This graduate seminar introduces some of the methodological challenges associated with qualitative work in political science. We begin by briefly considering some of the debates in philosophy of science that underlie our most basic methodological choices and how they have played out recently in political science. Then the main content of the course proceeds through a series of issues in qualitative research design: concept formation and measurement, case selection, causal mechanisms and process-tracing, “configurational” analysis, counterfactuals, time and path dependence, and interpretive approaches.

**REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Read.** You are expected to read all of the reading and know it well for class. If you are not spending at least a full day and a half reading for this class each week—and probably more—then you are not doing what I expect of you.

2. **Participate.** Talk in class, ask questions, or make me aware that you’re engaged in other ways. I know some people don’t like to talk in class; if that is you, come see me in office hours (or by appointment) and show me that you’re alive and paying attention.

3. **Weekly responses to reading questions.** Each week you will be given a short series of questions about the readings to which you will respond before class. These are intended to help you understand the readings, take notes, and participate in discussion. They will be counted for completion but not graded on content. You may miss one week without penalty.

4. **Three-part research proposal:** (all due dates emailed before class unless otherwise noted)

   - Part I, due week 4 (DATE): # 1 & # 2 below, 2000 words or less.
   - Part II, due week 8 (DATE): #s 1, 2, 3 below, 3000 words or less.
   - Part III, final draft due (DATE), 4000 words or less, emailed by 5pm

**About the research proposal.** Political science, like any scholarly discipline, is a discussion not with “truth” itself but between scholars. That means that any work of scholarship necessarily begins by locating itself relative to other scholarly work on related subjects. It is rarely easy, however, to identify the important scholars to engage with on a subject that interests you and to characterize their work in a way that sets up your own potential contribution. Producing this sort of literature review is the larger of two main tasks in this assignment. The second is to sketch a research project of your own that could allow you to contribute to the debate in question.

Your literature review must have two sections: on the substantive arguments made in the literature, and on the methods used to demonstrate them. The latter is our real goal here, though it doesn’t make any sense without the former.
Your research proposal will eventually have the following sections:
1. Description of research question.
2. Substantive literature review: summary and critique of contrasting answers to the question.
3. Methods literature review: Description and critique of different methods used by answers in #2 to find and support their answers.
4. Sketch of a research plan for your own answer. Includes clear statement of rationale for further research and concrete description of your methods for empirical research.
5. Properly formatted list of references.

More extensive guidelines for each step will be handed out later in the course.

EVALUATION

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BOOKS TO BUY

Please purchase the following books at the UO Bookstore. All other readings will be available on Blackboard.


COURSE SCHEDULE FOLLOWS.

Read for Session 1: WEEK 1


Tuesday March 29: Explanation, causality, and methods choices

Read for Session 2: WEEK 2


Tuesday April 5: State of the mainstream debate: DSI v. RSI and beyond

Read for Session 3: WEEK 3


Tuesday April 12: Classic issues of case selection

Read for Session 4: WEEK 4


**Tuesday April 19: Causal mechanisms and process tracing**

**Read for Session 5:**


**Tuesday April 26: Concept formation and measurement**

**Read for Session 6:**


**Tuesday May 3: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)**

*Read for Session 7:*


Gary King and Lache Zeng, “How Factual is Your Counterfactual?” Research Paper No. 9, Harvard Burden of Disease Unit, October 2001, 41p. (read to get logic of argument, not too closely….)

**Tuesday May 10: Counterfactuals**

*Read for Session 8:*


**Tuesday May 17: Time and path dependence**
Read for Session 9:  


Tuesday May 24: Interpretive approaches I

Read for Session 10:  


Craig Parsons, “Why Constructivists and Non-Constructivists Must Engage,” draft ms.

Tuesday May 31: Interpretive approaches II