

Spring Quarter 2025:

PPHA 35578

Qualitative Methods for International Policy and Development

Background

Qualitative research offers policymakers multifaceted, nuanced, and rich insight into the issues they are seeking to impactfully address with their policies, for example in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). International development in particular emphasizes the need for local knowledge and for research that is grounded in the realities of everyday lives. Often, it is qualitative research that allows programs and policies to be tailored and context specific, which are both prerequisites for successful policy implementation and impact. A qualitative perspective also helps to draw out complexities to identify the trade-offs that come with all policy choices.

Thus, the technical skills of qualitative research—how to conduct it, evaluate it for its rigour, assess what it can contribute to policy debates, and package it for the highest impact and evidence uptake—are crucial in the policy sphere. Yet, the skills and mindset needed for qualitative research are rarely comprehensively taught. This course seeks to fill that gap through experiential (and often interactive) learning of qualitative research philosophies and epistemologies, research designs, how to pose a good qualitative research question, how to collect and analyse data, and how to write it up compellingly.

About your instructor

Mareike Schomerus, (PhD, London School of Economics and Political Science) is Vice President at Busara. She was formerly Director of Programme [Politics and Governance](#) at ODI in London (formerly Overseas Development Institute), and Research Director of the [Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium](#) (SLRC), also at ODI. At Busara, she heads the Center’s work that links behavioral science, governance, fragility and violent conflict. She is a widely published researcher with a body of work on violent conflict, political contestation and peace processes in South Sudan and Uganda and across borders, as well as behavioral mechanisms in post-conflict recovery, for which she has developed a body of work on the ‘[mental landscape](#)’ of lives in or after situations of violence conflict. In addition to conducting and leading academic research, she has conducted applied research for a wide range of international organisations. She is the co-editor of two volumes (on [African secessionism](#) and [South Sudan’s borderlands](#) (Palgrave Macmillan 2020, 2013) and author of the monographs *The Lord’s Resistance Army: Violence and Peacemaking in Africa* (Cambridge University Press 2021) and *Lives Amid Violence: Transforming Development in the Wake of Conflict* (Bloomsbury, 2023). At Harris, she also

teaches a course on qualitative research methods for international development policy. Her book *Research Design in Politics and International Relations* (with Anouk S. Rigterink) on multi-method research for political science will be published by SAGE in 2026.

Goals of this course and learning outcomes

The course aims to equip students with the knowledge and practical skills needed to conduct and interpret qualitative research and evaluate the strength of the empirical findings. It does so by getting deep into the question of what makes good qualitative research and how it can be translated for better policies—and then asking students to design and conduct their own qualitative research project. This means students will directly apply their learnings on qualitative inquiry by drafting a research design as well as collecting, analysing and packaging qualitative data. Specifically, the course aims to

- sensitize students to different knowledge philosophies appropriate to different types of questions so that they can recognize how different types of policy-relevant knowledge are created, and how such knowledge can be utilised to assess claims regarding the strength of evidence;
- equip students with skills needed to critique qualitative research for its rigour and assess trade-offs between quantitative and qualitative research;
- introduce students to a range of qualitative research designs and methods and assess their applicability for different research questions;
- familiarize students with examples of qualitative studies on issues relevant to international development policy or life in Chicago.

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- evaluate the rigour of qualitative research;
- compare the applicability of different types of qualitative research for different research questions and purposes;
- recognize the role of qualitative research in public policy and analyse policy implications of qualitative research findings;
- design a qualitative research project and apply qualitative research methods.

Prerequisites: Who is this course for?

This course is for students without prior experience of qualitative research, or for students who might have experience conducting formative qualitative research in preparation of quantitative research. The course is explicitly designed to act as a learning accompaniment to quantitative courses students might have taken at Harris, with the aim to offer students exposure to how issues they might have encountered in quantitative classes at Harris are reflected in qualitative research, and how qualitative knowledge helps broaden and nuance perspectives on the complexity of an issue.

In addition to training students in analytical skills, this course is committed to being a practicum through application of the methodological knowledge needed to conduct qualitative research, from choosing a research question, assessing what type of design works best, how to collect the data, how to analyse and present it and what steps are necessary for theory formation. Students will work on their own research project in weeks 4 - 9.

But, above all else, this course is for students who are curious about the world around them, who want to understand how to better address complex problems, and who love observation as well as hearing people’s stories about the lives they lead.

Relationship to other programs

This course is part of the Pearson Institute International Policy and Development Specialization.

How this class will work

Class meeting time and location

The class meets in person Tuesday and Thursday (3.30 – 4.50pm) in Keller (room tbd). Typically, Tuesdays will be devoted to introducing the material for the week; Thursday will be seminar- or workshop style. But this can always be mixed up, with activities possible on either day.

We are also doing an informal field trip between 9am and noon on April 29 (you choose one slot of 90 mins). This is not mandatory, but it will be eye-opening, fun and support your learning.

