

Qualitative Research Methods in Social Science

Semester 2 – 2016-2017

Instructor: Rahul Mukherji

Time: 14:00 – 16:00

Venue: SAI Room 317

Department of Political Science, South Asia Institute

Aims

This seminar is designed to help MA and PhD students work on their research design. This is a discussion in qualitative methods. Qualitative methods engage with serious historically informed research dealing with a few cases. The class will engage with the following issues:

1. What is a social theory?
2. How do we locate a research puzzle? Central to defining a research design is the issue of finding a problem in a research area which defies existing explanations.
3. The second stage is to select cases where this problem has arisen and seeking ways of addressing the research problem.
4. Third, we will spend some time trying to understand path dependence and process tracing. Many social phenomena depend on a particular kind of path they take. It becomes imperative then to trace the processes through which paths evolve and change.
5. We will have student presentations. Some will present during topic sections. Others will draw a research design with cases that pose a research puzzle.
6. PhD students will be encouraged to present a research design.
7. There will be a Tutorium attached to this class taught by Dr. Seyed Hossein Zarhani. The Tutorium will be worth two credit points and will help the students prepare for this class.

Calendar and Syllabus

1. 18 April 2017: General Introduction

Class formally begins on April 25.

2. 25 April 2017

Introduction: What is progress in Science?

This seminar will discuss the matter of progress in science.

Reading:

Imre Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes,” in Lakatos, et al eds., *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1980): 91-195.

Supplementary:

Alexander L George and Andrew Bennet, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (MIT Press 2004): Chapter 7.

Terence Ball, “From Paradigms to Research Programs: Toward a Post-Kuhnian Political Science,” *American Journal of Political Science* XX, 1 (Feb 1976): 151-75.

3. May 2 2017: Social Theory

Can we find a theory in a theory? Unless we can do that we cannot be puzzled by it. Did Lenin do it right?

Gary King, Robert O Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton University Press, 1994): 99-114.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

See: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>

Supplementary

William H Sewell, *Logics of History* (Chicago University Press, 2005): chapter 3.

4. May 9 2017: Research Puzzles

Can we now get puzzled by existing social theories? Puzzlement comes only when you have some ideas about conventional wisdom.

Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories* (Chicago University Press, 1968): chapter 2.

Supplementary

Ian Lustick, “Lijphart, Lakatos and Consociationalism,” *World Politics* 50 (Oct 1997): 88-117.

5. May 16 2017: Case Selection

How do you select cases if you find puzzles in a theory and address those puzzles?

Arend Lijphart, “Comparative Politics and Comparative Method,” *American Political Science Review* 65, 3 (1971): 682-93.

Supplementary

Gary King, et al, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton University Press, 1994): chapter 4 & 6.

John Gerring, “What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?” *American Political Science Review* 98 (2004), pp. 341-354.

6. May 23 2017: Path Dependence and Process Tracing

It is important to study social processes even within a single case. How can that be executed?

Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T Chcekel, *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge University Press, 2015): 3-37.

Supplementary

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (MIT Press, 2004): 205-32.

Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (June 2000), pp. 251-267.

Tim Buthe, "Taking Temporality Seriously," *American Political Science Review* 96, 3 (September 2002): 481-493.

G Capoccia and R D Kelemen, "The Study of Critical Junctures," *World Politics* 59, 3 (2007): 341-69.

7. May 30, 2017: Puzzle presentations

This will be the first week of puzzle presentations.

8. June 6 2017, Reading week

There will be no class this week. Students are encouraged to engage with theories and seek puzzles. There will be no presentations this week. Some good examples: Rahul Mukherji, *Globalization and Deregulation: Ideas, Interests and Institutional Change in India* (Oxford University Press, 2014): 1-15.

Robert O Keohane, "Problematic Lucidity," *World Politics* 50 (Oct 1997): 150-70.

Ian Lustick, "Lijphart, Lakatos and Consociationalism," *World Politics* 50 (Oct 1997): 88-117.

9. June 13, 2017: Puzzle presentations

10. June 20, 2017: Puzzle Presentations

11. June 27 2017, Reading week

Students should engage with research designs during this week. They should have a problem. This puzzle should be driven by your understanding of existing theories and you should apply the methods of case selection to test your ideas. In addition, you can also read about counterfactual analysis.

Rahul Mukherji, *Globalization and Deregulation: Ideas, Interests and Institutional Change in India* (Oxford University Press, 2014): especially chapter 1.

Perna Singh, *How Solidarity Works for Welfare* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), especially chapters 1-2.

Philip E Tetlock and Aron Belkin, eds., *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

12. July 4, 2017, Research Design Presentations

13. July 11, 2017: Research Design Presentations

14. July 18 2017, Research Design Presentations

15. July 25 2017, Research Design Presentations

Prior Requirements

This is an MA level class. PhD students are also encouraged to participate. It will help if students are engaging theories that address real world problems. This will help us get puzzled because it is not very difficult to find theories that do not fit the real world.

Organization

The first meeting will be a discussion how we will run the seminar. I will also make a presentation on the history and philosophy of science. During the next four sessions, I will present for 45 minutes and we will discuss for 45 minutes. These presentations will discuss the readings for the class. From sessions 6-14 students will present research puzzles and research design. The research design has to evolve out of the puzzle.

MA students can write a 4500-word paper on research design and PhD students will write a 6000-word paper on research design. This paper will be due at the end of the term.

I will need a 1500 to 2000 - word assignment on the discussions in class by every presenter. This short paper will summarize the presentation and comments received from the seminar participants. This paper will be turned in within a week after the presentation (Only those who present in week 2, we will get an extra week to submit the paper).

The essential readings will be uploaded on Moodle. Much of the supplementary material will be available in the library reserves. The essential readings are the minimal requirements for participating in this class. The supplementary material should be consulted by those who are making the seminar presentation. There is no limit to how much you can read.

I have pointed to additional resources in the following section titled: Scholarly Resources.

Students who desire a “Schein” must register on Moodle by the second week after the lecture begins.

The password for registering for this class is: Methods17

Assessment

Attendance in the Hauptseminar is voluntary for those who do not wish to get a ‘Schein’ at the semester’s end. For others, attendance is compulsory.

The short paper (1000-1500 word) will be due one week after the class presentation.

Discussions in class carry 30% of the grade. The short paper will carry 20% of the grade. And, the final paper will amount to half (50%) of the grade. It is important therefore to consistently participate in class to benefit from it and to earn a good grade.