



Wageningen School
of Social Sciences

Introduction to Interpretive Research Design

Prof. Peregrine Schwartz-Shea

WASS PhD course

25,26,27, 28 and 29 July 2016

Instructor details

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Short Bio

Peregrine Schwartz-Shea is professor of political science at the University of Utah where she teaches courses in Qualitative-Interpretive Research Methods, Research Design, Public Administration, and Gender and Politics. She conducts research on interpretive methods and human subjects protection policy. With Dvora Yanow, she co-authored *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes* (Routledge 2012), the first volume in the Routledge Series on Interpretive Methods that they co-edit.

<http://poli-sci.utah.edu/profile.php?unid=u0030948>

Description of the course

Research proposals are increasingly a part of scholarly life. The topics for theses and dissertations require prior approval; funding support usually depends on a committee's assessment of competing research proposals. Funding committees tasked with assessing proposals ask: Is the proposed topic significant? Will the proposed research address a recognized problem, solve a theoretical puzzle, or shed light on a heretofore unexamined area? Will *this* researcher bring the needed background, skills, and substantive knowledge to complete the proposed research? And most pertinent to this course: Does the design of the research—its methodology, methods, data and analytic techniques—address the research question in a convincing, coherent manner?

The expectations associated with the term “research design” vary. In some disciplines and/or research communities, the common approach to research design assumes variables-based research (and may even presume that randomized, control experiments are the “best” designs). Other disciplines and research communities are much more eclectic in their approaches to research and embrace methodological pluralism. Still, even in more pluralistic settings, research proposals may be scrutinized by those who have very particular conceptualizations of design and of research. Those conducting interpretive research need to be able to communicate their research purposes, design logics, and evaluative standards to such reviewers.

Research design, then, is a social endeavor. Articulating one's research question, project and approach to a variety of audiences in a variety of settings is essential to learning what one wants to do. Moreover, if others cannot understand what your project is about that may indicate a lack of clarity in what you are attempting or, at least, that you are not clearly communicating your research goals. From brief oral descriptions of your project over coffee to a more formal written proposal, convincing one's audience(s) is key. Wherever you are in the research process, this course will enable you to deepen your understanding of your topic, familiarize yourself with the key elements of interpretive research design, and practice articulating (and perhaps even defending) the approach you have chosen to your research question.

In addition to lecture and class discussion, students will work together in ‘lab sessions’ during the afternoons and/or evenings (Days 1-4). Detailed instructions will be given for these sessions, but the general approach is that students will draft and share sections of a research proposal with members of their research groups. Re-writing will occur over the four days to produce a short, written proposal as a record of learning from the course. On Day 5, participants will orally present their research proposals to the class. For those who already have written proposals, there are two

options: (1) Revising the proposal with a particular funding agency in mind. (2) Drafting a related or new proposal as part of an imagined (or actual) research agenda. (Note that assignment details for all labs will be made available to registered participants.)

- Lab 1. One-page draft – research question and significance in the context of identified literature.
- Lab 2. Edit, refine research question and literature; draft discussion and justification for anticipated data generation.
- Lab 3. Draft discussion of choice of analytic methods.
- Lab 4. Revise to produce proposal coherence across questions, data, analysis, anticipated contributions.

A caveat. *Effective* research design is highly contextual. Effectiveness depends on: the state of knowledge on a particular topic including areas of consensus and debate; the interests, talents, and methodological predispositions brought to that topic by the researcher; disciplinary conventions as well as the scholarly conversations and research communities engaged by the research; access to sites and data and ethical contingencies and constraints that may limit designs; and the funding priorities of governmental and private sources. In short, there is no universal template for achieving appealing, convincing, and fundable research proposals. An advantage of class members coming from a number of disciplines and/or a variety of backgrounds is that discussions and lab exercises should raise everyone’s awareness of these contextual factors (which may be tacitly known *within* disciplines and, thus, not actively discussed or analyzed).

Course objectives

- To learn to recognize and to formulate interpretive research questions;
- To understand and acquire the vocabulary appropriate to interpretive research design;
- To recognize and add to one’s research store an abductive logic of inquiry;
- To practice assessing the connections between research questions, forms of data, and implied contributions;
- To be able to articulate the rationale for interpretive research including its approach to design, access, selection, and evaluative criteria.
- To produce a brief research proposal as a record of course learning.