Special dates: planning your quarter

This section gives you a sense of how to plan your workload for the quarter. The course is roughly divided into three sections: introductory weeks where we lay a lot of the foundational knowledge; research design weeks where you start working on your research project; and data collection and analysis weeks, where you need to schedule interviews with people.

	Part 1: Foundations (weeks 1, 2, 3)	Part 2: Research design and interview setup (weeks 4, 5, 6)	Part 3: Data collection, analysis, write up (weeks 7, 8, 9, 10)
Scheduling	Emphasis on reading and class work.	Your assignments will start to focus on your research design. In week 5, you have to identify up to three interviewees (at least two) and confirm by week 6 that they are available. It’s a good idea to make sure you schedule interviews with people for early in week 7 and early in week 9. In week 6, we will also have a (very local!) field trip) on April 29.	Week 7 – 9 should be your interview weeks: schedule two interviews with each of your at least two/ at most three respondents, one week apart. Week 9 could be devoted to analysis and week 10 to writing up, with your final assignment, concept map and reflection due on May 30.
Deadlines	March 28: Formative: Who am I? (500 words)	April 18: What do you want to know? (500 words)	May 9: Coding your data (500 words) May 16: Abstract (160 words including title)

	April 1: Formative: Qualitative insights according to the bots (500 words)	April 19: Research proposal (700 words) May: Refining your interview approach (500 words)	May 30: Research report (2000 words); Concept map, reflection 200 words
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Canvas and other teaching tools

We will use Canvas as the main teaching tool and way to communicate. All readings will be uploaded here, organised by week. The Canvas calendar will also give you the relevant dates.

Use of artificial intelligence (AI) in this course

AI can increase productivity, but it can also severely curtail your learning. Since this is a practical, hands-on course, there are only a few instances where the use of AI might be a possibility. For this class, you are not allowed to use AI to generate text for your assignments (with one notable exception in week 2). If you use AI for your literature review, use specific search tools that are designed for that purpose. It is not allowed to hand in assignments where text is entirely written by AI.

There are a number of acceptable uses of AI in this course:

- generating Chicago-style references from URLs;
- checking your own writing for grammar;
- project management;
- note taking and summarizing papers;
- brain storming;
- Web searches and mapping of papers.

If you use AI for any purpose, please include a citation to that effect which clearly states which tools you have used for what purpose. You are responsible for the accuracy and appropriateness of any AI-generated content. If the use of AI to check grammar turns your text into an AI-written submission, this breaches the allowed usage of AI for this class.

This policy is designed to maximise student learning and to minimise the danger of plagiarism (which often happens when using AI without checking), while making use of the power of AI. If a student is found to have used AI beyond the acceptable uses outlined above, this may affect the grade, depending on the extent of the usage and clarifications in follow-up conversation. How the use of AI influences a student's grade is decided on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the instructor.

Use of technology in this class

This class is intermittently tech free. This means that during lectures or specific classroom activities, no open technology is accepted. This is to support student focus and interaction. To take notes during lectures, you have to bring a notebook and a pen. The instructor will make explicit when tech-free sessions begin. Adherence to this classroom etiquette will be reflected in the classroom participation grade.

How we will use class time

Attendance policy

In line with the attendance policy for Harris courses (which requires regular in-person class attendance as a condition for receiving course credit), class attendance is mandatory. In case of sickness, students need to notify the teaching assistant (TA) of absences prior to class, particularly if having to isolate due to Covid. In such a case, the TA will provide a Zoom link to the class. When attending class via Zoom, students are expected to mute their microphones and activate their cameras when possible. Class recordings can only be made available upon prior request with a reasonable explanation as to why a recording is needed only.

Any absence about which the teacher or TA is only notified after the class has passed will be considered a missed class.

Failure to attend class will result in a grade penalty. In line with Harris School attendance policy, students who miss more than two weeks' worth of classes should expect to withdraw from the course, or request an incomplete. This also applies if a student has kept up with course work.

The classroom sessions are short, so please try not to leave during the class as it can be very disruptive.

Your presence in the class room is really important as this is a course that relies on reflection, discussion, connection, and practice.

Assignments and assessment

This course has a mixture of formative and summative assessment. A formative assessment consists of ungraded feedback to support your learning. With each feedback, you will get an indicative grade of how an assignment would have scored in a summative assessment. Summative assessments are graded submissions.

Formative assignments

The course is designed to make qualitative research come to life by being hands on, with regular short, often reflective, assignment. Most of these assignments are building blocks for the final research assignments, so they are required to do. However, formative assignments will receive verbal feedback (via voice notes) only, with an indicative grade to allow students to judge the quality of their work.

