

Mixed-Methods Research Methodology

Details

Instructor: Bogdan G. Popescu

Hours: TBA

Total Hours of Contact: 2:30 per week

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: None

Office Hours: TBA

Course Description

This course examines methodological approaches in social science research, focusing on the strengths, limitations, and integration of quantitative and qualitative methods. Students will engage with foundational concepts, including the qualitative-quantitative divide, and the benefits and challenges of mixed-methods research. The course covers case studies, process-tracing, natural experiments, and regression analysis, with emphasis on applying these methods. We will conclude with discussions on ethics in political research, especially in complex or conflict-affected environments, and explore how mixed-methods research can provide a more nuanced understanding of political phenomena. Some questions that this course is trying to address include:

- How can quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other in social science research?
- What are the strengths and limitations of different research designs, such as case studies, natural experiments, and ethnography?
- How can process-tracing and mixed-methods approaches deepen our understanding of political phenomena?
- What are the ethical considerations and potential dilemmas faced when conducting field research in politically sensitive areas?

Summary of Course Content

This course introduces students to key methodological frameworks used in political science and more generally, social science research. We begin by exploring the qualitative-quantitative divide, examining how these methods differ in approach, application, and analytical power. Topics include the strengths and weaknesses of each method, strategies for multi-method research, and approaches to case studies, experiments, and ethnography. In the latter half, students will learn about fieldwork and interviews and will explore ethical considerations and best practices. The course aims to equip students with the ability to critically evaluate and employ diverse research strategies within their work.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, the students will:

- Understand and articulate key methodological approaches in social science research, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods.
- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of various research techniques, including case studies, experiments, and ethnography.
- Critically assess the ethical dimensions of conducting research, especially in challenging contexts or conflict zones.
- Gain transferable skills in designing, implementing, and critically analyzing research projects, with emphasis on transparency, integrity, and effective communication.

Assessment

You will be graded based on how well-prepared you come to class. During the first session, there will be primarily a lecture, while the second session will be dedicated to student presentations and a discussion. During the second session, students must demonstrate their knowledge of the readings and ability to engage in independent, critical thinking. References to current global issues will be a constant. Contributions to class discussion, especially during the second session, will represent 33% of the final grade.

A provisional research proposal employing a mixed-methods research design must be submitted at the end of Week 8. This proposal will be graded based on its clarity, rigor, and alignment with mixed-methods principles. Students will receive feedback to inform their final proposal. This constitutes 33% of the final grade.

The final proposal is due at the end of Week 15 and will require incorporation of feedback received after Week 8. This proposal will be presented to the class and graded on both the written submission and the quality of the presentation. The final proposal should demonstrate refined research design, responsiveness to feedback, and a strong mixed-methods approach. The final proposal constitutes 33% of the final grade.

Attendance

Students are required to attend classes following the University's policies. Students with more than four unexcused absences (two weeks) are assumed to have withdrawn from the course. Thus, students must attend classes and all exams in person on campus (unless otherwise required by the University). Students with a justified need to participate in any exam remotely may do so only if express permission has been obtained from the Dean's Office before the exam.

Students with Learning Difficulties and other Disabilities

The University does not discriminate based on disability. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

Required Books

There are no specific required book for the course. See the items for every specific week's session.

Academic Honesty

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

Week 1

Class 1: Intro to the Course

Date - Day - Lecture

- Introduction and course overview
- How can qualitative and quantitative research to speak to each other?

Reading

Charles Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. University of California Press (1984): 1-84 (chapters 1 and 2).

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

Class 2: Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research

Date - Day - Seminar

- How can qualitative and quantitative research to speak to each other?
- What are some pitfall associated with multimethod research?

Reading

Henry E. Brady, "Doing Good and Doing Better: How Far Does the Quantitative Template Get Us?" in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* eds. Henry E. Brady and David Collier. Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

Beach, Derek. 2020. "Multi-Method Research in the Social Sciences: A Review of Recent Frameworks and a Way Forward." *Government & Opposition* 55 (1): 163-182.

Week 2

Class 1: Strengths and Weaknesses of Qual.-Quant. Research

Date - Day - Lecture

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research?
- How can the qual.-quant. divisions be eliminated?

Reading

Seawright, Jason Seawright, 2016. Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

Sidney Tarrow, 2010. “Bridging the Quantitative-Qualitative Divide” in Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards eds. Henry E. Brady and David Collier. Rowman & Littlefield.

Class 2: Strengths and Weaknesses of Qual.-Quant. Research

Date - Day - Lecture

- How can qualitative work be integrated within a quantitative framework?
- What are some controversies within Mixed-Methods Research?

