

MPhil in International Relations and Politics, 2019-20
Research Methods in International Relations and Politics

Course convenor: Dr Pieter van Houten (pjv24@cam.ac.uk)

Course description

The course provides a graduate-level introduction to empirical research in international relations and politics. The topics covered in the first term's general module include historical background on the study of IR and politics in Cambridge, the main aspects of research design and different methodological choices and issues faced in most research projects (including MPhil dissertations), some of the philosophical assumptions underlying different approaches in the field, and common challenges related to selecting cases and materials, constructing arguments, formulating and presenting research proposals, and dealing with ethical considerations. This module will be particularly useful for students who have not done courses on research methodology in the social sciences before (and should be a useful reminder for those who have done such courses before). The module's emphasis is not on teaching specific techniques and approaches (which will vary widely across the students' dissertations), but on outlining different methodological challenges and choices involved in doing research in IR and politics, clarifying some methodological concepts and jargon, and giving practical advice on doing research. In addition, in the first term students will do a module on how to read and understand statistics used in the study of politics and international relations (or a different statistics module depending on preference and existing expertise in statistics).

In the second term, students choose one of the following modules on methods in qualitative and quantitative analysis commonly used in the conduct of inquiry: comparative case studies, interpretative methods, and public policy analysis. Particular attention will be paid in these modules to influential applications of these techniques in international and political studies. In addition, there will be optional workshops on using archives and on elite interviews, which will be useful to students who are planning to use these methods in their research.

Lectures and seminars in the various modules in this course orient students toward asking good research questions, gathering and analysing high-quality materials, and persuasively presenting research results. They develop skills for supporting further applications and experience in the field, and for evaluating key concepts, debates, and theories in our understanding of domestic and international systems and political behaviours.

Course structure

Michaelmas term modules (for all students)

1. Doing research in international relations and politics (weeks 1-8)
2. Understanding Statistical Analysis in Politics and International Relations (weeks 3-8)

Students who already have some background in statistics and did well in the 'skills check' done by the Social Sciences Research Methods Programme (SSRMP), or students who

would prefer to do a basic course that will give them practice in descriptive statistics, can substitute this module for a SSRMP statistics module. See below for more information.

Lent term modules (elective)

In Lent term, students will acquire familiarity with specific methods through lectures/sessions in the module of their choice. A later section of the course guide provides fuller descriptions of the modules.

The available elective modules are:

1. Comparative case studies
2. Interpretative methods [note that some of the sessions for this module take place already in Michaelmas term]
3. Public policy analysis

Students with specific interests in further topics in statistics or cross-disciplinary approaches offered by SSRMP should consult with the course convenor on the option of taking an SSRMP module instead of one of modules listed above.

In addition, there will be two optional two-hour workshops on the following topics:

- Archival research
- Doing elite interviews

Assessment

All students will need to receive a 'Pass' grade for the statistics module they choose. In addition, students will write a 2,000-word essay on a question/topic taken from a list provided by the department. This list will have questions/topics related to each of the elective modules taught in Lent term, as well as a question that relates to the general issues of research design covered in Michaelmas term. **For the relevant dates and deadlines for the provision of essay questions and the submission of the essay, see the MPhil course handbook.** Students will need to receive a 'Pass' mark on the essay in order to pass the course.

Students who have received permission to substitute one of the Lent modules with an additional SSRMC module will need to receive a 'Pass' mark in their chosen module.

Readings

There is no general textbook for this course. However, general texts on research methodology in politics, international relations and social science, which can be useful as reference, are:

David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 3rd ed (Palgrave, 2010).

Lisa Harrison, *Political Research: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2001).

Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady and David Collier (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

Diana Panke, *Research Design and Method Selection: Making Good Choices in the Social Sciences* (Sage, 2018).

Dawn Brancati, *Social Scientific Research* (Sage, 2018).

Peter Burnham, et al, *Research Methods in Politics* (Palgrave, 2004 or 2008 edition).
David E. McNabb, *Research Methods for Political Science* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004 or 2010 edition).
John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Critical Framework* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).
Jason D. Mycoff, *Working with Political Science Research Methods* (CQ Press, 2012).

