Because qualitative and quantitative methods have different strengths, there is an intuitive appeal to research designs that combine what each has to offer. Yet, social scientists often encounter severe problems in bringing these very different methods together. This class addresses this gap by considering practical strategies for integrating qualitative and quantitative methods.

The class will emphasize a set of existing research designs for combining qualitative and quantitative methods that: a) have well reasonably well-understood benefits, and b) can be implemented in a relatively straightforward fashion. We will also investigate new extensions to this existing set of “practical” research designs. Although most of our attention will be on the practicalities of designing workable research projects, we will also consider the value of Pragmatism as a philosophical paradigm for doing mixed methods research.

The assignments for the class will emphasize mastering the existing methodological literature on combining qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as producing written work that integrates these readings with each student's own research interests. Because this course emphasizes research design, it will not require the collection or analysis of data (nor is it intended to support projects that are already at advanced stages of data collection or analysis).

The course will be interdisciplinary in nature, with a goal of creating connections across the widely scattered fields that have contributed to both qualitative and quantitative methods. The students in this class typically come from a wide variety of disciplines, and we will take advantage of this diversity during our class discussions.

Readings, Assignments, Grades


Additional readings will be distributed by email

Most of the grade for this course comes from two short papers that you will also expand and edit into a final paper. The goal is to create a research design that uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate your own research interests. I will do the grading based on both your progress since the beginning of the class, along with the percentages for each assignment [shown in brackets].

I realize that “progress” is a very subjective standard, so I clarify what I mean: The main thing you need to know is that I use a individualized standard for progress -- it is where you are at end of the class, compared to where you were when the class started. For example, some of you will start with strong versions of your research questions, and primarily work on specific aspects of research design. Others will begin by working on the definition of your research questions, so your final consideration of design issues will still be relatively broad. Those are two different starting points, and I will use different standards for thinking about your personal progress in each cases.

[C-NC] Initial statement of interests (300 words) due via email on Jan. 13
[40%] Expanded statement of interests plus combined methods (1,000 words) due Feb. 26
[60%] Final combined methods research design (2,000 words) due March 17

All of these “word lengths” are maximums -- if you can do as well with fewer words, please do so.
Course Outline

Week 1. Jan. 7  “Course Overview”

Week 2. Jan. 14  “Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: A Basic Framework”
   Chapter One: An Introduction and Overview
   Chapter Two: Pragmatism as a Paradigm for Mixed Methods Research
   Chapter Three: Research Design and Research Methods
   Initial statement of interests due to me on Monday BY EMAIL

Week 3. Jan. 21  “Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Design Issues”
   Chapter Four: Motivations for Using Mixed Methods Research
   Chapter Five: The Sequential Priorities Model

Week 4. Jan. 28  “Sequential Connections: Preliminary qual inputs to QUANT projects”
   Chapter Six: Preliminary Qualitative Inputs in Quantitative Projects

Week 5. Feb. 4  “Sequential Connections: Preliminary quant inputs to QUAL projects”
   Chapter Seven: Preliminary Quantitative Inputs in Core Qualitative Projects

Week 6. Feb. 11  “Sequential Connections: Follow-up qual extensions to QUANT projects”
   Chapter Eight: Follow-up Qualitative Extensions in Quantitative Projects

Week 7. Feb. 18  Sequential Connections: Follow-up quant extensions to QUAL projects”
   Chapter Nine: Follow-up Quantitative Extensions in Qualitative Project

   Chapter Ten: Multipart Sequential Designs
   Background and Design paper due by email (or in class)

Week 9. March 4  Recent Developments
   Readings to be announced

Week 10. March 11 “Future Directions”
   Chapter Eleven: Finding the Expertise to Combine Multiple Methods
   Chapter Twelve: Conclusions: Further Thoughts About Research Design

(No Class) March 16  Full Research Design paper due by email (note, this is a Monday)

Exam Date: There is no final exam.
Three Assignments for Creating A Research Design

This set of assignments produces a research proposal that is based on the conceptual format for a typical thesis proposal. Thus, your final assignment should have sections that: 1) introduce the research question and project goals; 2) make an argument for the importance of the research; 3) describe the research design and the procedures you will use to collect and analyze the data; 4) discuss the anticipated results and conclusions from your research.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest Statement</th>
<th>Background &amp; Design</th>
<th>Full Research Design</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(300 words, due 1/13)</td>
<td>(1,000 words, due 2/26)</td>
<td>(1,500 words, 3/17)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction, (Revised)</td>
<td>Introduction (Revised)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background &amp; Design</td>
<td>Background &amp; Design (Revised)</td>
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<td>Research Methods</td>
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Here is how the three papers build on each other. The first paper primarily presents a research question and a statement about the methods you will use to address that question. The second paper expands on this introduction and brings in a background section and a preliminary version of your research design. For the design section, provide detailed justifications for the methods that you have chosen. The final paper expands on the research methods you will use. At each stage in the process, I will expect you to revise your previous work, based on both the additional material we cover in class and any comments I make on your earlier papers. You are free to change the subject of your research at any time, but please tell in advance if you change your topic.

Please note that NONE of these papers includes ANY literature review, which also means you should not include any citations or references. This is because I am not qualified to judged your substantive topic -- that is up to your own professors. Instead, you should concentrate entirely on your methods.

**Introduction & Background** The opening section of your proposal should tell the reader what your research is about why this topic is worthwhile, as well as giving some information about how you will do your research (in this case, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods that you plan to use). Beyond simply stating what you plan to do, this section should also provide a general justification for why you want to address this set of research goals. In addition, it should give the reader an general sense of how you will accomplish these goals in terms of the methods you will use. This section should be 2 paragraphs in length in the first assignment, and no more than 5-6 paragraphs in the later versions.

Note that this section is where you would ordinarily review the literature in ways that demonstrate the importance of the problem you are researching. That would be very important in an actual thesis proposal, but for this class, the goal is to develop more general arguments that demonstrate the importance of your research problem. In particular, the emphasis for this entire project is on research design, so this section should make a connection between what you are going to do (i.e., the substance of your research) and the way that you are going to do it (i.e., the methods you will use). You should thus devote at least one paragraph to making that connection.

**Research Methods** This is where you describe how you will collect and analyze the data that will answer your research question (or otherwise address your research goals). What broad methods will you use to collect the data? In particular, why do you want to use a combination of methods -- why is that preferable to using only one carefully selected method? How will you use each of your methods, and how will you integrate the results from your different methods?

For each of your methods, you might consider addressing the following questions: Who or what will be the sources for your data? What specific procedures will you use to collect the data that you need? How will you analyze the data in order to address your research questions?

In the final paper, this section adds more than 1,500 words to the earliest assignment, which makes it approximately 6-7 pages long and thus 10-15 paragraphs, depending on your writing style.