

PLSC 352: Mixed Methods Research

Fall 2020

Instructor: Professor Elizabeth Nugent
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Seminar Hours: T 1:30-3:20pm
Taught over Zoom

Office Hours: T 10-11:45am (over Zoom; sign up on Calendly [here](#))

Course Description

This course focuses on conducting research using mixed quantitative and qualitative methodologies and data. It is geared towards advanced undergraduate students who are interested in conducting mixed methods, and I encourage students to develop a research design for a senior essay for the final assignment. The course will begin with definitions and assumptions underpinning mixed methods research. We will then explore the strengths and weaknesses of specific combinations of quantitative tests, case studies, and narrative and interpretive work. This year, I have added a special session featuring political science librarian Kenya Flash and data science librarian Barbara Etsy on conducting online and alternative forms of mixed methods research to address challenges created by COVID-19. Next, we will read and evaluate the research design choices of published articles and an exemplary senior essay. The course builds to a final assignment in which students produce a mixed method research design.

Course Policies

A Note on COVID-19

We are in weird times, to say the least, and online seminars are not an ideal form of teaching or learning. I hope we can work together to make this course the best experience it can be for everyone. Please communicate any challenges you are facing or any feedback you have for me to improve the class as soon as they arise.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected in all seminars. Please communicate absences ahead of class when possible. If you miss more than three sessions without speaking with me, you will receive no more than half of the available points for participation.

E-mail Policy

If you have a quick (i.e. non-substantive) question, email is the best way to contact me. While I typically respond to emails quickly, please allow 48 hours for a response. If you do not receive a response within 48 hours, follow up with a reminder. This article is recommended reading about how to draft an effective email: Laura Portwood-Stacer, "[How to Email Your Professor \(without being annoying AF\).](#)"

If you email me the night before a deadline with a last minute request, please do not expect a response. It is important that you look at the assignments early to ensure I can answer any questions you may have in a timeframe that is useful to you. Longer questions -- for example, those dealing with your performance in the course or substantive questions about the course material -- are better asked in person. I will hold regular office hours on Tuesdays from 10-11:45am throughout the semester, and appointments can also be made on an individual basis.

Policies on Incomplete Grades and Late Assignments

For every day a written assignment is late, you will lose 2 points out of the total points available. No final papers will be accepted after December 20 without prior permission. Familiarize yourself with [Yale University's policy on incomplete grades](#).

Academic Integrity

Familiarize yourself with Yale University's policy on academic integrity. In short, don't turn in the same paper for two classes, don't plagiarize someone else's work, and don't cheat on the in-class exam or other assignments. When in doubt, come talk to me. To ensure that you do not accidentally violate Yale's academic honesty policies, please review [Yale University's Definitions of Plagiarism, Cheating, and Documentation of Sources](#).

Commitment to Diversity

Your experience in this class is very important to me. If you have already established accommodations with the [Resource Office on Disabilities](#), please communicate those to me as early as possible so we can discuss your needs in this course. If you have not yet established services through ROD, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but are not limited to: mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), please contact ROD. ROD offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, me, and the ROD.

Commitment to an Inclusive Learning Environment

Yale University adheres to the philosophy that all community members should enjoy an environment free of any harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination, or violence. If you encounter sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability please contact the Title IX Coordinator, [Stephanie Spangler](#), or [any of the University Title IX Coordinators](#). You may also report an incident to me. I am required to notify the Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident, though you may choose to request confidentiality from the University.

Course Requirements, Format, and Grading

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- 20 points of your grade will be determined by attendance and participation

The class will be taught as a seminar and revolves around class discussion. The quality of a seminar hinges on the quality of class discussion. Regular attendance and participation are important for understanding the material and for getting the most out of this course. Students are expected to come to class having completed all assigned readings and prepared to talk about them in depth. This may require you to prepare notes in order to remember important aspects of the readings.

- 20 points of your grade will be determined by an in-class facilitation during weeks 3-10

You will be expected to provide a brief introduction to the topic covered for that day, introduce a number of questions to guide our conversation, and lead us in discussion for the first half of class.

- 40 points of your grade will be determined by a final paper outlining an original mixed methods research design

This class is designed to be helpful for your research. As such, the course builds towards a final paper at least 15 pages in length, in which students create an original mixed methods research design. The paper should propose a research project using a mixed methods approach, with the goal of producing something that will help you in preparing a senior essay or similarly ambitious research project. The final paper is due to Canvas by December 15, 2020 by 5 pm EST. Please see section below with additional guidelines.

- 10 points of your grade will be determined by attending my office hours once during the semester to discuss your final paper
- 10 points of your grade will be determined by an in-class presentation of your final paper

Book to Purchase

Please purchase the following book (available through Yale Bookstore and online retailers). All other readings area available online and linked through Canvas.

- Seawright, Jason. *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Additional Guidelines for Final Paper

This class is designed to be helpful for your research. The final assignment is a paper at least 15 pages in length, in which you propose an original mixed methods research design. I strongly encourage students to use the final paper to design a project for their senior essay. The final paper is due through Canvas on **December 15, 2020 by 5 pm EST**.

