This course is intended for political science PhD students, though we will also be drawing on sociology and anthropology. By the end of the course, students should be well-equipped to undertake their own fieldwork. Students will be familiar with the major debates surrounding qualitative research in political science, and they will be able to confidently assess the design, execution, and interpretation of qualitative field research. The course focuses on data gathered interpersonally, rather than archival research.

A practical exercise will be a major component of the course. Each student will select a research site in the greater Boston area and visit the site regularly throughout the semester. Students will conduct participant observation research and interviews at their site, and we will discuss and analyze the results in class. This original qualitative data will also form the basis for a short final paper (10 - 12 pp., not a full seminar research paper). I encourage students to find research sites that relate to their substantive research interests, treating this class as a “dry run” for future fieldwork. Alternatively, students can select research sites that allow them to develop useful skills (for example, practicing a language). This class enables students develop their qualitative research skills in a supportive environment before venturing into the field alone.

CLASS MEETINGS & ADMISSIONS

The class meets Thursdays from 9-11 am in E53-438. Depending on the size of the class, we may split into two smaller groups for our “workshop” sessions.

We will need to reschedule our Feb. 26 class, because I will be giving a talk out of town on that date.

There is a special talk from 12-1:30 pm on Mar. 2, which you are required to attend unless you have an unavoidable academic conflict.

To allow for an interactive seminar, the class is limited to approximately 12 students. I further require that all students have substantial preparation in political science research methods. Students will be admitted in the following order:
1) MIT Political Science PhD students;
2) MIT PhD students from other departments, with significant background in political science;
3) Government PhD students from Harvard;
4) Political science PhD students from other area universities;
5) Others students.

Within each category, I will give preference to the students whose background and research interests align most closely with the topics covered in our class. MA students and undergraduates are not typically admitted. There is a 50% chance that the class will not be offered in Spring 2016.

For the class project, non-MIT students may also need approval from their home institution’s IRB. This will entail some additional work for non-MIT students.

EXPECTATIONS

Students will act responsibly, respectfully, and ethically at all times, especially while at their research sites. You are representing the MIT political science department (or your home department) when you go into the field, and we need to maintain positive relationships with the surrounding community and local organizations. Always identify yourself clearly as a researcher, treat your subjects with courtesy and respect, and operate within the guidelines of COUHES and your specific Human Subjects Protocol. Should a serious problem arise at your field site, please contact me or another faculty member immediately for advice.

Participation is a vital component of the class, and you are expected to attend all class meetings. Please arrive punctually and be prepared to engage meaningfully with the assigned readings and your peers’ work. Extensions and incompletes will be considered based on individual circumstances.

Plagiarism is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. In order to submit the same research paper to two different classes, you must have the explicit permission of both instructors, and the paper must be substantially longer than the normal assignment.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Field Research (40%)
- Spend 1-2 hours per week at your site, or have at minimum 1-2 hours per week of “face-to-face” contact related to your research project;
- Post a short (1-2 paragraph) update to Stellar every Tuesday by noon. This is required every week beginning Tuesday, Feb. 17.
- COUHES application. Draft due by email 20 Feb. Two signed hard copies (revised if necessary) due 24 Feb. by 9 am.
- Participant observation exercise. Due 30 March (post to Stellar).
- 5 or more interviews. One interview should be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. You must use at least 2 different styles for your interviews (for example, open-ended life history,
semi-structured, or structured). Notes/transcript from one interview due 30 March. Notes/transcript from two interviews due 20 April (post to Stellar).

Book Review (15%) Due 19 March before the start of class. Email to bateson@mit.edu. Review a prominent qualitative work in political science. I recommend Weapons of the Weak by James Scott, or Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador, by Elisabeth Wood. You may choose another book with prior approval. Write a 5-10 page critique of the book, using our class readings and other resources to evaluate its research design, substantive contributions, and especially the field research methods. Take care not to simply summarize the book.

