BSST 638P  
Qualitative Research Methods  
Spring 2018  
University of Maryland  

Lecture: Monday 6:00-8:30pm

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Office hours: Skype by appointment

TA: Joseph Oudin, MA  
Email: joudin@umd.edu  
Office hours: Skype by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

This course covers research design and qualitative methods using a hands-on approach. The course considers general themes such as the logic of inquiry, the appropriateness of qualitative approaches, as well as more specific topics such as process tracing, archival research, and survey methodology. It also provides students with the opportunity to learn and apply different tools for social science research.

The primary goals of the course are to: 1) formulate a proper research question in terrorism/counter-terrorism studies 2) present the appropriate qualitative research design to tackle the formulated question 3) introduce problems/issues one faces in terrorism research such as bias and causal complexity, and 4) cultivate a set of qualitative skills in order to analyze terrorism. By the end of the semester, students will have a better understanding of the qualitative research methods needed to answer important questions related to terrorism and counterterrorism.

Course Assessment

Final grades will be assigned according to the student’s performance on the following items:

1) Class participation based on readings/discussion questions 20%

2) Assignment 1 40%

3) Assignment 2 40%

1) Regular class attendance and active class participation (20% of the course grade): The expectation is that students will be prepared to constructively participate in class discussions. This requires completing the assigned readings before each class, attending class regularly, and being on time for class. The teaching assistant, Joe Oudin, will post discussion questions before each class and students should be prepared to discuss these questions during each lecture. If you are unable to attend a class due to health, work, or family considerations, you may post responses to the discussion questions on the course website before class begins to receive participation credit for the week. Please ensure that you have working headphones.
and a microphone (webcams are not required).

2) Assignments (80% of your course grade, 40% each): Each student will complete two assignments during the course. Students should post their assignments on ELMS. If you have questions about how to do this, please email Joe Oudin.

- **Assignment 1:** *(due April 9th)*

Assignment one is a qualitative essay that will rely on case-based methods (e.g., process-tracing, in-depth singular case study, comparative case studies, etc.). The purpose of the paper is to carry out a methodological case-based study of an issue that is both interesting to you and pertinent to contemporary counterterrorism policy. Your essay should include the following:

- Research question/s
- Theory
- Literature review
- Method
- Operationalization of key concepts
- Case selection criteria
- Case study analysis
- Evidence-based policy or theory recommendations
- Limitations
- Conclusions
- Reflections on methods

This essay should be between 15-20 pages, double-spaced. It should include a title page, a references page and, if necessary, appendices; these are not included in the page count.

- **Assignment 2:** *(due May 11th)*

Assignment two is a qualitative essay that will rely on **ONE** of the following methods: archival research, ethnographic observation, or content analysis. The purpose of the paper is to carry out a methodological study of an issue that is both interesting to you and pertinent to contemporary counterterrorism policy. Your essay should include the following:

- Research question/s
- Theory
- Literature review
- Methods
- Operationalization of key concepts
- Analysis
- Limitations
- Conclusions
- Reflections on methods

This essay should be between 15-20 pages, double-spaced. It should include a title page, a references page and appendices (e.g. codebook, list of archival documents, field notes, etc.); these are not included in the page count.
Expectations

This is a graduate course. Students are advised not to fall behind in the reading.

Powerpoint will be provided during lectures to guide note-taking and a recording of the lecture will be posted on Elms after the session has concluded. Students are expected to attend class regularly, arrive early and prepared, and conduct themselves with respect and courtesy toward others in the classroom.

Grading Scale

Grades will be assigned following the University of Maryland standard grading scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Qualitative Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93-96</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Achievement that is in keeping with the course requirements in every respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-66</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Work that was either completed but not worthy of credit, or incomplete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extensions and Incompletes

In the event that a serious problem emerges that you feel necessitates an extension or an incomplete, you must speak with us before the due date regarding this request. Extensions and incompletes are usually granted in the case of sickness, required official school events, familial bereavement, and religious holidays. Extensions and incompletes will not be granted if the request is made after the relevant deadline.

Plagiarism Policy

Academic dishonesty of any form will absolutely not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty encompasses the traditional behavior such as cheating on exams and assignments, giving false statements, etc., but also includes activities such as possessing and/or reviewing previous semester's assignments. The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally Recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html.
**Required & Suggested Readings**

The reading materials are available on the ELMS course website. Additional readings may be posted throughout the semester.

**Books** (you will be reading specific chapters from these books but you are advised to read the whole book at some future time):


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**MODULE 1: The Fundamentals of Doing Research**

**Jan 29**

**Introduction to the Study of Research Methods**

Doing Research: Purpose, Process, Products, and Ethics


**Feb 5**

**Research Questions and Literature Reviews**

Feb 12  The Building Blocks of Research
Theory, Conceptualization, Operationalization, Measurement


**Recommended (but not required) reading**


Feb 19  Theories of Terrorism


**Recommended (but not required) reading**


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**MODULE 2: Case Study Methods**

Feb 26  Logic of Inference


**Mar 5**

**Case Studies and Case Selection**


**Recommended (but not required) reading**


**Mar 12**

**Process Tracing**


**Recommended (but not required) reading**


**March 19**

**Spring Break**

**Mar 26**

**Comparative Method**


**Recommended (but not required) reading**


MODULE 3: Other Qualitative Methods

**Apr 2**  
**Archival Research**
- Recommended (but not required) reading

**Apr 9**  
**Content Analysis, Discourse Analysis**
**Assignment 1 Due**
- Recommended (but not required) reading

**Apr 16**  
**Ethnography and Participant Observation**


Recommended (*but not required*) reading

**Apr 23  Field Work and Surveys**


**Recommended (*but not required*) reading**

**Apr 30  In-Depth Interviewing**


**Recommended (*but not required*) reading**

**May 7** Catch-up, Q&A, the Future of Terrorism Research

Depending on whether we are lagging behind, we may simply use this as a catch-up class or a time to field any outstanding questions. Otherwise, we will use this class to discuss the future of terrorism research. If the latter, readings will be assigned two weeks prior to the class (this ensures that we have the most current research from which to draw).

**May 11** Assignment 2 Due