

**Government 2014**  
**Research Design in Political Science: Qualitative and Mixed Methods**

**Spring 2021**  
**Fridays, 9:45-11:45 AM**

Melani Cammett  
CGIS K-213  
Email: [mcammett@g.harvard.edu](mailto:mcammett@g.harvard.edu)  
Office Hours: Thurs., 2-4pm, and by appt.

Frances Hagopian  
CGIS K-402  
Email: [fhagopian@gov.harvard.edu](mailto:fhagopian@gov.harvard.edu)  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:00, and by appt

Course website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/84786>

Course Purpose: This course introduces students to multi-method research design and the basic principles and particular techniques of data collection and analysis in the social sciences, some of which are primarily qualitative while others apply to both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Topics examined include the logic of causal inference, measurement and conceptualization, choosing cases, mixed methods research designs, natural experiments, and research ethics. Research techniques covered are process tracing, archival research, interviews, content analysis, survey instrument design, and ethnography. Students will also have the opportunity to workshop their early-stage research at multiple points throughout the semester. The application of multi-methods research designs is emphasized throughout the course.

Course Format: The seminar will be highly interactive with minimal class time devoted to lectures. The first part of seminar meetings will entail group discussions of general readings and applications of the topic at hand, structured around relevant questions and debates. The second part will entail group work developed during in-class breakout sessions or exercises and workshops based on assignments that students will prepare prior to the class meeting. Exercises will be based on common readings or problems, but during workshops students will present building blocks of their own research projects and critically and constructively engage with others' projects.

Enrollment: This course is intended for Ph.D. students primarily in Government and related disciplines. All Ph.D. students in the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences are automatically admitted to the course. Others are welcome to apply for admission to the course; we will communicate these decisions regarding course admission by email.

Requirements:

*Class participation:* In seminar meetings, students are expected to discuss readings, critically examine applicable texts (where possible, we choose from dissertation projects), suggest improvements on the methods employed, and engage actively in weekly classroom exercises. (40% of course grade)

An important component of class participation will be to prepare to discuss in-class exercises on seven occasions (February 12, February 26, March 5, March 19, March 26, April 2, and April 24). (Assignments for the exercises are provided under the corresponding weeks on the syllabus.) Exercises will not be individually graded, but we will take the quality of your contributions to these exercises into account in assigning your class participation grade.

*Workshop:* Four in-class workshops (total 20%, each 5%, of course grade)

Workshops will enable students to develop and receive feedback on their own early stage projects and to provide constructive feedback on others' work. Precise details of assignments are provided in the syllabus below under the corresponding weeks when they are due.

- Fri., Feb. 19: Workshop #1 – Question, potential explanations and mechanisms
  - o Upload assignment to course website by Tues., Feb. 16 at 6pm
  - o Upload peer comments to course website by Thurs., Feb. 18 at 6:00pm
  
- Fri., Mar. 12: Workshop #2 – Case selection and research design
  - o Upload assignment to course website by Tues., Mar. 9 at 6pm
  - o Upload peer comments to course website by Thurs., Mar. 11 at 6:00pm
  
- Fri., Apr. 9: Workshop #3 – Coding and analyzing textual data
  - o Upload assignment to course website by Tues., Apr. 6 at 6pm
  - o Upload peer comments to course website by Thurs., Apr. 8 at 6:00pm
  
- May (Date TBD): Workshop #4 – Research prospectus (preliminary draft)
  - o Upload assignment to course website by (date TBD) at 6pm
  - o Upload peer comments to course website by (date TBD) at 6:00pm

*Prospectus:* The final assignment will be a research prospectus (40% of the grade). Tentative deadline: Upload to course website by Wed., May 12 by 11:59pm. See page 26 of this syllabus for guidelines.

Readings: All materials are available electronically through the course website.

Academic Integrity and Collaboration: For all written work in this class, students' ideas must be their own. Students may read each other's work and offer feedback to each other. However, all idea generation and writing for submitted assignments must be done individually. Students that peer review each other's work must be sure that their ideas and composition reflect their own individual effort. Students must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped them with their work.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability should present their Faculty Letter from the [Accessible Education Office](#) (AEO) and speak with one of the Professors within the first three weeks of class meetings. All discussions will remain confidential.

## Outline and Syllabus

### Part I. Foundations

#### Week 1, January 29.

#### Introduction: Puzzles, questions, and research ethics (FRAN/MELANI).

*This week, we introduce the course. We have three purposes: (1) to convey the approach we intend to adopt toward methodology – one that emphasizes the importance of using appropriate methods to answer important questions, (2) to provide a short background to the history of the methodological and epistemology debates of the past 50 years in political science, and (3) to introduce the principles of ethical research and ways to abide by them in order to protect the safety, livelihood and dignity of the people and communities that we study.*

*The readings for this week are deliberately short. Pay special attention to the clarion call of these works that significant research addresses enduring theoretical and empirical puzzles in our discipline, and that different kinds of approaches can contribute to different stages of building and testing theory. We will also discuss procedures for securing research clearance from the Institutional Review Board and how different research methods raise particular challenges for maintaining ethnical research principles.*

#### General readings

Keohane, Robert O. 2009. "Political Science as a Vocation" *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42: 2 (April): 359-363.

