

**Department of Political Science
Dalhousie University
Winter 2016/2017**

POLI 3493

POLITICAL INQUIRY II: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Class time and location

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:05-2:25 pm
Tupper Building
Theatre 'C'

Instructor

Andrea Lane
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Office hours

- Friday 1:30-2:30 (office tba)
- or by appointment

Course Overview

This course introduces the theory and practice of qualitative research methods to study political phenomena. Themes addressed in the course include the theoretical and conceptual implications of choosing a particular methodology; the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods; qualitative data collection methods available to political scientists, including interviewing, focus groups, participant observation, unobtrusive methods; the analysis and presentation of qualitative data; the ethical issues involved in conducting qualitative research; and the content and structure of research proposals based on qualitative data and methods. Students will put into practice the theoretical and methodological insights learnt during this course by conducting individual and team projects on key aspects of the qualitative research process (operationalization, data collection, data analysis, data display and presentation) and by drafting a research proposal on a subject related to politics.

Course Format

The course will be based on a combination of lectures and individual assignments. Lectures will follow the readings, but they will not overlap completely. Since the course will have *no tutorials*, lectures will presuppose familiarity with the readings. It is *essential* for students to complete the reading assignments before the lecture, in order to fully benefit from class discussions. Coming to lectures is mandatory, and **attendance will be taken**.

Course readings

There is one textbook required for the course: *Foundations of Social Research* by Michael Crotty. The book will be available at the bookstore; there is also a Kindle version available on Amazon. Any edition of the book is suitable. This book will be a valuable resource for any students hoping to do Honours or graduate research in Political Science or other social sciences.

Other readings mentioned in the course outline will be either available for photocopying at the Killam Library Short Loan, available for downloading from the Killam Library website, or posted online on the course website. Most readings are excerpts from the following books:

- Lawrence Neuman and Karen Robson, *Basics of Social Research – Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Second Canadian Edition, Pearson 2011. Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, Third Edition, Oxford University Press 2010
- Janet Buttolph, H. T. Reynolds, Jason D. Mycof, *Political Science Research Methods*, Sixth Edition, CQ Press 2010
- Alan Bryman, Edare Bell and James J. Teevan, *Social Research Methods*, Third Canadian Edition, Oxford University Press 2012

Course on Brightspace

Lecture slides, syllabus, assignment instructions, bibliographic references and other relevant material for this course will be available on Brightspace. Brightspace will also function as the main means of communication between the instructor and students. Students will also be able to view their grades, read announcements, submit (some) assignments and contribute to the discussion board. The course on Brightspace can be accessed at <https://dal.brightspace.com/d21/login>

Email Policy

Please feel free to contact me by email if you have any questions related to the course. I will reply to legitimate email inquiries within 2 days. If you do not receive a reply within this period, please resubmit your question(s).

Course Evaluation

The course evaluation is based on a combination of a midterm, assignments, and class participation. The final grade will be calculated out of 100 points and based on the content, quality and originality of the work submitted or presented (NB: check below for the number of points each assignment is worth) plus attendance and active involvement in class activities. Assignments are due IN CLASS on the dates indicated, with **paper hard copies** of every assignment required. I will have a box at the front of class for students to place assignments in. The exception is the research proposal, which will be submitted electronically via the dropbox folder on Brightspace.

Midterm - (30 points)

A midterm exam, covering the theoretical overview of the first six week of class, will take place in in class on **February 16th**. The exam will be a series of both short-answer and essay questions.

In-class test (10 points)

This assignment will be an in-class test on the concept of operationalization and its applications, as well as sample selection. Students will be provided with a series of research questions and will have to identify the key concepts and then select observable phenomena that can represent these concepts in a qualitative form. As well, students will identify the appropriate research sample from which to draw inferences. The test will take place in Week 8 (**March 9th**)

Data collection exercise (15 points)

Each student is asked to conduct a small research exercise entailing the use of either interviews, participant observation or unobtrusive methods (i.e. archival analysis or collection of human traces) to collect qualitative data and then submit a transcript of the material collected accompanied by a brief memo that introduces the project's topic, method, location, timing and participants. This exercise should form the backbone of the semester-end Research Proposal assignment, so students are advised to think carefully about their topic selection, research question, and chosen methodology. The topic and research question(s) for the research proposal should be related to the theme of politics, broadly understood. **Topics and research questions are due March 7th; the completed assignment is due March 30th**. The assessment of the project is based on the content, quality and originality of the work submitted.