Reading

David Laitin and James Fearon, 2008. “Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods” in The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology. Oxford University Press: 756-776.

Creswell, John W. Creswell, 2011, “Controversies in Mixed Methods Research” in The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, eds. N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. Sage: 269-284.

Week 3

Class 1: Case Studies

Date - Day - Lecture

- What are case studies and what are they good for?
- What is process-tracing?

Reading

John Gerring, 2012. “What is a Case Study” and “What is a Case Study Good For?” in Case Study Research: Principles and Practices ed. John Gerring, Cambridge University Press: 17-64.

Moses, Jonathan W. and Knutsen, Torbjørn L., 2007. “History, Interviews and Case Studies.” in “Ways of Knowing”. Bloomsbury: London. C6, pp. 118-145.

Class 2: Case Studies

Date - Day - Seminar

- How can process tracing be applied in practice?
- How can we use case studies to draw meaningful inferences about the world?

Reading

Daniel Mattingly, 2016. “Elite Capture: How Decentralization and Information Institutions Weaken Property Rights in Rural China.” World Politics 68(3), pp. 383-412.

Killian Clarke and Korhan Kocak. 2020. “Launching Revolution: Social Media and the Egyptian Uprising’s First Movers.” British Journal of Political Science 50(3): pp. 1025-1045.

Week 4

Class 1: Regression Analysis in Mixed Methods Research

Date - Day - Lecture

- How does multi-method social science work?
- How can we combine large and small-n research designs?

Reading

Jason Seawright. 2016. Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3.

Michael Coppedge, 1999. "Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories: Combining Large-N and Small in Comparative Politics" *Comparative Politics* 31.4: 465-476.

Class 2: Regression Analysis in Mixed Methods Research

Date - Day - Seminar

- What is nested analysis and how can it be used in comparative research?
- What are some of the drawbacks of regression analyses?

Reading

Evan Lieberman. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99(3) pp: 435-52.

Christopher H. Achen. 2005. "Let's put garbage-can regressions and garbage-can probits where they belong." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 22(4): pp. 327-339.

Week 5

Class 1: Natural Experiments

Date - Day - Lecture

- What are natural experiments and how can they be useful?
- What are some pros and cons associated with natural experiments?

Reading

Thad Dunning, 2012. *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-Based Approach*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 11.

Hainmueller, Jens, and Dominik Hangartner. 2013. "Who gets a Swiss passport? A natural experiment in immigrant discrimination." *American political science review* 107, no. 1: 159-187.

Class 2: Natural Experiments

Date - Day - Lecture

- What are some drawbacks of experiments?
- What are some pros and cons associated with natural experiments?

Reading

Thad Dunning, 2016. “Transparency, Replication, and Cumulative Learning: What experiments alone cannot achieve.” Annual Review of Political Science 19: S1-S23.

Hangartner, Dominik, Elias Dinas, Moritz Marbach, Konstantinos Matakos, and Dimitrios Xefteris. 2019. “Does exposure to the refugee crisis make natives more hostile?.” American Political Science Review 113, no. 2: 442-455

Week 6

Class 1: Experiments

Date - Day - Lecture

- How can we integrate field experiments with qualitative methods?
- How can we embed case studies within experiment?

Reading

Elizabeth Levy Paluck, 2010. “The Promising Integration of Field Experimentation and Qualitative Methods.” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 628: 59-71.

Gubitz, Sam R. 2022. “Experiments” in Clipperton, Jean (ed.). “Empirical Methods in Political Science”. Northwestern University Libraries. Available at <https://nulib-oer.github.io/empirical-methods-polisci/experiments.html>

Class 2: Experiments

Date - Day - Lecture

- How can we integrate field experiments with qualitative methods?
- How can we embed case studies within experiment?

Reading

Jason Seawright, 2016. Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 7.

Druckman, James N., and Donald P. Green. 2021. “A New Era of Experimental Political Science.” In Advances in Experimental Political Science, edited by James N. Druckman and Donald P. Editors Green, 1–16. Cambridge University Press.

Week 6

Class 1: Difference-in-Differences Design

Date - Day - Lecture

- How do differences-in-differences work?
- How can we apply differences-in-differences to learn about the world?

Reading

Cunningham, Scott. 2021. Causal Inference: The Mixtape. Yale University Press. Chapter: Differences-in-Differences.

Abdelgadir, Aala, and Vasiliki Fouka. 2020. "Political Secularism and Muslim Integration in the West: Assessing the Effects of the French Headscarf Ban." *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 3: 707-723.

Class 2: Difference-in-Differences Design

Date - Day - Lecture

- What are the limitations of differences-in-differences?
- How can we apply differences-in-differences to learn about the world?

