

POLS 320 001
Social Science Research Methods
Professor Kendra L. Koivu
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Office SSCI 2048
Office hours: Wednesday 2:30-4:30pm, or by appointment

This course offers an introduction to qualitative research methods in the social sciences. Qualitative research methods are non-quantitative (i.e., non-statistical) modes of social inquiry, and include various endeavors like historical analysis, case studies, focus groups, interviews, and participant observation. The goals are to give students new analytic tools which they can apply to other courses, to increase their capacity to pose and answer research questions on their own, and to give them hands-on experience conducting qualitative research. The readings and lectures will cover a wide variety of qualitative methods. The readings include not only explicitly methodological texts, but many substantive examples from different fields of social science which serve to illustrate different methods. In order to reinforce the readings and lectures, students will do a series of short exercises in which they apply ideas developed in the course.

Required Books

Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 14th edition. Wadsworth Publishing, 2013

Katherine Dettwyler, *Dancing Skeletons: Life and Death in West Africa*. Waveland Press, 1993

Assignments

Your grade in this class will be based on the following components:

- 1) Weekly quizzes (15%): With the exception of week 1, students will be expected to take an online quiz for the upcoming week's readings. Each quiz will become available on the course website on Friday and should be completed by Wednesday. The purpose of these quizzes is to prepare you for the week's discussions.
- 2) Exercises (30%): In the fourth section of the class students will engage in three types of qualitative research techniques: interviews, focus groups, and archival analysis. An assignment will accompany each activity (TBA). The purpose of these exercises is to give students experience conducting qualitative research.

3) Memos (10%): Students will turn in five 1-page memos. Students will be asked to either reflect on a particular topic or answer a particular question. These will be graded pass/fail—in other words, as long as they are handed in you will get credit. The purpose of these memos is to encourage the activity of “thinking as writing” with short, low-stakes writing assignments.

4) Section tests (20%): There will be four short in-class exams consisting of fill-in-the-blank and short answer questions.

5) Final project (25%): Students will turn in a 10-page research proposal. The final project will build on the ideas you have developed in your memos and the experience you have gained from the qualitative research exercises. Time will be devoted in class throughout the semester to components of the research proposal, such as concept formation, case selection, choice of methods, and most importantly, research question.

Policies

First, the basics: You are required to arrive to class on time, having completed the assigned readings for the week. You are expected to refrain from using your phone for the duration of class. Unless otherwise stated, all assignments should be submitted as hard copies in class. Course communication will occur via email and over UNM Learn. The syllabus, readings, and assignments will be posted on the course webpage.

In addition: Recent research has shown that students retain less when taking notes on laptops, and that in-class laptop use—when not related to a specific in-class assignment—is correlated with lower student learning outcomes. For these reasons, unless exempted by the Office of Equal Opportunity or needed for an in-class assignment, **laptops will not be permitted in class**. If you would like more information about the study, see Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer, “The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note Taking,” *Psychological Science* 25, 6 (2014).

Accommodation of Disabilities

Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact me as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner. Handouts are available in alternative accessible formats upon request. If you need more information on the Americans with Disability Act, please contact the Office of Equal Opportunity at 277-5251.

Course Schedule

Section I: Thinking about the World around Us

Week 1 (January 16): Introduction

Week 2 (January 23): Human Inquiry and Science

Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, Chapter 1 (pgs. 3-30)

Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chapter 2 “The Route to Normal Science” (pgs. 10-22)

*First memo due, January 27

Week 3 (January 30): Dialectics of Social Research: A single logic or creative tensions?

Babbie, chapter 2 (pgs. 45-59 ONLY)

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research,” *Political Analysis* 14:3, Summer 2006 (pgs. 227-249)

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, “The Science in Social Science,” Chapter 1 in *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Research in Qualitative Research*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994 (pgs. 3-33)

Examples of Creative Tensions

Lumpers vs. Splitters: JH Hexter, *On Historians*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979 (pgs. 241-243)

Hedgehog vs. Fox: Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966 (pgs. 1-2)

Case-Oriented vs. Variable-Oriented: Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987 (pgs. xii-xiii)

Thin vs. Thick Description: Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” Chapter 1 in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973 (pgs. 6-7)

Specific Facts vs. Generalization: AM MacIver, “Levels of Explanation in History,” in May Brodbeck, ed., *Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, New York: MacMillan, 1968 (pgs. 304-307)

Parsimony vs. Accuracy: Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*, New York: John Wiley, 1970 (pgs. 20-23)

Dichotomies: Cullen Murphy, "The Power of Two: A New Way of Classifying Everyone," *Atlantic Monthly* 274:5, November 1994 (pgs. 22-24)

*First section test, February 3

Section II: The Core Components of Social Science Inquiry

Week 4 (February 6): The Puzzles that Motivate Us

Babbie, chapter 4 (pgs. 88-112)

