

## Qualitative Research Methods in Political Science

Monsoon 2024

Dipin Kaur

**Class Meeting:**

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3 pm – 4:30 pm  
AC01-103 (LR)

**Office Hours:**

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5- 6 pm, AC04-710

Sign up at: <https://calendly.com/dipin-kaur/officehours>

### Course Description

The course will introduce students to qualitative research design, data collection, and analysis. It will focus on a variety of political questions to cover the basic techniques for collecting, interpreting, and writing up qualitative data. The first part of the course is organized around the sequence scholars conventionally follow to conduct qualitative research: find a research question, engage with existing literature, formulate hypotheses, collect material, analyze it, and effectively communicate findings. The second part of the course will familiarize students with various qualitative research methods and analysis tools, including interviews, participant observation, case studies, and archival research using primary sources. In the process, students will (a) reflect on the ethics of conducting qualitative research and (b) get a flavor for some themes/ types of research questions to which such techniques are best suited. In the final part of the course, students will learn how to analyze collected data and develop a research plan on their chosen topic using any one combination of methodologies from the following options:

1. Participant Observation/ Interview / Oral History (developing interview questions, identifying a diverse portfolio of interviewees, identifying the biases/ positionality of people you are interviewing/ analyzing insights and gaps) OR
2. Archival Research and process tracing/ case study (what you find, what is missing, the positionality of the people who wrote the material)

Based on this data collection, students will write a final paper that formulates a research question, relevant hypotheses, and initial findings.

The overall class grade will be based on student performance in the following assignments:

- **10 weekly discussion posts (20%)**
- **In-class attendance and participation (20%):** (15%) and reading presentation (5%)
- **In-class Midterm on October 3 (20%)**
- **Final Paper Submission on December 10 (40%):** Outline and in-class elevator pitch (Nov 26 and Nov 28 10%), Final submission (30%)

### Assignments and Grading Rubric

#### Grading Rubric:

Assignments for the course include weekly classroom posts that identify, assess, and integrate arguments based on the week's readings (20%); an in-class midterm assignment (20%); and a final paper (40%) which includes points for an outline and an in-class pitch. Additionally, students will be assessed on their preparation for the week's class through their discussion of assigned readings (15%) and their short, in-class presentations of one reading from the syllabus (5%).

#### Assignments:

##### 1. Weekly Classroom Posts (20%)

Short posts (up to 100-150 words maximum), once per week, addressing either a question you had from the readings for the week, reactions to its concepts (i.e., whether you agree or disagree and why), or connections to other readings/contexts. No outside research is required. Instead,

you can use this space to raise clarification questions for parts you didn't understand, to agree or disagree with positions staked out by these authors and their approaches, or to judge whether the claims travel to other contexts.

Students will be expected to post on Classroom for any 10 (i.e., any one week excused + no response due for the week of the midterm or the last class) of the course.

**These are due on Monday/ Wed 11:59 pm on the day prior to the class meeting.**

## **2. In-Class Midterm Assignment: (20%)**

The midterm will take place on **Thursday, October 3**, during class time. The exam will last 1 hour and 15 minutes, during which time students will answer a set of multiple-choice questions and 2 long answer questions in a closed book format.

## **3. Class Participation (15%) and In-Class Presentation (5%)**

Aside from being present (see attendance policy below), students are expected to take part in discussions as part of class activity. In addition, all sessions will start with a student's presentation, based on class readings and case studies selected by students. Please sign up for a set of reading(s), posted on excel.

## **4. Final Paper (40%): Outline + in-class elevator pitch (10%) & Final Submission (30%)**

### **4(a): Research Design Outline: Fieldwork plan/ Archival Research Plan & Initial Findings (10%)**

**This outline will be maximum 500 words and is due by 11:59 pm on Thursday, Nov 28.**

**Pick ONE of two methodological applications for your final research paper. Based on your choice, submit ONE of the following research design outlines:**

*Option 1: Archival research plan and Initial Findings:*

Identify an archive – available digitally (see the end of the syllabus for suggestions) – that contains material relevant to your project. Draft a plan for which folders/ particular topics you will access in that archive.