Reading

Paglayan, Augustin, 2022. "Education or Indoctrination? The Violent Origins of Public School Systems in an Era of State-Building." *American Political Science Review* 116(4): 1242-1257.

Fouka, Vasiliki. 2020. "Backlash: The unintended effects of language prohibition in US schools after World War I." *The Review of Economic Studies* 87, no. 1: 204-239

Week 7

Class 1: Ethnography

Date - Day - Lecture

- What is political ethnography?
- How can comparative ethnography be used in research?

Reading

Schatz, Edward, ed. 2009. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press: Introduction and conclusion, pp. 1-22, 303-318.

Erica S. and Nicholas Rush Smith. 2019. "The Case for Comparative Ethnography." *Comparative Politics* 51 (3): 341-359.

Class 2: Ethnography

Date - Day - Lecture

- How can ethnography be used in political research?
- What are some of the drawbacks of ethnography for political research?

Reading

Wedeen, Lisa. 2000. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 255-272.

Ahram, Ariel I, and J. Paul Goode. 2016. "Researching authoritarianism in the discipline of democracy," *Social Science Quarterly* 97 (4): 834-849.

Week 8

Class 1: Consultation on Project Proposal 10/21/2024 - Mon - Lecture

Class 2: Consultation on Project Proposal 10/23/2024 - Wed

Week 9

Class 1: Fieldwork

Date - Day - Lecture

- What is field research?
- How can field work be used in research?

Reading

Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2007. "Field Research." In Handbook of Comparative Politics (Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, eds.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press: pgs. 123-146.

Fu, Diana. 2017. "Disguised Collective Action in China." Comparative Political Studies 50 (4): 499-527

Class 2: Fieldwork

Date - Day - Lecture

- What are advantages associated with field research?
- How is field work used in research?

Reading

Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2007. "Field Research." In Handbook of Comparative Politics (Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, eds.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press: pgs. 123-146.

Weitzel, Michelle. 2018. "Audializing Migrant Bodies: Sound and security at the border." Security Dialogue 49 (6): 421-443

Weitzel, Michelle. 2018. "Sonic Encounters in Critical Security Studies." In Research Methods in Critical Security Studies. New York, NY: Routledge.

Week 10

Class 1: Interviewing

Date - Day - Lecture

- How can interviewing be used in political research?
- What are some advantages associated with advantages?

Reading

Mosley, Layna. 2013. Interview Research in Political Science. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Introduction & Chapter 1, pp. 1-28, 31-44.

Fujii, Lee Ann. 2017. Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach. New York, NY: Routledge.

Class 2: Interviewing

Date - Day - Lab

- How do interviews fit within a broader range of qualitative methods?
- What are ethnographic interviews?

Reading

Dingwall, Robert. 1997. "Accounts, Interviews and Observation." In Context and Method in Qualitative Research (Gale Miller and Robert Dingwall, eds.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: pp. 51-64.

Spradley, James P. 2016. The Ethnographic Interview. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Week 11

Class 1: Process-Tracing

Date - Day - Lecture

- How should we think about timing and sequencing within political research?
- What is the logic of process-tracing in social sciences?

Reading

Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Not Just What, but When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes." Studies in American Political Development 14 (1): 72-92.

Mahoney, James. 2012. "The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences." Sociological Methods & Research 41 (4): 570-597.

Class 2: Process-Tracing

Date - Day - Lecture

- What does process-tracing tell us about history and institutions?
- What do critical junctures tell us about historical legacies?

Reading

Collier, David. 2011. "Understanding Process Tracing." PS: Political Science & Politics. 44(4): 823-830.

Collier, David, and Gerardo Munck. 2022. Critical Junctures and Historical Legacies: Insights and Methods for Comparative Social Science. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.

Week 14

Class 1: Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research

Date - Day - Lecture

- What are some transparency and integrity criterion in conducting fieldwork?
- What are some research ethics dilemmas and responsibilities?

Reading

Tripp, Aili Mari. 2018. "Transparency and Integrity in Conducting Field Research on Politics in Challenging Contexts." *Perspectives on Politics* 16 (3): 728-738

Fujii, Lee Ann. 2012. "Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 45 (4): 717-23,

Class 2: Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research

Date - Day - Lecture

- What is the IRB and how does one deal with it?
- What are some ethical challenges when doing research in conflict areas?

Reading

Yanow, Dvora, and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. 2016. "Encountering Your IRB 2.0: What Political Scientists Need to Know." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 49 (2): 277-286.

Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2006. "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones." *Qualitative Sociology* 29 (3): 373-86.

Week 15

Class 1: Consultation on Project Proposal 10/21/2024 - Mon - Lecture

Class 2: Presentation of Project Proposal 10/23/2024 - Wed