

Qualitative Methods in Political Science

Course code 6444QUAL • Groups 102 and 103

Block II / 2025–2026

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Instructors:

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Office Hours:

Thursdays: 14:00–15:00 – Room 6.23
Wijnhaven Building.

Thursdays by appointment – Room 6.23
Wijnhaven Building.

Class Time: Thursday

Group102: 11:15 – 13:00

Group 103: 15:15 – 17:00

Room: Room 3.18 Wijnhaven Building

Course description

This course is designed to teach students the essentials of qualitative research to prepare them for researching a thesis using qualitative methods. Each session builds on the one preceding it. The main topics covered are:

- **Research design:** qualitative research design, causal inference, and the logic of case selection for single and comparative case studies.
- **Data collection:** Interviews and document research.
- **Data analysis:** Students will learn the basics about the most commonly used methods of analysis: process tracing, discourse analysis, and content analysis. In addition, the issues of validity, generalizability and reliability are addressed.

Learning objectives

By the end of this seminar, students will be able to:

- Be able to design qualitative research projects using appropriate techniques;
- Understand the inherent benefits of qualitative research and what type of questions it can answer;
- Understand and acknowledge the limits of qualitative designs;
- Understand how to collect and analyse qualitative data;
- Understand the most commonly used approaches to qualitative research in international relations.

Method of Instruction

The course consists of a two-hour seminar meeting once per week, which includes lectures, discussions, and group activities.

Requirements

Students are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to each session, attend all classes, actively participate in class discussions, and complete all assigned work.

Course Materials

The readings for this seminar consist of scholarly articles and book chapters, which are available on the internet or through the university library; links can be found in Brightspace. Assigned readings are listed on the following pages. **If a reading is listed on a specific day, you should read these texts *before* that date.**

Optional Reading

Students interested in a particular topic can consult the optional readings listed in a separate file in Brightspace. These can be used as a starting point, for example, to help you deepen your understanding of a method, decide whether to use a technique in future research, or acquire skills necessary for implementing a technique in a project.

Four books are excellent general sources to consult when you would like additional information about topics covered in the seminar:

- Cyr, J. and Goodman, S.W. (2024). *Doing Good Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press [[online access via the library here](#)]
- Brancati, Dawn. 2018. *Social Scientific Research*. London: Sage. [hard copies available at the Leiden University libraries in Den Haag (Wijnhaven) and Leiden (FSW)].
- Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine and Dvora Yanow. 2012. *Interpretive Research Design*:

Concepts and Processes. New York: Routledge. [[electronic access available](#)]

- Grimm, Jannis J., Kevin Koehler, Ellen M. Lust, Ilyas Saliba, and Isabell Schierenbeck. 2020. Safer Field Research in the Social Sciences: A Guide to Human and Digital Security in Hostile Environments. London: Sage. [[electronic access available](#)].

Mode of Instruction

We will meet once a week on Thursdays. If you are part of Section 1, the meeting will take place at 11:15, and if you are part of Section 2, the meeting will take place at 15:15. Class meetings will be held in room 3.28 at the Wijnhaven Building in The Hague. We are co-teaching this class, which means that each instructor will teach on the same day to the two groups. A list of sessions and their instructors can be found below and on the week by week overview. Instructors will be available for office hours on the days in which they teach. If slides are used during our meetings, they will be posted on Brightspace after the session.

You are not allowed to switch groups during the block.

Week 1 – Oct. 30	Dr. Davila-Gordillo
Week 2 – Nov. 6	Dr. Lichtenheld
Week 3 – Nov. 13	Dr. Davila-Gordillo
Week 4 – Nov. 20	Dr. Davila-Gordillo (Group 102) Dr. Lichtenheld (Group 103)
Week 5 – Nov. 27	Dr. Davila-Gordillo
Week 6 – Dec. 4	Dr. Lichtenheld
Week 7 – Dec. 11	Dr. Lichtenheld
Week 8 – Dec. 18	Writing week (no session)

Office hours and communication

Walk-in office hours will take place every Thursday from 14:00 to 15:00, you can meet with Dr. Davila Gordillo in room 6.23 on her teaching days. If you would like to meet with her and the walk-in hours don't work for you, you can also schedule an online meeting using this link: [Book a meeting](#). You can meet with Dr. Lichtenheld in room 6.23 by appointment.