- Give a very brief description of the archive you have chosen.
- Comment on how well/badly it represents the subject and the process that has led to the archive being representative or not.
- What new questions does the archive provoke?
- What you have found so far/ expect to find moving forward.

*Option 2: Fieldwork Plan and Initial Findings:*

Identify a topic that you can address using Participant Observation, Interviews, or Oral Histories (in person if it's a campus-related subject, online is okay otherwise). Write a description of the research to be conducted, including:

- a clear statement of the question the project seeks to address
- the choice of field site(s)/ stakeholders or individuals you will be talking to (on Zoom or over the phone is just fine)
- methods you are using, including recruitment, informed consent, and data security procedures, course readings and secondary sources you will be drawing on.
- an assessment of possible risks and benefits to subjects and society,
  - What you have found so far/ expect to find moving forward.

**You will be asked to present a 2-minute elevator pitch of this archival/ fieldwork plan on Nov 26 (last week of class).**

### **4(b): Final Paper**

Based on the chosen topic and methodology the student has narrowed down, they will collect data during reading week, and write a final paper that formulates a research question, relevant

hypotheses, and initial findings. To this end, students can use any one combination of methodologies from the following options:

1. Participant Observation/ Interviewing/ thick description/ case study (developing interview questions, identifying a diverse portfolio of interviewees, identifying the biases/ positionality of people you are interviewing) OR

2. Archival Research and Thick description/ case study (what you find, what is missing, the positionality of the people who wrote the material)

This paper will be 3,000-7,000 words in length and is due by **12 pm on Tuesday, December 10. This is a final deadline. No extensions will be granted, and grades will be automatically docked for late submissions as per the class policies below.**

**NOTE ON AI USE:** I ask that you declare AI use and your sources whenever you have used them. For weekly assignments, if you use AI, include a sentence telling us (a) if you used AI, (b) what that tool helped you with. For the final paper, if you use AI, include a “Reflection on AI use” paragraph, where you disclose which software you have used, and how it has helped you overcome gaps in your paper. If you fail to do this, I have software that helps me detect whether you have used AI tools to write your assignment. A lack of disclosure is considered plagiarism and penalized as per course policies below.

### Course Structure, Schedule, and Readings:

#### **Week 1 – Tue, Aug 27 and Thu, Aug 29: Course Introduction: Why Qualitative Research? And a Quick Intro of Qualitative Methodological Approaches**

- (Aug 27/ 29) Small, Mario Luis, and Jessica McCrory Calarco. Qualitative literacy: A guide to evaluating ethnographic and interview research. Univ of California Press, 2022. Introduction.
- (Aug 27/ 29) Gerring, John. 2017. “Qualitative Methods.” Annual Review of Political Science 20(1): 15-36. [https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-polisci-092415-024158#\\_i13](https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-polisci-092415-024158#_i13)
- (Aug 27/ 29) Lareau, Annette. 2021. Listening to People. A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2.

*Recommended Reading:*

- Ian Shapiro (2002), “Problems, Methods, and Theories in the Study of Politics, or What's Wrong with Political Science and What to Do about It”, *Political Theory*, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 596-619.

#### **Week 2 – Tue, Sep 3 and Thu, Sep 5: Research Designs for Qualitative Methods**

- (Sep 3) Blee, Kathleen M., and Ashley Currier. "Ethics beyond the IRB: An introductory essay." Qualitative Sociology 34 (2011): 401-413.
- (Sep 3) Adida, C.L., Ferree, K.E., Posner, D.N., & Robinson, A.L. (2016). Who's asking? Interviewer coethnicity effects in African survey data. *Comparative Political Studies*, 49 (12), 1630-1660.
- (Sep 5) Sultana, Farhana. "Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research." *ACME: An international journal for critical geographies* 6.3 (2007): 374-385.
- (Sep 5) Gani, Jasmine K., and Rabea M. Khan. "Positionality statements as a function of coloniality: Interrogating reflexive methodologies." *International Studies Quarterly* 68.2 (2024).

