

COURSE DESCRIPTION

ADVANCED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Academic year 2025-2026

1. Programme-related data

1.1. Higher Education Institution	Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
1.2. Faculty	Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences
1.3. Doctoral School	Political and Communication Sciences
1.4. Field of study	Communication Science
1.5. Level of study	Doctoral

2. Course-related data

2.1. Course title	Advanced Qualitative Research Methods			Course code	SDSPC2
2.2. Course coordinator	Prof. Univ. Dr. Gabriel Bădescu/Lector univ. Dr. habil. KOVÁCS Borbála badescu@fspac.ro/borbala.kovacs@ubbcluj.ro				
2.3. Seminar coordinator	Prof. Univ. Dr. Gabriel Bădescu/Lector univ. Dr. habil. KOVÁCS Borbála badescu@fspac.ro/borbala.kovacs@ubbcluj.ro				
2.4. Year of study	1	2.5. Semester	1	2.6. Type of assessment	Exam
2.7. Course status	Compulsory		2.8. Course type	Core subject	

3. Total estimated time (hours per semester of teaching activities)

3.1. Number of hours per week	3	of which: 3.2. course	2	3.3. seminar/ laboratory/ project	1
3.4. Total of hours in the curriculum	42	of which: 3.5. course	28	3.6. seminar/ laboratory	14
Time allocation for individual study (IS) and self-taught activities (ST)					hours
Learning from textbooks, course materials, bibliography, and notes (IS)					47
Additional research in the library, on subject-specific electronic platforms, and on-site					46
Preparing seminars/ laboratories/ projects, assignments, reports, portfolios, and essays					47
Tutoring (professional guidance)					2
Examinations					2
Other activities					
3.7. Total hours of individual study (IS) and self-taught activities (ST)				144	
3.8. Total hours per semester				200	
3.9. Number of credits				10	

4. Prerequisites (where applicable)

4.1. curriculum-related	Not applicable.
4.2. skills-related	Not applicable.

5. Specific conditions (where applicable)

5.1. course-related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to UBB and FSPAC regulations, attendance at the course lectures is not mandatory to pass the discipline. • The subject taught by the teacher in the course is an integral part of the end-of-semester exam, complementary to the bibliography assigned in the syllabus. • The course is organised according to the schedule approved by the department and communicated to students at the beginning of the semester. • Course make-up sessions are only held when they overlap with official bank holidays or when the course holder cannot teach the course for objective reasons. The make-up schedule is established in agreement with the students through their representatives.
5.2. seminar/laboratory-related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance is mandatory for at least 75% of classes (11 out of 14).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the student's activity during seminars does not meet the minimal requirements to pass the discipline, the student has to retake the discipline during the following academic year. • Academic fraud is defined in line with the rules of the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeş-Bolyai University (https://fspac.ubbcluj.ro/application/files/9715/6828/0474/Cod_etiic_studenti.pdf). Plagiarism and attempts at academic fraud of seminar homework is punished by granting grade 1 for the discipline and the discussion of the case in the School's staff meeting for taking further administrative steps.
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6. Subject-specific learning outcomes

Knowledge
1. Students will become familiar with a range of key concepts in qualitative research. More importantly, they will form a clear understanding of the qualitative research cycle comprising (1) the research design cycle; (2) the fieldwork cycle (or the ethnographic cycle) and (3) the analytic cycle (see Hennink et al., 2011, 4).
2. In addition, they will become familiar with the range of issues and steps that each of these cycles is habitually predicated on in qualitative research practice.
3. Finally, students will gain understanding of how to write up a research design section and a findings section of a qualitative research report.
Skills
1. study skills: especially note taking, summarising (orally and in written form), critical reading comprehension, metacomprehension; constructive feedback and teamwork.
2. formulate research questions adequate for qualitative enquiry; and rephrase research questions related to a topic to better serve a workable, manageable qualitative enquiry for a PhD research project.
3. identify and rely on social theory and extant research to inform the conceptualisation of key concepts chosen for the study; the most adequate primary data; and mode of analysis.
4. prepare and defend the documentation necessary for ethical clearance; and the ethical conducting of fieldwork.
5. do thematic coding in a way that serves the answering of the research questions.
6. draw up brief syntheses of findings drawing on the coded segments to specific codes/ code families.
7. critical thinking skills: especially deductive reasoning; hypothesising; structured argumentation; the application of newly acquired knowledge to new situations.
8. technical skills: the use of the MaxQDA software package to import transcripts and use the software to code in a rigorous manner.
Responsibility and autonomy
1. defining one's own learning needs.
2. planning progress and incorporating constructive feedback received.
3. manage a semester-long project in a successful way.