If the allocated times do not work for you, you can email your instructor. Here are some tips and tricks for emailing your professors: [How to email your professor](#). We acknowledge that our last names are difficult to spell; you can email us as Dr. D and Dr. L.

Attendance

This seminar requires that you manage your time effectively, keep track of the assigned readings, and, most importantly, attend and actively participate in every class session. Plan your schedule around the class meeting. Regular attendance is strongly recommended. If you are unable to attend a session, please inform the instructor in advance. This will prevent any delays as we will not wait for absent students before starting the sessions. Students may miss one seminar meeting for acceptable reasons (health, personal/family matters, etc.); this should always be clearly communicated to the relevant instructor.

Technology

You may use your laptop in class to reference the readings or other class-related materials. Please do not use your laptops, phones, or other devices for browsing, texting, or social media, as it is distracting not only to you but to students around you as well. Please be mindful and respectful.

House Rules

This class is a partnership between us as instructors and you as students. Together, we will build a supportive, respectful, and productive environment. Building this kind of environment requires mutual respect. We all need accommodations because we all learn in different ways. If aspects of this course prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let us know as soon as possible. Together, we will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the course requirements. Please let us know if you go by a name and/or pronoun that is different from what is on the class roster. Using correct names and gender pronouns is important to us. Please share those details with us and correct us if a mistake is made. We expect students to arrive at class prepared to contribute, meaning they have completed the required readings and assignments, and to behave professionally.

Academic Integrity

This class adheres to Leiden University's regulations on academic integrity, including cases of plagiarism. According to the University, "Plagiarism is understood as presenting, intentionally or otherwise, someone else's words, thoughts, analyses, argumentations, pictures, techniques, computer programs, etc., as your own work." Review the full university policy on plagiarism here: [Leiden University plagiarism policy](#)

Plagiarism and cheating are unacceptable and will be pursued to the full extent of the University's policies. Collaboration with other students on assignments is strictly prohibited. Providing proper citations in your writing is necessary and expected. If you have any questions about what constitutes a correct citation, it is your responsibility to seek guidance prior to submitting the assignment. In all writing, you must put any words that are not your own between quotation marks. You must also attribute any ideas that are not your own to the source from which you derived them.

A great resource on citing is here: [University Library: Citing](#)

The use of ChatGPT and other AI tools is generally not recommended in this course. Using AI-generated text without citation constitutes fraud and will be treated accordingly: [Leiden announcement on AI and assignments](#)

The use of artificial intelligence (AI)

Incorporating AI in examinations qualifies as fraud according to Article 6.1 of the Rules and Regulations of the Board of Examiners (BoE) of the MIRD program. If a suspicion arises that an examination impermissible AI use, the examiner can either submit the case to the BoE of the MIRD or, after consulting with the BoE, can invite the suspected student for a conversation. If the instructor decides to do an oral follow-up, the aim of this conversation is to check whether the student has achieved the learning objectives tested by the examination. The examiner has the right to adjust the grade as a result of this conversation. Suspected cases of fraud will be submitted to the BoE of the MIRD program.

Make sure to include an AI Disclosure Statement with Assignments 2 and 3:

“I declare that no artificial intelligence tools were used in the preparation of this work. I bear full responsibility for the content of the work.”

Assignments and grades

- Assignment 1: In-class Multiple Choice Quiz (35%) on materials from Weeks 1–3. Date: November 20 (Week 4).
- Assignment 2: Written paper (30%) of 1,250 words (+/- 10%) on materials from Weeks 4–6. Deadline: Wednesday, December 3, 17:00.
- Assignment 3: Written paper (35%) of 1,250 words (+/- 10%) covering all weeks. Deadline: Thursday, December 18, 17:00.