*Recommended Reading:*

- Clark, William Roberts. 2020. “Asking Interesting Questions.” In Luigi Curini and Robert Franzese, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science and International Relations*. Chapter 1.

- D'silva, Margaret U., et al. "Reflexivity and Positionality in Researching African-American Communities: Lessons from the Field." *Intercultural Communication Studies* 25.1 (2016).
- Lincoln, Yvonna S., and William G. Tierney. "Qualitative research and institutional review boards." *Qualitative inquiry* 10.2 (2004): 219-234.

### **Week 3 – Tue Sep 10, Thu Sep 12: Field Research, Interviews, Oral Histories, and Ethnography I**

- (Sep 10) Wood, Elisabeth J. 2008. "Field Research" in *The Handbook of Comparative Politics*, edited by Carles Boix and Susan Stokes.
  - (Sep 10) Pachirat, Timothy. *Every Twelve Seconds*. Yale University Press, 2011. Chapter 1 and 2.
  - (Sep 10) A 2-page handout on what thick description is  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B9780080970868440572> and a
  - (Sep 12) Collections of mini-articles about the debates around it Benjamin, Lauren MacLean, and Melani Cammett. "Symposium: Field Research: How Rich? How Thick? How Participatory?." *Qualitative Methods* 4.2 (2006): 9-18.
  - (Sep 12) Srinivas, M.N. (1976), *The Remembered Village*, OUP, Preface + Chapter 1-2.
- Recommended Reading:*
- Michelutti, Lucia, et al. *Mafia raj: the rule of bosses in South Asia*. Stanford University Press, 2018.
  - Jha, Arishek. "Religiosity, Space-making, Exclusion: Kanwar Yatra Celebrations in a North Indian City." *Studies in Indian Politics* 12.1 (2024): 20-32.
  - Murphy, Elizabeth and Robert Dingwall. 2007. "The Ethics of Ethnography." In Paul Atkinson, ed. *The Handbook of Ethnography*, p. 339-351.
  - Pacheco-Vega, Raul, and Kate Parizeau. "Doubly engaged ethnography: Opportunities and challenges when working with vulnerable communities." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 17.1 (2018): 1609406918790653.
  - Scott, James C. *The art of not being governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia*. NUS Press, 2010.

### **Week 4 – Tue Sep 17, Thu Sep 19: Field Research, Interviews, Oral Histories, and Ethnography II**

- (Sep 17) Kapiszewski, Diana. 2015. "Interviews, Focus Groups, and Oral Histories" in *Field Research in Political Science*, eds Kapiszewski and MacLean. Cambridge University Press, 190-233.
  - (Sep 17) Secrets from Belfast: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/secrets-from-belfast/>
  - (Sep 19) Fujii, Lee Ann. "Shades of truth and lies: Interpreting testimonies of war and violence." *Journal of peace research* 47.2 (2010): 231-241.
  - (Sep 19) Lewis-Kraus, G. (2016), "The Trials of Alice Goffman", *The New York Times*, Jan. 12.
- Recommended Reading:*
- Keefe, Patrick Radden. *Say Nothing: A true story of murder and memory in Northern Ireland*. Anchor, 2019.
  - Fujii, Lee Ann. *Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities*. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 45(4): 717-23.

### **Week 5 – Tue Sep 24, and Thu Sep 26: Archival and Historical Research**

- (Sep 24) Elman, Colin, Diana Kapiszewski and Lorena Vinuela. 2010. "Qualitative Data Archiving: Rewards and Challenges." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 43(1): 22-27.
- (Sep 24) Grant, Aimee. *Doing excellent social research with documents: Practical examples and guidance for qualitative researchers*. Routledge, 2018. Chapter 4. "Historical and Official Documents: Moving Beyond Simple Interpretations." Pp 58-72.