What this course will not cover

- Although any research proposal must include its choice of and justification for its particular approaches to data analysis, the specifics of particular interpretive *analytic techniques* will not be covered in this course.
- Although the basic philosophical presuppositions of interpretive research will be introduced (i.e., its constructivist ontology and intersubjectivist epistemology), in-depth consideration and discussion of philosophy of social science is beyond the purview of this course.
- Although the course interrogates the meaning of the term “mixed methods,” it does not take up the approach to design envisioned by, e.g., the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*.

Prerequisite knowledge

No prerequisite knowledge is required to take this introductory course. Those who will benefit most from the course are those currently planning research (i.e., working on a research proposal) or who will do so in the future; those who have completed field research and are in the “writing up” stage will also benefit from several parts of the course, such as understanding and communicating (e.g., to reviewers) what the appropriate quality standards are for assessing interpretive work. (Note that the pre-course assignments, given below, include basic introductions to the nature of interpretive research. For those who wish to deepen their background in this area, see: the supplementary

readings section below for additional recommended readings on philosophy of social science; the sources listed on p. 44 of the required text, *Interpretive Research Design*.)

Required texts

Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine, and Yanow, Dvora. 2012. *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*. New York and London: Routledge. [SS&Y in the daily list]

Yanow, Dvora, and Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine, eds. 2014. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. 2nd ed. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. [Y&SS2 in the daily list]

Additional articles: Please see detailed day-to-day schedule below.

Pre-course assignments

#1 Background reading assignments to be completed before the course begins:

Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine. 2015. Interpretive social science. In *Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, ed. Michael Gibbons. Wiley-Blackwell Publishers.

From the required text *Interpretation and Method*, 2014

Wherefore “Interpretive?” An introduction, pp. xiii-xxii.

Chapter 1, Yanow, Dvora, Thinking Interpretively: Philosophical Propositions in the Social Sciences,” pp. 5-26.

#2 Introductions:

Once the course is confirmed, I will be asking you to briefly introduce yourself to me. In particular, I would appreciate your answering the following questions (2 pages maximum):

- Are you currently working on a research proposal?
- What are the primary methods of data generation that you plan to use or have used?
- What specific questions or concerns, if any, are you bringing with you to the course?

This information will assist me in getting to know you and, as possible, I will try to plan to address the mentioned questions/concerns during the course. I would like this information by 15 July 2016.

Day-to-day schedule (Monday 25 to Friday 29 July)

AND

Day-to-day reading list

Please note: the information contained in this course description form may be subject to subsequent adaptations (e.g., taking into account new developments in the field, specific participant demands, class size, etc.). Registered participants will be informed in due time in case of adaptations.

	Topic(s)	Details, Readings
Monday 25 July 9.00-10.30	Introduction to Interpretive Research Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Method and methodology • Varieties of 	<u>Readings:</u> SS&Y, Introduction SS&Y, #1 Wherefore research designs? SS&Y, #2 Ways of knowing: Research questions and logics of inquiry SS&Y, #3 Starting from meaning: Contextuality and its implications

	<p>interpretive research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Mixed methods” caveat 	<p>Y&SS2, #20 Danjoux, Ilan. Don’t judge a cartoon by its image, pp. 353–67.</p> <p>Y&SS2, #21 Yanow, Dvora. How built spaces mean: A semiotics of space, pp. 368-86.</p> <p>Fujii, Lee Ann. 2008. The power of local ties: Popular participation in the Rwandan genocide. <i>Security Studies</i> 17: 569-597.</p> <p>Soss, Joe. 2005. Making clients and citizens: Welfare policy as a source of status, belief, and action. In <i>Deserving and entitled: Social constructions and public policy</i> eds. Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram, pp. 1-28.</p> <p><u>Think about:</u> What makes a research question / research project “interpretive?” How do methodological presuppositions affect the shape and content of research questions?</p>
11.00-12.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do research questions come from? • Components of a research proposal <p>Discussion of ‘lab’ assignment</p>	<p><u>Readings:</u> Sandberg, Jörgen and Alvesson, Mats. 2011. Ways of constructing research questions: Gap-spotting or problematization? <i>Organization</i> 18/1: 23-44.</p> <p><u>In-class activity:</u> Pair up; introductions of each other; formulating interpretive research questions</p> <p>Form groups</p>
Afternoon/evening ‘lab’ assignment		<p>Small group and/or paired work: Research questions and research conversations; one-page draft – research question and significance in the context of identified literature.</p>
Tuesday 26 July 9.00-10.30	<p>The Research Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abductive logic • Access • Research roles • Co-generation of data 	<p><u>Readings:</u> SS&Y, #4 The rhythms of interpretive research I - Getting Going</p> <p>Y&SS2, #11 Shehata, Samer. Ethnography, identity and the production of knowledge, pp. 353–67.</p> <p>Fujii, Lee Ann. 2010. Shades of truth and lies: Interpreting testimonies of war and violence. <i>Journal of Peace Research</i> 47 (2):231-41.</p> <p><u>Think about:</u> When does research begin?</p>
11.00-12.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms of evidence 	<p><u>Readings:</u> SS&Y, #5 The rhythms of interpretive research I -</p>