- Formative Assignment 1: Who am I? (500 words), due March 28
- Formative assignment 2 (no feedback): Qualitative insights according to the bots (500 words), due April 1
- Formative assignment 3: What do you want to know? (500 words), due April 18
- Formative Assignment 5: Refining your interview approach (500 words), due May 2
- Formative Assignment 6: Coding your data (500 words), due May 9

Summative assignments

Students' grade will be made up of the following:

Short assignments graded (15%): There will be two short summative (graded) assignments. These are designed to support students in working towards their final research paper, but they will be graded as stand-alone contributions.

- Summative Assignment 1 (graded): Research Proposal (700 words), due April 25
- Summative Assignment 2 (graded): Abstract (160 words including title), due May 16

Research Report (50%): The final research paper of no more than 2000 words in length will consist of an outline of the research question; research design with brief justification of case selection, theoretical approach (including brief literature overview) and methods; preliminary insights from sample interviews and suggested policy-relevant preliminary findings. A detailed template will be provided. Students should endeavour to discuss their approach with the instructor at least once during office hours.

Due date: May 30

Class Participation: 35% (comprised of attendance, class participation, concept map, reflection, timely submission of formative assessments): Students are expected to attend class and actively contribute to discussions and class activities, maybe at times taking the lead in the discussions or sharing their reflections on the reading and learning that they have noted down in the concept map that all students develop (for which instructions will be given). 6% of the class participation grade is submitting your formative assignment on time, with each timely submission receiving 20 points, and each late submission receiving 7 points.

Due date for concept map and reflection: May 30

Course outline: Readings, topics, and schedules

Readings

We will be reading articles, book chapters, reports and newspaper articles. Readings each week are split into so-called 'Tools Readings', which elaborate the craft and technical aspects of qualitative research. Each week also has readings called 'Delving into qualitative worlds', which will familiarize you with how qualitative research on a particular theme is written up.

For the Tools Readings, a number of books make a few appearances and are useful (enjoyable even!) reference books for you. These are:

Rubin, A. T. 2021. *Rocking qualitative social science: An irreverent guide to rigorous research*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press.

Small M. L. & McCrory Calarco, J. 2022. *Qualitative Literacy: A guide to evaluating ethnographic and interview research*, Oakland, CA, University of California Press.

Sword, Helen (2012) *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

We will also be reading quite a few chapters from a book that is not even in print yet (but of which you are getting a confidential preview):

Rigterink, Anouk A., and Mareike Schomerus. 2026 (forthcoming). *Research Design in Politics and International Relations* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

We are also turning to a classic piece of qualitative research on a part of the world you all know very well. Numerous chapters are assigned from:

Duneier, M. 1992. *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability and Masculinity*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Most readings listed here are available online or through library access. We will upload readings to Canvas for ease of access.

Week 1 (March 25/27): Substance

To understand social change, political tension or challenges in international development, different types of knowledge are crucial. The course's introductory week focuses on the relationship between international development policy and qualitative research. Using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we examine for what policy questions qualitative research is best suited and what level of scientific evidence it can provide in the eyes of a policy-maker or a scholarly community committed to evidence-based policy. We will also dive into what it means to think of everyday situations like a social scientist.

Tool Readings

Irwin, Neil (2017 (March 17)) What if Sociologists Had as Much Influence as Economists? *The New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/17/upshot/what-if-sociologists-had-as-much-influence-as-economists.html>)

Small M. L. & McCrory Calarco, J. 2022. *Qualitative Literacy: A guide to evaluating ethnographic and interview research*, Oakland, CA, University of California Press.

Chapter: Self-Awareness

Class materials

United Nations 2015. *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, New York, NY, United Nations.

BASIC CONCEPTS from Sociology and Anthropology - Tools to think with.

https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/anthropology/21a-245j-power-interpersonal-organizational-and-global-dimensions-fall-2005/study-materials/basic_conc.pdf.

Delving into qualitative worlds: Unpacking human experience of geopolitics

Kimari, Wangui. 2021. "‘Under construction’: everyday anxieties and the proliferating social meanings of China in Kenya." *Africa* 91 (1):135-152. doi: 10.1017/S0001972020000996.

Formative Assignment 1: Who am I? (500 words)

Introduce yourself. Structure this introduction using some of the concepts from ‘Basic concepts from sociology and anthropology’ reading and some of the issue areas that the SDGs identify. You could, for example, talk about your culture and how it has been shaped, or how it has

shaped who you are. What are your values? What are the norms by which you live your life and how did they come to be? How have you encountered issues of the Sustainable Development Goals? How do you think about your current role or identity? In what social structures did you grow up? Write the assignment providing a level of information that you are happy for others to read, as we will use assignments in class.

Due date: March 28

Week 2 (April 1/3): Mindset

What is a researcher's mindset? How can it help in identifying and evaluating international development challenges? This week, we unpack how such a mindset can support problem-driven research that is anchored in the real world, rather than focusing on a split between methodological approaches. To help us grapple with the research problems in the coming weeks, we clarify how the type of answer one seeks determines the research approach.