7. Contents

7.1. Course	Teaching and learning methods	Remarks ¹
1/ Course practicalities & different methodological approaches in the social sciences Why do we do empirically grounded research & where does the qualitative	Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students. Exercise 2.2 in Silverman (2013).	Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.

¹ For example, organisational aspects, recommendations for students, specific aspects relating to the course/seminar, such as inviting experts in the field, etc.

approach fit within scientific knowledge generation?		
<p>MANDATORY READINGS: Ragin, Charles C., and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2011. <i>Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method</i>. 2nd ed. Sage. Chapter 2, pp. 33-55.</p> <p>Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i>. 4th ed. Sage. Chapter 2, pp. 5-12.</p>		
2/ What Qualitative Research is Best For, scientific knowledge-wise	Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students.	Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.
<p>MANDATORY READINGS: Ragin, Charles C., and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2011. <i>Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method</i>. 2nd ed. Sage. Chapter 5, pp. 111-116.</p> <p>Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i>. 4th ed. Sage. Chapter 2, pp. 12-16.</p>		
3/ Theory, empirical research and knowledge generation - deductive versus inductive social science - theory and what it's for - theory – research design – data – explanation/knowledge	Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students.	Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.
<p>MANDATORY READINGS: Ragin, Charles C., and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2011. <i>Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method</i>. 2nd ed. Sage. Chapter 3, pp. 57-76.</p> <p>Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i>. 4th ed. Sage. Chapter 7, pp. 103-118.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED READING: Vila-Henninger, Luis, Claire Dupuy, Virginie Van Ingelgom, et al. 2024. 'Abductive Coding: Theory Building and Qualitative (Re)Analysis'. <i>Sociological Methods & Research</i> 53 (2): 968–1001. https://doi.org/10.1177/00491241211067508.</p>		
4/ Deciding on a qualitative research design	Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students.	Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.
<p>MANDATORY READINGS: Hennink, Monique M., Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey. 2011. <i>Qualitative Research Methods</i>, London: Sage. Chapter 3, pp. 31-40.</p> <p>Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i>. 4th ed. Sage. Chapter 8, pp. 120-126; 132-139.</p>		
5/ Choosing an appropriate primary data source - what type of qualitative data? - naturally occurring data - qualitative in mixed designs	Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students. Discussion of concrete examples in Silverman.	Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.
<p>MANDATORY READING: Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i>. 4th ed. Sage. Chapter 4.</p>		
6/ Data collection with human subjects: research ethics	Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students.	Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.
<p>MANDATORY READINGS: Ragin, Charles C., and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2011. <i>Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method</i>. 2nd ed. Sage. Chapter 4, pp. 81-89.</p> <p>Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i>, 4th ed. London: Sage. Chapter 10.</p>		