For help on writing:

Lisa A. Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: a practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods* (SAGE/CQ Press, 2012).
Howard S. Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*.
(University of Chicago Press, 1986).
Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (University of Chicago Press, 1995).

The module descriptions below indicate further specific suggested readings. However, as their interests in particular issues and methods will vary widely, students are encouraged to approach lecturers for reading suggestions on issues that are of particular relevance to their own research.

Module descriptions and reading lists: Michaelmas term

1. Doing research in international relations and politics

Lecturers: Prof Duncan Bell, Prof Duncan Kelly, Dr Pieter van Houten

Time: Mondays 9-10 (weeks 1-8)

This module serves as background to research methodology in the study of international relations and politics. All students should find aspects of it useful, but it will be of particular use to students who have no or limited experience with research methodology in the social sciences. For other students, it should serve as a helpful refresher of methodology issues they have studied before.

The module takes a pragmatic approach to research methods, and aims to focus on issues and advice that are relevant for most types of research in the study of international relations and politics. It does not provide training in specific methodological tools or advocate particular approaches or methods. Instead, it will provide students with a clearer sense of what doing research involves and the most common methodological challenges and choices encountered in the process of doing this, and indicate some possible strategies to deal with these challenges. Thus, it serves as an introduction to the more specific modules that are available in Lent term (see below).

The module consists of 8 sessions. These sessions will follow a lecture format, but there will be time to ask questions about the various aspects of research methodology that are covered in the session. Hopefully the sessions will be interactive, as this would make the sessions more directly relevant for the practical issues faced by students embarking on a research project.

There are no required readings for this module. The readings below are suggestions for students who want to start exploring the discussed issues further. The lecture slides will include references to relevant examples from the political science and international relations literature. In addition, students are encouraged to approach the lecturers (or their supervisors) if they would like further reading suggestions on specific topics and issues.

1. History of the study of politics and IR in Cambridge [Duncan Bell and Duncan Kelly]

This introductory session does not focus on research methodology, but provides some historical background to the study of politics and international relations in Cambridge (something students often ask and are curious about when they start their MPhil).

Andrew Gamble, 'The Limits of Politics: An Inaugural Lecture Given in the University of Cambridge, 23 April 2008' (published by Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Stefano Collini, et al, *That Noble Science of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), chapter XI.

2. Research design and formulating research questions [Pieter van Houten]

This session introduces the basic elements of research design, and discusses the importance and challenges of formulating research questions. In relation to this, it will discuss the various ways in which research projects – and, in particular, MPhil dissertations – can 'make a contribution'.

- Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), chapter 2 (and especially pp. 27-40).
- Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), chapter 1 (especially pp. 12-19).
- Diana Panke, *Research Design and Method Selection: Making Good Choices in the Social Sciences* (Sage, 2018), chapter 2.
- Rogers M. Smith, 'Should We Make Political Science More of a Science or More about Politics?', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35 (June 2002): 199-201.
- Stephan Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), chapter 3.

3. Methodological issues and choices in a research project: an overview [Pieter van Houten]

'Research methodology' covers many different aspects, ranging from fundamental assumptions underlying particular approaches to research (which are grounded in different positions in the philosophy of social science) to a variety of concrete methods and techniques that can be used to obtain and analyse information. This session lays out the various aspects, and considers the extent to which a combination of approaches/methods is possible for each of them.

- Paul Furlong and David Marsh, 'A Skin Not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science', chapter 9 in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 3rd ed. (London: Palgrave, 2010).
- Bob Hancké, 'The Challenge of Research Design', chapter 11 in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 3rd ed. (London: Palgrave, 2010).
- Diana Panke, *Research Design and Method Selection: Making Good Choices in the Social Sciences* (Sage, 2018).

4. Positivist approaches to research in politics and international relations [Pieter van Houten]

This session considers one prominent approach to social science research known as 'positivism'. It highlights the main features and manifestations of this approach, gives some examples from the study of international relations and politics, and considers its problems and limitations.

- David Sanders, 'Behavioural Analysis', chapter 1 in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 3rd ed. (London: Palgrave, 2010).
- Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating, 'How Many Approaches in the Social Sciences? An Epistemological Introduction', in Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating (eds), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), chapter 1 and section 3.5 (pp. 99-114).
- David D. Laitin, 'The Perestroika Challenge to Social Science', *Politics and Society* 31 (2003): 163-184.

