**Master**
**Political and Social Sciences Department**

**Teaching Plan**
**Qualitative Research Methods**
**2015-2016 Second Term**

**Professor**
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## DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to provide an introduction to qualitative research methodology in social sciences. The central aim of this course is to prepare students to design and conduct qualitative research in a variety of different settings, while providing them with a critical understanding of broader conceptual, theoretical, and methodological debates within this paradigm of research. Throughout the course, a particular emphasis will be placed on the issues of *diversity*. We will explore various ways of developing and evaluating qualitative research strategies that deal with the complexities related to race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, culture and so forth. By the end of this course, students will be able to develop a clearly defined research project that centers on the issues of diversity, process and discuss their initial research findings, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of existing qualitative studies in this area.

The course is organized into three main parts that elaborate different stages and components of qualitative research.

Part I. *Theories and Concepts.*
The first theoretical part will focus on how to design qualitative research. We will begin with considering different paradigms and methodological debates in social sciences (Session 1) and move on offering a toolkit for designing qualitative research (Session 2).

Part II. *Methods and Measurement.*
The second and more practical part will be devoted to the different qualitative research designs and methodological tools for collecting data and generating knowledge in qualitative studies. This involves considering the case study and comparative designs (Session 3), interviews, participant observation, fieldwork, and ethical issues (Session 4).

Part III. *Analysis, Interpretation, and Presentation.*
The last part will focus on the practice of data analysis, interpretation of the key findings, and presentation of conclusions. In particular, we will provide tools for organizing and processing the data, describing and interpreting the major findings, and writing up the conclusions (Session 5). The last session of the course will be dedicated to presentations of students' research proposals and primary findings (Sessions 6).

All sessions will consist of: (a) Introduction of conceptual and theoretical issues; (b) Presentation and discussion of the required readings; and (c) Interactive discussions on methodological issues concerning the research projects to be developed.

## PREREQUISITES

As the course is based on the development of a qualitative research project, it requires students to have initial knowledge on how to articulate research questions, formulate hypotheses, and elaborate the contributions of their research to the broader theoretical concerns and debates in social sciences. Both in seminars and in tutorial sessions, we will work on enhancing these capacities.

## OBJECTIVES
- Develop a critical understanding of philosophical underpinnings and methodological debates in social science research.
- Develop the ability to consider the appropriateness different research designs, data collection techniques and types of evidence to construct robust qualitative research.
- Have the capacity to carry out qualitative research and be aware of possible challenges in different stages of the research.
- Understand and confront the ethical challenges of doing fieldwork
- Be familiar with some of the published studies in diversity research, evaluate their research questions, logic of arguments, research methods, and data analysis.
- Develop a qualitative research project, present the initial findings, and provide informed feedback on the projects of your classmates.

## RESEARCH PROJECT

The course is practice intensive and operates under the philosophy 'learning by doing'. With this in mind, students will be required to produce a brief piece of empirical research. This will allow you to deal with the knowledge acquired and develop skills to present, explain and defend your research approach and results. The research project will be discussed in class (in the third hour). On **February 10th**, a first outline – including research question, academic relevance and methodology - will be handed in. Final research papers are due on **March 4th, Friday**. In the last session of the course, you will present and defend your research projects in the context of an academic seminar.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is expected of all students. The attempt by any student to copy in whole or in part from another source without giving full references will be considered plagiarism.

For more detailed information on academic integrity code, please visit:

http://www.upf.edu/universitat/en/codi-etic/codi_etic_en.pdf

## EVALUATION

- **Attendance and participation: 10%**

  Students are expected to have done all assigned readings before each session, and to actively participate in classroom discussion. Since the interactive class environment is one of the best places to share our knowledge and develop new ideas, your active and informed participation is an essential part of this course.

- **Two weekly reflection essays: 30%**

  Students will work in groups and write 2 short reflection essays (~4 pages) on the key issues and questions of the three sessions that they will select at the first meeting. For each week, you will post your essay on the *Aula Global* no later than Tuesday 12:00 pm (that is one day before class). The essays should be concise, clear, analytically sharp, and well reasoned. You need to be ready to discuss your main points in class. ** No essays are due for the 1st and 6th, sessions.