Research Proposal (30 points)

The assignment consists in the drafting of a research proposal based on your previous qualitative research methods assignment (see above.) Research proposals should be maximum 12 pages long (12pt font, double spaced, 1 inch margins). The topic and research question(s) for the research proposal should be related to the theme of politics, broadly understood; **topics and research questions are due March 7th**. If you have doubts about the appropriateness of the topic and research questions selected, please contact the instructor. More details on the research proposal, including some concrete examples, are available on Brightspace. **The completed assignment is due on April 20th**.

- *Class attendance and participation* (15 points)

Class attendance means being physically present (and awake!) for all lectures; attendance will be taken, and unexcused absences will reduce your mark in this category. Class participation includes *active and informed* involvement in class discussions, the submission of “bad research” examples (explained in the first class), and proving you read the syllabus by emailing me your name, hometown and favourite colour by the second week of class, January 17th.

Late penalty policy

Late submissions will be penalized *five points per day* (including weekends but excluding religious holidays). Extensions will be granted only for documented reasons of illness, or bereavement. The length of the extension will be based on the information in the documentation. In case of illness, students must ask the physician to indicate *explicitly* the length of time during which they were unable to attend to their coursework obligations.

Grading scale

A+: 90-100%	C+: 64-67%
A: 85-90%	C: 60-63%
A-: 80-84%	C-: 56-59%
B+: 76-79%	D: 50-55%
B: 72-75%	F: 0-49%
B-: 68-71%	

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”),

and/or suspension or expulsion from the University. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to: <http://plagiarism.dal.ca/student/index.html>.

Accommodation policy

Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests, quizzes and exams should make their request to the Office of Student Accessibility & Accommodation (OSAA) prior to or at the outset of each academic term (with the exception of X/Y courses). Please see www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca for more information and to obtain Form A. Request for Accommodation. A note taker may be required to assist a classmate. There is an honorarium of \$75/course/term. If you are interested, please contact OSAA at 494-2836 for more information. Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom so that students who require their usage will be able to participate in the class.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

PART 1: QUALITATIVE POLITICAL INQUIRY AND ITS FOUNDATIONS

Week 1: January 10/12

Class introduction: Qualitative research and political inquiry

Readings: Buttolph et al. Chapter 2; Brians et al. Chapter 1

Class 1:

- What does it mean to do social science research?
- Qualitative vs quantitative methods
- Key paradigms and debates in qualitative research methods
- Preview of the course;

Taking social research seriously

- Winners and losers in research
- Who asks the questions?
- What can we do with research?
- Why does bad research do so much damage?

Class 2:

Ontologies, epistemologies, and theories...oh my!

Readings: Crotty, Introduction; Brians et al. Chapter 1

Week 2: January 17/19

Objectivism and Positivism

Class 3

Readings: Crotty, Chapter 1; Buttolph et al. Chapter 1/2

- Objectivism and scientific positivism
- Being “objective”

Class 4

Objectivism and positivism continued; Positivist research design/examples

Week 3: January 24/26

Constructivism

Class 5

Readings: Crotty, Chapter 3; Passy, Florence, and Marco Giugni. "Life-Spheres, Networks, and Sustained Participation in Social Movements: A Phenomenological Approach to Political Commitment." *Sociological Forum* 15, no. 1 (2000): 117-44.

Class 6 Constructivist research design, examples

Readings: Srdjan Vucetic, "Why did Canada sit out the Iraq War? One constructivist analysis." *Canadian Foreign Policy* 13(1) (2006): 133; Amir Lupovici, "Constructivist methods: a plea and manifesto for pluralism," *Review of International Studies* 35(1) (2009): 195-218.

