

Doing Research
POLI 102, Fall 2019
University of California, Santa Cruz

Schedule: MWF 10:40-11:45a.m., J Baskin Engr 165

Professor: Sara Niedzwiecki

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30-2:30p.m., or by appointment

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Course Overview

This course introduces students to conceptualizing and executing research in the social sciences. It offers an introduction to preparing for, conducting, and evaluating systematic research that uses qualitative methods. Qualitative research methods are non-quantitative (i.e., non-statistical) modes of social inquiry, and include various data collection and data analysis endeavors like interviews, focus groups, content analysis, archival research, case studies, and process tracing.

One cannot learn research methods in a passive way; really understanding the concepts and techniques behind methodology requires *Doing Research*. Every week students will do a series of in- or out-of-class exercises in which they will apply ideas developed in the course and the readings. While this class cannot provide in-depth training on each research methodology, nor cover the whole range of qualitative methods used in the social sciences, students will learn the overall process of designing a research project and will practice a variety of research techniques for executing those projects. Throughout the course, students will be charged with thinking critically and debating the strengths and weaknesses of various methodological approaches in the study of politics and learn how to apply these insights to their own research.

Students interested in any career that requires doing research (such as journalism, advocacy, public service, education, law) will benefit from the tools learned in this course. In addition to a strong hands-on approach, the class introduces students to the work of scholars that incorporate qualitative methodologies to their research and institutions on campus that support researchers (such as the Institutional Review Board and McHenry Library).

The course is divided into three parts. The first aims to develop students' capacity to pose research questions and structure a plan for answering them. This part includes a discussion of research design— identifying research puzzles, studying different forms of causality, analyzing concepts, developing variables, reading relevant literature, and writing literature reviews. Students will develop hands-on experience in asking their own research questions and preparing to answer them.

The second part of the course will introduce students to using qualitative methods for data collection. The methods discussed in this part include: field research, interviews, archival research, focus groups, qualitative coding, and content analysis.

The third part includes a discussion of methods for data analysis, including: process tracing, comparative case studies, case selection, comparative historical analysis, and mixed methods. Hands-on exercises to apply both data collection and data analysis methods will take place through activities in McHenry Library, out in the field, and within the classroom.

Learning Outcomes

Students will...

- (1) Learn how to ask research questions and develop research designs to answer them.
- (2) Learn how to gather evidence that will enable them to answer those research questions.
- (3) Learn how to analyze qualitative evidence to make valid causal inferences.
- (4) Develop qualitative research skills that can be applied to other courses and to their future careers.
- (5) Build critical thinking skills for understanding and criticizing works that use qualitative methodologies.
- (6) Improve written and oral communication skills through written activities, class discussions, and an oral presentation.

Course Requirements

- 1) **In-Class assignments, attendance, and participation (40%):** Students are required to **attend** class, **read** all assigned materials, and **actively participate** in class discussions. **Class attendance is a firm requirement.** Attendance will be taken at every session. Students who have more than two (unexcused) absences will have their participating grade reduced five points for each additional absence. Doing well in this class depends on active listening and willingness to participate in discussion in an engaged and informed fashion (i.e. **having completed the reading assigned for that day**).

Students will work on **in-class assignments** every week. The purpose of these exercises is to give students hands-on experience with the analytical process of research. In order to complete those activities, **students need to: i.) attend class (no make-up assignments are allowed) and ii.) have done the readings for that day.** In-class assignments assume that students have done the readings for that day, so not doing the readings will negatively impact your grade.

- 2) **Homework (40%):** Students will engage in four research activities outside of the classroom: how to read a research article, interviews, archival research, and process tracing. A detailed assignment (available through Canvas) will accompany each activity. The purpose of these exercises is to give students experience conducting qualitative research outside the classroom. Homework should be submitted through Canvas. All **late assignments** will be marked down 1/2 of a grade for each day late (i.e. 5 out of 100 points).

- 3) **Research Proposal (15%):** The proposal will be written in three steps.

- i. **On October 16**, students will submit a one-page draft that includes: 1) a research question, 2) a paragraph summarizing the literature review, and 3) a choice of variables and causal mechanisms. A detailed assignment (available through Canvas) accompanies this activity.
- ii. We will meet one-on-one to discuss each student's outline on **October 18**.
- iii. The final proposal is due on **November 25 and must be uploaded to Canvas by November 27**. The Research Proposal should be 1,000-words (~4 pages double-spaced). A detailed assignment (available through Canvas) accompanies this activity.