Tool Readings

Rigterink, Anouk A., and Mareike Schomerus. 2026 (forthcoming). "Chapter 2: The Rewards of a Research Mindset." In *Research Design in Politics and International Relations* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Rigterink, Anouk A., and Mareike Schomerus. 2026 (forthcoming). "Chapter 4: How do you know? Your epistemology." In *Research Design in Politics and International Relations* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Rubin, A. T. 2021. *Rocking qualitative social science: An irreverent guide to rigorous research*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press.

Chapter 2. What exactly are qualitative methods?

Chapter 4. On Belay: Connecting your work to an anchor

Schwartz, M. A. 2008. The importance of stupidity in scientific research. *J Cell Sci*, 12, 1771.

Delving into qualitative worlds: Health and well-being

Duneier, M. 1992. *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability and Masculinity*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Part One: The Caring Community

1.Slim and Bart

Formative assignment 2 (no feedback): Qualitative insights according to the bots (500 words)

Using the research topic that we focused on during class, prompt AI to write a piece of qualitative research on the research topic in 500 words. File this piece as part of your concept map/ spark file that you are setting up as discussed in class.

Due date: April 1

Week 3 (April 8/10): Questioning

We will think about research problems beyond methodological divides towards a process that clarifies the type of answers sought, and what research design and method tools are best suited to find those answers. We will focus on different approaches to qualitative research, dispel the myth that qualitative research is just a matter of asking open-ended questions of a few people, and grapple with possible shortcomings of a chosen design and how to mitigate those. We will also look in detail at ethical implications of qualitative research and the behavior of the qualitative researcher, who often spends considerable time interviewing people about challenging experiences in their lives.

Tool Readings

- Rigterink, Anouk A., and Mareike Schomerus. 2026 (forthcoming). "Chapter 15: Studying Experiences, Feelings and Perceptions: Phenomenology to Study Inequality." In *Research Design in Politics and International Relations* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Rubin, A. T. 2021. *Rocking qualitative social science: An irreverent guide to rigorous research*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press.
3. Picking your proj: Identifying your research question
- Lake, Milli, and Alexandra C. Hartman. 2023. "Vulnerability, the pursuit of knowledge, and the humanity of doing research." In *Qualitative Researcher Vulnerability: Negotiating, Experiencing and Embracing*, edited by Bryan C.; Costas Batlle Clift, Ioannis; Bekker, Sheree; Chudzikowski, Katharina. London/ New York, NY: Routledge.

Delving into qualitative worlds: Society

- Meghji, Ali, and Rima Saini. 2017. "Rationalising Racial Inequality: Ideology, Hegemony and Post-Racialism among the Black and South Asian Middle-Classes." *Sociology* 52 (4):671-687. doi: 10.1177/0038038517726645.

Week 4 (April 15/17): Encountering

In qualitative research, the researcher encounters two people at once: the research respondent and the self. This week, we will focus on a number of key elements that shape how research turns out, or that help position a piece of qualitative research more meaningfully in an ongoing debate. We will focus on time and temporality, discourse, the role of document analysis, identifying bias as well as unpacking positionality and how this might shape research dynamics and the various options for data collection.

Tool Readings

- APSR Editors. 2022. Publishing Your Qualitative Manuscript in the APSR.
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/blog/2022/03/03/publishing-your-qualitative-manuscript-in-the-apsr/>.
- Rigterink, Anouk A., and Mareike Schomerus. 2026 (forthcoming). "Chapter 14: Studying Customs, Practices and Expressions: Ethnography to Study Identity." In *Research Design in Politics and International Relations* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Jaynes, Gerald D., David E. Apter, Herbert J. Gans, William Kornblum, Ruth Horowitz, James F. Short, Gerald D. Suttles & Robert E. Washington (2009) *The Chicago School and the roots of urban ethnography: An intergenerational conversation with Gerald D. Jaynes, David E. Apter, Herbert J. Gans, William Kornblum, Ruth Horowitz, James F. Short, Jr, Gerald D. Suttles and Robert E. Washington.* *Ethnography* 10(4): 375-396.

Small M. L. & McCrory Calarco, J. 2022. *Qualitative Literacy: A guide to evaluating ethnographic and interview research*, Oakland, CA, University of California Press.

Cognitive Empathy

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai (2021, 3rd edition) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Chapters 2 and 3 (Research through imperial eyes; Colonizing knowledges).

Delving into qualitative worlds: Secure and just societies

Duneier, M. 1992. *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability and Masculinity*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Part Three: Membership in Society

6. The Need for Contact with Society

Formative assignment 3: What do you want to know? (500 words)

From this week onwards, all assignments will focus on developing your research project. Using insights you have gained on life in Chicago and challenges highlighted in the SDGs, go on a research topic hunt. Apply your research mindset when walking around your neighborhood with the aim to identify something that you want to know about the people in it and their experience of one of the SDGs. Read local news sites to see whether there are any relevant hot topics. Note down three ideas (one paragraph each, no more than 500 words total), covering a research question, justifying why you find the question interesting for a better understanding of the focus SDG, what broader insights you hope to get from pursuing that question and identifying who could be your research subject.