Grofman, Bernard. 2001. *Political Science as Puzzle Solving*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapter 1 "Introduction," pp. 1-11.

Gerring, John. 2012. *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2 "Beginnings," pp. 37-57.

Ziblatt, Daniel. "Of Course Generalize, But How? Returning to Middle Range Theory in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Association-Comparative Politics Newsletter* 17.2 (2006): 8-11.

Lieberman, Evan. 2016. "Can the Biomedical Research Cycle be a Model for Political Science?" *Perspectives on Politics*, 14, 4: 1054-1066.

Fujii, Lee Ann. 2012. "Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 45, 4: 717-723.

APSA. "Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research." American Political Science Association, Washington D.C., April 4, 2020.

Additional readings (not required)

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. 1979. "Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research" [The Belmont Report]. Available at <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html>.

National Science Foundation. n.d. "Interpreting the Common Rule for the Protection of Human Subjects for Behavioral and Social Science Research." Available at [www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/hsfaqs.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/hsfaqs.jsp).

Brooks, Sarah. 2013. "The Ethical Treatment of Human Subjects and the Institutional Review Board Process." In Layna Mosley, ed. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapter 2, pp. 45-66.

Teele, Dawn Langan. 2014. "Reflections on the Ethics of Field Experiments." In Teele, ed., *Field Experiments and Their Critics: Essays on the Uses and Abuses of Experimentation in the Social Sciences*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Chapter 5, pp. 115-140.

NO CLASS, FEBRUARY 5: University Wellness Day

**Week 2, February 12.**

**Concepts, measures & description (FRAN)**

*Before we seek to explain an outcome of interest, we must identify a means for describing it. Typically, this involves defining a core concept and establishing a coding scheme or other ways of measuring the dependent variable. Eventually, you will have to do the same for your explanatory variable(s), and even devise ways of measuring co-variables.*

*This week's reading and exercise is intended to help students think about how to define key concepts and typologies, where appropriate; develop appropriate scales and coding schemes to measure them; and to present a coherent description of the range of outcomes on the dependent variable. We also encourage you think about the concepts you will want to operationalize and measure in your own dissertation projects in advance of next week's workshop.*

General readings

Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. "Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review* 64, 4: 1033-1053.

Adcock, Robert and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: Toward a Shared Framework for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95, 3: 529-546.

Goertz, Gary. 2008. "Concepts, Theories, and Numbers: A Checklist for Constructing, Evaluating, and Using Concepts or Quantitative Measures." Chapter 5 in Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 97-118.

Gerring, John. 2012. *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 5 “Concepts,” pp. 107-140, 6, “Descriptive Arguments,” pp. 141-154, and 7 “Measurements,” pp. 155-194.

Collier, David, Jody Laporte, and Jason Seawright. 2008. “Typologies: Forming Concepts and Creating Categorical Variables,” Chapter 7 in in Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 152-173.

Kreuzer, Marcus. 2019. “The Structure of Description: Evaluating Descriptive Inferences and Conceptualizations.” *Perspectives on Politics*. 17, 1: 122-139.

#### Application

Holland, Alisha. 2016. “Forbearance.” *American Political Science Review* 110, 2: 232-246.

#### Additional Reading (not required)

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, ch. 2, “Descriptive Inference,” pp. 34-74.

Schedler, Andreas. 2012. “The Measurer’s Dilemma: Coordination Failures in Cross-National Political Data Collection.” *Comparative Political Studies* 45, 2: 237-266.

#### In-class small group exercise

Working with classmates in small groups during in-class breakout sessions, this exercise will challenge you to think explicitly about how to move from big concepts to tractable measures. Each group should first select one of the following “high-level” (universal or “background”) concepts.

- Political representation
- Contentious politics
- Political culture
- Development
- Political regimes
- Political violence

Next, groups will then identify at least two “middle-level” (general or “systematized”) concepts, and finally, define a “low-level” (configurative) concept that would form the basis for empirical research. To take an example from the reading, “law enforcement” is Holland’s high-level, universal conceptualization; “forbearance” is her middle-level, general conceptualization; and evicting squatters and street vendors is her low-level, configurative conceptualization.

Now, groups have two options. They may choose to rely on published works or develop their own schemes. If your group chooses to follow the former route, identify how the authors have operationalized and measured their concept. What are the strengths and shortcomings of their measures? Is their coding scheme clear? If so, why? If not, what would have made it more persuasive?

If your group decides to develop a novel scheme, how will you operationalize the concept, and what scale will you use to measure it? Draft a coding scheme with rules for assigning numeric or categorical values to your observations.

**Week 3, February 19.**  
**Explanations and mechanisms (MELANI)**

*Social scientists increasingly call for attention to mechanisms in explanations of social or political phenomena. However, approaches to the very question of how to identify and test mechanisms vary, and the choice of an approach to causation has implications for designing tests of causal processes. This week we will explore distinct conceptualizations of “mechanisms” and discuss ways to identify and test them.*

General readings

Gerring, John. 2012. *Social Science Methodology*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 8 “Causal Arguments,” pp. 198-202, 215-217.

King, Gary, Keohane, Robert and Verba, Sidney. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 3 “Causality and Causal Inference,” pp. 75 – 87.

Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. 2013. “Methodological Rorschach Tests: Contrasting Interpretations in Qualitative and Quantitative Research.” *Comparative Political Studies* 46, 2: 236-251.

