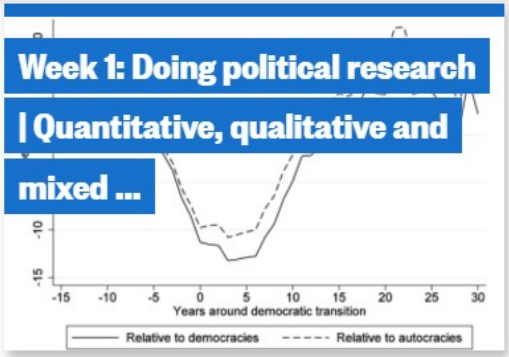
Week 1: Doing political research | Quantitative, qualitative and mixed ...

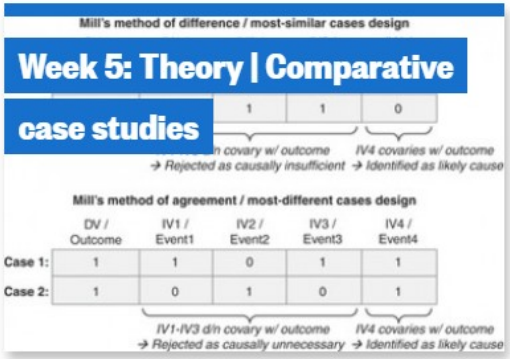


Week 2: Ontology and epistemology | Interviews

Week 3: Questions | Elite interviews

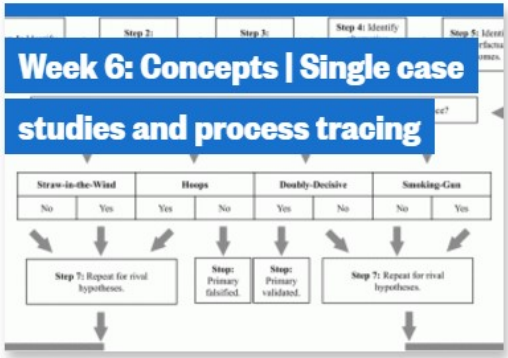
Week 4: Literature reviews | Focus groups