Due date: April 18

Week 5 (April 22/24): Asking

This week focuses on the many practical aspects of conducting your research study. We will particularly zoom in on techniques and tricks for data collection and how to counter the common urge in qualitative research to ask a lot of questions without much focus. One way to avoid this urge is to be clear about the framing of the issue and the role of theory.

Tool Readings:

Rigterink, Anouk A., and Mareike Schomerus. 2026 (forthcoming). "Chapter 7: On The Case: Cases, Case Selection and Case Studies." In *Research Design in Politics and International Relations* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Small M. L. & McCrory Calarco, J. 2022. *Qualitative Literacy: A guide to evaluating ethnographic and interview research*, Oakland, CA, University of California Press.

Heterogeneity

Tomaszewski, L. E., J. Zarestky, and E. Gonzalez. 2020. "Planning Qualitative Research: Design and Decision Making for New Researchers." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 19. doi: 10.1177/1609406920967174.

Rigterink, Anouk A., and Mareike Schomerus. 2026 (forthcoming). "Chapter 9: The Ethics of Research." In *Research Design in Politics and International Relations* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

In addition, please browse the University of Chicago research ethics website to familiarise yourself with the kind of questions that an ethical review board would ask of research involving humans. You can start a submission on the website to take yourself through the process (but don't submit it). Please come to class prepared to discuss anything you noticed about this process. The relevant websites are:

<https://aura.uchicago.edu/>

<https://sbsirb.uchicago.edu/>

Delving into qualitative worlds: Cities and communities

Duneier, M. 1992. *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability and Masculinity*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Part Two: The Moral Community

3. Valois as a 'Black Metropolis'

Summative Assignment 1 (graded): Research Proposal (700 words)

This week asks you to focus your research project. Please write a research proposal (no more than 700 words). This needs to include your research question, what key concepts you will link this to and what the broader implications of your findings might be, where your question sits in the literature, your research design, your data collection strategy data, and identify up to three interviewees (at least two), and a preliminary set of up to ten interview questions. These interview questions should be resolutely qualitative: Open-ended and asked with a clear sense of what the narrative answers you might get will contribute to your process of answering your research question.

Due date: April 25

Week 6 (April 29/May 1): Embedding

This week we return to the question of how qualitative research is embedded in a policy process. Research tends to be influential for policy if it offers a rigorous and widely-relatable theory—but how is such a theory derived from qualitative research? We also examine the role of qualitative research to evaluate the impact of a policy and identify obstacles to policy uptake, and how to use the language of research to reach into practice.

Field trip: We'll be going on a humble, social and inquisitive mini-field trip between 9am and noon on April 29 (you pick one 90 min section during this time). More details to follow!

Tool readings

Small M. L. & McCrory Calarco, J. 2022. *Qualitative Literacy: A guide to evaluating ethnographic and interview research*, Oakland, CA, University of California Press.
Palpability

Rigterink, Anouk A., and Mareike Schomerus. 2026 (forthcoming). "Chapter 8: Knowledge Hierarchies: Why You See Things the Way You Do." In *Research Design in Politics and International Relations* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Sallee, M. W., & Flood, J. T. (2012). Using Qualitative Research to Bridge Research, Policy, and Practice. *Theory Into Practice*, 51(2), 137–144.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2012.662873>

Delving into qualitative worlds: The extraordinary ordinary

Comfort, Megan L. 2003. "In The Tube At San Quentin: The “Secondary Prisonization” of Women Visiting Inmates." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 32 (1):77-107. doi: 10.1177/0891241602238939.

Formative Assignment 5: Refining your interview approach (500 words)

Based on this week’s feedback and learning, write up ten revised interview questions. Please add a brief interview schedule: Who will you interview, when and under what conditions? Confirm that they are available and happy to be interviewed by you twice (with two weeks in between), detailing how you have asked them for informed consent (total length: no more than 500 words)

Due date: May 2

Week 7 (May 6/ May 8): Analysing

This week, we look at different methods of data analysis and how each might suit the type of answer sought. It is a very practical week to avoid the feeling (well-known by many researchers) of sitting at a desk, wondering what to do. We will develop different ways to code your qualitative data, adjusting the process according to your research methodology and approach.

Tool Readings:

Pugh, Allison J. (2013) What good are interviews for thinking about culture? Demystifying interpretive analysis. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1(1): 42-68.

Small M. L. & McCrory Calarco, J. 2022. *Qualitative Literacy: A guide to evaluating ethnographic and interview research*, Oakland, CA, University of California Press.
Follow-up

Rigterink, Anouk A., and Mareike Schomerus. 2026 (forthcoming). "Chapter 19: Qualitative Methods of Data Analysis." In *Research Design in Politics and International Relations* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Delving into qualitative worlds: Insights and ideas

Schomerus, Mareike (2023) *Lives Amid Violence: Transforming Development in the Wake of Conflict*. London: Bloomsbury.

