
Winter Term Seminar

Dr Lea Sgier

“Qualitative Approaches to Data Collection
and Analysis“

3 – 4 November 2016



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Content

This seminar aims to introduce doctoral students to key elements of qualitative research: 1) its main traditions and paradigms, in particular 'mainstream' qualitative research aiming for theory-testing and by and large grounded in the assumptions of positivism, and interpretive research aiming for an understanding of deeper structures of meaning that shape the social and political world; 2) the specificities, uses and limitations of qualitative research and their implications for the research process and research design; 3) the main approaches to data collection and analysis, in particular documentary/archival research, qualitative interviewing, focus groups and ethnographic research; content-based types of analysis and interpretive types of analysis such as discourse and narrative analysis.

The aim of this workshop is twofold: students who do (or consider doing) qualitative research will find some "food for thought" as to how what they do or consider doing fits into the wider universe of research methodology, and what key difficulties they should be prepared to deal with; students who do not work with qualitative methods should acquire a basic "literacy" in qualitative research so as to be able to understand what other researchers do and think about it constructively.

Structure

The first day (all workshop participants) will give an overview of the field of qualitative research along the lines outlined above and provide some illustrations of research typically done in political science, international relations and sociology. It will also leave some time for discussion and participants' questions. The second day (subgroup of participants) will first go into more detail on selected issues of qualitative-interpretive research, and will then devote some time to the discussion of some of the participants' research projects or proposals.

Preparatory work

The preparatory work will entail the reading of 4-5 articles or chapters that will be circulated 2-3 weeks ahead of the seminar.

About the instructor

Lea Sgier is an assistant professor at the Political Science Department of Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, and an associate researcher and lecturer at the University of Geneva. She is also an instructor at various social science methodology summer schools and doctoral programmes in and outside Europe. Her main interests are in qualitative-interpretive method-

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ology, gender and politics, and old age and dementia policy. She has a project starting soon on older dependent people's political citizenship in Switzerland (2016-18). Since 2013 she is a member of the Steering Committee of the ECPR Standing Group on Political Methodology (www.ecpr-methods.org).