	<p>Discussion of lab assignment</p>	<p>Understanding and generating evidence Y&SS2, Part II, Yanow, Dvora, and Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine. Analyzing data. pp. 147-160. Y&SS2, #12 Weldes, Jutta. High politics and low data: Globalization discourses and popular culture, pp. 228-38. Y&SS2, #12 Soss, Joe. Talking our way to meaningful explanations: A practice-centered view of interviewing for interpretive research, pp. 161-182. Hamilton, Jennifer A. 2009. On the ethics of useable data. In <i>Field work is not what it used to be: Learning Anthropology's method in a time of transition</i>, ed. James D. Faubin and George E. Marcus. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 73-88.</p> <p><u>In-class activity:</u> General advantages and disadvantages: interview data, observational data, participant-observational data, documents, archives...</p>
<p>Afternoon/evening 'lab' assignment</p>		<p>Small group and/or paired work: Edit, refine research question and literature; draft discussion of anticipated data; how, specifically, does the data address the research question.</p>
<p>Wednesday 27 July 9.00-10.30</p>	<p>Designing for trustworthiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interpretive gestalt • Modes of analysis • Reflexivity • How to think about theory... 	<p><u>Readings:</u> SS&Y, #6 Designing for trustworthiness Y&SS2: Part III, Yanow, Dvora, and Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine. Analyzing data, pp. 255-66. #7 Schwartz-Shea Peregrine. Judging quality: Evaluative criteria and epistemic communities, pp. 120-46. #22 Wilkinson, Cai. Not just finding what you (thought you) were looking for: Reflections on fieldwork data and theory, pp. 387-405. Yanow, Dvora. 2014. Interpretive Analysis and Comparative Research. In Isabelle Engeli and Christine Rothmayr Allison, eds., <i>Comparative policy studies: Conceptual and methodological challenges</i>, 131-59. Houndsmill, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.</p> <p><u>Think about:</u> What have been your experiences with discussions of research quality?</p>
<p>11.00-12.30</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The human element 	<p><u>Readings:</u></p>

	Discussion of lab assignment	<p>SS&Y, #7 Design in context SS&Y, #8 Speaking across epistemic communities Y&SS2: Part IV Yanow, Dvora, and Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine. Re-recognizing the human sciences through interpretive methodologies, pp. 421-5.</p> <p><u>Think about:</u> What sorts of “politics of research” have you encountered?</p>
Afternoon/evening ‘lab’ assignment		Small group and/or paired work: Draft discussion of choice of analytic methods; Why this approach to analysis?
Thursday 28 July 9.00-10.30	Research ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harms? • Consent • Privacy and confidentiality 	<p><u>Readings:</u> Fujii, Lee Ann. 2012. Research ethics 101: Dilemmas and responsibilities. <i>PS: Political Science & Politics</i> October, 717-23. Mertus, Julie A. 2010. "Maintenance of personal security: Ethical and operational issues." In <i>Surviving field research: Working in violent and difficult situations</i>, ed. C. L. Sriram, J. C. King, J. A. Mertus, O. Martin-Ortega and J. Herman. London: Routledge, 165-76. Thomson, Susan M. 2010. ‘That is not what we authorized you to do...’: Access and government interference in highly politicized research environments. In <i>Surviving Field Research: Working in Violent and Difficult Situations</i>, ed. Chandra Lekha Sriram, John C. King, Julie A. Mertus, Olga Martin-Ortega, and Johanna Herman, 108-24.</p> <p><u>Think about:</u> Researchers are increasingly being asked or even required to engage ethical aspects of their research in their research proposals. What ethical issues does your research raise?</p>
11.00-12.30	Writing up research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating interpretive standards into the research report Discussion of ‘lab’ assignment	<p><u>Readings:</u> Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine, and Yanow, Dvora. 2009. Reading and writing as method: In search of trustworthy texts. In Sierk Ybema, Dvora Yanow, Harry Wels, and Frans Kamsteeg, eds., <i>Organizational Ethnography: Studying the Complexity of Everyday Life</i>. London: Sage, 56-82.</p> <p><u>Think about:</u></p>

