

## **“Qualitative” Research Methodologies • SIS-680.A01 Summer Semester 2009**

Professor Patrick Thaddeus Jackson  
Office: 101F Leonard Hall  
office hours: in class and by appointment

e-mail: ptjack@american.edu  
AIM, Twitter: ProfPTJ

This course will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:30pm-8:00pm, in SIS 205, except when we don't meet on campus at all (see the daily schedule for details).

### Course Objective and Description

That is to say, my dear philosophers: let us be on guard from now on against the dangerous old conceptual fairy-tale that posited a “pure, will-less, pain-less, timeless knowing subject.” Let us be on guard against the snare of such contradictory concepts as “pure reason,” “absolute spirituality,” “knowledge in itself” – these always demand that we think of an eye that cannot be thought, an eye that must not have a direction, an eye in which the active and interpretive powers, through which alone seeing becomes *seeing-something*, are supposed to be prevented and lacking. Here therefore is absurdity and nonsense demanded of the eye. There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective “knowledge”; and the *more* affects that we allow to speak about a thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we know ourselves to deploy for the same thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing – and our “objectivity” – be.

– Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* 3:12

This course rests on three propositions about the practice and content of scholarly research:

1. the purpose of good research is to produce knowledge, which is composed of facts, out of mere data.
2. not all good research is, or should be, conducted through the application of large-n quantitative techniques.
3. there *are* systematic procedures for conducting other kinds of research; these procedures rest on diverse ontological and epistemological assumptions, but are equally rigorous in their own ways.

Accordingly, this course will provide you with an introduction to three significant styles of research in the social sciences that are neither identical with nor deficient forms of large-n quantitative research: small-n comparative case study; interpretive ethnography; and relational analysis, encompassing both network and discourse aspects. I have selected these three because it has been my experience that students of social life at all levels who are trying to do “qualitative” research (a category of which I am *deeply* skeptical, for reasons that I will detail in the first lecture of the course) are usually trying to use one of these three styles without really being explicit about it. The goal of this course is to make the tacit assumptions often at work in such research as explicit as possible, so that they can serve as a template or guide for more systematic and rigorous application to a variety of research questions.

As will quickly become apparent, I am also firmly committed to the proposition that a style of research is complicit in the *production* of the particular world of facts and knowledge that it reveals. This means that I am highly skeptical of attempts to combine research styles without proceeding very cautiously, and also that I am not convinced that different research styles can “triangulate” on a single thing in any determinate fashion. The styles of research that we will be examining in this course are, in my opinion, incommensurate with one another at some level; the solution to this problem is to pick a style of research and stick to its parameters and precepts as consistently as possible. This proposition is as debatable as any of the others that I have laid out here, and I suspect that we will have occasion to debate it as the semester goes on. But you should know my position on this philosophical (and, ultimately, *moral*) question before we begin our work together.

### Assignments and Grading

This will be a hybrid course, consisting of lectures, workshops, individual consulting sessions, and class discussions. Each three-session “module” focusing on a particular style of research will begin with one session largely devoted to “lecture reaction,” in which we will meet having listened to a lecture that I have posted at my syndication site [www.kittenboo.com](http://www.kittenboo.com), and work through that material—including the book that I have played off of in the posted lecture—through in-class exercises and discussions. The second session will focus on the discussion of one or more exemplary works in the style under consideration. The third session of each module will focus on individual students’ project proposals.

Over the course of the semester each enrolled student will produce three partial research proposals, one in each of the three styles that we will be examining; each proposal will be a maximum of 1000 words long and will contain two of the four basic parts of a good research proposal: a *research question* (phrased in the form of a question); and a *methodological plan* for how you plan to provide an answer to your research question. [An actual research proposal would also have to contain a *literature summary* that situates your question in the context of previous attempts to address the same or a

similar issue and a *critique* of those previous attempts. These two are often combined into a single “literature review” section; I separate them here to call attention to the two discrete functions that have to be fulfilled by any discussion of the extant literature in a research proposal. But in any event, you won’t be writing a any literature summaries or critiques for this course.] I have structured the course sessions so that there will be ample time for in-class discussions of individual research proposals, both as a single large group and in smaller groups.

