

Qualitative Analysis (POLI 611)

Professor Tania Islas Weinstein
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Class: Mondays from 2.35-4.35

Office Hours: Thursdays 1-3 pm

** Please sign up for office hours here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ASTdWGupBzZCtbwhujJJBhM2fTH3VUoIGfXHdxIXMQ4/edit>

Course Description

This graduate-level seminar will explore the theoretical and practical aspects of a number of qualitative research methods. While the course will focus more heavily on the interpretive research tradition, we will also read and discuss examples of positivist research that engages in generalizations and causal explanations. Throughout the course, we will go back and forth between theoretical questions regarding epistemology and ontology, debates about research ethics, and practical research techniques (including participant-observation, interviewing, discourse analysis, and archival research). Some of the specific topics we will discuss include situated knowledge, positionality, reflexivity, objectivity, and generalization.

Students should come away from the course with an appreciation of important work in Political Science and other social sciences that uses qualitative methods; a better understanding of the logics that distinguish different qualitative methods; the ways in which these different methods can be combined (including how interpretive methods can be used to generate causal explanations); and the ability to incorporate these methods and techniques into their own research.

Course Requirements

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|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Participation | 10% |
| Note Packet | 20% |
| 3 Written Exercises | 45% (15% each) |
| Final Project: Research Proposal | 25% |

Structure of the Course

Reading and Participation (10%)

Due to the ongoing pandemic, this course will be taught remotely. Because the course is a seminar, you are expected to join in the collective enterprise of discussing ideas in relation to texts. Careful reading and discussion are essential. It is expected that you will have acquired, completed, and be prepared to discuss the assigned readings by the beginning of class. We will hold weekly online meetings on Zoom at a fixed time. Attendance is strongly recommended. To protect students' privacy, these sessions will not be recorded. I encourage

you to enable the video function but will not make this a requirement and will not penalize you for having your video turned off.

** There will be three special sessions during the semester with invited guests who are specialists in their field. These sessions will *not* take place during class time. I will distribute a doodle-poll to determine dates/times that work best for most of us. Attendance of these sessions is not mandatory and you will not be penalized for missing them. I do, however, encourage everyone to join as these will be unique opportunities to talk to these brilliant scholars.

- I. Invited guest: Dr. Saiba Varma (The University of California San Diego): Discussion on doing fieldwork during times of a pandemic (and at moments of crisis in the world and academia).
>> In preparation please read: Gökçe Günel, Saiba Varma, and Chika Watanabe “A Manifesto for Patchwork Ethnography,” *Cultural Anthropology* (June 9, 2020): <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/a-manifesto-for-patchwork-ethnography>.
2. Invited guest: Dr. Claudia Chávez-Argüelles (Tulane University): Discussion on how the gendered racial positionalities of the researcher inflect the research process particularly when conducting activist research in conflict zones, colonial contexts, and/or conditions of gendered and racialized terror.
>> In preparation please read: Maya Berry, et al. 2017. “Toward a Fugitive Anthropology: Gender, Race, and Violence in the Field.” *Cultural Anthropology* 32 (4): 537-565.
3. Invited guest: Dr. Alisa Rod (McGill’s Research Data Management Specialist): Discussion on the promises and pitfalls of using full-text databases to analyze discourses.

Note Packet (20%)

Each week two or three students (depending on how many students are enrolled) will be in charge of taking notes on the material covered that week. The note-taking assignment consists of two different components:

- I. The first part is to be submitted on Sunday by 5pm (the day before class). You will need to upload a 1- or 2-page document to myCourses which includes the following components:
 - A brief summary of the main arguments of each reading (What major points are the author(s) trying to make?)
 - Major insights/strengths and weaknesses/critiques of each reading.
 - Identify the methodology that is being deployed in each of the substantive readings.
 - Pose a series of questions to guide our discussion in class (related to methods).

** Keep in mind that this is a methods class so we are less concerned with discussing the theoretical and/or substantive aspects and arguments of the readings and will, instead, focus

on the methods that are deployed. These two aspects are, of course, always interrelated, but the idea is that we make this relationship apparent and discuss it in class.