Due Dates, Page Length Requirements, and Points

40 points of your grade will be determined by the final paper. Smaller components of the paper will be due throughout the semester and I expect that you will incorporate my feedback in the final version. Please pay attention to page length requirements. These are *minimum* requirements; you can certainly write more though you may not write less.

Assignment 1

- Due October 6, 2020 before class
- Research question and literature review
- 5 pages (double spaced)
- 10 points

Assignment 2

- Due November 10, 2020 before class
- Research design and justification of methodological approach
- 5 pages (double spaced)
- 10 points

Final Paper

- Due December 15, 2020, 5pm EST
- Final paper
- 15 pages (double-spaced)
- 20 points
- *Note: This should not be the previous assignments copied and pasted together. You should incorporate feedback you received on previous assignments.*

Research Question and Literature Review

A good literature review synthesizes and critiques existing work on a topic, both in substantive and in method. This review goes beyond summary by critically engaging existing studies, identifies gaps in how a question has been investigated, and situates the current study in that gap. You can find exemplary literature reviews by searching your topic in the *Annual Review of Political Science*, which exclusively publishes review essays written by top scholars. Alternatively, shorter literature reviews appear the beginning of (nearly) all published articles. For this class, the research question and literature review section should end with a proposal of your original theory and how it addresses lacunae in the literature.

Resources:

- General guidelines for writing the literature review of a paper: <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/literaturereview> and <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/types-of-writing/literature-review/>
- How to guide: <http://levente.littvay.hu/litreview/>
- Yale resources for political science reviews: <https://guides.library.yale.edu/politicalscience/litreviews>

Research Design and Justification

The research design section of the paper describes the data collection and analyses you conduct to investigate a research problem. This should include how you will measure your dependent and independent variables, and how you will support your causal or descriptive argument, and with what data. For this class, this section will be prospective – i.e., what research you *will* undertake to test your theory. In published research pieces, this section is titled “data” and/or “research design,” is written in the past tense, and details how data was collected and analyzed. For the purposes of this class, this section must describe a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyses.

Resources:

- General guidelines for writing the methods section of a paper: <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/methodology>
 - Quantitative: <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/quantitative>
 - Qualitative: <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/quantitative>
- Qualitative methods section of a paper: https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/writing_up_your_phd_qualitative_research.pdf (starting page 29)
- Mixed methods research design: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1558689815594687> (Note: search the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* for additional examples of how to read and write a mixed methods research design section)

This section should also answer the question of why your proposed research design and methodological approach best answers your proposed research question. A good justification will reference both the strengths and limitations of a given approach. Justifications for mixed methods often discuss how a combination of approaches complement each other. You might cite the material we cover from weeks 2 through 5 on the syllabus for a mixed method design.

Resources:

- <http://methods.sagepub.com/reference/sage-encyc-qualitative-research-methods/n392.xml>
- <https://www.oxbridgeessays.com/blog/writing-dissertation-methodology/>

Schedule of Class Meetings

Part I: Fundamentals

1. September 1
Course Introduction
2. September 8
Definitions and Logics of Quantitative and Qualitative Research
3. September 15
Definitions and Logics of Mixed Methods Research
4. September 22
Mixed Methods Research Design
5. September 29
Conducting Mixed Methods Research in the Age of Covid-19

Part II: Components of Mixed Methods Research

6. October 6 **** Assignment 1 Due to Canvas by Beginning of Class****
Case Studies in Mixed Methods Research
7. October 13
Regression Analysis in Mixed Methods Research
8. October 20
Fieldwork, Interviews, Ethnography in Mixed Methods Research
9. October 27
Experimental Evidence in Mixed Methods Research

Part III: Examples of Mixed Methods Research

10. November 3
Mixed Methods Examples: Published Articles
11. November 10 **** Assignment 2 Due to Canvas by Beginning of Class ****
Mixed Methods Example: Yale Senior Essay

Part IV: Applying What We've Learned

12. November 17
In-Class Presentations

**** Final paper due December 15, 5pm****

Part I: Fundamentals

Class 1. September 1

Course Introduction

Please come to class prepared to give a brief introduction of yourself, your research, and your interest in the class, and having read the following documents:

“How to Read a Political Science Article”

“Example of a Mixed Methods Research Proposal”

Class 2. September 8

Definitions and Logics of Quantitative and Qualitative Research

David Collier and Colin Elman, “Qualitative and Multimethod Research” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford University Press (2008): 779-795.

Charles Franklin, “Quantitative Methodology” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford University Press (2008): 796-813.

Charles Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. University of California Press (1984). Chapter 1 (“The Distinctiveness of Comparative Social Science”).

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research.” *Political Analysis* 14 (2006): 227-249.

Class 3. September 15

Definitions and Logics of Mixed Methods Research

Jason Seawright, *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. Cambridge University Press, 2016. Chapter 1.

John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, 2011. Chapters 1 (“The Nature of Mixed Methods Research”) and 2 (“The Foundations of Mixed Methods Research”).

Sidney Tarrow, “Bridging the Quantitative-Qualitative Divide” in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, eds. Henry E. Brady and David Collier. Rowman & Littlefield and Berkeley Public Policy Press, 2010.