- **Leading class discussion: 10%**

  Each session will have a group of discussion leaders, who will have the duty to summarize the main issues, open and lead the class discussion. It is important that discussion leaders carefully read the reflection essays before class and incorporate their main points in the discussion.

- **Research project presentation: 10%**

  Students will present the main findings of their research projects in power point presentation at one of the last two sessions. Details of research project presentations will be discussed in class.

- **Research Project: 40%**

  Each group will turn in a final research paper (max. 6,000 words without annex) no later than **March 4th (Friday)**. Details of final research project will be discussed in class.

** In order to pass the subject, it is required to get at least **five out of ten** in each part (weekly reflection essays, leading class discussion, research project presentation, and final research project). If any of the parts is failed, you will have to recover only those parts that did not fulfill the specific requirements.

** If you fail to attend more than 20% of the required session meetings, you will need to hand in an official medical notice for your absence.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### SESSION 1: January 13

### Logics of Inquiry in Social Sciences: Qualitative Analysis in Perspective

**Description:** We will begin the course with a brief introduction to the key methodological debates in social sciences. In this respect, we will review the so-called "divide" between quantitative and qualitative research traditions, which keeps on shaping the field of social sciences. This broader introduction to social science methodologies will allow us to put the qualitative research into perspective vis-á-vis other research traditions. Then, we will move on opening the box of qualitative tradition and analyze diverse approaches within this paradigm. The main topics of discussion will include relative strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research, compatibility of

their principles, standards, and philosophical underpinnings, diverse approaches and assumptions within qualitative research, and possibilities for bridging methodological divides in social sciences.

**Discussion questions:** How is qualitative research different from quantitative methodologies? What are its key strengths and weaknesses? Are qualitative and quantitative logics of inquiry compatible to each other? How and why do we choose our methodological approach? And how does our methodological choice determine our research design?

**Required reading**:

Porta, Donatella Della, and Michael Keating, eds. 2008. *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp: 19-39.

**Recommended readings**:

Sil, Rudra. 2000. "The Division of Labor in Social Science Research: Unified Methodology or 'Organic Solidarity'?." *Polity* 32 (4): 499–531. doi:10.2307/3235291.

Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." *Political Analysis* 14 (3): 227–49.

King, Gary, Robert O Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

Ragin, Charles C. 2004. "Turning the Tables: How Case-Oriented Research Challenges Variable-Oriented Research." In *Rethinking Social Inquiry Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, edited by Henry E Brady and David Collier, Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, pp: 123–38.

For diverse approaches within qualitative research:

Creswell, John W. 2007. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Chapter 4, pp: 53-85.

Iosifides, Theodoros. 2012. "Migration Research between Positivistic Scientism and Relativism: A Critical Realist Way Out." In *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, edited by Carlos Vargas-Silva, 26–49. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Spencer, Renée, Julia M. Pryce, and Jill Walsh. 2014. "Philosophical Approaches to Qualitative Research." In *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Patricia Leavy. Oxford University Press, pp: 81–96.

**SESSION 2: January 20**

**Fundamentals of Qualitative Research Design**

**Description:** While the first session provides a background on the key principles and assumptions of qualitative research; in this second session, we will focus on how these philosophical underpinnings are turned into robust research designs. In this session, we will overview the main steps of qualitative research designs, which could be summarized under conceptual/theoretical, methodological, and empirical parts. By providing the bigger picture of qualitative research design, this session aims to make you ready for getting started with your own research design and plunging into further elements of qualitative research.

**Discussion questions**: How do you choose a research topic, define the research problem, and state your scholarly contribution? How do you ensure the compatibility among research questions, methods, and case selection? What are the key issues and challenges in collection and analysis of qualitative data?

**Required Reading**:

Saldana, Johnny. 2011. *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research*. 1 edition. New York: Oxford University Press, Chapter 3, pp: 65-88.

Dancygier, Rafaela M. 2010. *Immigration and Conflict in Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp: 3-20. ** We will analyze this chapter with respect to its research design.

**Recommended readings**:

Munck, Gerardo L. 2004. "Tools for Qualitative Research." In *Rethinking Social Inquiry Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, edited by Henry E Brady and David Collier, 105–20. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Schmitter, Philippe C. 2008. "The Design of Social and Political Research." In *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, edited by Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating, 263–95. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Flick, Uwe. 2009. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Fourth Edition. Los Angeles, Calif.: SAGE Publications. Part 3, "Research Design," pp: 87-146.