Chapter 5: Vertical columns of accelerated air: The mental landscape

Formative Assignment 6: Coding your data (500 words)

Using insights from class discussions, develop a method for coding your data and briefly describe it in no more than 500 words. Elaborate on how your key will help you to situate your interview data within the concepts you are using and how it will guide you towards gaining an answer to your research question.

Due date: May 9

Week 8 (May 13/15): Telling

This week focuses on how to use the analysis of your qualitative data to delve into the craft of writing it up to deliver a coherent and readable set of rigorous research findings, using the power of good research writing. We will think about different formats your write up can take and what are useful tricks to present this research in the most effective way.

Tool Readings

Chrisinger, D. & Brodsky, L. 2023. *Because Data Can't Speak for Itself: A Practical Guide to Telling Persuasive Policy Stories*, Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press.

Part 1: People: Telling Stories with Data about People for People

Gilgun, Jane F. (2005) "Grab" and Good Science: Writing Up the Results of Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Health Research* 15: 256-262.

Smith, A. 2015. How PowerPoint is killing critical thought. *The Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/23/powerpoint-thought-students-bullet-points-information>

Sword, Helen (2012) *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

(Despite what the somewhat dry title suggests, this is a highly readable analysis of how academic language can fall short of delivering the best impact. You might not be able to read the whole book this week, but I would propose that you browse the chapters to see which interest you most—and then continue to use the insights from this book for the rest of your writing career.)

Delving into qualitative worlds: Framing

Ames, Morgan G. (2019) *The Charisma Machine: The Life, Death, and Legacy of One Laptop per Child*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Introduction, Chapters 3 and 4, Appendix B.

Summative Assignment 2 (graded): Abstract (160 words including title)

Write an abstract of how you are framing your research paper. Summarize its main argument, its research design, and implications for the SDG-driven debate in which you are situating your findings. (word limit: 160 including title).

Due date: May 16

Week 9 (May 20/22): Using

This is the week when many of our learnings from this course come together. As you are writing up your research, we are returning to the question of what the elements are that can make qualitative research relevant for policy. A number of themes more commonly discussed regarding quantitative research will become prominent this week, such as how qualitative research can offer validation and reliability.

Tool Readings

Rubin, A. T. 2021. *Rocking qualitative social science: An irreverent guide to rigorous research*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press.

11. Living on the sharp end: Dealing with sceptics of qualitative research

Erickson, Frederick (2009) Four Points Concerning Policy-Oriented Qualitative Research. In: Norman K Denzin & Michael D Giardina (eds) *Qualitative Inquiry and Social Justice: Toward a Politics of Hope*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Small, M. L. 2022. Why I Rewrite. *Sociologica*, 16, 35-38.

Smit, Brigitte (2003) Can Qualitative Research Inform Policy Implementation? Evidence and Arguments from a Developing Country Context. *FQS Social Research* 4(3).

Swedberg, Richard (2016) Before theory comes theorizing or how to make social science more interesting. *The British Journal of Sociology* 67(1): 5-22.

Week 10: No class, preparation of final submission

Summative Assignment: Preliminary research (2000 words)

Your final research paper should be no more than 2000 words in length. Some of the building blocks of the paper are drawn from assignments of previous week. The paper should cover the following:

- Abstract
- Introduction highlighting relevance of research question to current SDG debates/ literature
- Elaboration of research question
- Research methodology and implemented methods
- Limitations and reflections on your process and learning
- Preliminary findings and emerging argument
- Conclusion with possible policy implications.

Due date: May 30

Summative assignment: Concept map and additional reflection of 200 words

Submit your final concept map, your initial AI-based assignment, and reflection on your learning between what ChatGPT offered and what knowledge you created.

Due date: May 30

Grading policies

How does grading work in a qualitative course?

Qualitative assessment might be very different from what you are used to. While we will talk about the many ways in which the quality of qualitative work can be recognised to support you

in submitting your best work, the process of assessment is often based on the depth and progress within your thinking that is observable to the instructors. In qualitative work, rather than having points deducted for giving a wrong answer, you earn points by grappling with your material and task in rigorous and thoughtful ways. However, there is a certain discretionary room for the instructor to place your work in context with that of others in the class. This also means that this course does not share grading rubrics with students. The assignments will receive clear instructions, so following those instructions with depth and reflection should help in doing your best work. For qualitative work, working to grading rubrics really limits the discretionary room to assess original work.

In addition, this course will provide you a lot of feedback on your work through formative assignments to help you understand the nuances of doing qualitative research better and to understand how you can improve your grades before the summative assignments.