Fearon, James D. 1991. “Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science.” *World Politics* 43, 2: 169-195.

Hedstrom, Peter and Petri Ylikoski. 2010. “Causal Mechanisms in the Social Sciences.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 36: 49-67.

Falletti, Tulia G. and Julia F. Lynch. 2009. “Context and Causal Mechanisms in Political Analysis.” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, 9: 1143-1166.

Additional reading (not required)

Morgan, Stephen L., and Christopher Winship. 2015. *Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 10, “Causality and causal mechanisms.”

Applications

Grzymala-Busse, Anna. 2015. *Nations Under God: How Churches Use Moral Authority to Influence Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2, pp. 22-61.

## **Workshop #1: Question, potential explanations and mechanisms**

For this workshop, you will generate a short paper (not exceeding 5 pages) with the following elements:

1. **Question/puzzle**: Identify a core question central to your own research and/or that you find compelling, ideally structured in the form of an empirical puzzle.
2. **Concept/Measurement**: Specify a central concept you will address in your research—which can be either the outcome you seek to explain or the idea you hope to use to explain an outcome of interest. Explain how you will define and operationalize this concept for the purposes of your research. If a typology is appropriate, go ahead and propose one first. Then, discuss what specific indicators of your concept you will use, and how will you measure these indicators. How many categories will your variable have and why? Will you measure it on an ordinal, nominal, or some other scale, and why?
3. **Explanations/hypotheses**: Identify and briefly summarize one main hypothesis and at least two plausible alternative explanations, ideally with in-text citations to relevant scholarly literature, that explain the outcome at hand or might resolve your puzzle. Articulate your three (or more) potential explanations as clear, testable, and falsifiable causal propositions.
3. **Observable implications**: Identify several (or, ideally, as many as possible...) direct observable implications of each proposition and indirect ones that follow from the logics employed. If possible, think of observable implications at different levels or units of observation (e.g., individuals, groups, spatial units, etc.).
4. **Diagram**: Draw an initial, basic diagram showing the relationship between your hypothesized cause and the outcome of interest. Then, build on this bare-bones figure to construct a more developed diagram specifying the mechanism(s) that link the cause and outcome. Indicate where and how observable implications fit into each step on the causal chain.

Upload your document to Canvas by Tues., Feb. 16 at 6pm. Read and comment on the submissions of your fellow seminar participants in advance of the class meeting. Upload peer comments to course website by Thurs., Feb. 18 at 6:00pm. Come prepared to discuss your comments during the workshop.

## Part II. Research Design

### Week 4, February 26.

#### Case selection (FRAN)

*A good research design usually involves choosing cases well, but how to do so may seem elusive. This week, we will confront some enduring questions of research design. How many cases does one choose? How many are too many? Too few? What should be compared, and how? What criteria should be used in selecting cases? What role does case selection play in building and testing theories?*

*The readings for this week grapple with these questions. As you read them, pay close attention to the answers they provide, including the following considerations:*

- *What are their critiques of the comparative method? Are these critiques fair? How do authors handle these critiques in contemporary research designs?*
- *Is a single-case study defensible?*
- *What is the state of the art in choosing cases?*

*Background on early approaches to case selection (not required - we will not spend much time on these in class):*

Lijphart, Arend. 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *American Political Science Review* (September): 682-93.

Eckstein, Harry. 1975. "Case-Study and Theory in Political Science" in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, eds. *Handbook of Political Science*. Vol. 7. Reading: Addison-Wesley. Pp. 113-132.

Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Interscience. Chapter 2, "Research Designs," pp. 31-46.

*The comparative method and its critics:*

Lijphart, Arend. 1975. "The Comparable Cases Strategy in Comparative Research." *Comparative Political Studies* 8, 2: 158-177.

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get." *Political Analysis* 2: 131-149.



*A path forward for case selection?*

Gerring, John. 2007. "The Case Study: What It is and What It Does." In Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Chapter 4, pp. 90-122.

Mahoney, James and Goertz, Gary. 2004. "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 98, 4: 653-69.

Seawright, Jason and John Gerring. 2008. "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research." *Political Research Quarterly* 61, 2: 294-308.

Levy, Jack S. 2008. "Counterfactuals and Case Studies." In Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 627-644.

Riedl, Rachel Beatty. 2017. "Sub-National—Cross-National Variation: Method and Analysis in Sub-Saharan Africa." *American Behavioral Scientist* 61, 8: 932-959.

*Additional Readings (not required)*

Slater, Dan and Daniel Ziblatt. 2013. "The Enduring Indispensability of Controlled Comparison." *Comparative Political Studies* 46, 10: 1301-1327.

Rueschemeyer, Dietrich. 2003. "Can One or a Few Cases Yield Theoretical Gains?" In James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 9, pp. 305-336.

Glynn, Adam and Nahomi Ichino. 2016. "Increasing Inferential Leverage in the Comparative Method: Placebo Tests in Small *n* Research." *Sociological Methods and Research* 45, 3: 598-629.

Exercise

This assignment engages the class with a key question in distributive politics -- Is democracy better for the poor? – a debate in which empirical tests have been contradictory and inconclusive. Working with classmates in preassigned small groups *prior to* this week’s seminar meeting, choose two of the following readings, and be prepared to discuss how case selection influences the authors’ answers to this question.

