

WSSR WORKSHOPS ON SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Introduction to Interpretive Methods

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May 16-18, 2018

9:00am – 4:30pm

Summary

As humans we are constantly engaged in interpretation – drawing insight from what we see and hear in the world around us, from the stories we read online and conversations with the people we encounter. But what does it mean to think of research in this way – i.e. as a method of social inquiry? What specific problems might interpretive methods allow us to address? The answer to these questions relies heavily on the notion that as individuals we are meaning-bearing agents; meaning-generative ones too. The decisions we make – how we vote, what parties we join, what songs we sing, what rallies we attend – are based in part on what meanings we ascribe to these acts, what significance they have for us. Thinking interpretively about the social world offers purchase on a number of features usually eschewed by traditional (positivist) social science approaches – including the ways in which peoples' lives are circumscribed by power, the structural harms of institutions (even putatively just ones), the community-embedded logic of actions/movements – and helps us identify the disconnect between concepts as they exist on paper and how they operate in the lifeworlds we inhabit.

This workshop is designed to prepare students to employ interpretive methods for the pursuit of social inquiry. It will focus on the two central tasks of any research project: first, choosing and refining a research question (and in particular, specifying the kind of questions that can be wed to interpretive methods); second, selecting a specific method of inquiry. To this end, the course will offer a methodological 'bootcamp' of sorts – covering ethnography/participant observation, discourse analysis, genealogy, historiography, etc. The workshop will include a mixture of seminar discussions as well as hands-on exercises and interactive group work focused on particular tasks of interpretation.

Primary texts

- D. Yanow and P. Schwartz-Shea. 2013. Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn. London: Routledge. **(IM)**
Available at Webster Course Reserve Room (3 hour loan)
- E. Schatz (ed). 2009. Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. **(PE)**
Available at Webster Course Reserve Room (3 hour loan)

Students will get the most out of class sessions if they complete the readings in advance of each session.



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Schedule of Sessions and Reading List

Wednesday, May 16

Session I: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm	
<p>Part A. What is interpretation? What makes interpretation a method?</p>	<p>Required readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IM, Intro, chs 1, 6 • C. Geertz. 1973. <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i>. NY: Basic Books, ch 1: http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF157E Ch 15: http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF224F • L. Wedeen. 2002. "Conceptualizing Culture," <i>American Political Science Review</i> 96:4. http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u-http%3A%2F%2F0-www.jstor.org.mercury.concordia.ca%2Fstable%2F3117506 <p>Further readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M. Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," (any translation) • M. Weber. <i>The Vocation of Science</i>, (any translation). • C. Taylor. 1971. "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," <i>The Review of Metaphysics</i> 25(1), p 3-51. • P. Rabinow and W. M. Sullivan, "The Interpretive Turn: A Second Look," in P. Rabinow and W. M. Sullivan, eds., <i>Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look</i> (California, 1987), 1-30.
<p>Part B. Problems, Concepts and Methods: Where to Begin?</p>	<p>Required reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I. Shapiro. 2002. "Problems, Methods, and Theories in the Study of Politics: Or, What's Wrong with Political Science and What to Do About It", <i>Political Theory</i> 30:4, pp. 596-619. http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u-http%3A%2F%2F0-www.jstor.org.mercury.concordia.ca%2Fstable%2F3072623 • J. Gerring. 1999. "What Makes a Concept Good? A Criterial Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences." <i>Polity</i> 31:3, pp. 357-393. http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u-http%3A%2F%2F0-www.jstor.org.mercury.concordia.ca%2Fstable%2F3235246 • G. Sartori. 1970. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." <i>The American Political Science Review</i> 64:4, pp. 1033-46. http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u-http%3A%2F%2F0-www.jstor.org.mercury.concordia.ca%2Fstable%2F1958356



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IM, ch 4, 8 <p>Further readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G. Goertz. 2006. <i>Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide</i>. Princeton: Princeton University Press, chs 1-3. • F. C. Schaffer. 2016. <i>Elucidating Social Concepts: An Interpretivist Guide</i>. New York: Routledge • A, Schedler. 2011. "Concept Formation." In B. Badie, D. Berg-Schlosser, and L. Morlino (eds), <i>International Encyclopædia of Political Science</i>. London: Sage. • R. Adcock and D. Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 95:3, pp. 529-547. • A. Schütz. 1954. "Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences," <i>Journal of Philosophy</i> 51:9, pp. 257-273. • A. Schütz. 1954. "Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences," <i>Journal of Philosophy</i> 51:9, pp. 257-273.
<p>Session 2: 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm</p>	
<p>Part A. Interpretive Exercise (I)</p>	
<p>Part B. Debriefing</p>	