Grading policies

Submission of assignments

All assignments should be submitted as soft copies via Canvas in 12-point font with a standard margin of about one inch/2.5 centimeters. All assignments are to be submitted as word documents (not pdf). Assignments that exceed the word count will have points deducted for each page that overruns the page or paragraph limit. The word limit is the word count of the entire submission, including references, student name and number, title of the assignment and footnotes. This policy is strict policy because in the policy world, people's tolerance for reading beyond expected length is very limited, so learning how to be succinct is part of this course.

Assignments are always due on Fridays at the end of the day (yes, that can mean midnight). This is to give you the chance to have a weekend and to give me a chance to give you feedback as swiftly as possible so that you can use it the following week. The second assignment (due April 1) will not get feedback.

Late submissions will be subject to deduction of one half-grade per day. Late submissions of formative assignments receive 7 points; on time submissions receive 20 If you are running into problems, do let the TA know first.

Length of assignments

Assignments that are longer than the stated word limit will have points deducted for each page that overruns the page or paragraph limit. The page limit includes references (which can be included in smaller font footnotes). The reason why we are strict on the page limit is that particularly in the policy world, people's tolerance for reading beyond expected length is very limited. Thus, learning how to be succinct is part of this course.

Late submissions

Late submissions will be subject to deduction of one half-grade per day. Extensions can only be granted if requested in a timely manner before the deadline and with a viable reason, such as sickness. Students will receive feedback on their assignments within a week of the deadline.

Requests for Regrades

If a student wants to request a regrade, this requires submitting a written argument why the student feels the grade is inappropriate. Regrades cannot be requested on the basis that no grading rubric was provided to students prior to assignment submission.

Grading rubrics

This course does *not* share grading rubrics with students. The assignments will receive clear instructions, so following those instructions with depth and reflection should assure that you hit the necessary requirements. Grading rubrics limit student engagement with what an assignment asks of them.

Pass/Fail Policy

If you are considering a pass/fail option, please speak to the instructor to see what solution we can offer.

Course scores and letter grades

The course is graded on the common 4-point scale: 4.0 = A, 3.7 = A-, 3.3 = B+, 3.0 = B, 2.7 = B-, 2.3 = C+, 2.0 = C, 1.7 = C-, 1.3 = D+, 1.0 = D, F = 0. (Note that there is no A+ or D- in the common grade scale.)

Individual assignments are graded on a 20-point scale, which are translated to letter grades for the final grade:

- 18-20 points = 4.0 (A)
- 16-17 points = 3.5 (B+)
- 14-15 points = 3.0 (B)
- 12-13 points = 2.5 (C+)
- 10-11 points = 2.0 (C)
- 8-9 points = 1.5 (D+)
- Below 8 points = 0.0 (F)

Office hours and how to contact the instructors

For all *matters related to the content of the course* (questions on readings, feedback, brainstorming), please get in touch with the TA (tbd).

For all *matters related to running the course* (readings, Canvas, logistical questions), please get in touch with the technical TA (tbd).

Mareike will have office hours in Keller (Conference Room 3107) at the following times:

- Wednesdays (March 26 – May 21), 3 – 5pm

Sign-up sheets for 15 min slots will be on Canvas. If you have trouble making any of these slots work, please reach out separately. However, it might help to plan ahead and sign up for a slot in advance if you know you might have questions at a particular time in the quarter. It is usually really tough to put on extra office hours in the last weeks of term, so please do plan ahead. However, at the same time, please do not blanket sign up for as many slots as possible but be

thoughtful about when you might need help. If you have signed up for a slot and can no longer make it, please be courteous to your fellow students and delete your name so someone else can take your slot. Students who have missed two appointments without cancelling with reasonable time for others to take the slot might no longer be allowed to sign up to an office hour slot. Please just don't do it.

To make the best use of your time in an office hour, it is often helpful to come prepared with a specific question or concern, regardless of whether it is related directly to the course or, for example, your career planning.

You can contact Mareike at mareikeschomerus@uchicago.edu.

Teaching assistant(s) graders

We will share the names and contacts of TAs at the start of the course. TAs in this course help with the running of the course, will set up and guide the glossary and support grading of assignments.

A TA, who has taken the course in the past, will be available to discuss assignments and other matters with students.

We will share ways to contact the TA and office hours in the first week of class.

General Resources Available to Students

UChicago and the Harris School offer a wide range of support programs for students. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the resources listed below or talk to your instructor.

Harris School and University of Chicago Policies

Below, you can find an overview of general university policies (including on academic dishonesty), as well as on how to treat audio and video recordings of classes.

- [University General Policies](#)
- [University Academic Polices](#)
- [Harris Academic Support Programs and Handbook](#)
- Policy on audio and video [recordings](#)
- [UChicagoGRAD](#)

For your wellbeing:

- <https://wellness.uchicago.edu/>
- [Student Health Services](#)
- Counselling services: <https://wellness.uchicago.edu/mental-health/>. *Students needing urgent mental health care can speak with clinicians over the phone 24/7 by calling the Therapist-on-Call at 773.702.3625.*

For your learning:

- <https://harris.uchicago.edu/student-life/dean-of-students-office/academic-support-programs>

Academic Integrity

All University of Chicago students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic Integrity and honesty. Among other things, this means that students shall not represent another's work as their own, use un-allowed materials during exams, or otherwise gain unfair academic advantage.