Time will be devoted in class to learn how to construct a research question, write a literature review, and discuss different forms of causality (Weeks 1-2). Students are also expected to develop a research design that include a discussion of choice of methodology for both collecting and analyzing the data. To make this choice, students will be exposed to different data collection methods (weeks 4-7) and methods for data analysis (weeks 7-9).

All **late proposals** will be marked down 1/2 of a grade for each day late (i.e. 5 out of 100 points).

- 4) **Oral Group Presentations (5%):** The class will be divided into groups according to methodological interests. Each group will be in charge of preparing an oral presentation. The Instructor will provide details on this activity.

As a 5-credit course, it requires 15 hours per week of students' work

Grades for the course will be based on the following percentages for each of these requirements:

	Grade	Deadline
In-Class assignments, attendance, and participation	40%	Every class
Homework	40%	Oct. 11, Oct. 28, Nov. 4, Nov. 18
Research Proposal	15%	Oct. 16 (5%) and November 25 (10%)
Group Presentation	5%	Week 10

Percentage Earned	Letter Grade	Grade Points
97 to 100	A+	4.0
93 to 96	A	4.0
90 to 92	A-	3.7
87 to 89	B+	3.3
83 to 86	B	3.0
80 to 82	B-	2.7
77 to 79	C+	2.3
73 to 76	C	2.0
70 to 72	C-	1.7
67 to 69	D+	1.3
65 to 66	D	1.0
Below 65	F	0.0

Readings

Readings for this class come from two sources:

- 1- Brancati, Dawn. *Social scientific research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2018. (This textbook is referred to as **SSR** in the syllabus).
- 2- Seawright, Jason. *Multi-Method Social Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016
- 3- I have assigned additional readings each week that are available online through Canvas.

Please note, while a copy of Brancati's textbook **(1)** is on reserve at McHenry Library, **students are strongly encouraged to buy it. Seawright's textbook (2) is available online through McHenry library**, but you are also welcomed to buy it. Please bring all the readings to class.

Expectations and Policies

Class Etiquette: I expect each and every student to be an active participant in this course. Class meetings will be discussion- and activity-based and are essential for the development of your methodological skills. Reflecting on the process, experience, and challenges of doing research is a vital part of becoming a better researcher. I expect you to have completed all of the readings and home assignments before each meeting and to come to class prepared to discuss your reading, writing, and homework. You are required to arrive to class on time. Unless otherwise stated, all assignments should be submitted as hard copies in class. Course communication will occur via your UCSC email.

Principles of Community. This class is committed to promoting and protecting an environment that values and supports every person in an atmosphere of civility, honesty, cooperation, professionalism and fairness. Our discussions will be guided by UCSC Principles of community available at: <https://www.ucsc.edu/about/principles-community.html>

Use of media: Please be respectful and only use laptops for note taking and doing activities (and not web surfing). Please silence your phones before coming to class. You are expected to refrain from using your phone for the duration of class.

Academic Honesty: I take academic integrity very seriously and expect all students to do the same. Please see [UC Santa Cruz Academic Misconduct Policy for Undergraduates](#), which details the disciplinary processes surrounding academic misconduct.

Campus Resources

Undocumented Student Services (USS): Under the umbrella of EOP, the USS (https://eop.ucsc.edu/undocumented_student_services/index.html) provides a robust set of services and support to ensure the graduation and retention of undocumented students at UC, Santa Cruz. The services are composed of peer mentors and an academic advisor who provide personal, academic, financial, and legal support to all UCSC undocumented students.

Disability Accommodations: UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. At this time, I would also like us to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at [831-459-2089](tel:831-459-2089) or by email at drc@ucsc.edu

Title IX: Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the Campus Advocacy Resources & Education ([CARE](#)) Office by calling (831) 502-2273 (<http://care.ucsc.edu>). In addition, Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) can provide confidential, counseling support, (831) 459-2628. You can also report gender discrimination directly to the University's Title IX Office, (831) 459-2462.

Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD, (831) 459-2231 ext. 1. For emergencies call 911. Faculty and Teaching Assistants are required under the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment to inform the [Title IX](#) Office should they become aware that you or any other student has experienced sexual violence or sexual harassment.

Basic Needs: Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. The Dean's office has established a "Slug Support Program" (<https://deanofstudents.ucsc.edu/slug-support/program/index.html>) to help students in need. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable her to provide any resources that she may possess.

Course Outline

- Weeks 1-3: Part I — Research Design*
- Introduction to Social Science Research
 - Research Questions and Puzzles
 - Research Design
 - Literature Review
 - Library Research
 - Causal Inference
 - Examples of Qualitative Research
- Weeks 4-7: Part II — Qualitative Methods for Data Collection*
- Field Research
 - Interviews
 - Archival Research
 - Focus Groups
 - Qualitative Coding
 - Content Analysis
- Weeks 7-9: Part III — Qualitative Methods for Data Analysis*
- Process Tracing
 - The Comparative Method
 - Case Selection
 - Comparative Historical Analysis
 - Mixed Methods
- Week 10: Oral Presentations*

Class Schedule and Homework Assignments

F – Sept. 27 Introduction to the course

I. RESEARCH DESIGN

Week 1 – Introduction to Social Science Research and Research Questions

M – Sept. 30 Introduction to Social Science Research

Activity to hand-in: review the syllabus and write a paragraph on what you believe will be the most challenging aspect of the course for you and how you will prepare or anticipate for that challenge

- Babbie, E. *The practice of social research*, 2016, Chapter 1 (pp. 4-14)
- Brancati, Dawn. *Social scientific research*, 2018 (**SSR**), Chapter 1 (pp. 3-13).

W – Oct. 2 Research Questions I

- SSR, Chapter 3 (pp. 33-43)

F – Oct. 4 Research Questions II

- Day, C. and K. Koivu (2018), “Finding the Question: A Puzzle-based Approach to the Logic of Discovery.” *Journal of Political Science Education*.

Week 2 –Research Design I

M – Oct. 7 Concepts

- SSR, Chapter 5 (pp. 61-75)
- Sartori, Giovanni (1970), “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics.” *The American Political Science Review* (pp. 1033–1053).

W – Oct. 9 How to Read and Write Social Science Research

- SSR, Chapters 4 and 21 (pp. 45-57; 319-332)
- Babbie, E. *The practice of social research*, 2016, Chapter 17 (pp. 486-508)

F – Oct. 11 Library Resources at McHenry Library instruction room 2353 (2nd floor).

Reference Librarian Lucia Orlando

Homework DUE: How to Read a Research Article

- Trachtenberg, Marc. *The craft of international history: A guide to method*, 2006. Chapter 3 (pp. 46-68).
- Hunter, Wendy, and Natasha Borges Sugiyama. 2014. “Transforming Subjects into Citizens: Insights from Brazil’s Bolsa Família.” *Perspectives on Politics*.

Week 3 –Research Design II

- M – Oct. 14 Causal Inference
- SSR, Chapter 6 (pp. 77-96)
 - Goertz, G. and J. Mahoney, “Causes of Effects vs. Effects of Causes,” in *A Tale of Two Cultures*, Chapter 3 (pp. 41-50).
- W – Oct. 16 Qualitative Research Example
- Homework DUE: Literature review and puzzle for your research proposal***
- Niedzwiecki, S. (2018) *Uneven Social Policies: The Politics of Subnational Variation in Latin America*. Chapters 1 and (skim) 3 (pp.1-26,51-81).
- F – Oct. 18 *No Class—Individual mandatory meetings on your research proposal*

II. QUALITATIVE METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Week 4 –Field Research and Interviews

- M – Oct. 21 Introduction to Field Research
- Wood, Elisabeth J. “Field Research.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Edited by Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, 123–46, 2009.
 - Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren M. MacLean, and Benjamin L. Read. *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*, 2015, Chapter 3 (pp.82-118).
- W – Oct. 23 Interviews
- Mosley, Layna. “‘Just Talk to People’: Interviews in Contemporary Political Science.” In *Interview Research in Political Science*. Edited by Layna Mosley, 1–28, 2013.
 - Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren M. MacLean, and Benjamin L. Read. *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*, 2015, Chapter 6 (pp.82-118).
- F – Oct. 25 *Out-of-class Activity: Interview three people of your choice and complete the homework*

Week 5 – Interviews and Archival Research

M – Oct. 28 Use of Interview Data

Homework DUE: Interview Exercise

- Bleich, Erik, and Robert Pekkanen. 2013. “How to Report Interview Data.” In *Interview Research in Political Science*, edited by Layna Mosley, 84–106.