Assignments

Detailed instructions for Assignments 2 and 3 will be posted on Brightspace by the end of Week 3 of the course. All assignments must be typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt font, double-spaced, and submitted via Turnitin on Brightspace on time. You must ask for and receive permission to submit an assignment late at least one week in advance of the deadline.

Late Assignments

All deadlines for this course are final. No late work is accepted without advance permission, you *have to contact the Study Advisors (24 hour mandate) or the Board of*

Examiners, depending on the extent of the personal circumstances. Work submitted after the deadline without permission will not be graded. If you cannot meet the deadline, please contact the Study Advisors or the Exam Committee in advance (before the deadline).

Compensation Policy

Failed partial grades or components should be compensated by passed partial grades or components. The calculated grade must be at least 5.50 to pass the course. It is not possible to re-sit a partial grade or component once you have passed the course.

- Passed partial grades obtained in the academic year 2024-2025 remain valid during the academic year 2025-2026.
- Passed partial grades obtained in the academic year 2025-2026 remain valid during the academic year 2026-2027.
- Should a student fail the overall course, the student can complete the course in the second year of the programme.

Important Deadlines

Multiple-choice quiz	November 20
Assignment 2	December 3
Assignment 3	December 18
Both assignments 2 and 3 must be submitted via Brightspace by 17:00 CET.	

Writing in this Course

As someone engaged in research, you will need to communicate your ideas – often in written form – to a variety of audiences. Being able to write effectively is essential.

Format:

- Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced.
- Use headings and subheadings only where necessary, with no more than three levels.
- Number and label all graphs, tables, maps, etc. (see “[Almost Everything You Wanted To Know About Making Tables and Figures](#),” Department of Biology, Bates College).
- Number the pages of the document.

Citations, References, and Footnotes:

- Provide a citation for every idea that is not yours. See the university resource on citing and plagiarism policy.
- Use APA as the default reference style.

- Use footnotes sparingly and only for information that does not fit into the main body of the text.

Writing Style:

- Great resources include the [Online Writing Lab at Purdue University](#) and the [University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Writer’s Handbook](#).
- You may use the pronoun “I” in your assignments.
- Each paragraph should develop one major idea; the first sentence should signal the topic.

Resources: [Bates College guide \(Tables & Figures\)](#) • [Leiden Library – Citing](#) • [APA \(library catalogue entry\)](#) • [Purdue OWL](#) • [UW–Madison Writer’s Handbook](#)

Course outline & schedule

Week 1 — Thursday, Oct. 30 – Instructor: Dr. Davila Gordillo

This week, we will cover: Research Questions, Concepts, and the Logic of Inference in Qualitative Research.

Required readings:

- Curini, Luigi and Franzese, Robert (2020). *The SAGE handbook of research methods in political science and international relations*. Sage **Chapter 2**
- Mahoney, James and Goertz, Gary (2006). “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research”. *Political Analysis* 14(3): 227–249. DOI: [10.1093/pan/mpj017](https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpj017)
- Cyr, J. and Goodman, S.W. (2024). *Doing Good Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press **Chapter 4**

Prepare for an in-class activity:

- Write out an example research question **in your own words**. This can be your own question, for example, from a project you are considering working on, or it can be based on any academic article or book that you have read recently.

Week 2 — Thursday, Nov. 6 – Instructor: Dr. Lichtenheld

This week, we will focus on cross-case comparisons

Required readings:

- Slater, Dan and Ziblatt, Daniel (2013). “The enduring indispensability of the controlled comparison”. *Comparative Political Studies* 46(10): 1301–1327
- Collier, David. 1993. “The Comparative Method.” In Finifter, Ada W., ed. *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*. Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association. pp.105-119. [[Find it here – use your Leiden University account](#)]
- Przeworski, Adam and Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. New York: Wiley. Ch 2, “Research Designs,” pp.31-46. [[Find it here – use your Leiden University account](#)]

Prepare for in-class activity: the handout is available on Brightspace.