Thursday, May 17

<p>Session 3: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm</p>	
<p>Part A. <i>Thinking</i> Ethnographically</p>	<p>Required reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PE, Intro, chs 1-3. • IM, chs 24-25. <p>Further Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P. T. Jackson. 2011. <i>The conduct of inquiry in international relations: Philosophy of science and its implications for the study of world politics</i>. NY: Routledge. • Cerwonka and L. Malkki. 2007. <i>Improvising Theory</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. • L. Wedeen. 1998. "Acting 'As If': Symbolic Politics and Social Control in Syria," <i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i> 40:3, pp. 503-523. • D .R. Hiley, J. F. Bohman, and R. Shusterman, eds. 1991. <i>The Interpretive Turn</i>. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
<p>Part B. <i>Practicing</i> Ethnography (focus on interviewing)</p>	<p>Required reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IM, ch 8-9. • PE, ch 4, 6, 7. <p>Further Readings:</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H. J. Rubin and I. S. Rubin. 2012. <i>Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data</i>, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage. • L. Mosley. 2013. <i>Interview Research in Political Science</i>. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. • L. A. Fujii. 2010. "Shades of Truth and Lies: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence," <i>Journal of Peace Research</i> 47:2, pp. 231-241 • J. Soss. 2000. <i>Unwanted Claims: The Politics of Participation in the U.S. Welfare System</i>. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. • T. Pachirat. 2011. <i>Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight</i>. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. • L. Wedeen. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> 13, pp. 255-272. • J. C. Scott. 1990. <i>Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts</i>. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
<p>Session 4: 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm</p>	
<p>Part A. Interpretive Exercise (II)</p>	
<p>Part B. Debriefing</p>	

Friday, May 18

<p>Session 5: 9:00 am - 12:00 pm</p>	
<p>Part A. Historical/Archival Work & Process Tracing</p>	<p>Required reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I. Lustick. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple of Selection Bias." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 90:3, pp. 605-18. • http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u=http%3A%2F%2F0-www.jstor.org.mercury.concordia.ca%2Fstable%2F2082612 • C. Thies. 2002. "A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in <i>International Studies Perspectives</i> 3:4, pp. 351-372. • http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u=http%3A%2F%2F0-search.ebscohost.com.mercury.concordia.ca%2Flogin.aspx%3Fdirect%3D9107%26site%3Ddehost-live%26scope%3Dsite • IM, ch 17. • G. Goertz and J. Mahoney. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Causal Mechanism Analysis pp. 227-249. • http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u=http%3A%2F%2F0-www.jstor.org.mercury.concordia.ca%2Fstable%2F25791851 <p>Further Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R. Vitalis. 2006. "The Past is Another Country," in E. Perelman and S. Science <i>Field Research: Essays & Bibliographic Sources on Research Design and Practice</i>, ch 1.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M. Wilde. 2009. "How Culture Mattered at Vatican II: Collegiality Truncating Movement Organizations," <i>American Sociological Review</i> 69:4, pp. 576- 607. • M. Trachtenberg. 2006. <i>The Craft of International History: A Guide to Methodology</i>. Press, ch. 5. • Bennett and J. T. Checkel. "Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Empirical Practice." J. T. Checkel (eds) <i>Process Tracing in the Social Sciences: From Metaphor to Method</i>. University Press. • J. Bercovitch. 2005. "Social Research and the Study of Mediation: Designing for Archival Research." <i>International Negotiation</i> 9:3, pp. 415-428. • T. Skocpol and M. Sommers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macroeconomic Research in the Modern World (Cambridge, 1994), 72-98
<p>Part B. Discourse Analysis/Genealogy</p>	<p>Required reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Vucetic. 2011. "Genealogy as a Research Tool in International Relations." <i>International Relations</i>. 37(3):1295-1312. http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.concordia.ca%2Fdocview%2F899294200%3Faccountid%3D11111 • J. Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique." <i>Journal of International Relations</i> 5(2), 1999: 225-54 http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u=http%3A%2F%2Fjournals.sagepub.com/mercury.concordia.ca%2Fdoi%2F10.1177%2F135407889903200201 • A. J. Norval, "The Things We Do with Words - Contemporary Approaches to Discourse Analysis." <i>Journal of Political Science</i> 30, 2000: 313-46 http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.jstor.org/mercury.concordia.ca%2Fstable%2F194277 <p>Further Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K. Krippendorff. 2013. <i>Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology</i>. • M. Foucault, [1971] 1977. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In <i>Language, Power, and the Subject: Essays and Interviews</i> edited by D. F. Bouchard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. • M. R. Somers. 2008. <i>Genealogies of Citizenship: Markets, Statelessness, and Nationalism</i>. Cambridge University Press. • L. Hansen. 2006. <i>Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War</i>.
<p>Session 4: 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm</p>	
<p>Part A. Interpretive Exercise (III)</p>	
<p>Part B. Debriefing</p>	

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