POLS 621—Qualitative Methods in Political Science
Spring 2017
Monday 2-4:50; Clark C347

Dr. Michele Betsill
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Office Hours: Wed. and Thurs. 11-12 and by appointment (through April.Lindgren@colostate.edu)

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This seminar introduces students to the use of qualitative research methods in the social sciences, particularly as applied in the discipline of political science. The course is designed to give students a broad overview of general research approaches and specific tools for collecting and analyzing qualitative data through a combination of lectures, conceptual discussions, and hands-on practical experience. Following a review of the broad philosophical and ethical debates surrounding the use of qualitative methods, we turn to questions of research design, with special attention to case study research, which is widely used in political science. The remainder of the semester will cover the “nuts and bolts” of qualitative research: gathering data through interviews, observation, and documents; strategies for recording, coding and analyzing qualitative data; and evaluating and presenting qualitative research. Students should expect to spend at least 6 hours outside of class completing readings and assignments. This course will adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy of the Colorado State University General Catalog and the Student Conduct Code.

Upon completion of this course, students will have a solid foundation for employing qualitative methods in their own social science research projects. Students will be able to:
- Identify different qualitative research traditions and their different philosophical worldviews;
- Understand the ethical issues related to qualitative research;
- Design qualitative case study research;
- Gather qualitative data through interviews, observations, and documents and artifacts;
- Analyze qualitative data;
- Present and evaluate qualitative research.

COURSE MATERIALS
The following books have been ordered for the course and should be available in the CSU bookstore:

Additional course readings will consist of journal articles and book chapters. Most articles should be available through CSU Libraries (lib.colostate.edu). Any readings not available through the library databases will be available on Canvas.
## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND TOPICS (see Canvas for any changes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 16</td>
<td>No class - MLK Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>What is Qualitative Research?</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>Qualitative Research in Political Science/the Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 6</td>
<td>Situating the Self and Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research</td>
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<td>February 13</td>
<td>Designing Qualitative Research: Case Studies</td>
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<td>February 20</td>
<td>Preparing for the Field &amp; Research Proposal Workshop I</td>
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<td>• Research Design Outline Due</td>
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<td>February 27</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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<td>March 6</td>
<td>Recoding, Coding &amp; Analyzing Data</td>
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<td>March 20</td>
<td>Observations</td>
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<td>• Field Exercise #1 Due</td>
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<td>March 27</td>
<td>Discourse Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>Documents &amp; Artifacts</td>
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<td>• Field Exercise #2 Due</td>
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<td>April 10</td>
<td>Process Tracing</td>
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<td>April 17</td>
<td>No class – individual meetings as needed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Human Subjects Training must be completed</td>
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<td>• Draft Research Proposal Due 4/20</td>
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<td>April 24</td>
<td>Research Proposal Workshop II</td>
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<td>• Peer Reviews Due</td>
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<td>May 1</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<td>May 8</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<td>• Final Research Proposal Due by midnight</td>
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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

1. **Seminar Attendance and Participation** (10%): Students should attend all class meetings, make thoughtful contributions to class discussions, and complete all course assignments in a timely manner. Each student will also participate in one group presentation of an article that employs qualitative methods. Students will begin the semester with a B for this portion of the final grade. The grade will be raised in accordance with the quality of the student’s participation over the course of the semester. You may consult with me at any time for an assessment of this grade.

2. **Research Journal** (20%): Each student will submit eight (8) research journal entries. These are NOT meant to be syntheses of the readings but rather reflections on how you might integrate qualitative methods in your own research. Each entry should be 300-400 words or a 3-4 minute video. Students who submit 8 entries will receive full credit for this portion of the final grade. Additional details available on Canvas.

3. **Field Exercises** (20%): Each student will complete two field exercises associated with different techniques for gathering qualitative data: interviews and observations (specific guidelines will be available on Canvas). **Due March 20 and April 3.**

4. **Research Proposal** (50%) Each student will design a research project with a substantial qualitative research component (specific guidelines will be available on Canvas). The project will consist of several components. Only the final proposal will be graded; failure to complete the other components will result in a deduction from the final proposal grade.
a. Research topic proposal. **Due February 20.**
b. Human subjects training. **Must be completed by April 17.**
c. Draft research proposal. **Due April 20.**
d. Peer reviews of draft research proposals. **Due April 24.**
e. Presentations. **May 1 and 8.**
f. Final proposal. **Due by midnight on May 8.**

**COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE**
(please check Canvas each week for any changes and additional resources)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>January 16</th>
<th>No class - MLK Day</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assignment (DUE January 18):</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Submit a 1-paragraph response to the question, “What is qualitative research?”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Required Readings:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>January 23</th>
<th>What is Qualitative Research?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Required Readings:</strong></td>
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<td>• Yin 2015, ch. 1</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>January 30</th>
<th>Qualitative Research in Political Science/the Social Sciences</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Required Readings:</strong></td>
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<td>• Yin 2015, ch. 12</td>
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**Further Reading:**

**Week 4 February 6**

**Situating the Self and Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research**

Assignment (due April 17):

- If you have not already done so, begin the CITI web-based training program for social and behavioral sciences at [http://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp?language=english](http://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp?language=english). Note this is a light reading week to give you time to work on these modules.

**Required Readings:**

- Yin 2015, chs. 2 & 5

**Further Reading:**


**Week 5 February 13**

**Designing Qualitative Research: Case Studies**

Assignment (for class):

- Bring a copy of one of these articles to class. If you have time, skim the article and think about the author’s research design choices.


**Required Readings:**

- Yin 2015, ch. 4

**Further Reading:**


**Week 6 February 20 Preparing for the Qualitative Research/ Research Proposal Workshop I**

**Assignment (for class):**

- Submit an outline of your research design and bring 2 copies to class (see specific guidelines on Canvas).

**Required Readings:**

- Yin 2015, chs 3 & 6

**Further Reading:**

Week 7 February 27 Interviews

Required Readings:
- Weiss 1994, chs. 1-5; Appendices C&D

Further Reading:

Week 8 March 6 Recording, Coding and Analyzing Qualitative Data

Required Readings:
- Yin 2015, chs. 7 and 8

Further Reading:
- Yin 2014, ch. 5.
Week 9  March 20  Observations

Assignment:
- Field Exercise #1 due (guidelines on Canvas)

Required Readings:

Further Reading:

Week 10  March 27  Discourse Analysis

Required Readings:
- Yin 2015, ch. 9.


Further Reading:

Week 11 March 3 Documents and Artifacts
Assignment:
- Field Exercise #2 Due (specific guidelines on Canvas)

Required Readings:
- Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren M. MacLean, and Benjamin Read. 2015. Thinking Outside the (Archive) Box: Discovering data in the field. In Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ch. 5.

Further Reading:

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<th>Week 12</th>
<th>April 10</th>
<th>Process Tracing</th>
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Further reading:

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As you prepare you draft research proposal, you may want to consult the following as well as other readings from Week 5:

**Week 14 April 24 Research Proposal Workshop II**

**Assignments:**
- Submit a draft research proposal by 5pm on April 20 (specific guidelines on Canvas).
- Complete 2 peer reviews of draft research proposals (specific guidelines on Canvas) by the time of class.

**Required Readings:**
- none

**Weeks 15 May 1 Presenting Qualitative Research**

**Assignment:**
- Student presentations (see guidelines on Canvas).

**Required Readings:**
- Yin 2015, chs. 10 & 11
- Yin 2014, ch. 6
- Weiss ch. 7.

**Further Reading:**

**Week 16 May 8 Presentations (con’t) and Final Proposals Due**