W – Oct. 30 In-Class Activity: Interview Prof. Gary Patton

- In preparation for the interview activity, please read background of your interviewee <https://www.gapatton.net/>

F – Nov. 1 Archival research **at McHenry Room 2353.**

Reference Librarians Jessica Pigza and Frank Gravier

- Trachtenberg, Marc. *The craft of international history: A guide to method*, 2006. Chapter 5 (pp. 140-168).
- Paredes, Oona. “[Working with Spanish Colonial Records and Archives: Reflections and Practicalities](#)” (Read pages 1-7, skim pages 8-25)

Week 6— Focus Groups and Qualitative Coding

M – Nov. 4 Archival Research and the Ethics of Research

Homework DUE: UCSC Campus-History Publications

Guest Speaker, Brenda Belcher, Research Compliance Analyst, Office of Research Compliance Administration (ORCA)

- We will discuss the Friday’s readings
- SSR, Chapter 2 (pp. 15-29)
- Familiarize yourself with UCSC human subjects’ procedures at <http://irb.ucsc.edu>.

W – Nov. 6 Focus Groups

- Cyr, Jennifer. *Focus groups for the social science researcher*, 2019. Chapters 1 and 4 (pp. 1-17; 71-84)

F – Nov. 8 Qualitative Coding

- Niedzwiecki, Sara; Chapman Osterkatz, Sandra; Marks, Gary; Hooghe, Liesbet (2018): *The RAI Travels to Latin America. Measuring regional authority under regime change*. In *Regional & Federal Studies*.

Week 7—Content Analysis and Process Tracing

M – Nov. 11 *Holiday. Veterans' Day*

W – Nov. 13 Content Analysis

- SSR, Chapter 17 (pp. 247-261)
- Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah Shannon, “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis” *Qualitative Health Research*, November 2005, 15:9 (pp. 1277-1288)

III. QUALITATIVE METHODS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

F – Nov. 15 Process Tracing

- David Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44, No. 4 (2011), pgs. 823-830
- Ricks, Jacob I., and Amy H. Liu. “Process-Tracing Research Designs: A Practical Guide.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51, no. 4 (2018): 842–46.

Week 8—Comparing Cases

M – Nov. 18 The Comparative Method

Homework DUE: Process Tracing

- Tannenwald, Nina. 1999. “The Nuclear Taboo: the United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use.” *International Organization* 53 (3): 433–68.
- SSR, Chapter 14 (pp. 199-214)

W – Nov. 20 Case Selection

- Koivu, Kendra, and Annika Hinze. “Cases of Convenience? The Divergence of Theory from Practice in Case Selection in Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Research.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50, no. 04 (2017): 1023–27.
- Seawright, J. (2016). *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. Chapter 4 (pp.75-106)

F – Nov. 22 Comparative Historical Analysis

- Thelen, K. and J. Mahoney. “Comparative-historical analysis in contemporary political science.” In *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*, 2015, pp 3–36.
- Mahoney, James, Erin Kimball, and Kendra Koivu. “The Logic of Historical Explanation in the Social Sciences.” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 1 (2009): 114–46.

Week 9 – Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

M – Nov. 25 Preparation for Group Presentations

Research Proposal DUE: Please hand in a hard copy of your proposal at the beginning of class

W – Nov. 27 Mixed Methods

Research Proposal: Upload a copy of your research proposal to Canvas

- Lieberman, Evan. 2005. “Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research.” *American Political Science Review* 99(3):435-52.
- Seawright, J. 2016. *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. Chapters 1 and 3 (pp. 1-18, 45-74).

F – Nov. 29 *Holiday. Thanksgiving*

Week 10– Group Presentations

M – Dec. 2 TBA

- Research Proposals Group 1

W – Dec. 4 TBA

- Research Proposals Group 2

F – Dec. 6 TBA

- Research Proposals Group 3