1. Objectives

The course explores the development and application of qualitative research designs and methods in political analysis. The aim is to introduce students to the theory and techniques of qualitative research through readings, discussion and practical exercises, in order to reinforce their capacity to design and implement their own research projects. The course therefore connects with the previous subject “Techniques of Statistical Analysis I” and aims to support the “Final Research Paper” as two of the core courses of the Master’s degree. Moreover, through the more practical issues it provides a useful toolbox for doing qualitative research on different compulsory courses.

The course begins with an introduction to qualitative research, focusing on the major terms of the debates about research design and issues of inference and interpretation. It then covers some issues around conceptualization and looks at a variety of approaches and techniques for data collection and data analysis. By producing a brief piece of empirical research, the students have to deal with the knowledge acquired and they can also develop skills to present, explain and defend the research approach and results.

2. Prerequisites

As the course is based on the development of a qualitative research project, it requires students to have initial knowledge of how to formulate hypotheses and articulate research questions connected with the theoretical concerns of political science. Both seminars and tutorial sessions will help the development of these capacities.
3. Competences to be achieved in the subject

Due to its methodological nature, the course is mainly oriented towards developing general competences such as:

**Instrumental Competences**
- Ability to analyse and synthesise
- Planning and management of time
- Written and oral communication in one’s own language
- Information management abilities (ability to search and analyse information coming from a variety of sources)
- Problem solving
- Decision-making

**Interpersonal Competences**
- Critical and self-critical ability
- Team work
- Interpersonal abilities
- Ability to communicate with people that are not experts in the subject
- Commitment to ethics

**Systemic Competences**
- Ability to put knowledge into practice
- Research abilities
- Ability to learn
- Ability to adapt to new situations
- Ability to generate new ideas (creativity)
- Leadership
- Design and management of projects
- Interest on quality
- Result-oriented

The empirical approach of the course will also support the development of specific competences in the field of political analysis where the research project will be located. More specifically, the large group will be divided into sub-groups in order to develop brief pieces of qualitative research in two different areas: public policy evaluation and political attitudes. This academic year, the sub-fields selected are: local development policies (LDP) and public policies on immigration (PPI), both at local government level. This means that several specific competences will be connected with both fields, such as public policy analysis and policy evaluation.
4. Contents

1. Introduction to qualitative research.

2. An approach to collecting qualitative data: concepts, techniques and strategies.

3. An approach to analyzing qualitative data.
   Dealing with field notes, interview transcripts, and focus group reports. Discourse analysis. Inference and interpretation of qualitative data. Clarifying findings and connecting qualitative evidence with theoretical and conceptual research questions.

4. An approach to submitting a qualitative research report.
   Writing a research report and communicating it effectively to the intended audience.
5. Assessment

The course requirements are:

Initial memo about the student's interest in the course (length: 250-500 words)
Compulsory initial group assessment (10% of final grade)

This memo is due in the second week of the course. By then the composition of the group has to be already decided. The memo should outline students' substantive research question on Local Development Policies or Public Policies on Immigration and explain the preliminary ideas they may have about a research design involving qualitative methods.

Research Portfolio (around 10 pages)
Compulsory mid-term group assessment (30% of final grade)

Students are required to develop and produce a research portfolio that will serve as their personal guide for the implementation of their qualitative research projects. They will develop it during the seminar sessions on research design and pre-field preparation.

There will be a partial presentation (in the 1st tutorial session) as on-going informal evaluation previous to the final one. In this first tutorial session students should present:
   a) A clear articulation of the research question;
   b) A description of what kinds of information and data will need to be collected;
   c) A research design including a description of the context in which it will be conducted;
   d) A description of the methods and techniques to be used to collect data.

The final research portfolio (around 10 pages or 3500-4000 words) will include the following parts:

   a) Introduction;
   b) Presentation and explanation (theoretical basis) of the topic and objectives (research questions and/or hypothesis);
   c) Research Design:
      1) Description of the information and data that will be collected (indicators, information blocks);
      2) Description of the field (context and relevant characteristics of the object of research) and units of information (cases and/or stakeholders that have been selected);
      3) Description and justification of the methods and techniques that will be used;
   d) Data collection instruments (questionnaires);
   e) Explanation of the access to the field and to the units of information;

Qualitative research report (around 15-20 pages)
Compulsory final group assessment (40% of final grade)