- (Sep 26) Anthony Badger (2012) "Historians, a legacy of suspicion and the migrated archives," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23:4-5, 799-807.
- (Sep 26) Read **BOTH** super short newspaper articles: Marc Parry (2016) "Uncovering the brutal truth about the British empire" *The Guardian* August 18. And Ian Cobain and Richard Norton-Taylor (2012) "Sins of Colonialists lay concealed for decades in secret archive," *The Guardian*, 18 April.

### **Week 6 – Oct 1 and Oct 3: Digital, Hybrid Ethnography and Midterm**

- (Oct 1) Seim, Josh. "Participant observation, observant participation, and hybrid ethnography." *Sociological Methods & Research* 53.1 (2024): 121-152.
- (Oct 1) Wang, Di, and Sida Liu. "Doing ethnography on social media: A methodological reflection on the study of online groups in China." *Qualitative Inquiry* 27.8-9 (2021): 977-987.
- (Oct 1) (Not mandatory but highly recommend) this 8-page primer on what Digital Ethnography is. Kaur-Gill, Satveer, and Mohan J. Dutta. "Digital ethnography." *The international encyclopedia of communication research methods* (2017): 1-10.

#### *Recommended Reading:*

- Deakin, Hannah, and Kelly Wakefield. "Skype interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers." *Qualitative research* 14.5 (2014): 603-616.

**Oct 1: First 30 min of class = Discussion of Readings. Next 30 mins = Guest Lecture on Digital Ethnography In The Context of Communal Violence by Prerna Vij. Last 30 min of class = Midterm Review**

### **Thursday, October 3: In-Class Midterm**

#### **Oct 8 and Oct 10: Midterm Break**

Use this time to think through a research question that you might be interested in that you can either (a) realistically conduct interviews for through the scope of the semester (refer to interviewing guides at the end of the syllabus) or (b) access archival records for. Refer to list of remotely available archives at the end of the syllabus.

### **Week 7 – Tue Oct 15, and Thu Oct 17: Oral History in the Context of India's Partition October 15: GUEST LECTURE BY AANCHAL MALHOTRA, ORAL HISTORIAN OF THE PARTITION –reading presentations will only take place for Thu, Oct 17's readings**

- (Oct 15) Malhotra, Aanchal. *In the Language of Remembering*. Introduction, Chapter 8 (Grief) and Chapter 14 (Memory)
- (Oct 17) Mazzei, Julie, and Erin E. O'Brien. "You got it, so when do you flaunt it? Building rapport, intersectionality, and the strategic deployment of gender in the field." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 38.3 (2009): 358-383.
- (Oct 17) Butalia, Urvashi. *The other side of silence: Voices from the partition of India*. Penguin UK, 2017. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

#### *Recommended Reading:*

- Sheftel, Anna, and Stacey Zembrzycki. "Who's afraid of oral history? Fifty years of debates and anxiety about ethics." *The Oral History Review* 43.2 (2016): 338-366.

### **Week 8 – October 22 and October 24: Archival Methods Contd.**

- (Oct 22) Leiby, Michele. "Digging in the archives: The promise and perils of primary documents." *Politics & Society* 37, no. 1 (2009): 75-99.
- (Oct 22) Lee, Alexander. "How (and how not) to use archival sources in political science." University of Rochester, January 16 (2015).

- (Oct 24) Abhijit Banerjee and Lakshmi Iyer, "History, Institutions and Economic Performance: The Legacy of Colonial Land Tenure Systems in India," *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 95, No. 4 (Sep., 2005), pp. 1190-1213.
- (Oct 24) Steven Wilkinson, "Identifying the Effects of Colonial Institutions: The Role of History," Manuscript presented at American Political Science Association annual conference, 2016.