5. Non-positivist approaches to research in politics and international relations [Pieter van Houten]

In contrast to positivist approaches, a variety of non-positivist approaches have gained prominence in the study of politics and IR. This session discusses the shared general assumptions behind these approaches, some of their more specific differences, and gives some examples of applications of these approaches.

- Craig Parsons, 'Constructivism and Interpretive Theory', chapter 4 in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 3rd ed. (London: Palgrave, 2010).

Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating, 'How Many Approaches in the Social Sciences? An Epistemological Introduction', Friedrich Kratochwil, 'Constructivism: What It Is (Not) and How It Matters', and Zoe Bray, 'Ethnographic Approaches', all in Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating (eds), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

'The Interpretive Approach in Political Science: A Symposium', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 6, 2 (2004): 129-164.

Milja Kurki, 'Causes of a Divided Discipline: Rethinking the Concept of Cause in International Relations Theory', *Review of International Studies* 32 (2006): 189-216.

6. Common challenge (I): formulating and supporting arguments [Pieter van Houten]

Doing research and producing academic writing implies formulating arguments and making the best possible case for these arguments. This session focuses on some of the issues involved in formulating and supporting arguments (including the use of concepts, the logical nature of certain arguments, and various ways in which arguments can be supported).

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Gary Goertz, 'Assessing the Trivialness, Relevance, and Relative Importance of Necessary or Sufficient Conditions in Social Science', *Studies in Comparative International Development* 46 (2006): 88-109.

Giovanni Sartori, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," *American Political Science Review* 64 (1970): 1033-1053.

7. Common challenge (II): selecting materials, cases, interpretations [Pieter van Houten]

Each research project faces the challenge of 'selecting', whether it is particular cases, documents, other materials or data, or different interpretations by other researchers. For some of these selection issues it has been attempted to formulate specific rules, while others can at best be approached with some awareness of the issues and common sense. This session highlights some of the more common 'selection issues', their possible implications, and ways to try to address them.

Ian S. Lustick, 'History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias', *American Political Science Review* 90 (1996): 605-618.

Jonathan Hopkin, "The Comparative Method," chapter 14 in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 3rd ed. (London: Palgrave, 2010).

Barbara Geddes, 'How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics', *Political Analysis* 2, 1 (1990): 131-150.

Diana Panke, *Research Design and Method Selection: Making Good Choices in the Social Sciences* (Sage, 2018).

8. Practical issues: research proposals, addressing ethical concerns [Pieter van Houten]

This last session provides some guidance on how to present research proposals (which is what students will need to do in the Easter term dissertation workshops), and on the importance of ethical consideration in various kinds of research. It is also an opportunity for students to ask any questions related to this module of the course.

Some advice on proposal writing:

<http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic1258127.files/Prospectus.pdf>

<http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/Handouts/HowtoWriteResearchProposals.pdf>

Peter A. Hall, 'Helpful Hints for Writing Dissertations in Comparative Politics', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 23 (1990): 596-598.

POLIS department's online information on 'research ethics' (and various pages and documents linked on this page): <http://www.polis.cam.ac.uk/graduate-student-resources/ethical-approval-for-mphil-research>

2. A Module in statistics

Students are required to take a module on statistics. The 'default module' is a module on 'Understanding Statistical Analysis in Political and International Relations', offered in the POLIS department. If students want to do a more hands-on statistical module or a more advanced statistical module, it is possible to do a statistics module offered by the Social Sciences Research Methods Programme (SSRMC; www.ssrcm.group.cam.ac.uk) instead of this default module. Students interested in doing this should discuss this with the course organiser (Dr van Houten).

To assess the students' existing background in and knowledge of statistics, a 'skills check' will be conducted by the SSRMC before the start of Michaelmas term. Students will receive information on this test by email. The results of this test will inform any discussions between the course organiser and students about their choice of statistics module.

2a. Understanding Statistical Analysis in Politics and International Relations

Lecturer: Dr Pieter van Houten (pjv24@cam.ac.uk)

Time: Fridays 13.00-14.30 (weeks 3-8)

Statistical analyses (or 'quantitative research') are widely used methods in the study of politics and international relations. While most students in our MPhil programme do not use such methods in their own research, it is likely that they will come across works that do in their course work or when reading about the topic of their research. It is, therefore, important that any student in this field is able to make some sense of such analyses and is able to read them critically (rather than simply avoid or ignore them).