- *What explains the provision of social welfare?*
  - Meltzer, Allan H., and Scott. F. Richard. 1981. “A Rational Theory of the Size of Government,” *Journal of Political Economy* 89: 914-27. (*Focus on the first 3 pages.*)
  - Lake, David A. and Matthew A. Baum. 2001. “The Invisible Hand of Democracy: Political Control and the Provision of Public Services.” *Comparative Political Studies* 34, 6: 587-621.
  - Ross, Michael. 2007. “Is Democracy Good for the Poor?” *American Journal of Political Science* 51, 4: 804-821.
  - Harding, Robin and David Stasavage. 2014. “What Democracy Does (and Doesn’t Do) for Basic Services: School Fees, School Inputs, and African Elections.” *The Journal of Politics* 76, 1: 229–45.
  - Paglayan, Agustina. 2020. “The Nondemocratic Roots of Mass Education: Evidence from 200 Years.” *American Political Science Review*. 1-20.

## **Week 5, March 5.**

### **Mixed methods (FRAN)**

*One apparent solution to the qualitative-quantitative divide in political science has been to “mix methods” – for example, to use large-N analysis to boost the reliability of findings discovered through small-N analysis, or to use qualitative methods to identify causal processes that link variables determined to be related through regression analysis of observational data. As we shall see next week, and as other departmental courses elaborate, incorporating experiments for causal identification is another widely used application of mixed methods designs.*

*This week’s readings offer different prescriptions for how methods can be mixed within the same study. As you review these readings, think about the following questions:*

- *How do mixed methods complement one another?*
- *At what stage of the theory-building and testing, or hypothesis formation and testing are different methods most appropriate?*
- *What are the pros and cons of mixed methods designs?*

### General readings

Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2008. “Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods.” In Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 33, pp. 756-777.

Small, Mario Luis. 2008. “How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 37: 57-86.

Lieberman, Evan. 2005. “Nested Analysis as a Mixed Method Strategy for Comparative Research.” *American Political Science Review* 99,3: 435-52.

Seawright, Jason. 2016. *Multi-Method Social Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Selections from Chapter 1, pp. 1-12; Chapter 3, pp. 45-74; and Chapter 7, pp. 150-170.

### Applications

Paluck, Elizabeth Levy and Donald P. Green. 2009. “Deference, Dissent, and Dispute Resolution: An Experimental Intervention Using Mass Media to Change Norms and Behavior in Rwanda.” *American Political Science Review* 103, 4: 622-644. (Focus on the introduction/motivation (pp. 622-624), experimental design (pp. 626-628), and especially the combination of quantitative and qualitative measurement strategies.)

Cammett, Melani. 2014. *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Introduction, pp. 107; Chapter 1, pp. 7-37.

### Additional Readings (not required)

Rohlfing, Ingo. 2008. “What You See and What You Get: Pitfalls and Principles of Nested Analysis in Comparative Research.” *Comparative Political Studies* 41, 11 (November): 1492-1541. (This is a critique of Lieberman 2005.)

Exercise

Take the readings you and your group members chose last week. During an in-class breakout session with the same group members, consider whether would you add another method or component to the research design of one of the two authors you read last week now that you have the benefit of this week's readings. If so, which method(s)? What gains will you achieve by doing so? Justify why an *addition*, rather than a *replacement*, would be more beneficial. After a short breakout session with your group, be prepared to discuss your ideas with the full seminar.

**Week 6, March 12.**  
**Natural experiments (MELANI)**

*In this class, we explore varieties of natural experiments, notably regression discontinuity designs and instrumental variables approaches, and discuss the ways they aim to address potential endogeneity threats. We then assess the pros and cons of these techniques, probing the conditions under which natural experiments allow us to infer that a hypothesized variable causes another cause to occur, and consider the value of qualitative research in natural experiments.*

General readings

King, Gary, Keohane, Robert and Verba, Sidney. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 5, Section 5.4, pp. 185-195.

Malesky, Edmund J. 2008. "Battling Onward: The Debate Over Field Research in Developmental Economics and its Implications for Comparative Politics." *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research* 6, 2.

Dunning, Thad. 2012. *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-Based Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, "Introduction: Why Natural Experiments?", pp. 1-38; Part I/Chapters 2-4, "Discovering Natural Experiments," pp. 41-102; and Chapter 7, "The Central Role of Qualitative Evidence", pp. 208-232.

Sekhon, Jasjeet S. and Rocio Titiunik. 2012. "When Natural Experiments Are Neither Natural nor Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 106, 1 (February): 35-57.

Applications

Fewerda, Jeremy and Nicholas L. Miller. 2014. "Political Devolution and Resistance to Foreign Rule: A Natural Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 108, 3: 642-660.

Kocher, Matthew A. and Nino P. Monteiro. 2016. "Lines of Demarcation: Causation, Design-Based Inference, and Historical Research." *Perspectives on Politics* 14, 4: 952-975.

Additional applications (not required)

Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98, 4: 529-545.

Dell, Melissa. 2010. "The Persistent Effects of Peru's Mining Mita." *Econometrica* 78, 6: 1863-1903.

Tuñón, Guadalupe. 2018. "When the Church Votes Left: How Progressive Religion Can Lead to Moral Conservatism." Unpublished manuscript, Dept. of Politics, Princeton University.