### **Week 9 – October 29 and October 31: Archives Contd.**

(Oct 29) Guest Lecture on Archival Methods by Narayani Basu (she will send readings in advance)

**Oct 31 – Diwali Holiday, Classes Do Not Meet**

### **Week 10 – Nov 5 and Nov 7: Coding and Analyzing Data**

- (Nov 5) Wolfinger, Nicholas H. "On writing fieldnotes: collection strategies and background expectancies." *Qualitative research* 2.1 (2002): 85-93.
- (Nov 5) Fujii, Lee Ann. 2017. Chapter 5, "I Have My Data, Now What?" In *Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach*. 1 edition. New York: Routledge.
- (Nov 7) Collier, David. "Understanding process tracing." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44.4 (2011): 823-830.
- (Nov 7) George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press, 2005. Skim Chapter 3 (pp. 67-72) and Read Chapter 4 (pp. 73-88).

*Recommended Readings:*

- Amat, Consuelo. "State Repression and Opposition Survival in Pinochet's Chile." *Comparative Political Studies* (2023): 00104140231169032.

- Neumann, Iver B. "Discourse analysis." *Qualitative methods in international relations: A pluralist guide*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008. 61-77.

### **Week 11 – Nov 12 and Nov 14: Foundational Debates and Qualitative Methods: Theme I – Studying the Holocaust and the Interpretation of Archival Sources**

- (Nov 12) Daniel Goldhagen. 1996. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf).
- (Nov 12) Browning, Christopher. 1998. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. 1st ed. with a new afterword (New York: Harper).
- (Nov 14) US Holocaust Memorial Museum, "The Ordinary Men/Hitler's Willing Executioners" debate, Selections from the Symposium on Google Classroom.
- (Nov 14) Kreuzer, Markus. 2014. "The Structure of Description: Elements of Analyzing and Criteria for Evaluating Historical Evidence." Paper prepared for Presentation at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C. August 27-31, 2014.

*Recommended Reading:*

*Einwohner, Rachel L. "Ethical considerations on the use of archived testimonies in Holocaust research: Beyond the IRB exemption." Qualitative Sociology 34.3 (2011): 415-430.*

### **Week 12 – Nov 19 and Nov 21: Foundational Debates and Qualitative Methods: Theme II – Voting Behavior in the Indian State using Field Research**

- (Nov 19) Kumar, S. (2014), "The Promise of Ethnography for the Study of Politics", *Studies in Indian Politics* 2(2): 237-242.
- (Nov 19) Michelutti, Lucia. "Electoral manipulation and impunity: ethnographic notes from Uttar Pradesh." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 58.1 (2020): 21-42.

- (Nov 21) Priyam, M. (2016), Political Ethnography as a Method for Understanding Urban Politics and Elections in India, Studies in Indian Politics
- (Nov 21) Thachil, Tariq. "Improving Surveys Through Ethnography: Insights from India's Urban Periphery." Studies in Comparative International Development 53.3 (2018): 281-299.
- (Nov 21) Short Article on Exit Polls 2024 and what they missed.  
<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/governance/why-did-2024-lok-sabha-predictions-miss-the-mark-heres-the-science-behind-exit-polls>

*Recommended Reading:*

*Banerjee, Mukulika. (2014), Why India Votes, Routledge, New Delhi, Introduction.*

### **Week 13 – Nov 26 and Nov 28: In-class elevator pitches, course conclusion**

**(Nov 26) Elevator Pitch – each student will get 60 seconds to summarize their idea + progress on it thus far in class. Other students will be allowed to ask questions/ give feedback for another 2 min per project.**

- (Nov 28) Brooks, Marissa, ed. 2017. "Symposium: The Road Less Traveled: An Agenda for Mixed Methods Research." PS: Political Science & Politics 50(4): 1015-1018.