- The University's policies regarding academic integrity and dishonesty are described [here](#). The University's approach is that "it is contrary to justice, academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another's statements or ideas as one's own work. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University's disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously."
- The Harris School's student policies are available on the [policies page of our website](#).
 - The *Academic Honesty and Plagiarism* section expresses the main principles.
 - Detailed guidelines for more specialized student work (e.g., problem sets including computer code) are offered in the sub-section titled *Harris Integrity Policy for Problem Sets Involving Code*.
- Harris's specific procedures for handling suspected violations of these policies are available in the section *Harris Procedures for Allegations of Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Dishonesty*.
- In addition to disciplinary sanctions, instructors will impose a grade penalty for students who have committed academic dishonesty.
 - The student will receive a grade of 0 on the assignment in question.
 - The student will receive an individual grade of C- on the team work, regardless of the overall team grade.

Disability Accommodations

The University's policies regarding students with disabilities are available [here](#). The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring equitable access to our academic programs and services. Students with disabilities who have been approved for the use of academic accommodations by Student Disability Services (SDS) and need a reasonable accommodation(s) to participate fully in this course must follow the [procedures established by the Harris School of Public Policy](#).

Timely notifications are required to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented. Currently registered students are asked to notify the Harris Student Disability Liaison, Eman Alsamara (ealsamara@uchicago.edu) of their access requests by the end of the first week of the quarter. The Harris Student Disability Liaison will work with the student and instructor to coordinate the implementation of student accommodations. *Harris students are not required to submit their accommodations letter to the instructor*. Students from other divisions in the University must submit their accommodations letter to Eman Alsamara (ealsamara@uchicago.edu) in the Harris Dean of Students Office.

Students who are facing extenuating circumstances at any point during the quarter should reach out to their Academic Advisor in the Dean of Students Office for support. If you feel you need

accommodations on an ongoing basis, contact Student Disability Services. To contact SDS: website: disabilities.uchicago.edu phone: (773) 702-6000 email: disabilities@uchicago.edu.

Diversity and Inclusion

The Harris School welcomes, values, and respects students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, and we believe that rigorous inquiry and effective public policy problem-solving requires the expression and understanding of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and traditions. The University and the Harris School have developed distinct but overlapping principles and guidelines to insure that we remain a place where difficult issues are discussed with kindness and respect for all.

- The University’s policies are available [here](#). Specifically, the University identifies the [freedom of expression](#) as being “vital to our shared goal of the pursuit of knowledge, as is the right of all members of the community to explore new ideas and learn from one another. To preserve an environment of spirited and open debate, we should all have the opportunity to contribute to intellectual exchanges and participate fully in the life of the University.”
- The Harris School’s commitments to lively, principled, and respectful engagement are available [here](#): “The Harris School of Public Policy welcomes and respects students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives as part of our commitment to building an inclusive community. *Fostering an environment that encourages rigorous inquiry and effective public policy problem-solving requires the involvement and understanding of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and traditions.* As a leading public policy school, Harris holds diversity as a core value. That includes not only diversity of opinion, but diversity along a broad spectrum of factors, including race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability status, religion, socio-economic background, and social or political belief. Recognizing the value of diversity and inclusion is essential to combating discrimination, addressing disparities, and cultivating ethical and clear-eyed policy leadership.”
- Since English language proficiency also varies within the student body, instructors are also encouraged to affirmatively communicate to students, particularly international students, how class participation features in the classroom experience and affects final course grades, since some students have limited experience expressing their ideas in English. Other course components, such as regular TA sessions, TA or instructor office hours, etc. should also be carefully explained since some international students have had little to no previous exposure to the U.S. academic system.

Video and Audio Recordings

The University has developed specific policies and procedures regarding the use of video/audio recordings: these policies are explicitly described in the University’s [student manual](#) as well as in the guidelines for instructors available [here](#). Perhaps the key components of this policy are worth spelling out in your syllabus:

By attending course sessions, students acknowledge that:

- They will not: (i) record, share, or disseminate University of Chicago course sessions, videos, transcripts, audio, or chats; (ii) retain such materials after*

- the end of the course; or (iii) use such materials for any purpose other than in connection with participation in the course.*
- ii. They will not share links to University of Chicago course sessions with any persons not authorized to be in the course session. Sharing course materials with persons authorized to be in the relevant course is permitted. Syllabi, handouts, slides, and other documents may be shared at the discretion of the instructor.*
 - iii. Course recordings, content, and materials may be covered by copyrights held by the University, the instructor, or third parties. Any unauthorized use of such recordings or course materials may violate such copyrights.*
 - iv. Any violation of this policy will be referred to the Area Dean of Students.*