

# PSCI 231-001: Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Research in Political Science

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Monday and Wednesday, 4:00-5:50 PM  
MacAlister Hall, Room 4011

Office hours: <https://jacksantucci.as.me>

## 1 Overview & goals

This course introduces key ideas in the field of *qualitative methods*. These research techniques use small numbers of ‘units’ and/or non-numeric sets of facts (e.g., history, interviews) to test and/or discover hypotheses. By contrast, *quantitative* methods use large data sets, usually just to test hypotheses. Some studies combine qualitative and quantitative; hence the term ‘mixed methods.’ We will look at such methods in the context of political science.

The course has two sections. Part one covers what it means to ‘know’ something in political science. Part two shows how qualitative research can contribute to knowing. We will cover one approach per week, each with an example from American politics.

At the end of this course, you will:

1. Understand how political science works and how qualitative methods fit into it;
2. Be able to digest a work of qualitative research, including its strengths and limits;
3. Have ideas about qualitative research you could do.

## 2 Required work product

Your grade will be based on the following components:

1. Class participation (15%) – Based on attendance and quality (not quantity) of additions to discussion. Try to do two things as you prepare for class: (1) find and understand the key distinction(s) in the readings, and (2) have some sense of how they relate to key distinctions from earlier classes. Please see this for tips: [https://jacksantucci.com/docs/syllabi/advice\\_for\\_readers.pdf](https://jacksantucci.com/docs/syllabi/advice_for_readers.pdf).

2. Midterm (35%) – A combination of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Each of these will focus on key ideas from the first part of this syllabus. To study, I recommend keeping track of the key concept(s) or distinction(s) in each reading. In class on **Wednesday, October 13**.
3. Presentation (15%) – Students will lead discussion during the second half of the course. There are twelve substantive readings (six on specific methods, one applying each) and roughly 30 students. Therefore, these will be group presentations. We will define those groups on the first day of class. If you are presenting a *methods* reading, please describe how the method works in relation to lessons from the first part of the course. What does the method do that other methods do not? What does the method not do, with respect to causal inference? If you are presenting an *application* reading, please focus on the following: the reading’s core claim, its dependent and independent variables, what ‘units’ it compared, and what overarching theory guides its statement of hypotheses (which may be implicit).
4. Final (35%) – One or more short essays based on the second part of this syllabus. This will cover the ‘pros and cons’ of different methods and the examples we cover. Successful exams will conform to the guidelines in this document ([https://jacksantucci.com/docs/syllabi/how\\_to\\_write\\_an\\_a\\_paper.pdf](https://jacksantucci.com/docs/syllabi/how_to_write_an_a_paper.pdf)) and demonstrate sustained engagement with course materials. Due at **11:59 PM on Sunday, December 5**.

### 3 Efficient use of e-mail

1. Use a subject line that indicates your need. Please don’t reply to a blanket email sent through Blackboard, nor to a thread about some other issue.
2. Include the full course number (i.e., PSCI-231-001).
3. Be as specific as possible, and use complete sentences.
4. Keep all correspondence with respect to the same issue in the same thread. Start a different thread for a different issue.
5. Use your Drexel email so that I can search my inbox for your username.

### 4 No redistribution of course materials

The following language is provided by Drexel University:

It is important to recognize that some or all of the course materials provided to you may be the intellectual property of Drexel University, the course instructor, or others. Use of this intellectual property is governed by Drexel University policies, including the IT-1 policy found here: <https://drexel.edu/it/about/policies/policies/01-Acceptable-Use>

Briefly, this policy states that course materials, including recordings, provided by the course instructor may not be copied, reproduced, distributed or re-posted. Doing so may be considered a breach of this policy and will be investigated and addressed as possible academic dishonesty, among other potential violations. Improper use of such materials may also constitute a violation of the University's Code of Conduct found here: <https://drexel.edu/cpo/policies/cpo-1> and will be investigated as such.