This module will introduce students to the most relevant statistical concepts (such as distributions, correlation and statistical significance) and techniques (such as linear regression and logistic regression) for applications of quantitative methods in the study of politics and IR. The emphasis will be on understanding and evaluating the results of the analyses, and less on how to actually do the analyses. This should help students to become more critical readers of books and articles that apply these methods to topics of interest to them.

The module is targeted at students who have not taken university-level courses in statistics or quantitative methods before. However, other students may find it a useful reminder and may be interested in the discussed applications to IR and politics.

This module consists of 6 sessions of 1.5 hours each. These sessions will follow a lecture format, but there will be time to ask questions about the covered material.

There will be optional quizzes related to some of the sessions (for students to test their knowledge of the topics covered). **Students will need to do a test at the end of the module.** They need to receive a 'Pass' in this element in order to pass the course as a whole.

Schedule of lectures

1. Introduction: evolution of the use of quantitative methods in Politics/IR, the role of quantitative methods in research
2. Descriptive statistics: distributions, frequencies, mean, median, etc.
3. Statistical significance, correlations
4. Linear regression
5. Logistic regression, other forms of regression
6. Conclusion: summary of main issues, pitfalls of quantitative methods, further examples

Possible readings

Overviews of the use of statistical analyses in Politics and IR, and discussions of the differences and complementarities between quantitative and qualitative methods:

Peter John, 'Quantitative Methods', chapter 13 in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 3rd ed. (Palgrave, 2010).

Peter Burnham, et al, *Research Methods in Politics* (Palgrave, 2004), chapters 5, 6.

Bear F. Braumoeller and Anne Sartori, 'The Promise and Perils of Statistics in International Relations', in Detlev F. Prinz and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias (eds), *Models, Numbers, and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations* (University of Michigan Press, 2004).

'Symposium: The Qualitative-Quantitative Disputation', *American Political Science Review* 89, 2 (June 1995): 454-481 (especially Sidney Tarrow, 'Bridging the Quantitative-Qualitative Divide', pp. 471-474).

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, 'A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research', *Political Analysis* 14 (2006): 227-49.

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

James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, 'Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods', in Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady and David Collier (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

One of the goals of this module is to give students a better intuitive grasp of statistical analysis and statistical reasoning. It is, therefore, strongly recommended that students read a non-technical book on statistical concepts, intuitions and techniques. Good books of this nature are (pick one or two, and no need to look at many of these!; the ones with * are particularly recommended):

* Charles Wheelan, *Naked Statistics: Stripping the Dread from the Data* (Norton, 2013).

* David Spiegelhalter, *The Art of Statistics: Learning from Data* (Pelican, 2019)

Derek Rowntree, *Statistics without Tears: An Introduction for Non-Mathematicians* (London: Penguin, 2018).

John Kranzler, *Statistics for the Terrified* [any recent ed.] (Rowman & Littlefield).

Uri Bram, *Thinking Statistically* (Capara Books, 2017).

Neil Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics* (4th ed) (Sage, 2010).

If you would like to learn statistics in more details, the next step is to consult a textbook on statistics (ideally one focused on the social sciences). There are many such books. Some useful ones are:

Andy Field, *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS* (one of the more recent editions) (Sage).

Roger Tarling, *Statistical Modelling for Social Researchers: Principles and Practice* (Routledge, 2009).

Paul D. Allison, *Multiple Regression: A Primer* (Sage, 1999).

Examples of quantitative research in Politics and IR will be provided in the lectures, and the lecture slides will have references for these examples.

2b. A statistics module offered by SSRMP

It is possible to substitute another module for this default module. If a student wants to do a more 'hands on' introductory statistics module (but has no prior background in statistics), then the module on 'Foundations in Applied Statistics' (www.ssrmc.group.cam.ac.uk/modules/core/foundations-in-applied-stats) is a possibility (unlike the default module, this requires students to learn and do some actual statistical analyses, but it only covers very basic statistics). Students who already have a background in statistics and obtain a good score in the 'skills test' are encouraged to take a SSRMC statistics module that is more advanced than the default module. Substituting the default module can only be done with approval of the convenor of this MPhil course in research methodology.