## **Workshop #2: Case selection and research design**

For this workshop, you will prepare a document (not exceeding 5 pages) that describes and justifies the research design of your research project.

- Indicate whether you will rely heavily on a comparative or case-study approach, a natural or field experiment, a nested analysis, or some other combination of methods. What advantages will such an approach give you over the alternatives? Be explicit about how this particular approach would help you best answer your research question.

- If you choose a comparative design, what causal leverage will these cases give you? If you choose a case study, what makes it a particularly compelling choice?

If you choose a nested analysis, by what logic will you choose your cases to supplement your large-N analysis?

- If you have an idea for a natural or field experiment, explain what the source of the as-if randomization is (for a natural experiment) or how you would implement random assignment (for a field or survey experiment).

Upload your document to Canvas by Tues., Mar. 9 at 6pm. Read and comment on the submissions of your fellow seminar participants in advance of the class meeting. Upload peer comments to course website by Thurs., Mar. 11 at 6:00pm. Come prepared to discuss your comments during the workshop.

## Part III. Techniques

### Week 7, March 19.

#### Case studies and process tracing (FRAN)

*We have experimental techniques and ways to analyze observational data to assess the impact of x on y. But how do we build persuasive explanations for a complex outcome – how a bill was passed, how a movement was mobilized, or why a war broke out? Following the intuition that many steps were involved that led to such an outcome, this week we consider the advice political scientists offer for how to do process tracing within cases, the critiques of those methods, and an application of process tracing.*

*As you examine these readings, keep in mind the following questions:*

- *What is process tracing? If you were pressed to succinctly explain what process tracing is, and is not, how would you proceed?*
- *What are the merits of the critiques of process tracing? How would you design your work, and what explicitly would you try to avoid, to answer the critics?*
- *What strategies do authors who apply process tracing employ to account for alternative explanations? Which, in your view, fall short? Which are most persuasive, and why?*

#### General readings

Bennett, Andrew and Jeffrey T. Checkel, eds. 2015. *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices,” pp. 3-37); and Chapter 5, “What Makes Process Tracing Good? Causal Mechanisms, Causal Inference, and the Completeness Standard in Comparative Politics,” pp. 126-152.

Collier, David. 2011. “Understanding Process Tracing.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44, 4: 823-30.

*In the first edition of Rethinking Social Inquiry, Brady, Collier, and Seawright introduced the concept of a “causal process observation.” This concept as a basis for causal inference was critiqued by Nathaniel Beck. Brady, Collier, and Seawright responded, and Beck, in return responded to the response. Here, we include an abridged version of the first part of this exchange. You will find the remainder under additional readings.*

Collier, David, Henry E. Brady, and Jason Seawright. 2004. “Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology.” In *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. Chapter 13. The entire chapter (pp. 229-266) is available to you, but we ask you to read pp. 252-264.

Beck, Nathaniel. 2006. “Is Causal-Process Observation an Oxymoron?” *Political Analysis* 14, 3: 347-352.

Grzymala-Busse, Anna. 2011. “Time with Tell? Temporality and the Analysis of Causal Mechanisms and Processes.” *Comparative Political Studies* 44, 9: 1267-1297.

Zaks, Sherry. 2017. “Relationships among Rivals (RAR): A Framework for Analyzing Contending Hypotheses in Process-Tracing Research.” *Political Analysis* 25, 3: 344-362.

Application

Weaver, Vesla M. 2007. "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy." *Studies in American Political Development* 21, 2: 230-265.

Additional readings (not required)

Brady, Henry E., David Collier, and Jason Seawright. 2006. "Toward a Pluralistic Vision of Methodology." *Political Analysis* 14, 3: 353-368.

Beck, Nathaniel. 2010. "Causal Process 'Observation': Oxymoron or (Fine) Old Wine." *Political Analysis* 18: 499-505.

Hall, Peter A. 2006. "Systematic Process Analysis: When and How to Use It." *European Management Review* 3, 1: 24-31.

Tilly, Charles. 1995. "To Explain Political Processes." *American Journal of Sociology* 100, 6: 1594-1610.

George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005. Chapter 10, "Process-Tracing and Historical Explanation," pp. 205-232.

Exercise

The following well received work employs cases with the explicit aim of demonstrating the causal mechanisms associated with the theory. Read the selection in advance of the seminar meeting. As you complete the reading, think about whether or not process tracing might have been employed more rigorously and, if so, how. Be prepared to discuss your observations in seminar.

Albertus, Michael. 2015. *Autocracy and Redistribution: The Politics of Land Reform*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6, "Elite Splits and Redistribution under Autocracy: Peru's 'Revolution from Above,'" pp. 190-224.



**Week 8, March 26.**  
**Archival research (FRAN)**

*Historical data are increasingly central in social science research related to questions ranging from the origins of democracy to the long-term roots of development trajectories, among other topics. In this week, we explore the nuts and bolts of archival research, which can be leveraged to generate both qualitative and quantitative data for historically oriented projects. We then discuss the challenges of accessing and working with both archival materials as well as secondary sources that address historical events and phenomena, and we evaluate the merits of potential solutions to these challenges.*

*Keep in mind that in some cases you may wish to consult proper archives, or archives that are curated. But at other times, you may wish to analyze other texts – militia newsletters, reports from business associations, national or local newspapers, or party platforms, just to name a few – that are not “archived.” The same lessons the political historian brings to archival research can be applied to these other documents as well.*

*(Note that we will cover content analysis in Week 10).*

General readings

Vitalis, Robert. 2006. “The Past is Another Country.” In *A Handbook for Social Science Field Research: Essays & Bibliographic Sources on Research Design and Methods*, edited by Ellen Perecman and Sara Curran. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, Chapter 1, pp. 5-20.