**SESSION 3. February 3**

**Single Case Study and Comparative Designs: Researching In-Depth and Across**

**Definition**: Single case studies allow researchers to achieve high conceptual validity, generate new hypotheses, explore causal mechanisms, and assess complex causal relations. On the other hand, comparative studies de-mythicize uniqueness by examining patterns of similarity and difference across different cases. In this way, they explore different causal processes that result in different outcomes. In this session, we will examine fundamental aspects of single case and comparative research designs and explore their relative advantages and potential problems.

**Discussion questions**: What is a case study? What are its strengths and potential problems? What kind of research questions could be best answered by case studies? Why do researchers engage in comparative research? What are the advantages and pitfalls of comparative research designs? How do single case and comparative designs contribute to theory-advancement in social sciences?

**Required readings**:
George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2004. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. Chapter 1, "Case Studies and Theory Development", pp: 3-36 and Chapter 8, "Comparative Methods" Controlled Comparison and Within-Case Analysis", pp: 151-179.

Bloemraad, Irene. 2013. "The Promise and Pitfalls of Comparative Research Design in the Study of Migration." *Migration Studies* 1 (1): 27–46.

Maxwell, Rahsaan. 2012. *Ethnic Minority Migrants in Britain and France: Integration Trade-Offs*. Cambridge University Press, pp: 1-28.

**Recommended readings**:

Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Third Edition. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, pp: 1-55.

Gerring, John. 2004. "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" *The American Political Science Review* 98 (2): 341–54.

Ragin, Charles C., and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2010. *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method*. Los Angeles, Calif.: SAGE Publications, pp: 111-134 and pp: 135-161

Simons, Helen. 2014. "Case Study Research: In-Depth Understanding in Context." In *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Patricia Leavy, 1 edition, 455–70. Oxford University Press.

Ragin, Charles C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 3, "Case-Oriented Comparative Methods", pp: 34-52.

FitzGerald, David. 2012. "A Comparativist Manifesto for International Migration Studies." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35 (10): 1725–40. doi:10.1080/01419870.2012.659269.

On Case-Selection:

Collier, David, and James Mahoney. 1996. "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research." *World Politics* 49 (1): 56–91.

Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapter 3, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias and Related Issues", pp: 89-129.

**SESSION 4. February 17**

**Interviews, Participant Observation, and Field Work**

**Description:** This session aims to give you an overview about the use and practice of various qualitative data collection techniques. We will begin the session by reviewing the various forms of qualitative interviews (i.e. structured, semi-structures, unstructured interviews; individual, group, and elite interviews; face-to-face, telephone, and internet interviews; and descriptive and assertive interviews). In each interviewing technique, we will discuss particular strengths and weaknesses involved in data collection process. Then, we will introduce and discuss the key aspects of participant observation such as its various stages (i.e. entry to the field, carrying out fieldwork, and turning ethnographic observation into research data), the role of the researcher and the issue of reflexivity, ethical issues involved in participant observation research, and promises and challenges of multi-sited ethnography.

**Discussion Questions:** Why do researchers use qualitative interviewing methods? How does the style of the interview affect the research outcome? Why do researchers use participant observation method? What kind of questions can be effectively studied by it? How do researchers get ready for conducting interviews and/or the fieldwork? What is the role of researchers during the process of interviewing? What do they do during the fieldwork? How does the presence of the researcher affect the data collection process? How do researchers deal with ethical issues involved in qualitative interviews and participant observation research?

**Required Readings:**

Sánchez-Ayala, Luis. 2012. "Interviewing Techniques for Migrant Minority Groups." In *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, edited by Carlos Vargas-Silva, 117–36. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Fitzgerald, David. 2006. "Towards a Theoretical Ethnography of Migration." *Qualitative Sociology* 29 (1): 1–24. doi:10.1007/s11133-005-9005-6.

Pero, Davide. 2008. "Migrants' Mobilization and Anthropology: Reflections from the Experience of Latin Americans in the United Kingdom." In *Citizenship, Political Engagement, and Belonging: Immigrants in Europe and the United States*, edited by Deborah Reed-Danahay and Caroline B. Brettell, 103–23. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press.