For the full list of SSRMC statistics modules, see

<https://www.ssrmc.group.cam.ac.uk/Modules/Core-modules-list>. Note that modules are taught in different periods. So students will need to be flexible with their schedules to substitute the default module.

Students who are considering taking a SSRMP module are encouraged to attend the [SSRMP Introductory Session](#) on **Wednesday 9 October 2019 at 4pm** in the Lady Mitchell Hall (Sidgwick site).

Module descriptions and reading lists: Lent term modules (elective)

1. Comparative case study methods

Lecturer: Dr Pieter van Houten (pjv24@cam.ac.uk)

Case studies – either comparative or single case studies – remain a very prominent methodological approach in the study of international relations and politics. This module focuses on several strategies and justifications for conducting case studies in the ‘positivist’ tradition (that is, research that assumes that facts and values can be separated and that focus primarily on substantiating causal arguments and explanations), as well as how case studies may be combined with other methods.

Sessions are one hour each.

General reading:

Joachim Blatter and Markus Haverland. 2012. *Designing case studies: Explanatory approaches in small-N research*. Palgrave.

Arend Lijphart. 1971. ‘Comparative politics and the comparative method’. *American Political Science Review* 65 (3): 682-693.

Jonathan Hopkin. 2010. ‘The comparative method’, chapter 14 in David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 3rd ed. Palgrave.

Matthew Lange. 2013. *Comparative-historical methods*. Sage.

Session 1: Controlled comparisons

Douglas Dion. 1998. ‘Evidence and inference in the comparative case study’. *Comparative Politics* 30 (2): 127-146.

Barbara Geddes. 1990. ‘How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics’. *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.

Dan Slater and Daniel Ziblatt. 2013. ‘The enduring indispensability of the controlled comparison’. *Comparative Political Studies* 46 (10): 1301-1327.

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett. 2005. ‘Comparative methods: Controlled comparison and within-case analysis’, chapter 8 in Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press.

Stanley Lieberson. 1991. ‘Small N’s and big conclusions: An examination of the reasoning in comparative studies based on a small number of cases’. *Social Forces* 70 (2): 307-320.

Charles C. Ragin. 2004. ‘Turning the tables: How case-oriented methods challenge variable-oriented methods’. In *Rethinking social inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*, edited by H.E. Brady and D. Collier. Rowman and Littlefield.

Session 2: Process tracing

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett. 2005. ‘Process tracing and historical explanation’, chapter 10 in Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press.

Charles Tilly. 2001. ‘Mechanisms in political processes’. *Annual Review of Political Science* 4: 21-41.

- James Mahoney and Gary Goertz. 2004. 'The possibility principle: Choosing negative cases in comparative research'. *American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 653-669.
- David Collier, Henry E. Brady and Jason Seawright. 2004. 'Sources of leverage in causal inference: Toward an alternative view of methodology'. In *Rethinking social inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*, edited by H.E. Brady and D. Collier. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Henry E. Brady. 2004. 'Appendix: Data-set observations versus causal-process observations: The 2000 U.S. presidential election'. In *Rethinking social inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*, edited by H.E. Brady and D. Collier. Rowman and Littlefield.

Session 3: The congruence method

- Joachim Blatter and Markus Haverland. 2008. 'In search of co-variance, causal mechanisms or congruence? Towards a plural understanding of case studies'. *Swiss Political Science Review* 14 (2): 315-356.
- Alexander George and Andrew Bennett. 2005. 'The congruence method', chapter 9 in Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press.
- John Gerring. 2007. 'Is there a (viable) crucial-case method?'. *Comparative Political Studies* 40 (3): 231-253.
- Peter A. Hall. 2008. 'Systematic process analysis: When and how to use it'. *European Political Science* 7 (3): 304-317; also published in *European Management Review*, 2006, 3 (1): 24-31.