Week 4: January 31/February 2

Interpretivism

Class 7 Readings: Crotty, Chapter 4; Edmund Mokrzycki, "The operation of Verstehen," *Quality and Quantity* 5:2 (1971)

Interpretivist methods; guest speaker, Ethnography

Class 8 Hermeneutics, research examples.

Readings: Crotty, Chapter 5; Carver, T. "Identity and Narrative in prime-time politics: The Hill-Thomas hearings," in Carver and Hyvärinen, eds. *Interpreting the Political: New Methodologies*. London; New York: Routledge, 1997. (Available online through Killam library.)

Week 5: February 7/9

Critical approaches

Class 9 Marxism & Critical theory

Readings: Crotty, Chapters 6/7; Cox, Robert W. 1983. "Gramsci, Hegemony, and International Relations: An Essay in Method," *Millennium* 12: 162-175.

Class 10 Feminist theory and methods

Readings: Crotty, Chapter 8; Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, Chapter tbd.;

Week 6: February 14/16

Class 11 Indigenous methodology; review

Readings: Chapters 1 and 2, Kovach, M. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Context*, 2009. (Book available online through Killam library.)

Class 12 Midterm

February 21/23: Study break (no class)

PART 2: DESIGNING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Week 7: February 28/March 2

Class 13

Qualitative Research: preliminary steps

Readings: Silverman Chapter 6 and 7; Neuman and Robson Chapter 4

- Topic selection
- Research questions
- Writing a literature review
- Theory and theory building

Class 14

Research Design 1 - Operationalization

Readings: Richards and Morse Chapter 4; Robert Adcock and David Collier. "Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research." *American Political Science Review*, 95(3):529-546, 2001.

Themes addressed in this session include:

- Key components of research design
- What is operationalization?
- Qualitative vs quantitative operationalization
- Examples of operationalization

Week 8: March 7/9

Class 15

Research design 2 - Sampling

Readings: Neuman and Robson Chapter 7; Buttolph et al. Chapter 9.

Themes addressed in this session include:

- Defining a sample
- Probability vs non probability sampling
- Getting it wrong
- Types of non-probability samples

Class 16 In-class test: Operationalization and sampling

PART 3: CONDUCTING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Week 9: March 14/16

Class 17 *Qualitative Data Collection Methods 1: Interviewing*

Readings: Brian Rathburn, "Interviewing and Qualitative Field Research: Pragmatism and Practicalities," in Box-Steffensmeier, J., ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. OUP 2008 (Available online via library.); Alice Goffman, "On the run: Wanted men in a Philadelphia ghetto." *American Sociological Review*, 74(3): 339-357, 2009.

Class 18 *Qualitative Data Collection Methods 2: Field Research (participant observation)*

Readings: Neuman and Robson Chapter 13

Week 10: March 21/23

Class 19 *Qualitative Data Collection Methods 4: Unobtrusive Methods (archival research, human traces)*

Readings: Berg Chapter 8

Class 20 Case studies

Reading: Levy, J. "Case studies: Types, designs and logics of inference," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 25:1-18, 2008.

Week 11: March 28/30

Class 21 Case studies and Counterfactuals

Readings: Levy, J. "Counterfactuals and Case Studies," in Box-Steffensmeier, J., ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. OUP 2008 (Available online via library.); Harvey, Frank P. "President Al Gore and the 2003 Iraq War: A Counterfactual Test of Conventional "W" isdom." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 1 (2012): 1-32.

Class 22 Blending qualitative and quantitative methods

Readings: Fearon and Laitin, "Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods," in *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology* (see above); Bryman et al. Chapter 15

Week 12: April 4/6

Class 23/24 Qualitative data analysis and interpretation; writing a research proposal

Readings: Neuman and Robson Chapter 15; Harding Chapter 5; Bryman et al. Chapter 14, Saldana Chapter 1; Schmidt Chapters 10 and 12.

- Steps in qualitative data analysis
- Content analysis and other data reduction methods
- The purpose, content and format of a research proposal