

University of Virginia
Department of Politics
Spring 2005

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PLAD 812: Qualitative Methods
M: 3:30 - 6:00
Cabell 225

This course addresses the theory and practice of qualitative methods for making valid inferences from non-experimental data. By theory, I refer to the philosophical sources of dissatisfaction with the treatment of causality and explanatory adequacy characteristic of quantitative methods. By practice, I refer to strategies aiding the disciplined deployment of data in the absence of statistical controls.

I expect students to provide competent answers to the following questions framing the theory of qualitative methods:

What are the fundamental critiques of qualitative methods from a quantitative perspective?

Does the field of qualitative methods have appropriate methodological responses?

What is the relationship between quantitative analysis and empiricist philosophies of science?

What does the critique of empiricism offered by causal realist philosophies of science tell us about the adequacy of statistical explanations?

What implications does the critique of empiricism offered by causal realist philosophies of science have for our understanding of the obligations of an appropriate qualitative methods?

And, with reference to the practice of qualitative methods:

Do qualitative methods, as presently understood, fulfill the requirements of explanatory adequacy?

With special reference to explanatory adequacy, what are the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to qualitative methods?

Answering these two sets of questions constitutes your sole writing obligation for the semester. A draft (10-15 pages) of your response to the theory questions is due on March 14th. A rewritten version of those answers, combined with answers to the practice questions, is due on May 9th. This final draft should be of the length and quality of a journal article.

Paperback copies of the main texts (marked as pb below) are available at the university bookstore. The remainder of the readings will be available on toolkit.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

January 24: Introduction

January 31: The Orthodox Challenge to Qualitative Methods

Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, 33-59.

Robyn Dawes, *Everyday Irrationality: How Pseudo-Scientists, Lunatics, and the Rest of Us Systematically Fail to Think Rationally*, 47-69.

Christopher Achen and Duncan Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies," *World Politics* 41 (1989): 143-69.

Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, chapter 4.

Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*, chapters 1-4.

February 7: The (New) Orthodox Defense of Qualitative Methods

Henry E. Brady and David Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, chapters 1-8, 10-13. (pb).

February 14: Empiricism

Alex Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Science: A Contemporary Introduction*, chaps 2-5. (pb).

David Hume, *An Enquiry into Human Understanding*, sections 1-7. (pb).

Carl Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History," in Michael Martin and Lee McIntyre, *Readings in the Philosophy of Science*, 43-53.

Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, sections 1-36, 43, 79-85.

February 21: Causal Realism

Richard Miller, *Fact and Method: Explanation, Confirmation, and Reality in the Natural and the Social Sciences*, 15-39, 60-73, 86-105, 155-177, 196-224. (pb).

Jon Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, 3-10.

Peter Hedstrom and R. Swedberg, "Social Mechanisms: An Introduction," in Hedstrom and Swedberg, eds., *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*, 1-25.

David Dessler, "Beyond Correlations: Toward a Causal Theory of War," *International Studies Quarterly* 35 (1991): 337-55.

Daniel Little, "Causal Explanation in the Social Sciences," chapter 10 in his *Microfoundations, Method, and Causation*, 197-214.

David Waldner, "Inferences and Explanations at the K/T Boundary...and Beyond," forthcoming in Ned Lebow and Mark Lichbach, eds., *Social Inquiry and Political Knowledge*.

February 28: Challenges to Statistical Explanations

Vaughan McKim, "Introduction," and Stephen Turner, "'Net Effects': A Short History," and David Freedman, "From Association to Causation via Regression," all in Vaughn R. McKim and Stephen P. Turner, eds., *Causality in Crisis? Statistical Methods and the Search for Causal Knowledge in the Social Science*, 1-19, 23-44, and 113-57.

Stanley Lieberson, *Making it Count: The Improvement of Social Research and Theory*. (pb).

Aage B. Sorensen, "Theoretical Mechanisms and the Empirical Study of Social Processes," in Hedstrom and Swedberg, *Social Mechanisms*, 238-65.

Timothy McKeown, "Case Studies and the Limits of the Statistical Worldview," in Brady and Collier, chapter 9.

Maire Ni Bhrolchain, "'Divorce Effects' and Causality in the Social Sciences," *European Sociological Review* 17 (2001): 33-57.

March 7: No Class

March 14: Interpretivism

Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Social Science*, chapters 2-5. (pb).

Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Science of Man," in Fred Dallmayr and Thomas McCarthy, eds., *Understanding and Social Inquiry*.

Alisdair MacIntyre, "Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible?" in Alan Ryan, ed., *The Philosophy of Social Explanation*.

Mark Neufeld, "Interpretation and the 'Science' of International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 19 (1993): 39-61.

Brian Fay, "General Laws and Explaining Human Behavior," in Martin and MacIntyre, *Readings in the Philosophy of Science*, 91-109.

James Farr, "Situational Analysis: Explanation in Political Science," *Journal of Politics* 47 (1985): 1085-1107.

March 21: Concept Formation

Larry Laudan, "Conceptual Problems," chapter 2 in his *Progress and Its Problems: Towards a Theory of Scientific Growth*, 45-70.

James Johnson, "Conceptual Problems as Obstacles to Progress in Political Science," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15 (2003): 87-115.

Lee MacIntyre, "Complexity and Social Scientific Laws," *Synthese* 97 (1993): 209-227.

Alexander Motyl, *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities*, 1-18.

John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*, chapters 3-4 (pb).

March 28: Case Studies and the Logic of Case Selection

Sidney Verba, "Some Dilemmas of Comparative Politics," *World Politics* 20 (October 1967): 111-27.

Donald Campbell, "Degrees of Freedom and the Case Study," *Comparative Political Studies* 8 (1975): 178-93.

Michael Coppedge, "Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories: Combining Large N and Small in Comparative Politics," *Comparative Politics* 31 (July 1999): 465-76.

John Gerring, "What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?" *American Political Science Review* 98 (May 2004): 341-354.

John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology*, chapters 8-10.

Jason Seawright, "Testing for Necessary and/or Sufficient Causation: Which Cases are Relevant?" *Political Analysis* 10 (2002): 178-93.

Jasjeet S. Sekhon, "Quality Meets Quantity: Case Studies, Conditional Probability, and Counterfactuals," *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (June 2004): 281-93.

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research," *American Political Science Review* 98 (November 2004): 653-70.

April 4: Longitudinal Studies

Alexander George and Timothy McKeown, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations* 2 (1985): 21-58.

Andrew Abbott, *Time Matters: On Theory and Method*, 37-63.

Robert Bates, et. al., *Analytic Narratives* 10-18, 148-90, 231-36.

Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*, 1-102, 167-78. (pb).

April 11: Cross-Sectional Approaches

Andrew Bennett and Alexander George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. (pb).

April 18: Cross-Sectional Approaches

Charles Ragin, *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*, chapters 1-5. (pb).

April 25: Comparative Longitudinal Studies

James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, chapters 1-4, 9-11. (pb).

David Collier and Ruth Berins Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, chapter 1.

David Waldner, *State Building and Late Development*, chapters 1 and 10.

Evan Lieberman, "Causal Inference in Historical-Institutional Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies* 34 (November 2001): 1011-1035.

May 2: Topic to be determined according to student interest. Possible topics:

Ontological Challenges (Contingency and Indeterminism)

Paradigm Wars (Kuhn, Lakatos, etc.)

Discussion of Student Research Designs

Discussion of Exemplary Research Designs

Multi-Method Approaches: Combining Statistics, Case Studies, and Formal Models