.edu

E53-453

Office phone: (617) 324-7336

Cell phone: (203) 812-0951

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2-4 pm

Assistant: Blair Read

Email Blair for priority during office hours (bmread@mit.edu).

This course is intended for political science PhD students, though we will also be drawing on sociology and anthropology. By the end of the course, students should be well-equipped to undertake their own fieldwork. Students will also be familiar with the major debates surrounding qualitative research in the discipline, and they will be able to confidently assess the design, execution, and interpretation of qualitative field research. The course focuses especially on ethnography.

A practical exercise will be a major component of the course. Each student will select a research site in the greater Boston area and visit the site regularly throughout the semester. Students will conduct participant observation research, interviews, and focus groups at their site, and we will discuss and analyze the results in class. This original qualitative data will also form the basis for a *short* final assignment (10 - 12 pp., *not* a full seminar research paper). I encourage students to find research sites that relate to their substantive research interests, treating this class as a “dry run” for future fieldwork. This class is a safe place to experiment with qualitative research in a supportive environment before venturing out into the field alone. Should problems or difficulties arise, we will discuss them in class and brainstorm solutions.

EXPECTATIONS

Students will act responsibly, respectfully, and ethically at all times, especially while at their research sites. You are representing the MIT political science department (or your home department) when you go into the field, and we need to maintain positive relationships with the surrounding community and local organizations. Always identify yourself clearly as a researcher, treat your subjects with courtesy and respect, and operate within the guidelines of COUHES and your specific Human Subjects Protocol. *Should a serious problem arise at your field site, please contact me or another faculty member immediately for advice.*

Participation is a vital component of the class, and you are expected to attend all class meetings. Please arrive punctually and be prepared to engage meaningfully with the assigned readings and your peers' work. Extensions and incompletes will be considered based on individual circumstances.

Plagiarism is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. In order to submit the same research paper to two different classes, you must have the explicit permission of both instructors, and the paper must be substantially longer than the normal assignment.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Field Research (40%)

- Spend 1-2 hours per week at your site.
- Post a short (1-2 paragraph) update to Stellar every Tuesday by noon.
- IRB application. *Due 20 February at the start of class. (Print and sign two hard copies.)*
- Participant observation exercise. *Due 27 March (post to Stellar).*
- 5 or more interviews. One interview should be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.
Notes from one interview and one interview transcript due 27 March and 17 April (post to Stellar).
- Focus group. *Notes or transcript due 17 April (post to Stellar).*

Book Review (15%) *Due 20 March before the start of class.*

Review a prominent qualitative work in political science. I recommend *Weapons of the Weak*, *Home Style*, *Theft of an Idol*, or *Peripheral Visions*, but you may choose another book with prior approval. Write a 5-10 page critique of the book, using our class readings and other resources to evaluate its research design, substantive contributions, and especially the field research methods.

Final Paper (25%) *Draft due 8 May (post to Stellar). You have the option to submit revisions by 20 May.*

Utilizing the qualitative data gathered from your field site, either a) construct a research proposal that builds upon this semester's work; or b) critically review and assess your findings and field methods. Whichever option you choose, the final paper should analyze your own fieldwork, data, and conclusions in light of the course's readings. Recommended length is 10-15 pages.

Class Participation (20%)

- Contribute to class discussions.
- Constructively critique your peers' work during our workshops.
- If you choose to use a laptop/tablet, stay on-task during class.

TEXTS

Required:

- Erikson, Kai T. (1976). *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett. 2005 *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Pachirat, Timothy (2011). *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Wood, Elisabeth. (2003) *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

All required texts are in stock at the COOP, but they may be cheaper online.

Recommended:

- Agar, Michael H. 1980. *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*. New York: Academic Press.
- Birch, Maxine, Tina Miller, Melanie Mauthner, and Julie Jessop, Eds. 2012. *Ethics in Qualitative Research, 2nd Ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M. Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, Eds. 2008. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brady, Henry E. and David Collier, Eds. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Coffrey, Amanda. 1999. *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dewalt, Kathleen and Billie R. Dewalt. 2002. *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Gerring, John. 2007. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- *Goertz, Gary and James Mahoney. 2012. *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda Shaw (Eds.) 2011 *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. 2nd Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lareau, Annette and Jeffrey Shultz, Eds. 1996. *Journeys through Ethnography: Realistic Accounts of Fieldwork*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis. 4th Ed.* Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Mahoney, James and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Eds. 2003. *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nordstrom, Carolyn and Antonius C. G. M. Robben. 1995. *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Schatz, Edward. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- van Maanen, John. 2011 (1988). *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography. 2nd Ed.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press.

