

## **PhD Course: Qualitative Research Methods**

### **PhD in Social and Political Sciences AY 2023-24**

#### **Instructors:**

Amelia Compagni (amelia.compagni@bocconi.it)

12 sessions

#### **1. Objectives and content**

The course explores qualitative methodologies and their application to research in the social sciences. The course exposes students to the theoretical principles underlying qualitative approaches and discusses the questions that can be addressed with these methodologies. At the same time, it aims at familiarizing the students with the concrete application of qualitative methodologies, giving them the opportunity to experience for themselves the strengths and weaknesses of such approaches.

The course, therefore, will entail traditional lectures, the discussion of scholarly papers built upon qualitative approaches, and examples conducted with these methodologies. It will confront students with the methods for analysing text data, derived from public speeches, conversations, or interviews, field notes and visual data.

The course has been design as a working seminar. During the course students will complete 3 non – assessed assignment whereby students will collect their own data for the purpose of qualitative analysis and will carry out the analysis themselves.

#### **2. Evaluation**

The evaluation is composed of:

- 100% a “research proposal-type” paper. The paper should incorporate (i) a literature review and research question to be investigated with qualitative methods; (ii) the description of the qualitative research design (iii) the description of the data collection tools and analysis to be undertaken. The assignment will be submitted to the instructor after the end of the course.

The material for the classes will be slides, scholarly papers, and chapters of methodology textbooks. The syllabus details the compulsory methodological readings. On Blackboard, prior to each class, the instructor will upload (i) cases taken from both scholarly papers and policy documents (ii) additional readings.

The sessions are structured so that in the first half we will discuss the assignments and in the second half a new topic.

### 3. Detailed syllabus

Session	Date	Content	Readings
1	08/02/2024 10.15-11.45 Compagni	Introduction to qualitative research and methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Epistemological issues</li> <li>• Basics of qualitative research</li> </ul>	<u>Useful sources</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silverman D (2008) “What is qualitative research?” in <i>Interpreting Qualitative Data</i>, Sage (chapter 2)</li> <li>• Gephart R (1999) Paradigms and research methods.</li> </ul>
2	08/02/2024 12.00-13.30 Compagni	Research design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building a conceptual framework and framing research questions in qualitative studies</li> <li>• Typologies of research design: Case-studies, process and historical studies</li> </ul> <p>Launch of Assignment 1: <i>Finding good research questions</i> (deadline 14/02 midnight)</p>	<u>Useful sources (research questions)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Booth, Wayne C., G.G. Colomb and J.M. Williams (2003) Chapter 4: From questions to problems, <i>The Craft of Research</i>, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press: 40-71.</li> <li>• Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland. (2005) Chapter 7: Asking questions, <i>Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis</i>. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company: 144 – 167</li> </ul> <u>Useful sources (research designs)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yin R (2018) “Designing case studies” in <i>Case study research and applications</i> 6th Edition (chapter 2)</li> <li>• Bennett, A., &amp; Elman, C. (2006). Complex causal relations and case study methods: The example of path dependence. <i>Political analysis</i>, 14(3), 250-267.</li> <li>• Bennett, A., &amp; Elman, C. (2006). Qualitative research: Recent developments in case study methods. <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>, 9, 455-476. (extra reading)</li> </ul>
3	15/02/2024 10.15-11.45	Class discussion on Assignment 1	
4	15/02/2024 12.00-13.30	Mixed methods research designs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Typologies of study</li> <li>• Data collection combinations</li> </ul>	<u>Useful sources</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creswell, J. W. &amp; Clark PVL (2011). <i>Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research</i>. United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Chapter 3 and 6</li> <li>• Lieberman E. (2005) Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research- <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 99(3); 435-452</li> <li>• Mele V &amp; Belardinelli P: (2019) Mixed Methods in Public Administration Research: Selecting, Sequencing, and Connecting. <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i>, 29, 2, 334–347 (extra reading)</li> </ul>