Lustick, Ian. 1996. “History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias.” *American Political Science Review* 90, 3: 605-618.

Trachtenberg, Marc. 2009. *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 5, pp. 140-168.

Bercovitch, Jacob. 2005. “Social Research and the Study of Mediation: Designing and Implementing Systematic Archival Research.” *International Negotiation* 9, 3: 415-428.

Lieberman, Evan. 2010. “Bridging the Qualitative-Quantitative Divide: Best Practices in the Development of Historically Oriented Replication Databases.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 37-59.

Additional readings (not required)

Harrison, Hope. 1992. “Inside the SED Archives: A Researcher’s Diary. Cold War International History Project Bulletin 2. (Begins on p. 20.) Available [here](#).

Schmidt, Laura. “Using Archives: A Guide to Effective Research.” Available [here](#).

Thies, Cameron. 2002. “A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations.” *International Studies Perspectives* 3, 4: 351-372.

Application:

Schickler, Eric. 2016. *Racial Realignment: The Transformation of American Liberalism, 1932–1965*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 7, “State Parties and the Civil Rights Realignment,” pp. 150-175.

Additional Applications (not required)

Finkel, Evgeny. 2015. “The Phoenix Effect of State Repression: Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust.” *American Political Science Review* 109, 2: 339-353.

Kuo, Didi. 2018. *Clientelism, Capitalism, and Democracy: The Rise of Programmatic Politics in the United States and Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3, “Clientelism as a Governing Strategy in the United States,” pp. 43-62.

Carpenter, Daniel and Colin D. Moore. 2005. “When Canvassers became Activists: Antislavery Petitioning and the Political Mobilization of American Women.” *American Political Science Review* 108, 3: 479-498.

Exercise

*Taking a concrete research question in political science (or a related social science discipline) that interests you, and that might lend itself to archival research. Come prepared to discuss the following issues in advance of the seminar:*

1. Are you aware of a set of documents that is appropriate for your inquiry?
  - If so, briefly describe these documents and how they would be helpful in answering your question. Where are they available? Are you able to identify an archive where these documents may be housed? If so, how can you gain access to them?
  - If not, tell us what sort of documents or archive you would hope to discover, and explain why they would be important to answering your question.
2. Have these documents or holdings from an archive, to your knowledge, been consulted by other U.S.-based political scientists, local scholars, or historians? If so, how have they used the documents? Would you use them in a substantially different way? Why or why not?
3. Briefly describe your next steps. Which documents from the larger universe would you consult, and on what basis would you make your choices? What, briefly but concretely, is your plan for analyzing the data? Anticipate potential objections to the validity of the data and outline a strategy for addressing them.

**Week 9, April 2.**  
**Interviewing (MELANI)**

*Interview-based research is a common component of many research designs in political science, whether as a key strategy for data collection or as an ancillary effort to improve the design of surveys or field experiments or to interpret findings derived from quantitative analyses of observational or experimental data. In this week, we address key components of interviewing as a research method, including the design of protocols for structured and semi-structured interviews, sampling of interviewees, “best practices” for conducting interviews, assessments of the validity and reliability of interview data, and ways to report interview data as transparently as possible.*

General readings

Lynch, Julia. 2013. “Aligning Sampling Strategies with Analytic Goals,” In Layna Mosley, ed., *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapter 1, pp. 31-38.

Hochschild, Jennifer. 2016. “Conducting Intensive and Elite Interviews.” In Michèle Lamont and Patricia White, *Report on the Workshop on Interdisciplinary Standards for Systematic Qualitative Research*. Washington, DC: National Science Foundation, pp. 124-127.

Martin, Cathie Jo. 2013. “Crafting Interviews to Capture Cause and Effect.” In Layna Mosley, ed., *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapter 5, pp. 109-124.

Gallagher, Mary. 2013. “Capturing Meaning and Confronting Measurement.” In Layna Mosley, ed., *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapter 9, pp. 181-195.

*Skim:* Rubin, Herbert J. and Irene S. Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Chapter 5, “The Responsive Interview as an Extended Conversation,” pp. 7-14; Chapter 7, “Structuring the Interview,” pp. 7-22; Chapter 8, “Designing Main Questions and Probes,” pp. 1-20; and Chapter 9, “Preparing Follow-Up Questions,” pp. 2-25.

Berry, Jeffrey M. 2002. “Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 35, 4: 679-682.

Bleich, Erik and Robert Pekkanen. 2013. “How to Report Interview Data.” In Layna Mosley, ed., *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapter 4, pp. 84-108.

MacLean, Lauren. 2013. “The Power of the Interviewer.” In Layna Mosley, ed. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapter 3, pp. 67-83.

Applications (choose one):

Hochschild, Jennifer. 1981. *What’s Fair? American Beliefs about Distributive Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 1-2.