**Final Paper due at 12 pm on Tuesday, December 10. This is a final deadline. No extensions will be granted, and grades will be automatically docked for late submissions as per the class policies above.**

### **Additional Resources for Archival Design and Conducting Interviews**

**Online Archival Resources:** An increasing number of archives are available remotely and digitally. Many finding-guides and secondary works can also increase the efficiency with which you use your scarce time in the archives. This session will focus on how to make use of these resources. Good sites to start include:

- Ashoka University Archives. A new release, this collection contains papers from leading Indian thinkers on a vast variety of topics. <https://archives.ashoka.edu.in/>
- Digital Archival Search Resources UK Archives Hub This is a cooperative enterprise that lists, in greater (multi-level) or lesser detail, the holdings of 330 UK Archives, in a searchable format <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/>
- Archives Library Information Center (ALIC) This is a clearinghouse and searchable set of databases describing US National Archives Records. <https://www.archives.gov/>
- David J. Mengel, Access to United States Government Records at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Access to US Records.
- Abhilekh Patal. This is National Archives of India's digital repository, and has a searchable set of records on various topics. <https://www.abhilekh-patal.in/jspui/>
- Indian Parliament Library: <https://eparlib.nic.in/handle/123456789/4>
- Indian Constituent Assembly Debates
- Archive of Archives (Different Scholars Talking about their experience using various archival resources from around the world): <https://medium.com/elm-2019/archive-of-archives-b5b0740b06ec>
- South Asia Open Archives: <https://www.jstor.org/site/saoa/>



- Online records of National Archives of India: <https://nationalarchives.nic.in/content/online-records-national-archives-india>
- Digitized Oral Histories at Nehru Memorial Library:  
<https://nehrumemorial.nic.in/digitalArchive>

### **Resources for Conducting Interviews:**

- Lareau, Annette. 2021. Listening to People. A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bennett, Andrew and Colin Elman. 2006. Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods. Annual Review of Political Science 9: 455- 76
- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2017. Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach. 1 edition. New York: Routledge.
- Hammersley, M., Atkinson, P. (2007), “Ethnography: Principles in Practice”, Routledge.
- Abbott, A. Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004.

### **Collections of Interviews/ News Articles: (NOT an exhaustive list, just a starting point so you can look around for similar collections on questions of interest to you).**

- 1984 Living History Project (on the anti-Sikh riots in 1984): <https://1984livinghistory.org/>
- 1947 Partition Archive (on the partition of India and Pakistan):  
<https://in.1947partitionarchive.org/>
- Outlook India Magazine: Archive of all issues starting 1995:  
<https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/archive>
- The Indian Express Archive <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=P9oYG7HA76QC>
- The Hindu Archive (2000-) <https://www.thehindu.com/archive/>
- The Times of India Archives (1838-2010) (Ashoka Library has institutional access)
- Mapping Sexuality in India – Archive of Supreme Court Judgements:  
<https://mappingsexuality.ashoka.edu.in/#judgements>
- South Asia Open Archives [https://www.jstor.org/site/saoa/?so=item\\_title\\_str\\_asc](https://www.jstor.org/site/saoa/?so=item_title_str_asc)
- National Archives of India Digitized Documents: Abhilekh Patal <https://www.abhilekh-patal.in/jspui/>
- Ideas of India Archive: <https://www.abhilekh-patal.in/jspui/> (contains a rare set of periodicals of the colonial period)
- The Internet Archive (<https://www.archive.org>) (catch-all online archive on a wide variety of contexts from across the world)
- Google Newspaper Archive (<https://news.google.com/newspapers>)
- Press Information Bureau of India Archives  
<https://archive.pib.gov.in/archive/phase2/archiveministry.aspx?phase=3>
- Ashoka Archives of Contemporary India <https://archives.ashoka.edu.in/>
- House of Common Parliamentary Papers Archives (18th, 19th, & 20th Century Papers & Content) (Ashoka Library has institutional access) [www.parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/](http://www.parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/)
- Indian Memory Project <https://www.indianmemoryproject.com/archivedirectory/>