This report must include the main results achieved in terms of arguments and empirical evidence. It will focus on the theory and concepts and their verification through the field work developed and the analysis of data. There will be a partial presentation (in the 3rd tutorial session) as on-going informal evaluation and a formal group presentation on the due date for the final assessment.
The final research report will include the following parts:

a) Introduction;
b) Presentation and explanation of the topic and objectives (research questions and/or hypothesis);
c) Description of the information and data that has been collected;
d) Description of the field (context and relevant characteristics of the object of research) and units of information (profiles of the stakeholders that have been selected);
e) Description and justification of the methods and techniques that have been used in the research;
f) Explanation of the access to the field and to the units of information;
g) Explanation of the kind of data analysis that has been applied (including categorisation and codification);
h) Results of the analysis;
i) Conclusions answering (and/or developing or expanding) your hypothesis or research questions;
j) Bibliography;
k) An annex that will include the interview questionnaire, the protocols for observation or selecting your documentary sources, the interview summaries, the field notes (if you have used observation methods) and/or the list of documents you have analysed (if you have used documentary methods).

Final memo about a critical evaluation of qualitative research methods (around 2-5 pages or 1000-1500 words)

Compulsory final individual assessment (20% of final grade)

The objective of this Individual Assessment is to evaluate your methodological learning in terms of three different sources: reading, lectures and empirical work (your group research project). The format of the assessment will be a methodological essay reviewing the three main aspects of a qualitative inquiry: a) research design, b) data collection techniques, and c) data analysis techniques.

Review your notes from your reading and lectures and read through your collective research work in order to assess what you have learned from a methodological point of view. Are there any similarities between what the literature recommends and what you did in your research project? Was your research design good enough to produce relevant findings? Were the results of using the different techniques and research methods similar to those described in the methodological literature? You must critically describe the potential and the limits of the qualitative research you have done and state what you would do better in future.

The final memo will be assessed on the extent to which it makes good use of the course reading material and discussions and provides clear explanations and arguments regarding the use of qualitative methods and techniques in the research. A bibliography should be included.
6. Methodology

Due to its methodological character, the course is based on a balance between conceptual and empirical approaches. The development of sessions reflects this balance and the importance of the field research component of the course.

The beginning of the course is designed to ensure a common basis for qualitative research, dealing with theoretical and conceptual issues. The main large group sessions (lectures) with compulsory attendance and the more extended required readings are the methodological basis of this initial part (two weeks). A first assessment based on an initial memo about students’ interests aims to consolidate this common knowledge basis.

The following weeks will be used to introduce qualitative methods and techniques and to initiate the research design to be done by each group (through seminars addressed to LDP and PPI groups). In order to organize the research activities, students must select one of the two fields into which the large group will be divided to develop their qualitative research (local development policies –LDP– and public policies on immigration –PPI–). At the same time, the two groups will be divided into four subgroups of four to five students each. Each group will receive a simulated “order” from the local government to develop a piece of research on the topic (this is the final report to be submitted at the end of the course).

These sessions start the applied block of the course (weeks 2 to 8), which will be complemented with required readings (readings 2.1 and 2.2) and activities outside the classroom such as the preparation of the research portfolio (with two partial presentations).

The final part of the course (weeks 9 and 10) will be addressed through lectures and discussions about how to analyze qualitative data and how to draft and submit the final research report. Finally, there will be an assessment based on the presentation of research results, an individual résumé and an evaluation of the qualitative methods and techniques used in the research. This final stage is designed to critically discuss the potential and the limits of the qualitative research developed.
7. Sources of information and didactic resources

- Basic bibliography
  
  And Compulsory Readings 1, 2, 3 and 4 (see reading list).