2. I will adjust the length of the sessions according to how the discussions are going but it's likely that because our meetings are over zoom, they will typically be shorter than regular in-person seminars. This means that we might not be able to cover everything during our discussion sessions. As such, the note-packet component of the course is meant to compensate for this and will, therefore, include not simply what was covered during the class discussion but other aspects that we might have missed. You will be responsible for writing extensive notes on the material for the week you are assigned to. These notes should include:
 - Summaries of all the readings with a particular focus on the methods deployed (including noting the promises and limitations of different methods and the way the methods are linked to the theoretical arguments).
 - A summary of the main points and takeaways discussed in class.
 - A short annotated bibliography which includes three to five additional sources on that week's topic.

>> You might want to think about this component as if you were giving a lecture or writing a paper on that week's specific topic. Your notes should be the material that you would use in preparation for your lecture or paper.

>> You have one full week after the class discussion to finish the notes and upload them to myCourses. I will look over them, compile them, and, at the end of the term, will send each of you a complete note-packet so that you will have entries on each of the topics covered in class.

>> This will be a joint enterprise, so you will be accountable not simply to me but to everyone else in class.

** Students should submit their top three ranked preference weeks for note-taking (the 3 weeks out of the available 10 weeks) to me via email by the end of the day on January 11; I will confirm dates by noon on January 12. Please skip weeks 1, 8 & 9, which means you have ten remaining weeks to choose from. If you don't have a strong preference for any of the weeks, please let me know. I will try my best to accommodate everyone's preferences and apologize in advance if I'm not able to do so.

Written Exercises (45% (15% each)).

- **Please upload all exercises to myCourses:**

>> **Exercise 1** (due Friday February 5th by 5 pm) (To be done in groups of 2 or 3): Write a 1200-word+/- reflection on the DA-RT (data access and transparency) debate that took place in the discipline a few years ago (it began in November 2015 in response to the [DA-RT Statement](#), a set of recommendations on Data Access and Research Transparency from APSA). After you have briefly summarized both sides of the debate, take a stance and defend it.

Useful sources (to begin to understand the controversy) and to see how journals and researchers have responded include the following:

- <https://dialogueondart.org/>
- <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/authors/annotation-for-transparent-inquiry-ati>

>> **Exercise 2** (To be done in groups of 2 or 3) This exercise has two components:

1. The first part is **due on Sunday February 14 by 5 pm (♥!)**: Identify what a discourse analysis is and what it consists of and write down 800-1000-word explanation to be uploaded on myCourses.
2. The second part is **due on Friday February 19 by 5 pm**: Conduct a 1200-word (+/-) discourse analysis of King, Keohane and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry* (1994). For those of you who are not in Political Science, try to pair up and choose another book that might be central to your discipline.

>> **Exercise 3** (due Friday April 2 by 5 pm): Conduct an open-ended interview ideally related to your research topic and ideally with someone who is involved in your fieldwork. Record it and transcribe it. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the interview can be conducted over Phone/Zoom/Skype. As you conduct the interview, make sure you write down what you are thinking (and feeling). Please turn in your transcription, notes, and a short reflection (500+/- word) of the exercise. Note that the theoretical material pertinent for this content will be covered in earlier in the course, particularly during Weeks 6 and 7.

** In preparation for this exercise we will have a short session with a specialist on the Research Ethics Board (REB). This session will take place during one of our scheduled meetings.

Final Proposal (25%) (due Monday April 12 by 5pm)

The final project will consist of segments of a draft proposal for your MA thesis or PhD dissertation or of a major research project. I will talk at length about the proposal and will hand out a guide. The idea is that this class will help you think through your main research topic and the research methods you will be using. Every proposal must address the following questions:

1. What is your research question, puzzle, or problem? What is it that you seek to understand?
2. What is your hypothesis or provisional answer to your question? What is your tentative argument?
3. Why should we care about this question/problem? Why is it important? (This is the “so what?” question or the “what’s at stake?” claim).
4. How will you execute this project? What’s your plan of attack? What methodologies will you employ and *why*? Given the theme of the class, this fourth component is crucial!

>> Everyone is *highly* encouraged to meet with me during office hours to discuss your research projects and proposals.

Inclusive Learning Environment

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the *Office for Students with Disabilities* which can be reached via email (disabilities.students@mcgill.ca) or phone (514-398-6009).

Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures” (see [McGill’s guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

Language of Submission

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

L’Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d’échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. Nous reconnaissons et remercions les divers peuples autochtones dont les pas ont marqué ce territoire sur lequel les peuples du monde entier se réunissent maintenant.

Texts

All texts will be made available electronically as downloads on myCourses with the exception of the following books, which are available as ebooks at the McGill Library website (there are unlimited licenses for the following books):

- Jane Bennett. 2009. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press).
- Arlette Farge. 2013. *The Allure of the Archives* (Yale University Press).
- Rebecca Hanson & Patricia Richards. 2019. *Harassed. Gender, Bodies, and Ethnographic Research*. (University of California Press).
- Erica Simmons. 2016. *Meaningful Resistance: Market Reforms and the Roots of Social Protest in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Bernardo Zacka. 2017. *When the State Meets the Street: Public Service and Moral Agency* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press).

The two books that are *not* available online and which you will need to purchase/borrow are the following:

- Michel Foucault. 1976. *History of Sexuality Vol. I*

- Mariana Mora. 2017. *Kuxlejal Politics. Indigenous autonomy, race, and decolonizing research in Zapatista communities* (The University of Texas Press).

The following texts are meant to serve as guides *throughout* the semester and particularly as you work on your proposals:

- Andrew Abbott. 2004. *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton): pp.3-40.
- Wayne C. Booth, et.al. 2016 [1995]. *The Craft of Research* (4th Ed) (Chicago: The University of Chicago): pp. 9-63.
- Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. 2011. "Ways of Knowing: Research Questions and Logics of Inquiry." *Interpretive Research Design. Concepts and Processes* (Taylor and Francis): pp. 24-43.

Course Schedule

** Please read the material in the order listed in the schedule.

Week 1. (January 11): Course Overview and Introductions (no readings)

We will meet over zoom and go over the syllabus and introduce ourselves. Be ready to *briefly* talk about your MA thesis or dissertation projects (research topic & main questions; why you chose this topic; what methods you plan on using – it's ok if you don't have this clearly figured out yet but the idea is to invite you begin to think about these questions seriously).

Week 2. (January 18): Political Ethnography

- Donna Haraway. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Autumn): pp. 575-599.
- Edward Schatz. 2009. "Ethnographic Immersion and the Study of Politics" in Edward Schatz (ed.) *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power* (The University of Chicago Press), Introduction (pp. 1-22).
- Jessica Allina-Pisano. 2009. "How to tell an axe murderer: an essay on ethnography, truth, and lies," in Edward Schatz (ed.) *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power* (The University of Chicago Press): ch.2 (pp. 54-73).
- Timothy Pachirat. 2009. "The political in political ethnography: dispatches from the kill floor," in Edward Schatz (ed.) *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power* (The University of Chicago Press): ch.6 (pp. 143-161).
- Lisa Wedeen. 2009. "Ethnography as Interpretive Enterprise," in Edward Schatz (ed.) *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power* (The University of Chicago Press): ch.3 (pp.75-93).
- Lisa Wedeen. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science*: 255-72.
- Lisa Wedeen. 2007. "The politics of deliberation. Qāt Chews as Public Spheres in Yemen." *Public Culture* (19:1): 59-84.

*** *Recommended* Practical Guides to writing ethnographic fieldnotes:

- Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (The University of Chicago Press).

- Dana-Ain Davis and Christa Craven (2016) *Feminist Ethnography* (Rowman and Littlefield), especially chapter 4.

Week 3 (January 25): Ethnographic Sensibility

- Sheldon Wolin. 1969. "Political Theory as a Vocation." *American Political Science Review* (Vol 63, No.4): 1062-1082.
- Bernardo Zacka. 2017. *When the State Meets the Street* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press) (all).
- Bernardo Zacka, et.al. 2020. "Political Theory with an Ethnographic Sensibility." *Contemporary Political Theory* (34 pages).