**I strongly recommend that you purchase Goertz & Mahoney 2012, but it is not in stock at the COOP.*

COURSE OUTLINE

6 Feb Course Logistics & Field Projects

Come to class prepared with two or three ideas about possible field sites.

10 & 11 Feb Special Event: Jeff Checkel talks & process tracing workshop

13 Feb Human Subjects & Ethics

Complete COUHES training before class. <http://couhes.mit.edu/training-research-involving-human-subjects>

Guest Speaker: Judy Medeiros-Adams, COUHES

Required:

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. 1979. *The Belmont Report*.

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html>

Case 1: *Gang Leader for a Day*

Venkatesh, Sudhir. 2008. *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*. New York: Penguin Press. Chapters 1 & 6. pp. 1-26 and 185-218. (on *Stellar*)

Waterston, Alisse. 2012. "Exoticizing the Other and the Author: Commentary on *Gang Leader for a Day* by Sudhir Venkatesh." *North American Dialogue* 15(1): 13-17.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1556-4819.2012.01046.x/full>

Case 2: T3 Facebook Data

Parry, Marc. 2011. "Harvard Researchers Accused of Breaching Students' Privacy." *Chronicle of Higher Education*. July 10. <http://chronicle.com/article/Harvards-Privacy-Meltdown/128166/>

Zimmer, Michael. 2010. "‘But the Data Is Already Public’: On the Ethics of Research in Facebook." *Ethics and Information Technology* 12(4):313-325.

http://download.springer.com/static/pdf/8/art%253A10.1007%252Fs10676-010-9227-5.pdf?auth66=1389903738_0e56efae74b2c916ff8638c49e75b2cb&text=.pdf

Case 3: The Belfast Project

Palys, Ted and John Lowman. 2012. "Defending Research Confidentiality 'To the Extent the Law Allows:' Lessons from the Boston College Subpoenas." *Journal of Academic Ethics* 10(4): 271-297. http://download.springer.com/static/pdf/311/art%253A10.1007%252Fs10805-012-9172-5.pdf?auth66=1390344924_19edbc2cd8b9bbac6068865f04ccaedd&text=.pdf

Read some of the news coverage of the case (you can choose specific articles), and browse <http://bostoncollegesubpoena.wordpress.com/>.

Recommended:

ASA Ethics Case Studies: Case 37 and Case 48. (and browse other cases) <http://www.asanet.org/ethics/detail.cfm?id=25>

Bobo, Lawrence D. 2009. "Crime, Urban Poverty, and Social Science." *Du Bois Review* 6(2): 273-278. <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayFulltext?type=1&fid=6889288&jid=DBR&volumeId=6&issueId=02&aid=6889280>

Debate on *Gang Leader for a Day* (introduction to forum, reviews, and response). *Sociological Forum* 24(1), March 2009: 199-219. <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/ehost/results?sid=9a949f4f-edc4-4bde-b20c-c06451a5d27e%40sessionmgr4002&vid=2&hid=4108&bquery=JN+%22Sociological+Forum%22+AND+DT+20090301&bdata=JmRiPWE5aCZ0eXBIPTEmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZI>

The National Science Foundation. "Frequently Asked Questions and Vignettes: Interpreting the Common Rule for the Protection of Human Subjects for Behavioral and Social Science Research." <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/hsfaqs.jsp>

Wolf, Leslie E et al. 2012. "Certificates of Confidentiality: Legal Counsels' Experiences with and Perspectives on Legal Demands for Research Data." *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* 7(4): 1-9. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3640418/pdf/nihms-457863.pdf>

20 Feb **Violence, Danger, & Risk Management** *IRB Application due 20 Feb.*

Guest Speaker: Fotini Christia, MIT

Required:

van Maanen, John. 1983. "On the Ethics of Fieldwork." In *An Introduction to Social Research: A Handbook of Social Science Methods, Volume I*. Ed. Robert B. Smith. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company. 1983. pp. 227-252. (*on Stellar*)

Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2006. "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones." *Qualitative Sociology* 29: 373-386.