			<u>Examples will be provided in class</u>
5	22/02/2024 9:00-10:30	<p>Data collection: Collecting verbal data through interviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The practice of interviewing: semi-structured interviews, elite interviews, narrative interviews</li> <li>• The practice of collecting verbal exchanges: conversations, focus groups, decision-making and deliberative processes</li> </ul> <p>Launch of Assignment 2(a): <i>Generating an interview protocol and conducting an interview</i> (<u>deadline 29/02 midday</u>)</p>	<p><u>Useful sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flick U. (2014) “Collecting verbal data” (chapter 15) - “Interviews” (chapter 16) - “Focus groups” (chapter 17) in <i>An Introduction to Qualitative Research</i>, Sage</li> </ul> <p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed (interviews)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anteby, M., &amp; Holm, A. L. (2021). Translating Expertise across Work Contexts: US Puppeteers Move from Stage to Screen. <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 86(2), 310-340.</li> <li>• Parkinson, S. E. (2013). Organizing rebellion: Rethinking high-risk mobilization and social networks in war. <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 107(3), 418-432.</li> </ul>
6	22/02/2024 10.45-12:15	<p>Data collection: Conducting fieldwork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting in: Identifying the research site, negotiating access, ERB procedures</li> <li>• Collecting real-time data: participant observation, field notes and ethnographic interviews</li> <li>• Ethnography in the digital world</li> </ul> <p>Launch of Assignment 2(b): <i>Conducting a digital ethnography</i> (<u>deadline 29/02 midday</u>)</p>	<p><u>Useful sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barley, S. R. (1990). Images of imaging: Notes on doing longitudinal field work. <i>Organization Science</i>, 1(3), 220-247.</li> <li>• Loafland, Snow, Anderson, Loafland, Loafland (2004). Thinking topics <i>In Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis</i> Loafland (chapter 6)</li> </ul> <p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rond, M, Lok, J &amp; Marrison, A (2021). To Catch A Predator: The Lived Experience of Extreme Practices. <i>The Academy of Management Journal</i>. 65. 10.5465/amj.2020.1492</li> <li>• Ho, C. J. (2021). Benevolent Policies: Bureaucratic Politics and the International Dimensions of Social Policy Expansion. <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 1-16.</li> </ul>
7	01/03/2024 10:15-11:45	Class discussion on Assignment 2a and 2b	
8	01/03/2024 12:00-13:30	<p>Analyzing qualitative data (I)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comparative case studies</li> <li>• grounded theory</li> </ul> <p>Launch of Assignment 3: Coding an interview text (<u>deadline 06/03 midday</u>)</p>	<p><u>Useful sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eisenhardt K.M. (1989) “Building Theories from Case Study Research”, <i>The Academy of Management Review</i>, Vol. 14, No. 4 pp. 532-550</li> <li>• Locke K. (2001) “Grounded theory’s research practices” in <i>Grounded Theory in Management Research</i>, Sage, (chapter 4)</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., &amp; Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. <i>Organizational research methods</i>, 16(1), 15-31.</li> </ul> <p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hallen, B. L., &amp; Eisenhardt, K. M. (2012). Catalyzing strategies and efficient tie formation: How entrepreneurial firms obtain investment ties. <i>Academy of Management Journal</i>, 55(1), 35-70. (read methodology section)</li> <li>Gioia, D. A., Thomas, J. B., Clark, S. M., &amp; Chittipeddi, K. (1994). Symbolism and strategic change in academia: The dynamics of sensemaking and influence. <i>Organization Science</i>, 5(3), 363-383.</li> </ul>
9	07/03/2024 9:00-10:30	Class discussion on Assignment 3	
10	07/03/2024 10:45-12:15	Analyzing qualitative data (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process research</li> </ul>	<p><u>Useful sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Langley A. (1999) Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data. <i>The Academy of Management Review</i> Vol. 24, No. 4 pp. 691-710</li> </ul> <p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cappellaro, G., Compagni, A., &amp; Vaara, E. (2021). Maintaining strategic ambiguity for protection: Struggles over opacity, equivocality, and absurdity around the Sicilian Mafia. <i>Academy of Management Journal</i>, 64(1), 1-37.</li> </ul>
11	14/03/2024 10.15-11.45	Textual analysis and the path to computational textual analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Framing analysis, rhetorical analysis, discourse analysis</li> <li>Back-to-back comparison with computational textual analysis; limitations and opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><u>Useful sources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fairclough, N., Fairclough I. (2015). "Textual analysis" in Bevir, M. And Rhodes R:A. <i>Routledge Handbook of Interpretive Political Science</i>, Routledge (chapter 13)</li> </ul> <p><u>Scholarly papers to be discussed</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lefsrud and Meyer (2012). Science or science fiction? Professionals' discursive construction of Climate Change. <i>Organization Studies</i></li> <li>Barry et al (2009). Obesity Metaphor: How Beliefs about the causes of obesity affect support for public policy. <i>The Milbank Quarterly</i></li> <li>Hoffman, M.A. (2019). The Materiality of Ideology: Cultural Consumption and Political Thought after the American Revolution1. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>, 125, 1 - 62.</li> </ul>

			<u>Other examples will be provided in class</u>
12	14/03/2024 12.00-13.30	From the field to scholarly output: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The experience of a PhD student using qualitative methods: a chat with Gain Maria Mallarino</li><li>• The process of writing up a qualitative paper</li><li>• The process of going through the review process</li><li>• Being on the reviewer's side</li></ul>	

#### 4. Non- assessed assignments

During the course of the classes, students will be asked to produce 3 assignments. While these assignments are not formally marked, they are extremely valuable to understand the real process of collecting and analysing qualitative data. A brief overview of each assignment is detailed below. Prior to each class, the instructors will upload on the Blackboard folder the detailed instructions for each assignment. During the class (date of discussion) you will be asked to make a 5-minute presentation of your work.

##### Assignment 1: Finding good research questions

*Topic:* In groups of 2-3, you will identify a paper from one of the top journals in the field of research of your interest. The paper will need to employ (also) qualitative methodologies. In a 5 minutes presentation each group will detail: 1) the RQ; 2) why they thought it was a good RQ; 3) the logical path followed by the authors to motivate the RQ and relative conceptual map.

##### You will choose between assignment 2a o 2b

##### Assignment 2a: Generating an interview protocol and conducting an interview

*Topic:* Those of you who choose this assignment will elaborate an interview protocol and explain the choice of interview type and interviewee. On the basis of the interview protocol you will conduct an interview with a suitable interviewee and transcribe it. The interview protocol will need to detail a RQ even if broad. In a 5 min presentation you will reflect on: 1) good and bad of the interview; 2) possible corrections to the protocol.

##### Assignment 2b: Conducting a digital ethnography/field observation

*Topic:* Those of you who choose this assignment will identify a digital space in which to conduct some observation (e.g. an online forum, a public debate, a parliamentary/party debate, a TV talk show, the press conference of a politician). The observation will need to be guided by a RQ even if broad. For the purpose of this assignment the choice can fall also on digital spaces in which your possibility to interact is limited or for which your observation is asynchronous. Observation will need to last at least a couple of hours overall. Field notes and the rest of the material associated to your observation will be then compiled. In a 5 min presentation you will reflect on: 1) good and bad of the observation process; 2) possible corrections to the protocol.

##### Assignment 3: Coding an interview texts

*Topic:* Each of you will be assigned an interview transcript and will be asked to analyse the text through coding techniques. On the date of the discussion you will work as a group to generalize the individual interview codes.