Week 4 (February 1). Ethical Debates

- Patricia Hill Collins. 1990. "Black Feminist Epistemology," in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*: pp. 251-297.
- Audra Simpson. 2007. "On ethnographic refusal. Indigeneity, 'voice,' and colonial citizenship." *Junctures* (Issue 9): 67-80.
- Elisabeth Jean Wood. 2006. "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones." *Qualitative Sociology* 29 (June 20): 373-386.
- Lee Ann Fujii. 2012. "Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities," *PS. Political Science and Politics* (October): 717-723.
- Derrick Hodge. 2013. "The Problem with Ethics," *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* (Vol. 36, No.2): 286-297.
- Eleanor Knott. 2019. "Beyond the Field: Ethics after Fieldwork in Politically Dynamic Contexts." *Perspective on Politics* (Vol. 17, No.1): 140-153.
- SKIM: Rebecca Hanson & Patricia Richards. 2019. *Harassed. Gender, Bodies, and Ethnographic Research*. (University of California Press).

*** More useful sources on issues of safety/security and sexuality/harassment:
<https://www.thenewethnographer.org/references>

Week 5 (February 8): Activist Research

- Craig Calhoun. 2008. "Foreword" in Charles R. Hale (ed.) *Engaging Contradictions. Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship* (University of California Press): xiii-xxv.
- Charles Hale. 2008. "Introduction" in Charles R. Hale (ed.) *Engaging Contradictions. Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*: 1-28
- Podcast New Books Network (2019): "Sarah Marie Wiebe, *Everyday Exposure: Indigenous Mobilization and Environmental Justice in Canada's Chemical Valley*" (45 min):
<https://newbooksnetwork.com/sarah-marie-wiebe-everyday-exposure-indigenous-mobilization-and-environmental-justice-in-canadas-chemical-valley-ubc-press-2016/>
- Mariana Mora. 2017. *Kuxlejal Politics. Indigenous autonomy, race, and decolonizing research in Zapatista communities* (The University of Texas Press) (all).

>> Special Session with Dr. Claudia Chávez-Argüelles. In preparation please read: Maya Berry, et al. 2017. "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology: Gender, Race, and Violence in the Field." *Cultural Anthropology* 32 (4): 537-565: (DATE: TBD)

>> **Exercise I (due: Friday February 12 by 5 pm).**

Week 6 (February 15): Ordinary Language Analysis and Interviews

- Frederic C. Schaffer. 2001. *Democracy in Translation* (Cornell University Press): chap. 1 (pp.1-20).
- Frederic C. Schaffer. 2014. “Thin Descriptions: The Limits of Survey Research on the Meaning of Democracy,” *Polity* (Vol. 46, No. 3): 303-330.
- Frederic C. Schaffer. 2013. “Ordinary Language Interviewing,” Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (eds.) *Interpretation and Method* (Routledge): ch.9 (pp.183-193).
- Frederic C. Schaffer. 2015. “Grounding. Elucidating how people understand a concept.” *Elucidating Social Science Concepts. An Interpretivist Guide* (Routledge: New York): pp. 26-54.

>> **Special session with Dr. Alisa Rod (McGill’s Research Data Management Specialist) to discuss the promises and pitfalls of full-text databases. (DATE: TBD)**

Week 7 (February 22): Interviews (in person and online)

- Layna Mosely. 2013. “Just talk to people? Interviews in contemporary Political Science,” in Mosely (ed.) *Interview Research in Political Science* (Cornell University Press): 1-28.
- Cathie Jo Martin. 2013. “Crafting interviews to capture cause and effect” in Mosely (ed.) *Interview Research in Political Science* (Cornell University Press): 109-124.
- Katherine Cramer Walsh. 2012. “Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective.” *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 517-32.
- Lee Ann Fuji. 2010. “Shades of Truth. Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence.” *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (2): 231-241.
- Lee Ann Fujii. 2018. *Interviewing in social science research: a relational approach* (Routledge): ch. 4 (pp. 53-72).
- Yasmin Gunaratnam. 2003. “Faking ‘race’ or ‘making race’? Race-of-Interviewer-Effects’ in Survey Research.” *Researching ‘Race’ and Ethnicity. Methods, Knowledge and Power* (London: Sage Publications): 53-78.
- Clip: Dr. Sylvia Yanagisako interviews Dr. Yarimar Bonilla on doing ethnography remotely (2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrmm_p9egKc&feature=emb_logo
- Clip: Dr. Sharika Thiraganam interviews Dr. Christine Hine on doing ethnography remotely (2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRn_eUQFhLQ
- Clip: Dr. Sylvia Yanagisako interviews John L. Jackson Jr. on doing ethnography remotely (2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8H3YZJlupY&feature=emb_logo

*** Useful resources for conducting elite interviews and “studying up”:

- Laura Nader. 1969. “Up the anthropologist – perspectives gained from studying up.” In Dell H. Hymes (ed). *Reinventing Anthropology* (New York: Random House).
- William S. Harvey. 2011. “Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews.” *Qualitative Research*. 11 (4): 431– 441.