<http://ehis.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=96e039de-6c1b-4131-b83c-a8ae6096c36e%40sessionmgr4004&vid=2&hid=4108>

Sluka, Jeffrey A. 1995. "Reflections on Managing Danger in Fieldwork: Dangerous Anthropology in Belfast." in *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*. Eds. Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius C. G. M. Robben. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 276-294. (on Stellar)

Recommended:

Kovats-Bernat, J. Christopher. 2002. "Negotiating Dangerous Fields: Pragmatic Strategies for Fieldwork amid Violence and Terror." *American Anthropologist* 104(1): 208-222.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1525/aa.2002.104.1.208/pdf>

27 Feb Field Notes & Interviewing

Required:

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-38 (on Stellar)

Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. 4th Ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth. pp. 99-118. (on Stellar)

Lareau, Annette. "Common Problems in Fieldwork: A Personal Essay." in *Journeys Through Ethnography: Realistic Accounts of Fieldwork*. Eds. Annette Lareau and Jeffrey Schultz. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. pp. 195-236. (on Stellar)

Leech, Beth L. 2002. "Asking Questions: Techniques for Semistructured Interviews." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 665-668.

http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPSC%2FPSC35_04%2FS1049096502001129a.pdf&code=692be0f3bb7bddde6cb278dbfe6e39fd

Fujii, Lee Ann. 2010. "Shades of Truth and Lies: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence." *Journal of Peace Research* 47(2): 231-241. <http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/47/2/231.full.pdf+html>

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press. Chapters 4 & 5, pp. 61 - 150. (on Stellar)

Rathburn, Brian C. 2008. "Interviewing and Qualitative Field Methods: Pragmatism and Practicalities." in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Eds. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 685-701. (on Stellar)

Recommended:

Agar, Michael H. 1980. *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*. New York: Academic Press.

6 March Interviewing (II)

Required:

Erikson, Kai T. (1976). *Everything in Its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

13 March Participant Observation

Required:

Timothy Pachirat. 2011. *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Recommended:

Calvey, David. 2008. "The Art and Politics of Covert Research: Doing 'Situated Ethics' in the Field." *Sociology* 42(5): 905-918. <http://soc.sagepub.com/content/42/5/905.full.pdf+html>

Fenno, Richard. 1978. "Notes on Method: Participant Observation." in *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*, by Richard Fenno. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company. pp. 249-295. (on Stellar)

Solomon, Avi. 2012. "Working Undercover in a Slaughterhouse: Interview with Timothy Pachirat." *BoingBoing*. 8 March. <http://boingboing.net/2012/03/08/working-undercover-in-a-slaughter.html>

Spicker, Paul. 2011. "Ethical Covert Research." *Sociology* 45(1): 118-133. <http://soc.sagepub.com/content/45/1/118.full.pdf+html>

20 March Identity & Relationships

Book review due 20 March.

Guest Speaker: Lihi Ben Shitrit, Harvard Divinity School & the University of Georgia, Athens

Required:

Materials to be provided by Lihi Ben Shitrit. (*on Stellar*)

Coffrey, Amanda. 1999. *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Chapter 3: “The Interpersonal Field,” Chapter 5: “The Sex(ual) Field,” and Chapter 6: “Romancing the Field.” pp. 39-58, 77-113. (*on Stellar*)

Duncombe, Jean and Julie Jessop. “‘Doing Rapport’ and the Ethics of ‘Faking Friendship.’” in *Ethics in Qualitative Research, 2nd Ed.* Eds. Maxine Birch, Tina Miller, Melanie Mauthner, and Julie Jessop. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. pp. 108-121. (*on Stellar*)

Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis, 4th Ed.* Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth. Chapter 4: “Getting Along,” pp. 54-80. (*on Stellar*)

Recommended:

Orlandella, Angelo Ralph. 1993. “Appendix B: The Whyte Impact on an Underdog.” in *Street Corner Society, 4th Ed.* by William Foote Whyte. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 374-389. (*on Stellar*)

Whyte, William Foote. 1993 (1941). *Street Corner Society, 4th Ed.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Appendix A: “On the Evolution of Street Corner Society,” pp. 279-373. (*on Stellar*)

27 March No Class — Spring Break

? April Workshop 1

Upload participant observation exercise and interview transcript or notes to Stellar by 27 March.