<p>7/ Data collection with human subjects: Prepping fieldwork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - topic guide - sampling logics - recruitment strategies - access 	<p>Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students.</p>	<p>Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.</p>
<p>MANDATORY READINGS: Hennink, Monique M., Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey. 2011. <i>Qualitative Research Methods</i>, London: Sage. Chapter 5.</p> <p>King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. <i>Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research</i>. Princeton University Press. Pp. 124-128; 128-139 (Selection bias).</p> <p>Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i>, 4th ed. London: Sage. Chapter 12.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED READINGS: Hennink, Monique M., Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey. 2011. <i>Qualitative Research Methods</i>, London: Sage. Chapter 6 In-depth interviews OR Chapter 7 Focus group discussions OR Chapter 8 Observation.</p>		
<p>8/ Fieldwork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being safe - evaluating the quality of the data - processing primary data - analysis starts during data collection! 	<p>Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students.</p>	<p>Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.</p>
<p>MANDATORY READINGS: Hennink, Monique M., Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey. 2011. <i>Qualitative Research Methods</i>, London: Sage. Chapter 6 In-depth interviews, pp. 132 OR Chapter 7 Focus group discussions, pp. 165-166 OR Chapter 8 Observation, pp. 198-199.</p> <p>Hennink, Monique M., Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey. 2011. <i>Qualitative Research Methods</i>, London: Sage. Chapter 9, pp. 210-216.</p> <p>Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i>, 4th ed. London: Sage. Chapter 13, pp. 231-235; & Exercise 13.1.</p>		
<p>9/ Code development and coding</p>	<p>Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students.</p>	<p>Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.</p>
<p>MANDATORY READING: Hennink, Monique M., Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey. 2011. <i>Qualitative Research Methods</i>, London: Sage. Chapter 9, pp. 205-210; and 216-230.</p>		
<p>10/ MaxQDA</p>	<p>Hands-on coding workshop.</p>	<p>Students are encouraged to join class discussions.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDED READING: Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i>. 4th ed. Sage. Chapter 14 (by Clive Seale).</p>		
<p>11/ Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from codes to analysis <p>from description to theory-building</p>	<p>Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students.</p>	<p>Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.</p>
<p>MANDATORY READING: Hennink, Monique M., Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey. 2011. <i>Qualitative Research Methods</i>, London: Sage. Chapter 10.</p>		
<p>12/ Evaluating quality in qualitative research</p>	<p>Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students using Silverman's examples in section 16.4.</p>	<p>Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.</p>

MANDATORY READINGS: Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i> , 4th ed. London: Sage. Chapter 16.		
Tracy, Sarah J. 2010. 'Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research'. <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i> 16 (10): 837-51. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121 .		
13/ Qualitative research with countries (and other non-human units of analysis): QCA	Oral presentation based on the mandatory readings. Interactive discussion with students.	Students are expected to read the mandatory readings ahead of the course meeting. Students are encouraged to join class discussions.
MANDATORY READINGS: King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. <i>Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research</i> . Princeton University Press. Pp. 115-118; 219-228.		
Ragin, Charles C., and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2011. <i>Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method</i> . 2nd ed. Sage. Chapter 6.		
14/ REVISION	Interactive discussion with students, on issues to be decided with students. Mock exam questions.	Students are encouraged to join class discussions.
NO MANDATORY READINGS.		
BIBLIOGRAPHY: Hennink, Monique M., Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey. 2011. <i>Qualitative Research Methods</i> . Sage. King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. <i>Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research</i> . Princeton University Press. Ragin, Charles C., and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2011. <i>Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method</i> . 2nd ed. Sage. Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i> . 4th ed. Sage. Tracy, Sarah J. 2010. 'Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research'. <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i> 16 (10): 837-51. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121 . Vila-Henninger, Luis, Claire Dupuy, Virginie Van Ingelgom, et al. 2024. 'Abductive Coding: Theory Building and Qualitative (Re)Analysis'. <i>Sociological Methods & Research</i> 53 (2): 968-1001. https://doi.org/10.1177/00491241211067508 .		
7.2. Seminar/ laboratory		
	Teaching and learning methods	Remarks
1/ RQ - research design match	In-class exercises. Using examples, discuss the appropriateness of the qualitative research design given the RQs.	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
2/ Goals of qualitative research	Discuss qualitative work that (1) gives voice; and (2) that builds theory. How do these achieve these objectives?	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
3/ Models; concepts; theories; hypotheses; Methodologies; and methods	Think of which model, concepts etc. you are currently using in thinking about your own research topic. Are these appropriate? Explain.	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
4/ Choosing the most appropriate research methodology	Exercise 8.1 in Silverman (2013).	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
5/ Choosing an appropriate qualitative approach	Exercise 4.1 in Silverman (2013).	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
6/ Effective fieldwork documents	Draft a topic guide; a recruitment letter and a flyer. Specify sampling logic; and potential limitations.	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
7/ Evaluating quality and kick-starting analysis	Evaluate for quality the transcript given using Hennink et al.'s checklist.	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
8/ Code development	Using the transcripts given to you, develop codes and sub-codes.	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.