- Matthew N. Beckmann and Richard L. Hall. 2013. "Elite interviewing in Washington, D.C." in Mosely (ed.) *Interview Research in Political Science* (Cornell University Press): 196-208.

*** Useful resources on conducting interviews and doing ethnography in a pandemic:

- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1clGjGABB2h2qbduTgfqribHmog9B6PoNvMgVuiHZCl8/preview>
- <https://items.ssrc.org/category/covid-19-and-the-social-sciences/social-research-and-insecurity/>

>> Special session with Dr. Saiba Varma to discuss ethnography in times of COVID-19. In preparation please read: [Gökçe Günel](#), [Saiba Varma](#), and [Chika Watanabe](#) "A Manifesto for Patchwork Ethnography," *Cultural Anthropology* (June 9, 2020): <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/a-manifesto-for-patchwork-ethnography> (DATE: TBD)

Week 8 (March I): Spring Break/No class

- No readings

Week 9 (March 8): Sensory Politics

- Jane Bennett. 2009. *Vibrant Matter* (Duke University Press) (all).
- Michelle D. Weitzel. 2020. "Common Sense Politics: Religion and Belonging in French Public Space." *French Politics* (18):380–404.
- Michelle D. Weitzel. "Sensory Politics and the Discipline: An Evolving Research Paradigm." (*forthcoming*)

** [Dr. Michelle Weitzel \(University of Basel\)](#) will attend our class.

Week 10: (March 15) Discourse Analysis

- Michel Foucault. *History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (all)

>> **Exercise 2. The first part of the exercise is due on Sunday March 14, no later than 5 pm and the second part is due on Friday March 19, no later than 5 pm.**

Week 11. (March 22) Case Studies and Paired Comparison

- John Gerring. 2004. "What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?" *American Political Science Review* (Vol. 98, No.2):
- Dietrich Rueschemeyer. 2003. "Can one or few cases yield theoretical gains?" *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): pp. 305-335.
- James Mahoney. 2007. "Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics" *Comparative Political Studies*.
- Sidney Tarrow. 2010. "The strategy of paired comparison: Towards a theory of practice." *Comparative Political Studies* (43:2): 230-259.
- Erica Simmons and Nicholas Rush Smith. 2017. "Comparison with an Ethnographic Sensibility." *American Political Science Association*: 126-130.

- Erica Simmons. 2016. *Meaningful Resistance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) (pp.1-109).

Week 12. (March 29) Process Tracing and Temporality

- Paul Pierson. 2004. *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press): Chapter 1.
- William H. Sewell, 2005. *Logics of History*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press): Ch. 3 (pp.81-123).
- Marcus Kreuzer. 2019. "The structure of description: evaluating descriptive inferences and conceptualizations." *Perspectives on Politics* (Vol.17, No.1): 122-139.
- Tulia Falleti and James Mahoney. 2015. "The Comparative Sequential Method," in James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (eds.), *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis* (Cambridge University Press), Ch. 8 (pp. 211-236).
- Erica Simmons. 2016. *Meaningful Resistance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) (pp.110-201).

*** Recommended Practical Guide:

- Jacob Ricks and Amy Liu. 2018. "Process-Tracing Research Designs: A Practical Guide," *PS: Political Science & Politics*.

>> **Exercise 3 (due Friday April 2, no later than 5 pm).**

Week 13. (April 5) Archival Research

- Arlette Farge. 2013. *The Allure of the Archives* (Yale University Press): excerpts.
- Michel-Rolph Trouillot. 1995. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press): chap. 2 (pp. 31-69).
- Saidiya Hartman. 2008. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe* (26): 1-14.
- Mara Loveman. 2014. "Constructing National Orders." *National Colors: Racial Classification and the State in Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp.169-206.
- Megan Ming Francis. 2019. "The Price of Civil Rights: Black Lives, White Funding, and Movement Capture," *Law & Society Review* 53(1): 275-309.