*****We will need to reschedule this class.****

Required:

Student participant observation exercises and interview notes/transcripts. (*on Stellar*)

10 April Analyzing Qualitative Data

Required:

Checkel, Jeffrey and Andrew Bennett (Eds.). Process tracing chapters to be provided. *(on Stellar)*

George, Alexander and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Chapters 1-2 and 7-11.

Goertz, Gary and James Mahoney. 2012. *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 2, 4, 7 and 8. *(On Stellar)*

Braumoeller, Bear F. and Gary Goertz. 2000. "The Methodology of Necessary Conditions." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(4): 844-858.

<http://ehis.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=a79d66ba-24c6-4d27-9a36-aefc5bb7e398%40sessionmgr4003&hid=4111>

Recommended:

Mackie, J. L. "Causes and Conditions." *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Oct. 1965), pp. 245-264. <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.mit.edu/stable/20009173?seq=1>

Collier, David, Henry E. Brady, and Jason Seawright. 2010. "Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology." in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Eds. Henry Brady and David Collier. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. pp. 161-204. *(on Stellar)*

Rihoux, Benoit. 2008. "Case-Oriented Configurational Research: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), Fuzzy Sets, and Related Techniques." in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Eds. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 722-736. *(on Stellar)*

**17 April Multi-Method Research &
Qualitative Research**

*Upload interview transcript or notes and
focus group notes or transcript to
Stellar by 17 April.*

Required:

Wedeen, Lisa. 2009. "Ethnography as Interpretive Enterprise." in *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Ed. Edward Schatz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 75-94. *(on Stellar)*

Paluck, Elizabeth Levy. 2010. "The Promising Integration of Qualitative Methods and Field Experiments." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 628: 59-71. <http://ann.sagepub.com/content/628/1/59.full.pdf+html>

Mahoney, James. 2007. "Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics." *Comparative Political Studies* 40(2): 122-144. <http://cps.sagepub.com/content/40/2/122.full.pdf+html>

Mahoney, James. 2010. "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research." *World Politics* 62(1): 120-147. <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayFulltext?type=1&fid=6866164&jid=WPO&volumeId=62&issueId=01&aid=6866160&bodyId=&membershipNumber=&societyETOCSession=>

Tarrow, Sidney. 2010. "Bridging the Quantitative-Qualitative Divide." in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Eds. Henry Brady and David Collier. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. pp. 101-110. (*on Stellar*)

Recommended:

Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2008. "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods." in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Eds. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 756-776. (*on Stellar*)

Gerring, John. 2010. "Causal Mechanisms: Yes, But ..." *Comparative Political Studies* 43(1): 1499-1526. <http://cps.sagepub.com/content/43/11/1499.full.pdf+html>

Mahoney, James. 2008. "Toward a Unified Theory of Causality." *Comparative Political Studies* 41(4/5): 412-436. <http://cps.sagepub.com/content/41/4-5/412.full.pdf+html>

18 April **Special Event: Heidi Hardt talk & elite interviewing workshop**

24 April **Workshop 2**

Required:

Student notes/transcripts from focus groups. (*on Stellar*)

1 May From the Field to Publication (I)

Required:

Wood, Elisabeth. (2003) *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

8 May From the Field to Publication (II)

*Draft final paper due 8 May
(post to Stellar).*

Required:

Hawkesworth, Mary. 2003. "Congressional Enactments of Race-Gender: Toward a Theory of Raced-Gendered Institutions." *American Political Science Review* 97(4): 529-550.

http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPSR%2FPSR97_04%2FS0003055403000868a.pdf&code=193b2e6781e65ad46ca4bcf617ba24df

Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2012. "Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 517-532.

http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPSR%2FPSR106_03%2FS0003055412000305a.pdf&code=829bde52d95659a81bcfe8a66d382c

Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. 2013. "Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War." *American Political Science Review* 107(3): 418-432.

http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPSR%2FPSR107_03%2FS0003055413000208a.pdf&code=3c4950aac8cbf672cf84720c13bb8d5

15 May Final Workshop

Required:

Students' draft final papers. (*on Stellar*)

Due date for (optionally) revised final papers: 20 May.