Session 4: Case studies & multi-method research

- Amel Ahmed and Rudra Sil. 2012. 'When multi-method research subverts methodological pluralism – or, why we still need single-method research'. *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (4): 935-953.
- Thad Dunning. 2008. 'Natural and field experiments: The role of qualitative methods'. *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research* 6 (2): 17-23. Available online at: <https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/uploadedFiles/moynihan/cqrm/Newsletter6.2.pdf>
- Evan S. Lieberman. 2005. 'Nested analysis as a mixed-method strategy for comparative research'. *American Political Science Review* 99 (3): 435-452.
- Ingo Rohlfing. 2008. 'What you see and what you get: Pitfalls and principles of nested analysis in comparative research'. *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (11): 1492-1514.
- Sidney Tarrow. 1995. 'Bridging the qualitative-quantitative divide in political science'. *American Political Science Review* 89 (2): 471-474.
- Alberto Abadie, Alexis Diamond, and Jens Heinmueller. 2015. "Comparative politics and the synthetic control method." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(2): 495-510.

2. Interpretative methods

'Interpretivism' takes issue with many of the assumptions of the 'positivist' tradition. For example, it questions whether facts and values can be separated (which implies that the researcher's own views and values become an important issue and consideration in interpretivist research), and it focuses primarily on 'understanding' the meaning of particular actions and events rather than on 'causal explanations'.

Interpretivism in the study of international relations and politics – and in the social sciences more generally – takes many different shapes, and is a vibrant and increasingly prominent approach (or, more accurately, set of approaches). This module focuses on some of the methods used in and issues raised by these approaches. It consists of two parts. The first part focuses on critical discourse

analysis, while the second part focuses on ethnographic methods used in interpretivist research in our field.

Part 1: Critical approaches to discourse analysis (shared with SSRMP)

Lecturer: Dr Lauren Wilcox (lw487@cam.ac.uk)

The focus of these two sessions will be the linking of theory to method, paying particular attention to the relationship between language or other forms of representation or communication and the broader social milieu with special attention to power relations. The topic will be approached from a broadly Foucauldian angle: Foucault writes that discourse “consists of not—of no longer—treating discourses as groups of signs signifying elements referring to contents of representations, but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak.” The emphasis of these two lectures will be less upon what is known as ‘conversation analysis’ or ‘content analysis’ and more on methods based on post-positivist methods and critical theory which emphasize how language and other social practices create reality rather than reflect it, and thus methods of interpreting discourse are themselves not ideologically or politically neutral practices.

Session 1: The origins of critical discourse analysis (the Frankfurt school, Foucault, post-structuralism, feminism); how theoretical backgrounds shape research design

Session 2: 'Doing' discourse analysis: analysing methods and approaches

Suggested readings:

Carol Cohn, “Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. Vol. 12, no. 4 (Summer 1987)

Lene Hansen, “Gender, Nation, Rape: Bosnia and the Construction of Security,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Vol 3. Issue 1 (2000).

Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, “A Genealogy of Dependency” A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State,” *Signs: Journal of Women, Culture and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Winter, 1994).

Helen Kinsella, “Gendering Grotius: Sex and Sex Difference in the Laws of War,” *Political Theory*, (April 2006); vol. 34, 2: pp. 161-191.

David Campbell, *Writing Security: US Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992 (1998).

Selchow, Sabine. “The Drones of Others: An Insight into Imagination of UAVs in Germany.” *Behemoth – A Journal on Civilisation*, 8 (2): pp. 55-72.

Part 2: Methods and issues in interpretivist research

Lecturer: Dr Iza Hussin (ih298@cam.ac.uk)

This part of the module is organized as a seminar on interpretivist methods as a sub-field of political science methodology. Students will read a range of recent scholarship on, and using, political ethnography, the analysis of symbols, text and culture, and address analytic and ethical issues that arise alongside mixed methods research. The second meeting builds upon the first to continue to question criteria for evaluating qualitative methodologies in the study of politics.

Texts will include:

- Edward Schatz (ed), *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).
- Lisa Wedeen, 'Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science', *American Political Science Review* 96, 4 (2002), pp. 713-728.
- Frederic C. Schaffer, *Democracy in Translation: Understanding Politics in an Unfamiliar Culture* (Cornell University Press, 1998).
- Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).
- Charles Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768-2008* (Paradigm, 2004).
- Charles Tilly, *Contentious Performances* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing", link:
<http://polisci.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/people/u3827/Understanding%20Process%20Tracing.pdf>

3. **Public policy analysis** (*shared with SSRMP*)

Lecturers: Prof Mike Kenny, Dr Cristina Penasco, Dr Pieter van Houten

The analysis of policy depends on many disciplines and techniques and so is difficult for many researchers to access. This module provides a mixed perspective on policy analysis, taking both an academic and a practitioner perspective. This is because the same tools and techniques can be used in academic research on policy options and change as those used in practice in a policy environment.