Written assignments *must* be submitted to me electronically. In order to do this, please save your essay in either MS Word or rtf format, and e-mail them to me at the address above. Please name your document as follows: yourlastname\_essay\_#.doc or yourlastname\_essay\_#.rtf, where # should be replaced by the assignment number and yourlastname is, of course, your last name. I will send an acknowledgment by e-mail when I receive your essay, and will return the essay with comments embedded in the text when I have graded it. If you cannot see the comments, or if the file fails to open properly, please e-mail me *immediately* so that we can resolve the problem.

Semester grades will be calculated as follows:

Three partial research proposals.....	60%
Class participation .....	40%

Obviously, you can’t participate if you aren’t in class, although the BlackBoard discussion forums (one will be set up for each style) and office visits can serve as close substitutes if you absolutely have to miss a scheduled class session. I do not feel that it is appropriate to take attendance for a graduate-level course, but I will notice if you are persistently absent, and your performance on the written assignments will also likely suffer.

### Special Summer Session Procedures

Because I suspect that many of you will be working during the day, and hence unable to come to office-hours during normal business hours, I will be starting class each evening that we meet on campus at 6:00pm, rather than 5:30pm. I will be present in the classroom at 5:30, and available for meetings to discuss course material or assignments. This half-hour is unscheduled, so just drop in. Otherwise, if you would like to schedule a meeting-time with me, consult my calendar ([ical.mac.com/onyxdr/Patrick](http://ical.mac.com/onyxdr/Patrick)) and then e-mail me a possible time to meet. I am never on campus on Mondays.

### Readings

The following books have all been ordered at the American University bookstore; all are required.

- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw (1995). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (U Chicago Press).
- Marx, Anthony W. (1998). *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil* (Cambridge UP).
- Orr, Julian (1996). *Talking About Machines* (Ilr Press).
- Ragin, Charles (2000). *Fuzzy-Set Social Science* (U Chicago Press).
- Tilly, Charles (1998). *Durable Inequality* (U California Press).
- Hansen, Lene (2006). *Security as Practice* (Routledge).

## Daily Schedule

- 12 May Introduction, or, why there is no such thing as a “qualitative” research methodology  
Recommended Readings:  
Weber, Max. 1949. “‘Objectivity’ in the Social Sciences and Social Policy,” in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, ed. Edward Shils and Henry Finch (New York: Free Press).  
Weber, Max. 1946. “Politics as a Vocation” and “Science as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford UP).  
“Symposium: Teaching Qualitative Methods,” *Qualitative Methods* 1:1 (Spring 2003).  
Schwartz-Shea, Peri, and Dvora Yanow. 2002. “‘Reading’ ‘Methods’ ‘Texts’: How Research Methods Texts Construct Political Science,” *Political Research Quarterly* 55:2 (June).
- 14 May NO CLASS—you have a lot of reading to do; best get to it.

## Part the First: Comparative Case Studies

- 19 May Comparative Case Studies I  
Lecture #2, <http://kittenboo.com/blog/2008/05/19/sis-680-lecture-two/>  
Readings: \*Ragin, all.  
Recommended:  
Geddis, Barbara. 1990. “How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get,” *Political Analysis* 2.  
Dogan, Mattei, and Dominique Pelassy. 1990. *How to Compare Nations*, second edition (Chatham House Publishers).  
Przeworski, Adam, and Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (Interscience Press).

Ekstein, Harry. 1975. "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in *Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (Addison-Wesley)

Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton UP).

APSR forum on King, Keohane, and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry*, June 1995.

Mahoney, James, and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds. 2003. *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge UP).

Brady, Henry, and David Collier, eds. 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Rowman and Littlefield).

David Collier, "The Comparative Method," in Ada Finifter, ed., *Political Science: the State of the Discipline II* (Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 1993), pp. 105-119.

McKeown, Timothy. 1999. "Case Studies and the Statistical Worldview," *International Organization* 53:1 (Winter).

21 May

### Comparative Case Studies II

Readings: \*Marx, all.

Recommended:

Gourevitch, Peter. 1986. *Politics in Hard Times: Comparative Responses to International Economic Crises* (Cornell UP).

Varshney, Ashutosh. 2002. *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Yale UP).

Almond, Gabriel, and Sidney Verba. 1965. *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Little, Brown and Company).

Spruyt, Hendrik. 1994. *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton UP).