**Recommended Readings:**

On Interviews and Focus Group Research:

Mason, Jennifer. 2002. *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd edition. London: SAGE Publications. Chapter 4, "Qualitative Interviewing", pp: 62-83.

Brinkmann, Svend. 2013. *Qualitative Interviewing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp: 1-43.

Miller, Jody, and Barry Glassner. 2004. "The 'Inside' and the 'Outside': Finding Realities in Interviews." In *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, edited by David Silverman, Second Edition edition, 125–40. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Bloor, Michelle Thomas, Jane Frankland, Michelle Thomas, and Kate Robson. 2001. *Focus Groups in Social Research*. London: SAGE Publications, pp: 1-19.

Kamberelis, George, and Greg Dimitriadis. 2014. "Focus Group Research: Retrospect and Prospect." In *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Patricia Leavy, 1 edition, 315–40. Oxford University Press.

On Elite Interviews:

Leech, Beth L. 2002. "Asking Questions: Techniques for Semistructured Interviews." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 35 (04): 665–68. doi:10.1017/S1049096502001129.

Goldstein, Kenneth. 2002. "Getting in the Door: Sampling and Completing Elite Interviews." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35 (4): 669–72.

Woliver, Laura R. 2002. "Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Interviewing." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35 (4): 677–78.

On Ethnographic Research and Ethical Issues:

Wedeen, Lisa. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (1): 255–72.

Rudolph, Lloyd I., and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. 2003. "Engaging Subjective Knowledge: How Amar Singh's Diary Narratives of and by the Self Explain Identity Formation." *Perspectives on Politics* 1 (04): 681–94. doi:10.1017/S153759270300046X.

Michael, Angrosino. 2008. *Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Baszanger, Isabelle, and Nicolas Dodier. 2004. "Ethnography: Relating the Part to the Whole." In *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, edited by David Silverman, Second Edition edition, 9–34. London: SAGE Publications.

Marshall, Catherine, and Gretchen B. Rossman. 2010. *Designing Qualitative Research*. Fifth Edition edition. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications. Chapter 3, "Trustworthiness and Ethics", 39-53.

van Liempt, Ilse, and Veronika Bilger. 2012. "Ethical Challenges in Research with Vulnerable Migrants." In *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, 451–66. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

**SESSION 5. February 24**

**Qualitative Data Analysis: Processing, Interpreting, and Writing**

**Description:**

The last and perhaps the most crucial stage of research process includes organizing and processing the data, describing and interpreting the major findings, and discussing the relationship among the key findings, initial arguments, and the existing social science theories, and writing the conclusion of the research. In this session, we will review different steps and strategies to analyze qualitative data and writing up the research conclusions.

**Discussion Questions:**

What counts as evidence that addresses to our research questions? What are the major ways of organizing and categorizing the qualitative data? How can we draw conclusions from our categories? When do we use computer-assisted analysis? How can we link our findings to the research questions and arguments stated in the introduction?

**Required Readings:**

Yin, Robert K. 2010. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. New York: Guilford Press. Chapter 8, "Analyzing Qualitative Data, I: Compiling, Disassembling, and Reassembling" and Chapter 9, "Analyzing Qualitative Data, II: Interpreting and Concluding", pp: 176-228.

Bloemraad, Irene. 2012. "What the Textbooks Don't Tell You: Moving from a Research Puzzle to Publishing Findings." In *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, 502–20. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

**Recommended Readings:**

Mason, Jennifer. 2002. *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd edition. London: SAGE Publications. Chapter 8, "Organizing and Indexing Qualitative Data", pp: 147-172.

Trent, Allen, and Jeasik Cho. 2014. "Interpretation Strategies: Appropriate Concepts." In *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Patricia Leavy, 1 edition, 639–57. Oxford University Press.

Marshall, Catherine, and Gretchen B. Rossman. 2010. *Designing Qualitative Research*. Fifth edition. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications. Chapter 8, "Managing, Analyzing, and Interpreting Data", 205-227.

**SESSION 6. March 9**

**Description:** This session will be dedicated to present and discuss the main research exploratory findings by each group.