This course is provided as three 2-hour sessions delivered as a mix of lectures and seminars. No direct analysis work will be carried out in the sessions themselves, but sample data and questions may be provided for students who wish to take the material into practice.

Session outlines

Session 1: How do we analyse policy development and change over time? The policy cycle and models of policy change

In studying how policies are developed and chosen, there are two different timescales to consider - the immediate process of policy development (the policy cycle) and the evolution of a policy over long periods of time (models of policy change). This session will outline both timescales and discuss how these models can be applied to study policy change, highlighting the contested nature of most models of policy.

Readings

- Ayres, S. & Marsh, A. (2013). Reflections on contemporary debates in policy studies, *Policy & Politics* 41(4): 643-663.
- Dye, T. (2011). Chapter 2 in Dye, T., *Understanding Public Policy*, Pearson (13th ed).
- John, P. (2003). Is there life after policy streams, advocacy coalitions, and punctuations: Using evolutionary theory to explain policy change? *Policy Studies Journal* 31(4): 481-498.
- Nowlin, M. (2011). Theories of the policy process: State of the research and emerging trends, *Policy Studies Journal* 39(S1): 41-60.

Examples of using the models in research:

- Brunner, S. (2008). Understanding policy change: Multiple streams and emissions trading in Germany, *Global Environmental Change* 18: 501-507.
- Cairney, P. (2007). A ‘multiple lenses’ approach to policy change: The case of tobacco policy in the UK, *British Politics* 2: 45-68.

Session 2: What tools do we use to analyse policy options I – CBA and MCDA in policy analysis

Policy analysis is a distinct practice that is forward looking, taking an issue and trying to both develop options and to provide a decision framework for making a policy choice. This first of two sessions provides a brief overview of cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) and gives examples of their use in policy decision making.

Readings

- HM Treasury (2013). Chapter 5 “Appraising the Options”, in HM Treasury (2013). *The Green Book: Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government*, London: TSO.
- HM Treasury (2013). Annex 6 “Discount Rate”, in HM Treasury (2013). *The Green Book: Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government*, London: TSO.
- OECD (2006). *Cost benefit analysis and the environment*, OECD Publishing, chps 1,2, and 19 available online http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/environment/cost-benefit-analysis-and-the-environment_9789264010055-en.
- Sunstein, C. (2014). The real world of cost-benefit analysis: thirty-six questions (and almost as many answers), *Columbia Law Review*, 114(1): 167-211.
- DCLG (2009). *Multi-criteria Analysis: A manual*, Department of Communities and Local Government.

Session 3: What tools do we use to analyse policy options II – assessing the (likely) effects of policies

A key challenge in policy analysis and practice is how to assess and predict the effect of particular policy decisions. Examples of widely used tools for this are regression analysis (as much of the information that policymakers need is provided through the outputs of regression analysis of varying complexity) and randomised controlled trials. This session will focus on some of tools, discussing their main features and using examples of their use in policy analysis and policy making.

Readings

- Field, A. (2009). Regression, Chapter 7 in Field, A. (2009) *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS*, Sage (or any other edition).
- HM Treasury (2013). Chapter 2 “Overview of appraisal and evaluation” in HM Treasury (2013). *The Green Book: Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government*, London: TSO.
- HM Treasury (2011). Chapters 1 & 2 in HM Treasury (2011). *The Magenta Book: Guidance for Evaluation*, London: TSO.
- Glennester, R. & Takavarasha, K. (2013). *Running Randomized Evaluations: A Practical Guide*, Princeton University Press
- Leigh, A. (2018). *Randomistas: How Radical Researchers Are Changing Our World*, Yale University Press

Additional reading

Beyond the topics covered in the three sessions above the following are provided as broader reading on policy analysis and the craft of policy analysis:

- Cairney, P. (2012). What is public policy? How should we study it? In: Cairney, P. (2012). *Understanding Public Policy: Theories and Issues*, pp. 22-45, Palgrave MacMillan.
- Hallsworth, M. et al (2011). *Policy Making in the Real World: Evidence and Analysis*, Institute for Government, London.
- Robert, C. & Zeckhauser, R. (2011). The methodology of normative policy analysis, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 30(3): 613-643.
- Weimer, D. (1998). Policy analysis and evidence: A craft perspective, *Policy Studies Journal*, 26(1): 114-128).

