

POL 803 – QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Seminar: Tues 1:30-5:20 **Rm:** AQ 5048 **Office Hrs:** Wed 10:30-12:00 **Tel:** 778-782-4346 **Email:** jbusumtw@sfu.ca

Description

This course covers the principles and practices of qualitative research in the social sciences with a focus on the study of politics. The course is designed to help graduate students become explicitly self-conscious about methodological issues in research, and develop the knowledge and skills to conduct systematic qualitative research. The course is divided into four parts. Part I examines briefly some foundational issues in qualitative research by reviewing positivist, interpretive and critical research traditions, epistemologies and ontologies, as well as questions about the relationship between theory, methodology, evidence and inference. Parts II and III introduce students to qualitative research design and methods. Part II discusses research design. With a focus on *case studies* as a particular research strategy used to study a wide range of political phenomena and events, we discuss a series of steps from framing research questions and developing concepts and analytical frameworks, to selecting cases to be studied. Part III examines a variety of qualitative techniques and approaches most commonly used by political science researchers to collect and analyze evidence/data including archival research, content analysis & historiography, interviews & surveys, discourse & narrative analysis, policy analysis, and participant observation/ethnographic research. Students will be acquainted with the practical uses of these approaches, their strengths/limitations, and the trade-offs involved in choosing one approach, technique, or type of evidence over another. In addition to readings that discuss the various issues and methods, we also include examples from published political science research as illustrative examples. We conclude Part III with a discussion of some ethical issues in qualitative research. Part IV discusses research and grant proposal writing. Students will engage in at least two exercises in qualitative methods and give presentations linking their choice of methodological approach with their own research interests and projects.

Course Organization

A three-hour seminar each week

Texts

There are no specific required texts for the course. All required readings are available on short-term reserve in the library or the SFU WebCT system.

Course Evaluation

Participation	10%
Review/Reaction Paper	20%
Short Exercises in Qualitative Techniques (2)	30%
Research Proposal & Presentation	40%