## 5 Other policies

You agree to:

1. Treat classmates and any guest speakers with respect.
2. Check Drexel email daily through the date of the final exam.
3. Attend class and meet course deadlines. Out-of-class written work loses five points for each 24-hour period past the time and date it is due.
4. Use Internet search or a dictionary to look up words you do not know.
5. Abide by all other Drexel policies, found at the following websites. Note that I reserve the right to use plagiarism-detection software.
  - Academic integrity: <https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity>
  - Disability accommodation: <https://drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/students>
  - Add/Drop: <http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-add-drop>
  - Course withdrawal: <https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-withdrawal>
  - Incomplete grades: [https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/incomplete\\_grades](https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/incomplete_grades)
  - Grade appeals: <https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/grade-appeals>

I agree to:

1. Abide by any grading guidelines in this syllabus and related instructions for assignments. Grading is on the 0-100 scale: 97 and up (A+), 93-96 (A), 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-87 (B), 80-82 (B-), and so on, down to 50 (F). Rounding occurs for final grades only, to the nearest whole number. The rounding threshold is 0.5 percentage points.
2. Answer student e-mail within 48 business hours. Business hours are 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday through Friday, non-holiday.
3. Except for any required books, post links to readings on Blackboard, if not the readings themselves.
4. Grade written work within 10 business days of submission.

5. Notify you of changes to this syllabus at least one week in advance of affected due dates.
6. Give office hours on a by-appointment basis. (See link above.) Students who are not in Philadelphia can book these times for phone conversations.

## 6 Schedule of readings and classes

### 6.1 Defining political science, hypotheses, and theories

**Sep. 20:** This syllabus and the guidelines for papers. See links in Section 2 above.

**Sep. 22:** My slides, titled “What is political science?”

**Sep. 27:** Online political event (optional): “Pluralism and the Politics of Reform: Achieving Multi-racial, Multi-party Democracy,” 2021 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Link to be provided.

**Sep. 29** Two items:

- Santucci, Jack. 2018. “Tips on Reading Political Science.” Typescript.  
[http://www.jacksantucci.com/docs/syllabi/advice\\_for\\_readers.pdf](http://www.jacksantucci.com/docs/syllabi/advice_for_readers.pdf)
- My slides, titled “How to read political science.”

**Oct. 4:** Two items:

- Ackerman, John, Barak Carlson and Young Han. “International Relations Paradigms.” Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) Distance Learning Program, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2010. **Skim.**
- My slides, titled “What is a theory? The case of international relations paradigms.”

**Oct. 6:** Geddes, Barbara. 1990. “How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics.” *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.

**Oct. 11:** No class. Indigenous People’s Day.

**Oct. 13:** First exam.

### 6.2 Qualitative methods and some applications

#### 6.2.1 Nested analysis

**Oct. 18:** Lieberman, Evan S. 2005. “Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research.” *American Political Science Review* 99 (3): 435-452.

**Oct. 20:** Santucci, Jack. 2017. “Party Splits, Not Progressives: The Origins of Proportional Representation in American Local Government.” *American Politics Research* 45 (3): 494-526.

### 6.2.2 Path dependence

- Oct. 25:** Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review* 94 (2): 251-267.
- Oct. 27** Tarrow, Sydney. 2021. Selection from *Movements and Parties: Critical Connections in American Political Development*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### 6.2.3 Comparative historical analysis

- Nov. 1:** Thelen, Kathleen and James Mahoney. 2015. "Comparative-Historical Analysis in Contemporary Political Science." In James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen, eds., *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*, pp. 3-36. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nov. 3** Mickey, Robert. 2015. Selection from *Paths Out of Dixie: The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944-1972*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

### 6.2.4 Process tracing

- Nov. 8:** Collier, Dave. 2011. "Understanding Process Tracing." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44 (4): 823-830.
- Nov. 10** Rosenfeld, Sam. 2018. Selection from *The Polarizers: Postwar Architects of Our Partisan Era*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### 6.2.5 Learning from one 'case'

- Nov. 15:** Soss, Joe. 2018. "On Casing a Study versus Studying a Case." *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research* 16 (1): 21-27.
- Nov. 17:** Francis, Megan Ming. 2014. Selection from *Civil Rights and the Making of the Modern American State*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### 6.2.6 Learning from interviews

- Nov. 22:** Wedeen, Lisa. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 255-272.
- Nov. 29;** Welborne, Bozena C., Aubrey L. Westfall, Özge Çelic Russell, and Sarah A. Tobin. 2018. Selection from *The Politics of the Headscarf in the United States*. Cornell: Cornell University Press.
- Dec. 1:** National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. 1979. *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*. [https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/sites/default/files/the-belmont-report-508c\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/sites/default/files/the-belmont-report-508c_FINAL.pdf). **Also: course evaluation and discussion of final exam.**