Nugent, Elizabeth. 2020. *After Repression: How Polarization Derails Democratic Transition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 5; Chapter 1 optional.

### **Focus groups (not required)**

*Some of you may be interested in conducting focus groups. Given time and space constraints, we can't do everything so we have not included this topic in the course. However, below are some useful resources for those of you who are considering using focus groups in your research.*

#### General readings

Morgan, David. 1996. "Focus Groups." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22: 129-152.

Short, Susan E. 2006. "Focus Group Interviews." In Ellen Perelman and Sara R. Curran, eds., *A Handbook for Social Science Field Research: Essays and Bibliographic Sources on Research Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Pp. 103-115.

Greenbaum, Thomas L. 2000. "Moderating Fundamentals." In *Moderating Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Group Facilitation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Pp. 125-157.

#### Additional resources

Barbour, Rosaline. 2007. *Doing Focus Groups*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Krueger, Richard A. 2009. *Focus groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kidd, Pamela S. and Mark B. Parshall. 2000. "Getting the Focus and the Group: Enhancing Analytical Rigor in Focus Group Research." *Qualitative Health Research* 10, 3: 293-308.

Greenbaum, Tom. 2008. "The Case Against Internet Focus Groups." MRA Alert Newsletter, April. <http://www.groupsplus.com/pages/case22.htm>

**Week 10, April 9.****Content analysis and coding texts (MELANI)**

*Content analysis is a systematic way to analyze textual material, whether derived from documents, oral communications such as speeches or interviews, field research notes, or graphics and other forms of media. By analyzing the presence, meaning and relationships among words, themes or concepts, the approach can be used to derive inferences about research questions in the social sciences. Data can remain in a purely qualitative format or can be converted into quantitative formats. In this week, we will focus on the nuts and bolts of content analysis, with particular attention to the development and application of coding schemes and ways to assess the reliability and validity of inferences derived from the approach. Students who wish to use this technique in their own research may wish to familiarize themselves with the NVivo or other content analysis software. A free download of NVivo software is available through the Harvard Library [website](#), which provides links to an online tutorial or to arrange personal training or assistance with the software.*

General readings

Herrera, Yoshiko and Bear Braumoeller, eds. 2004. "Symposium: Discourse/Content Analysis." *Qualitative Methods* 2, 1. Contributions by Hardy et al., pp. 19-22; and Neuendorf, pp. 33-36.

Boréus, Kristina and Göran Bergström. 2017. "Content Analysis." In K. Boréus and G. Bergström, eds. *Analyzing Text and Discourse: Eight Approaches for the Social Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, Chapter 2.

Drisko, James and Tina Maschi. 2015. "Qualitative Content Analysis." In J. Drisko and T. Maschi, eds., *Content Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 4.

Aberbach, Joel D. and Bert A. Rockman. 2002. "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35, 4: 675.

Kurasaki, Karen S. 2000. "Intercoder Reliability for Validating Conclusions Drawn from Open-Ended Interview Data." *Field Methods* 12 (August): 179-194.

Additional readings (not required)

Krippendorff, Karl. 2013. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Chapters 4-7, 14. (NB: Earlier editions are also fine.)

Drisko, James and Tina Maschi. 2015. "Basic Content Analysis." In J. Drisko and T. Maschi, eds., *Content Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 2.

Application

Kim, Annice, Shiriki Kumanyika, Daniel Shive, et al. 2010. "Coverage and Framing of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities in US Newspapers 1996-2005." *American Journal of Public Health* 100, S1: S225-S231.

Additional application (not required):

Bilu, Yoram. 1989. "The Other as a Nightmare: The Israeli Encounter as Reflected in Children's Dreams in Israel and the West Bank." *Political Psychology* 10: 365-390.

### **Workshop #3: Coding and analyzing textual data**

Write a short paper (not exceeding 5 pages) that addresses the following elements:

1. Specify a research question related to your own research interests.
2. Gather a set of documents from archival sources, other print materials or transcripts from in-depth interviews of relevance to this question. (You may use sources that you have gathered or created for your own research or that others have generated and made available online.)
2. Describe and justify the procedures used to sample the documents and/or interviewees.
3. Elaborate and justify your coding scheme. Include your codebook as an appendix.
4. Describe your data analysis strategies (either by using NVivo or hand coding).
5. Present your results and discuss any potential limitations of your study.

Upload your document to Canvas by Tues., April 6 at 6pm. Read and comment on the submissions of your fellow seminar participants in advance of the class meeting. Upload peer comments to course website by Thurs., April 8 at 6:00pm. Come prepared to discuss your comments during the workshop.

**Week 11, April 16.**  
**Survey instrument design (MELANI)**

*Many quantitative and mixed methods research designs employ survey data, whether based on original surveys or publicly accessible data from survey projects. While the literature on survey research as a methodology is vast and multifaceted – and [Dr. Chase Harrison](#) in the Harvard Government Department offers an entire course on survey methods – we will focus on several practical elements of evaluating and/or carrying out survey research, including the design of survey instruments, linking questions to concepts and measures, and the pros and cons of specific ways to word questions and of distinct response categories. Whether or not you plan to employ the analysis of survey data in your own project, familiarity with these issues is critical for consuming much published research in empirical political science.*

General readings

Pasek, Josh and Jon A. Krosnick. 2010. “Optimizing Survey Questionnaire Design in Political Science: Insights from Psychology.” In Jan E. Leighley, ed., *Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Jennifer Dykema. 2020. “Advances in the Science of Asking Questions.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 46: 37-60.