Lieberman, Peter. 1998. *Does Conquest Pay? The Exploitation of Occupied Industrial Societies* (Princeton UP).

26 May

### Comparative Case Studies III

Readings: none required, as this is a workshop/discussion day.

28 May

NO CLASS—catch your breath and work on your proposal.

29 May

*Assignment 1 Due, 5:00pm*

## Part the Second: Interpretive Ethnography

2 June

### Interpretive I

Readings: \*Emerson et. al., all.

Lecture #3: <http://kittenboo.com/blog/2008/06/02/sis-680-lecture-three/>

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Recommended:

- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books).
- Gibbons, Michael T., ed. 1987. *Interpreting Politics* (NYU Press).
- Moon, J. Donald. 1975. "The Logic of Political Inquiry," in *Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (Addison-Wesley).
- Goodman, Nelson. 1978. *Ways of World-Making* (Hackett).
- Winch, Peter. 1990. *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*, second edition (Routledge).
- "Symposium: Interpretivism," *Qualitative Methods* 1:2 (Fall 2003).
- Garfinkel, Harold, and Anne Rawls. 2002. *Ethnomethodology's Program* (Rowman and Littlefield).
- Rabinow, Paul, and William Sullivan, eds. 1979. *Interpretive Social Science* (U California Press).
- Wendt, Alexander. 1998. "On Constitution and Causation in International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 24.
- Weeden, Lisa. 2002. "Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 96:4.

4 June

Interpretive II

Readings: \*Orr, all.

Recommended:

- Kondo, Dorinne. 1990. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourse of Identity in a Japanese Workplace* (U Chicago Press).
- Yanow, Dvora. 1997. *How Does a Policy Mean?: Interpreting Policy and Organizational Actions* (Georgetown UP).
- Gamson, William. 1992. *Talking Politics* (Cambridge UP).
- Fenno, Richard. 2002. *Home Style: House Members in their Districts* (Longman Classics).

9 June

Interpretation Workshop – meet downtown (details TBA)

11 June

Interpretive III

Readings: none required, as this is a discussion/workshop day.

12 June

*Assignment 2 Due, 5:00pm*

Part the Third: Relational Research

16 June

Relational I

Readings: \*Tilly, all.

Lecture #4: <http://kittenboo.com/blog/2008/06/17/sis-680-lecture-4/>

Recommended:

- Wellmann, Barry, and S. D. Berkowitz, eds. 1997. *Social Structures: A Network Approach* (JAI Press).
- Tilly, Charles. 1989. *Big Structures, Large Processes, Hugh Comparisons* (Russell Sage Foundation).
- Tilly, Charles. 2002. *Stories, Identity, and Political Change* (Rowman and Littlefield).
- Katznelson, Ira. 1997. "Structure and Configuration in Comparative Politics," in *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, ed. Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman (Cambridge UP), pp. 81-112.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa. 1997. "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 103:2, pp. 281-317.
- Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus, and Daniel H. Nexon. 2003. "Globalization, the Comparative Method, and Comparing Constructions," in *Constructivism and Comparative Politics*, ed. Dan Green (M. E. Sharpe Press).
- Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality*, volume one (Vintage).
- Shotter, John. 1993. *Cultural Politics of Everyday Life* (U Toronto Press).
- Neumann, Iver. 1999. *Uses of the Other: "The East" in European Identity Formation* (U Minnesota Press).
- Milliken, Jennifer. 1999. "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods." *European Journal of International Relations* 5(2): 225-54.

18 June

Relational II

Readings: \*Hansen, all.

Recommended:

- Mitchell, Timothy. 1991. *Colonising Egypt* (U California Press).
- Weldes, Jutta. 1999. *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (U Minnesota Press).
- Fierke, K. M. 1998. *Changing Games, Changing Strategies* (Manchester UP).
- Burt, Ronald. 1995. *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition* (Belknap Press).
- Bially Mattern, Janice. 2004. *Ordering International Politics* (Routledge).
- Ringmar, Eric. 1996. *Identity, Interest, and Action* (Cambridge UP).
- Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus. 2006. *Civilizing the Enemy* (University of Michigan Press).

23 June

Relational III

Readings: none required, as this is a discussion/workshop day.

25 June

Grand Finale

26 June

Assignment 3 Due, 5:00pm