Required readings

- Clarke, Killian (2018). “When do the dispossessed protest? Informal leadership and mobilization in Syrian refugee camps”. *Perspectives on Politics* 16(3): 617– 633

Week 3 – Thursday, Nov. 13 – Instructor: Dr. Davila-Gordillo

This week, we will focus on within-case analysis and process tracing.

Required readings:

- Beach, Derek and Rasmus B. Pedersen. 2013. *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chs. 1-2, pp. 1-22.
- Collier, David (2011). “Understanding process tracing”. *PS: political science & politics* 44(4): 823–830

Prepare for in-class activity: the handout is available on Brightspace.

Required reading:

- Bateson, Regina (2022). “Voting for a Killer: Efrain Rios Montt’s Return to Politics in Democratic Guatemala”. *Comparative Politics* 54(2): 203–228

Week 4 – Thursday, Nov. 20

Group 102 – Dr. Davila Gordillo

Group 103- Dr. Lichtenheld

This week, we will do an in-class quiz and discuss field research ethics and ethnography. Group 102 will be taught by Dr. Davila Gordillo and Group 103 by Dr. Lichtenheld. The quiz will start promptly at 11:15 sharp or at 15:15 sharp. You will have 15 minutes for all questions. If you arrive late, you will have less time to answer questions. After the quiz and a brief pause, we will discuss fieldwork ethics and ethnography.

Required readings:

- The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. 1979. Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of the Human Subjects of Research. Washington, D.C.: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. [[Find it here](#)]
- Cyr, J. and Goodman, S.W. (2024). *Doing Good Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press **Chapters 10, 20, and skim 27**
- Morris MacLean, Lauren et al. (2019). “Research ethics and human subjects: A reflexive openness approach”. *American Political Science Association organized section for qualitative and multi-method research, qualitative transparency deliberations, working group final reports, report 2* [[Find it here](#)]

In class activity: TBA

Week 5 — Thursday, Nov. 27 – Instructor: Dr. Davila Gordillo

This week we will focus on interviews

Required readings:

- Cyr, J. and Goodman, S.W. (2024). *Doing Good Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press **Chapters 16, 17, and 18**

Prepare for in-class activity: the handout is available on Brightspace.

In-class activity reading:

- Vandeleene, Audrey (2024). “The why of candidate selection: How party selectors handle trade-offs between party goals”. *Party Politics* 30(1): 73–84

Week 6 — Thursday, Dec. 4 – Instructor: Dr. Lichtenheld

This week, we will focus on Archival Research

Required readings:

- Cyr, J. and Goodman, S.W. (2024). *Doing Good Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press (**Chapter 22**)
- Schrag, Zachary M. (2021). *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research*. Princeton University Press. ISBN: 9780691198224. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1pdr9> (visited on 10/18/2024) **Chapter 5: An Introduction, Ch. 9: Archival Research, and Ch. 10: Interpreting Sources**
- Lee, Alexander et al. (2022). “The library of Babel: how (and how not) to use archival sources in political science”. *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 2(3): 499–526

Prepare for in-class activity: TBA

Assignment 2 due via Brightspace by 17:00 on Wednesday, Dec. 3.

Week 7 — Thursday, Dec. 11 – Instructor: Dr. Lichtenheld

This week, we will talk about Content and Discourse Analysis

Required readings:

- Cyr, J. and Goodman, S.W. (2024). *Doing Good Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press **Chapter 35**
- Schreier, Margrit. 2013. “Qualitative Content Analysis.” In Flick, Uwe, ed. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*. London: Sage.
- Gee, J. P., and Michael Handford. “Introduction.” In *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis (1st ed.)*, edited by James Paul Gee and Michael Handford. pp. 1-6. Routledge, 2012.

Prepare for in-class activity: TBA

Week 8 — Assignment 3 due via Brightspace Thursday December 18 by 17:00.