David Laitin and James Fearon, “Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford University Press (2008): 756-776.

Class 4. September 22

Mixed Methods Research Design

John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, 2011. Chapter 3 (53-106; “Choosing a Mixed Methods Design”) and 6 (171-205; “Collecting Data in Mixed Methods Research”).

Recommended: Skim chapter 7 (203-250). For additional guidance for when you write up results in a final piece using mixed methods, read chapter 8 (251-272).

Review “Example of a Mixed Methods Research Proposal” from week 1

Class 5. September 29

Conducting Mixed Methods Research in the Age of Covid-19

Please come to class having read the material linked under “background reading” and skimmed the links under “resources” and “adapting methods.”

First half of class: Guest Lectures

- Yale Political Science Librarian Kenya Flash: resources on campus and online
- Yale Data Librarian Barbara Etsy: identifying data by reading existing literature

Second half of class: Brainstorming Session

Background reading

- [Conducting Social Science Research During Crisis](#) from Professor Lauren Duquette-Rury (Sociology, Wayne State University)
- Social Science Research Council guide for [Social Research and Insecurity](#)
- Advancing Conflict Research’s guide for [Research on and During the Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Resources

- Yale Library research guide for [Political Science and Policy Studies](#)
- Department panel on [How to Do Comparative Politics during COVID](#)

Adapting methods for online research

- [Rethinking Research](#)
 - [Alternative Fieldwork](#)
 - [Digital Ethnography](#)
 - [Online Archives](#)
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Part II: Components of Mixed Methods Research

Class 6. October 6

Case Studies in Mixed Methods Research

Jason Seawright, *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016, Chapter 8.

John Gerring, "What is a Case Study" and "What is a Case Study Good For?" in *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* ed. John Gerring, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 17-64.

David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing." *PS: Political Science & Politics* (2011) 44.4: 823-830.

Christine Trampusch and Bruno Palier, "Between X and Y: How Process Tracing Contributes to Opening the Black Box of Causality." *New Political Economy* 21.5 (2016): 437-454.

Class 7. October 13

Regression Analysis in Mixed Methods Research

Jason Seawright, *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016, Chapter 3.

Christopher H. Achen, "Let's put garbage-can regressions and garbage-can probits where they belong." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 22.4 (2005): 327-339.

Michael Coppedge, "Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories: Combining Large-N and Small in Comparative Politics." *Comparative Politics* 31.4 (1999): 465-476.

Evan Lieberman, "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99.3 (2005):435-52.

Class 8. October 20

Fieldwork, Interviews, Ethnography in Mixed Methods Research

Elisabeth J. Wood, "Field Research" in *The Handbook of Comparative Politics*, edited by Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, 2008.

Diana Kapiszewski, "Interviews, Focus Groups, and Oral Histories" in *Field Research in Political Science*, eds Kapiszewski and MacLean. Cambridge University Press, 190-233.

John Boswell, Jack Corbett, Kate Dommett, Will Jennings, Matthew Flinders, R.A.W Rhodes, and Matthew Wood, "State of the Field: What can political ethnography tell us about anti-politics and democratic disaffection?" *European Journal of Political Research*. 58.1 (2019): 56-71.

Class 9. October 27

Experimental Evidence in Mixed Methods Research

Jason Seawright, *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016, Chapter 7.

Thad Dunning, *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-Based Approach*. Cambridge University Press, 2012. Chapters 1 (“Introduction: Why Natural Experiments?”) and 11 (“Building Strong Designs through Multi-Method Research”).

Elizabeth Levy Paluck, “The Promising Integration of Field Experimentation and Qualitative Methods.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 628: 59-71.

Part III: Examples of Mixed Methods Research

Please come to class having read the manuscript(s) assigned for weeks 10, 11, and 12 in their entirety. We will first discuss the author’s research design choice, and then evaluate the qualitative and quantitative data in isolation and in combination.

Class 10. November 3

Mixed Methods Examples: Published Articles

Ana Arjona, “Institutions, Civilian Resistance, and Wartime Social Order: A Process-driven Natural Experiment in the Colombian Civil War.” *Latin American Politics and Society* 58.3 (2016): 99-122.

Erica de Bruin, “Preventing Coups D’état: How Counterbalancing Works.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62.7 (2018): 1433-1458.

Heba Gowayed, “The Unnecessary Nudge: Education and Poverty Policy in a Cairo Slum.” *Sociological Forum* 33.1 (2018): 482-504.

Daniel Mattingly, “Elite Capture: How Decentralization and Information Institutions Weaken Property Rights in Rural China.” *World Politics* 68.3 (2016): 383-412.

Class 11. November 10

Mixed Methods Example: Yale Senior Essay

David Broockman, “How Minority Politicians Are Elected, Represent Minorities Differently, and Affect Citizens’ Political Behavior: Five Empirical Contributions” (Winner of the Frank Milner Patterson Prize for the best senior essay on the American political system, 2010-2011)

Part IV: Applying What We've Learned

Class 12. November 17

In-Class Presentation of Research Designs

Please come to class prepared to give a 5-minute presentation on the topic and research design of your final paper.