Christopher Day and Kendra L. Koivu, "Coming up with a Question: A Puzzle-based Approach to the Logic of Discovery" (manuscript)

*Class cancelled, February 10

Week 5 (February 13): Research Design

Babbie, Chapter 4 (pgs. 113-122)

Stephen F. Steele, Bill Hauser, and AnneMarie Scarisbrick-Hauser, *Solution-centered Sociology: Addressing Problems through Applied Sociology*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1999; Chapter 1 (pgs. 3-18)

*Second memo due, February 17

Week 6 (February 20): Concepts and Measurement

Babbie, chapter 5 (123-154)

Gary Goertz, *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006; Chapter 1 (pgs. 1-24)

*Third memo due, February 24

Week 7 (February 27): Causation and Case Selection

Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, "Causes of Effects vs. Effects of Causes," "Hume's Two Definitions of Cause," and "Case Selection and Hypothesis Testing" in *A Tale of Two Cultures*, pp. 41-50 and 75-86, 177-188

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, "Phase One: Designing Case Study Research" in *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, pgs. 73-88

*Second section test, March 3

Section III: Approaches to Qualitative Inquiry

Week 8 (March 6): The Comparative Method

Theda Skocpol, "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18:2, April 1976 (pgs. 175-210)

Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," in Theda Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, Cambridge University Press, 1994 (pgs. 72-98)

***March 13-17 SPRING BREAK**

Week 9 (March 20): Process Tracing and Case Studies

David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44, No. 4 (2011), pgs. 823-830

Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Adventure of Silver Blaze"

We will choose one from each of the two categories below:

Descriptive Inference

Daniel Lerner, "The Grocer and the Chief: A Parable," Chapter 1 in *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, Glencoe: Free Press, 1958 (pgs. 1-42)

Richard Fenno, "US House Members in their Constituencies: An Exploration" *American Political Science Review* 71(3), 1977 (pgs. 883-917)

Nina Tannenwald, "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use," *International Organization* 53(3), Summer 1999 (pgs. 433-468)

Causal Inference:

Henry Brady, "Data-set Observations versus Causal-Process Observations: The 2000 U.S. Presidential Election," in David Collier and Henry Brady, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards, 2nd edition*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010 (pgs. 237-243)

Vesla Weaver, "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy" *Studies in American Political Development* 21(2), 2007, (pgs. 230-265)

Andrew Bennett, "Process Tracing and Causal Inference," in Brady and Collier *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (about World War I and the Fashoda Crisis)

*Third section test, March 24

Section IV: The Practice of Qualitative Research

Week 10 (March 27): Field Research and Interviews

Babbie, chapter 10 (pgs. 287-321)

Gerardo Munck and Richard Snyder, "David Collier: Critical Junctures, Concepts, and Methods" (pgs. 556-587) and "Theda Skocpol: States, Revolutions, and Comparative Historical Imagination" (pgs. 649-696). SKIM these chapters—focus on the questions that the interviewer is asking.

Week 11 (April 3): Field Research and Focus Groups

Jennifer Cyr, "The Pitfalls and Promise of Focus Groups as a Data Collection Method" *Sociological Methods and Research*, 45(2) 2016

William Gamson, *Talking Politics*, Cambridge University Press 1992, Appendices A, B, and C

*Interview exercise due, April 3

*Library instructional session, April 7

Week 12 (April 10): Unobtrusive Research and Content Analysis

Babbie, chapter 11 (pgs. 322-334)

*Focus group exercise due, April 10

*Fourth memo due, April 14

Week 13 (April 17): Archival analysis

Babbie, chapter 11 (pgs. 341-350)

*Fourth section test, April 21

Section V: Ethics and Roundtables

Week 14 (April 24): Ethics in Qualitative Research

Katherine Dettwyler, *Dancing Skeletons: Life and Death in West Africa*, Waveland Press, 1993

*Archival exercise due, April 24

*Fifth memo due, April 28

Week 15 (May 1): Roundtables

No readings this week, class time will be devoted to workshopping your research proposals

Final proposal due: May 12 12:30 - 2:30pm (drop off in office 2048)

Important Dates (assignments, exams, breaks, cancellations, etc)

January 27: First memo due

February 3: First section test

February 10: Class cancelled

February 17: Second memo due

February 24: Third memo due

March 3: Second section test

March 13-17: Spring break

March 24: Third section test

April 3: Interview exercise due

April 7: Library instructional session in Frank Waters Room

April 10: Focus groups exercise due

April 14: Fourth memo due

April 21: Fourth section test

April 24: Archive exercise due

April 28: Fifth memo due

May 1-5: Roundtable presentations

May 12, 12:30-2:30pm: Submit final projects (Social Sciences building, room 2048)