Optional workshops (Lent term)

These workshops focus on specific methods (archival research and elite interviews), and are intended for students who are planning to use these methods in their research. The workshops will help them to understand some of the key features of these methods, and illustrate how historians and social scientists use information from documents or interviews to develop coherent arguments. Each workshop is a two-hour session.

A. Archival research

Lecturer: Dr Peter Sloman (pjs93@cam.ac.uk)

When using historical sources, students in the social and political sciences are entering slightly unfamiliar territory: there are rules and customs governing the use of such sources, but also freedoms associated with their use about which they might otherwise have been ignorant. This workshop will look in detail at one of the contemporary historian's key sources – original documents – and consider the challenges and opportunities they present. We will consider why we need documents and where they are to be found; how archives are organised; and issues of secrecy, confidentiality and the release of documents.

Recommended reading:

John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (various editions, Longman, 1984-2010)

Charles Tilly, 'Why and How History Matters', and Robert Franzosi, 'Historical Knowledge and Evidence', in Robert Goodin and Charles Tilly (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* (Oxford University Press, 2006)

Stefan Berger, Heiko Feldner and Kevin Passmore (eds.), *Writing History: Theory and Practice* (Hodder Education, 2003; 2nd ed., Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), esp. Jon Lawrence on 'Political History' and John Harvey on 'History and the Social Sciences'

Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton University Press, 2006)

B. Elite Interviews

Lecturer: Dr Pieter van Houten (pjv24@cam.ac.uk)

Interviews can be an immensely helpful tool for the study of politics and international relations. They can serve as a way of accessing information that is otherwise hard to obtain, as a direct measure of attitudes of elites and the wider public, or as a check on whether information found in other sources is consistent with the perspective of insider participants. However, these methods and the information obtained by them also have their pitfalls and pose various challenges. This workshop focuses on why interviewing is useful and how to carry it out. It will discuss issues such as the peculiarities of interviewing, its main advantages and disadvantages, interview preparation, conducting the interview, and the interpretation of interview data.

Possible readings:

Beyers, Jan, Caelesta Braun, David Marshall, Iskander de Bruycker. 2014. 'Let's talk! On the practice and method of interviewing policy experts'. *Interest Groups & Advocacy* 3(2): 174–87.

* Bryman, Alan. 2015. *Social Science Research Methods*. 5th ed. (or earlier ed.). Oxford UP. Chapter 20.

- * Burnham, Peter, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant and Zig Layton-Henry. 2004. *Research Methods in Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 9.
- * Fujii, Lee Ann. 2018. *Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach*. Routledge.
- Harvey, William S. 2011. 'Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews'. *Qualitative Research* 11(4): 431-441.
- Mikecz, Robert. 2012. 'Interviewing Elites: Addressing Methodological Issues'. *Qualitative Inquiry* 18(6): 482-493.
- Mosley, Layna (ed). 2013. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Cornell UP.
- Peabody, Robert L., Susan Webb Hammond, Jean Torcom, Lynne P. Brown, Carolyn Thompson and Robin Kolodny. 1990. 'Interviewing Political Elites'. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 23(3): 451-455.
- * Rathbun, Brian C. 2008. 'Interviewing and Qualitative Field Methods: Pragmatism and Practicalities'. In Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady and David Collier (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford UP. Chapter 29.
- Roulston, Kathryn, Kathleen deMarras and Jamie B. Lewis. 2003. 'Learning to Interview in the Social Sciences'. *Qualitative Inquiry* 9(4): 643-668.
- Rubin, Herbert J. and Irene S. Rubin. 2012. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 3rd. ed. Sage.
- Symposium on 'Interview Methods in Political Science'. 2002. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 663-688.