Week 5: Theory | Comparative case studies



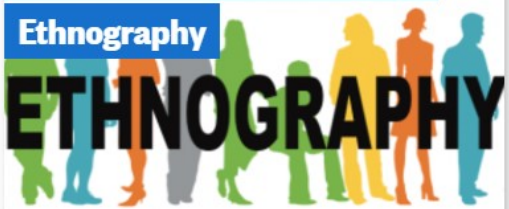
Reading Week

Week 6: Concepts | Single case studies and process tracing

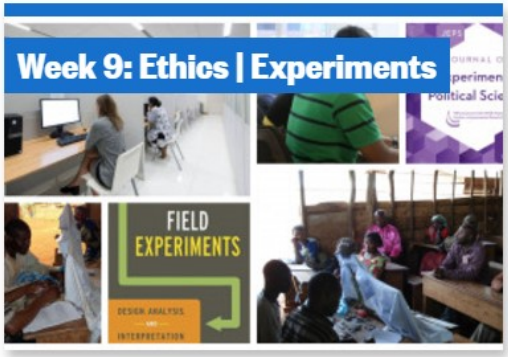


Week 7: Measurement I Documents and archives

Week 8: Research integrity | Ethnography



Week 9: Ethics | Experiments



Week 10: Your research designs

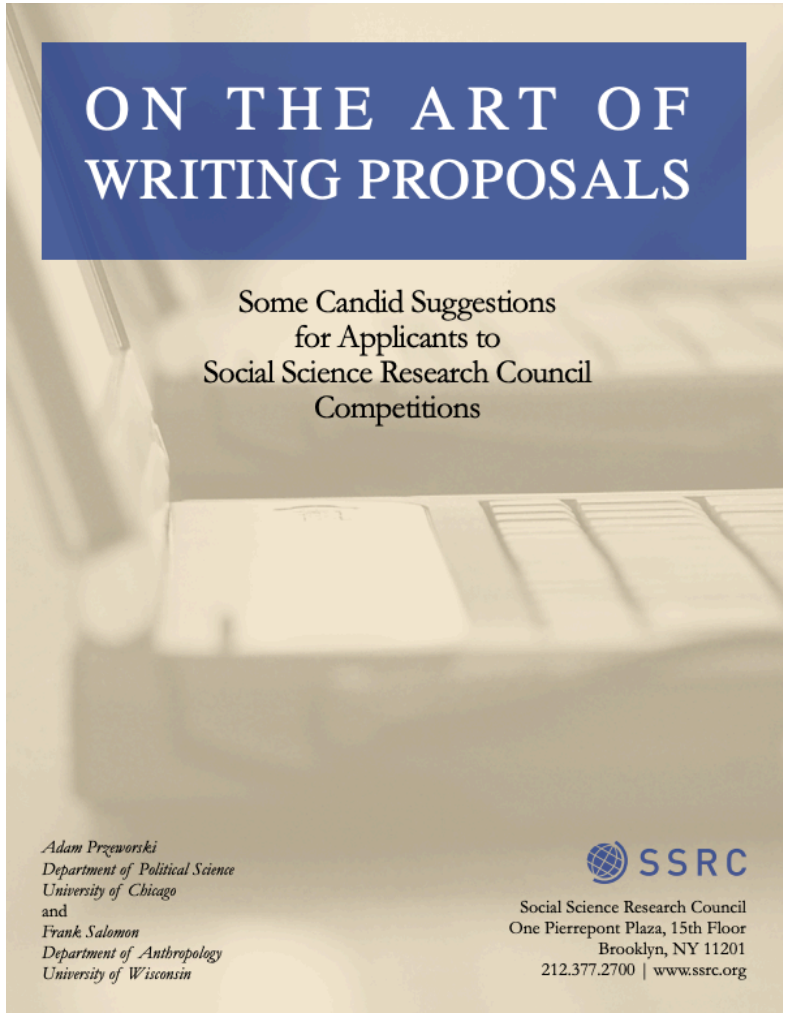
Research proposal: Looking ahead

- State the **research question(s)** that you could answer within the constraints of a dissertation.
- Provide the **background literature** – what is the body of literature that your RQs emerges from and that you plan to speak to?
- Present a **research design** to explain data collection and analysis.
- Discuss the **limitations and critical considerations** specific to your research design.
- Bibliography.

Research proposal: Looking ahead

- Research question(s) that are sufficiently focused and tractable.
- Literature review that sets the relevant context and motivates the research question – what is the gap?
- A research design that
  - describes the type(s) of evidence which will be collected and analyzed to address the research question;
  - shows that the proposed evidence can feasibly be collected in the timeframe available;
  - outlines feasible method(s) that will be used to analyze the evidence.
- A thoughtful discussion on the expected relative strengths and limitations of the combination of evidence and analytical method.

“On the Art of Writing Proposals” (SSRC)



https://www.ssrc.org/publications/the-art-of-writing-proposals/

Explaining/discussing research design: Process tracing and case studies

- Literature review: How do you use the literature to motivate the study? What is the puzzle? Why is this study interesting, in relation to what we already know or assume?
- How do you justify the selection of cases for comparison? What is the evidence that these cases are different on the independent and dependent variables while being mostly similar in other aspects?
- What is your proposed explanation? Where does the evidence come from? What is the most convincing piece of evidence?
- Are there any alternative explanations in addition to the central argument?
- Which part of your argument could be generalized to other contexts? What is the scope condition?

Explaining/discussing research design: Quantitative research design

- Basic components
  - The key empirical **question(s)**?
  - The key **hypotheses** (empirical or testable implications) based on the theoretical literature?
  - The key **independent** (explanatory) and **dependent** (outcome) variables?
  - The key **statistical result(s)** we expect to observe in the regression table(s)?
- Advanced components
  - Are all necessary **control** variables (covariates) included in the model?
  - Are there any additional tests to assess the **robustness** of the main results? Are there any tests to study the **heterogeneous** effect (i.e., do the main findings change if we divide up the observations)?
  - What else can be or should have been tested?

Explaining/discussing research design: Qualitative research design

- What is the key concept from the literature that you seek to engage with? How do you motivate your study with reference to the literature?
- How do you justify the case selection? Is it a typical case? An exceptional case? What puzzle can it contribute to solving?
- How will the qualitative methods used allow you to answer the research questions? Is there anything that might be missed out, with your design?
- Is anything in your research paper generalizable to other settings?
- How does your research provide a sense of "being there?"

Research proposal exercise (using examples on Moodle)

- what the research question is
- what the research design is and why the proposed design could produce useful findings to answer the research question
- what limitations are acknowledged and whether there are any that aren't
- how feasible do you think the project is
- how is the bibliography structured (as opposed to just its content)
- what lessons you've learned for your own RP

Happy holidays!

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