Groves, Robert M., Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., Mick P. Couper, James M. Lepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Tourangeau. 2010. *Survey Methodology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons. Chapters 7-9.

Artino Jr., Anthony R., Jeffrey S. La Rochelle, Kent J. Dezee and Hunter Gehlbach. 2014. “Developing Questionnaires for Educational Research: AMEE Guide No. 87.” *Medical Teacher* 36, 6: 463-474.

Additional Readings (not required)

Krosnick, Jon A. and Stanley Presser. 2009. “Question and Questionnaire Design.” In *Handbook of Survey Research*, 2nd edition, edited by James D. Wright and Peter V. Marsden. San Diego: Elsevier.

Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Jennifer Dykema. 2011. “Questions for Surveys: Current Trends and Future Directions.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75, 5: 909-961.

Applications

Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. “Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation.” *American Political Science Review* 89, 2: 271-294.

Tsai, Lily L. 2015 “Constructive Noncompliance.” *Comparative Politics* 47, 3: 253-279.

Additional Applications (not required)

Seligson, Mitchell A. 2002. “The Impact of Corruption on Regime Legitimacy: A Comparative Study of Four Latin American Countries.” *The Journal of Politics* 64, 2: 408-433.

Schildkraut, Deborah J. 2007. "Defining American Identity in the Twenty-First Century: How Much 'There' is There?" *The Journal of Politics* 69, 3: 597-615.



**Week 12, April 24.****Political ethnography/observation (FRAN)**

*What can ethnography tell us that other methods cannot? How can ethnography be made systematic, persuasive, and replicable? Is ethnography a valid stand-alone method, or a procedure to be followed during the course of other fieldwork in order to generate original and compelling hypotheses?*

*As you do this week's readings, consider the arguments that proponents of ethnography make for the ethnographic method, and then, consider which of the applications persuaded you. Which present deficiencies?*

General readings

Kubik, Jan. 2009. "Ethnography of Politics: Foundations, Applications, Prospects." In Edward Schatz, ed. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 25-52.

Wedeen, Lisa. 2002. "Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science." *American Political Science Review* 96, 4 (December): 713-28.

Fenno, Richard F. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown. "Appendix – Notes on Method: Participant Observation," pp 249-295.

Thachil, Tariq. 2018. "Improving Surveys Through Ethnography: Insights from India's Urban Periphery." *Studies in Comparative International Development*. 53, 3: 281-299.

Applications:

Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2012. "Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 106, 3: 517-532.

Diana Fu. 2016. "Disguised Collective Action in China." *Comparative Political Studies* 50, 4: 499-527 and Methodological Appendix, pp. 1-23.

Additional readings (optional)

Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (April): 273-286.

Edward Schatz, ed. 2009. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. University of Chicago Press.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 1, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," pp. 3-30.

Taylor, Charles. 1971. "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man." *Review of Metaphysics* 25, 1 (September): 3-51.

Weber, Max. 2011. "The Meaning of 'Ethical Neutrality' in Sociology and Economics," and "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy." In Max Weber, *Methodology of the Social Sciences*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction. Pp. 1-47; 51-85.

Scott, James. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 2, "Normal Exploitation, Normal Resistance," pp. 28-47; and Chapter 5, "History According to Winners and Losers," pp. 138-183.

Auyero, Javier. 2000. *Poor People's Politics: Peronist Survey Networks and the Legacy of Evita*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pp. 80-118.

In-Class Small-Group Exercise

Look over any of the applied works we have read this semester (there is no need for you to do this in advance). As a group, discuss what advice you would give one or more of these authors about how their work might have benefitted from an ethnographic component? At which stage of the research? What would an ethnography have added, or what errors might it have avoided? What, specifically, would you want to know that the methods employed did not tell you?

### **Workshop #4: Preliminary draft of research prospectus**

Your final assignment for the course is a research prospectus. We will schedule a separate class, most likely falling during reading period, when we will workshop outlines of or proposals for the full prospectus. You should prepare an abbreviated, approximately 5-page draft, which addresses a question that is central to your own research interests and includes preliminary versions of the following elements:

- Statement of research question, ideally in the form of a puzzle
- Brief measure of your key concept(s) and a description of the range of outcomes on the dependent variable
- Brief statement of tentative hypothesis
- Identification and brief discussion of the range of possible rival hypotheses (and complementary hypotheses, if applicable) situated in relevant scholarly literatures
- Elaboration of tentative hypothesis, with elaboration of logic, mechanisms and observable implications
- Justification of case selection
- Potential data sources
- Proposed methods of data analysis; please append an interview schedule or coding scheme for textual analysis to the prospectus.
- Conclusion, including (re)statement of the importance of the question

We will ask you to upload the assignment to the course website four days in advance of the workshop, and to read and comment on the submissions of your fellow seminar participants in advance of the class meeting, uploading peer comments to course website a full day before the workshop. Come prepared to discuss your comments during the workshop.

### **Final assignment**

The research prospectus should address all of the above elements in a polished draft and should not exceed 25 double-spaced pages, exclusive of the bibliography. Upload assignment to course website by Wed., May 12 by 11:59pm.