9/ MaxQDA	Hands-on coding workshop.	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
10/ Categories in inductive analysis	Hands-on analysis workshop.	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
11/ Conceptualisation in inductive analysis.	Hands-on analysis workshop.	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
12/ Evaluating qualitative studies	Using the criteria in Table 16.3, 16.4 or 16.5 in Silverman (2013, 306-7) OR Tracy's criteria, evaluate the given article.	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
13/ Comparative Qualitative Analysis	In-class exercises. Using examples, discuss the appropriateness of the qualitative research design given the RQs.	Students are expected to participate in class exercises.
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
<p>Clarke, John, Dave Bainton, Noémi Lendvai, and Paul Stubbs. 2015. <i>Making Policy Move: Towards a Politics of Translation and Assemblage</i>. Policy Press.</p> <p>Hennink, Monique M., Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey. 2011. <i>Qualitative Research Methods</i>, London: Sage.</p> <p>King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. <i>Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research</i>. Princeton University Press.</p> <p>Jo, Eun A. 2025. 'Storytelling Elites and the Remaking of Nationhood in Democratic South Korea and Taiwan'. <i>Comparative Political Studies</i>, August 23, 00104140251369326. https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140251369326.</p> <p>Kölln, Ann-Kristin, and Jonathan Polk. 2024. 'Structuring Intra-Party Politics: A Mixed-Method Study of Ideological and Hierarchical Factions in Parties'. <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> 57 (9): 1552–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231194067.</p> <p>Ragin, Charles C., and Lisa M. Amoroso. 2011. <i>Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method</i>. 2nd ed. Sage.</p> <p>Silverman, David. 2013. <i>Doing Qualitative Research</i>. 4th ed. Sage.</p> <p>Tyner, Katie. 2025. 'The Succession Effect: Change Over Time in Women's Political Leadership Styles in New Zealand'. <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> 58 (10): 2202–36. https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140241290207.</p>		

8. Evaluation

Type of activity	8.1 Evaluation criteria ²	8.2 Evaluation methods ³	8.3 Percentage in the final grade
8.4. Course	Project presentations.	Oral exam.	50%
8.5. Seminar/ laboratory	Participation in class discussions.	See assignment description.	10% * 50%
	Research puzzle development	See assignment description.	25% * 50%
	Choosing an appropriate qualitative methodology	See assignment description.	25% * 50%
	Research ethics documentation	See assignment description.	25% * 50%
	Qualitative data analysis of choice	Coding of transcripts	15% * 50%
8.6 Minimum standard for passing			
<p>In line with art. 29 (2) of The Rules governing Babeş-Bolyai University Students' Status (https://fspac.ubbcluj.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/statutulstudentului.pdf), students are required to participate in at least 75% of seminars, i.e. 11 out of 14 meetings. Students who do not meet this requirement cannot graduate the discipline and need to retake it in the following academic year.</p> <p>Academic fraud is defined in line with the rules of the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeş-Bolyai University (https://fspac.ubbcluj.ro/application/files/9715/6828/0474/Cod_eti_c_studenti.pdf). Plagiarism and attempts at academic fraud of seminar homework and during exams are punished by granting grade 1 for the entire course and the discussion of the case in the Department's staff meeting for taking further administrative steps.</p>			

² The evaluation criteria must directly reflect the learning outcomes targeted at the level of the degree programme respectively at the level of the subject. More specifically, the learning outcomes set out in the expected learning outcomes are assessed.

³ Both final evaluation methods and ongoing evaluation strategies should be established.

Any academic paper relies on information with proper sources cited according to scientific rules. It is strongly recommended that you use a referencing style common in the social sciences (APA, MLA, Chicago, Harvard, Oxford etc.). The Department of Political Sciences recommends the use of APSA (the American Political Science Association) citation and referencing rules (Chicago style). If any other style is preferred, it should be used consistently throughout the paper. The evaluation of written assignments takes into account the correct use of the chosen citation style.

9. SDG labels (Sustainable Development Goals)⁴

	<input type="radio"/>	Sustainable Development Generic Label						
								
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
								No label applies
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					

Date of entry:
September 2025

Signature of course coordinator
Prof. Univ. Dr. Gabriel Bădescu

Signature of seminar coordinator
Lector univ. Dr. habil. KOVÁCS Borbála

Date of approval in the department:
September 2025

Signature of the SDSPC Director
Prof. univ. dr. Gabriel Bădescu

⁴ Select a single label which, according to the [Implementation of SDG labels in the academic process](#), best matches the subject. If the subject addresses sustainable development in a generic manner (i.e. by presenting/introducing the general framework of sustainable development, etc.), then the Sustainable Development generic label may be applied. If none of the labels describe the subject, select the last option: "No label applies."