Final Paper (25%) Draft due 8 May (post to Stellar). You have the option to submit revisions by 20 May. Utilizing the qualitative data gathered from your field site, either a) construct a research proposal that builds upon this semester’s work; or b) critically review and assess your findings and field methods. Whichever option you choose, the final paper should analyze your own fieldwork, data, and conclusions in light of the course’s readings. Recommended length is 10-15 pages.

Class Participation (20%)
- Contribute to class discussions.
- Constructively critique your peers’ work during our workshops.
- If you choose to use a laptop/tablet, stay on-task during class.

TEXTS

Required:


Recommended:


COURSE OUTLINE

5 Feb  Course Logistics & Field Projects

Come to class prepared with two or three ideas about possible field sites.

12 Feb  Identity & Relationships  Complete COUHES training by 12 Feb.

Guest speaker: Lihi Ben Shitrit, Assistant Professor, University of Georgia, Athens

Required:

Chapter by Lihi Ben Shitrit (to be distributed).


Recommended:

19 Feb  Ethics & Risk Management

Guest Speaker: Judy Medeiros-Adams, COUHES (to be confirmed)

Required:

http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html


http://ehis.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=96e039de-6c1b-4131-b83c-a8ae6096c36e%40sessionmgr4004&vid=2&hid=4108

Recommended:


http://download.springer.com/static/pdf/8/art%253A10.1007%252Fs10676-010-9227-5.pdf?auth66=1389903738_0e56eafe74b2c916ff8638c49e75b2cb&ext=.pdf


ASA Ethics Case Studies (especially Case 37 and Case 48).  
http://www.asanet.org/ethics/detail.cfm?id=25

http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayFulltext?type=1&fid=6889288&jdid=DBR&volumeId=6&issueId=02&aid=6

http://ehis.ebscohost.com/ehost/results?sid=9a949f4f-ecd4-4bde-b20c-c06451a5d27e%40sessionmgr4002&vid=2&hid=4108&bquery=JN+%22Sociological+Forum%22+AND+DT+20090301&bdata=JmRiPWE5aCZ0eXBlPTEmc2I0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl


Draft COUHES application due 20 February by email to bateson@mit.edu. Hard copy COUHES application (with revisions, if necessary) due 24 Feb., by 9 am. I will be submitting all the final, hard copy COUHES applications on 24 Feb. before I leave on my trip.
26 Feb  From the Field to Publication (I): *Peaceland*

Required:


**We will need to reschedule this class to Feb. 23 or Feb. 24. I am out of town Feb. 25 - Mar.1**

2 March  Special Event: Severine Autessere at the Methods Speaker Series

12-1:30 pm in the Millikan Room

Severine will be giving a talk on the methods used in *Peaceland*.

Attendance is mandatory unless you have an unavoidable academic conflict.

5 March  Participant Observation & Field Notes

Required:


Recommended:


12 March  Interviewing I (The Basics)

Required:


19 March  Interviewing II (Challenges)  Book Review due 19 March.


Mannekin, Devorah. Working paper on Resistance in the IDF. (To be distributed.)

Bateson working paper on Families for Safe Streets. (To be distributed.)

26 March  No Class — Spring Break

2 April  Workshop 1

Upload participant observation exercise and interview transcript or notes to Stellar by 30 March.

Required:

Student participant observation exercises and interview notes/transcripts. (on Stellar)

9 April  Qualitative Research, Political Science, and Causation

Required:


16 April  Within-Case Analysis

Required:


23 April  Workshop 2

Required:

Student field notes/transcripts. (on Stellar)

30 April  Cross-Case Analysis & Mixed Methods

Required:


7 May From the Field to Publication (II): Articles

Required:

[recent articles, to be selected by students]

Recommended:

http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FPSR%2FPSR107_03%2FS0003055413000208a.pdf&code=3c4950aadc8cbf672cf84720c13bb8d5

14 May Final Workshop
Upload draft final paper to Stellar by 8 May.

Required:

Students’ draft final papers. (on Stellar)

Due date for (optionally) revised final papers: 21 May.

End-of-semester party (attendance optional): 22 or 23 May.