- Complementary bibliography

- Teaching material for the subject
  
  During the course, some teaching materials will be distributed to complement lectures.
### 8. Programming of activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Classroom activity</th>
<th>Activity outside the classroom</th>
<th>Results that are object of assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/01/2010</td>
<td>Lecture: Introduction to qualitative research. Introduction to the &quot;order&quot;</td>
<td>Required readings 1 (see Reading list). Work on research interests</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture: Research designs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/01/2010</td>
<td>Lecture: Qualitative methods and techniques. Interviews</td>
<td>Required readings 1 (see Reading list)</td>
<td>Initial memo about interests</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture: Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>26/01/2010</td>
<td>Lecture: Focus groups</td>
<td>Required readings 2.1 (see Reading list). Work on research design</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminars and tutorials</td>
<td>Draw a first draft of the research design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/02/2010</td>
<td>Lecture: Access to the field</td>
<td>Required readings 2.1 (see Reading list). First draft of research protocol and questionnaire.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminars and tutorials</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/02/2010</td>
<td>Lecture: Observation methods. Overview</td>
<td>Required readings 2.2 (see Reading list). Research protocol and questionnaire. Work on the research portfolio.</td>
<td>Research portfolio: Research question (LDP and PPI), research design and interview questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture: Participant observation and “citizen X”</td>
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<tr>
<td>16/02/2010</td>
<td>Lecture: Documentary Research</td>
<td>Required readings 2.2 (see Reading list). Field-work, interviews and documentary research</td>
<td>Research portfolio: Research question (LDP and PPI), research design and interview questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminars and tutorials</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/02/2010</td>
<td>Lecture: Content and Discourse analysis</td>
<td>Required readings 3 and 4 (see Reading list). Field-work, interviews and/or focus groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminars and tutorials</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/03/2010</td>
<td>Lecture: Grounded Theory. The research report</td>
<td>Required readings 3 and 4 (see Reading list). Analysis of data. Work on the final research report</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminars and tutorials</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/03/2010</td>
<td>Research results presentations</td>
<td>Required readings 4 (see Reading list). Work on the final research report and individual memo.</td>
<td>Final research report and presentation of research results</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminars and tutorials</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16/03/2010</td>
<td>Research results presentations</td>
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<td>Final research report and presentation of research results</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture: The quality of qualitative research. Concluding remarks</td>
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</table>
9. Structure of the programming of activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity in the classroom</th>
<th>Activity outside the classroom</th>
<th>Assessment activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning activities</td>
<td>Didactic resources</td>
<td>Time scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/01/10</td>
<td>Lecture: Introduction to qualitative research</td>
<td>Teaching materials and Readings 1</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture: Introduction the &quot;assignment&quot; (LDP and PPI)</td>
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<td>1 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture: Research design</td>
<td>Teaching materials and Readings 1</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/01/10</td>
<td>Lecture: Qualitative methods and techniques</td>
<td>Teaching materials and Readings 1</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture: Interviews</td>
<td>Teaching materials and Readings 2.1</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/01/10</td>
<td>Lecture: Focus groups</td>
<td>Teaching materials and Readings 2.1</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminars and tutorials I: Research design for LDP groups</td>
<td>Teaching materials and Readings 2.1</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/02/10</td>
<td>Lecture: Access to the field</td>
<td>Teaching materials and Readings 2.1</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Seminars and tutorials II: Research design for PPI groups</td>
<td>Teaching materials and Readings 2.1</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<td>09/02/10</td>
<td>Lecture: Observation methods. Overview</td>
<td>Teaching materials and Readings 2.2</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture: Participant observation and &quot;Citizen X&quot;</td>
<td>Teaching materials and Readings 2.2</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>16/02/10</td>
<td>Lecture: Documentary Research Teaching materials and Readings 2.2 2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation Teaching materials and readings 2.2 4 hours Research portfolio (III) and participant observation design 3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tutorial for each group of LDP and PPI Teaching materials and Readings 2.2 2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation Teaching materials and readings 2.2 4 hours Research portfolio (III) and participant observation design 3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>23/02/10</td>
<td>Lecture: Content and Discourse Analysis Readings 2.2 2 hours</td>
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<td>Documentary research and research report Readings 2.2 4 hours Research portfolio (III) and participant observation design 3 hours</td>
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<td>Documentary research and research report Readings 2.2 4 hours Research portfolio (III) and participant observation design 3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/03/10</td>
<td>Lecture: Grounded Theory Readings 3 and 4 1 hour Analysis of qualitative data Readings 3 and 4 2 hours</td>
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<td>Lecture: The research report Readings 3 and 4 1 hour Presentation of a qualitative research report Readings 3 and 4 2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tutorial for each group of LDP and PPI Readings 3 and 4 2 hours Analysis of qualitative data Readings 3 and 4 2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/03/10</td>
<td>Seminar I: Presentation of research results for LDP groups Readings 3 and 4 2 hours Research portfolio and research report Readings 3 and 4 3 hours Research portfolio (final), Research report and Final memo 3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tutorial for each group of LDP and PPI Readings 3 and 4 2 hours Research portfolio and research report Readings 3 and 4 3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>16/03/10</td>
<td>Seminar II: Presentation of research results for PPI groups 2 hours</td>
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<td>Research portfolio (final), Research report and Final memo 3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture: Analyzing qualitative data 1 hour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lecture: The quality of qualitative research 1 hour</td>
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</table>
9. Reading list

**INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH. RESEARCH DESIGN**

Readings 1


**AN APPROACH TO COLLECT QUALITATIVE DATA: CONCEPTS, TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES**

Readings 2.1 – Interviews and focus group


Readings 2.2 – Participant observation and Documentary research


An approach to analysing qualitative data

Readings 3


An approach to presenting a qualitative research report

Readings 4