		How can trustworthiness be demonstrated?
Afternoon/evening 'lab' assignment		Assessing proposal coherence: Final revisions of research questions, literature, data, analysis, anticipated contributions.
Friday 29 July 9.00-12.30	Research proposal presentations	<p>Each student will present her or his research question, design, proposed methods of data generation and analysis and anticipated research contributions.</p> <p>As an audience, we will first asking probing, skeptical questions of each presenter: Does the research put the meaning making of those studied at the center of the research? Is the research trustworthy? Is it ethical? Are the anticipated research contributions significant?</p> <p>At the end, we will “debrief” and discuss ways in which all the proposals might be improved.</p>

Literature

There will not be time to read all of the chapters from the required text: Yanow, Dvora, and Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine, eds. 2014. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. 2nd ed. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. Below I indicate chapters that may be of particular interest, depending on student background.

Those new to interpretive research may especially benefit from chapters that provide more depth on philosophy of social science:

2. Contending Conceptions of Science and Politics: Methodology and the Constitution of the Political
Mary Hawkesworth
4. Working with Concepts: Challenging the Language–Reality Dichotomy
Douglas C. Dow
6. Neither Rigorous nor Objective? Interrogating Criteria for Knowledge Claims in Interpretive Science
Dvora Yanow

Those interested in thinking critically and interpretively about statistics should consult:

3. Figuring Authority, Authorizing Statistics
Kirstie M. McClure
13. The Numeration of Events: Studying Political Protest in India
Dean E. McHenry, Jr.

Those with an historical and archival interest would enjoy:

14. Making Sense of Making Sense: Configurational Analysis and the Double Hermeneutic
Patrick Thaddeus Jackson
15. Studying the Careers of Knowledge Claims: A Guide
Pamela Brandwein
16. Critical Interpretation and Interwar Peace Movements: Challenging Dominant Narratives
Cecelia Lynch
17. Political Science as History: A Reflexive Approach
Ido Oren

There are a variety of additional chapters on particular methods:

9. Ordinary Language Interviewing
Frederic Charles Schaffer
10. Seeing with an Ethnographic Sensibility: Explorations beneath the Surface of Public Policies
Ellen Pader
18. Value-Critical Policy Analysis: The Case of Language Policy in the United States
Ronald Schmidt, Sr.
19. Stories for Research
Steven Maynard-Moody and Michael Musheno

And chapters that engage the sociology and politics of research:

23. “May I See Your Color-Coded Badge?” Reflections on Research with “Vulnerable” Communities
Michael Orsini
24. We Call It a Grain of Sand: The Interpretive Orientation and a Human Social Science
Timothy Pachirat
25. Doing Social Science in a Humanistic Manner
Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea

Location:

The sessions will be held in building “De Leeuwenborgh”, Hollandseweg 1 in Wageningen, The Netherlands. The exact room will be announced later.

Credits and examination:

This is a 3 ECTS course. To successfully complete the course, preparation for the meetings/practicals and active participation is necessary. In addition to that, the fulfillment of daily assignments and a take home paper will be parts of the course. The daily assignments will be graded daily, without feedback, (as 0 - Did not submit, 1 - Insufficient, 2 - Sufficient, 3 - Excellent). For the take-home paper

the Instructor will set a deadline for completion but no later than three weeks after the end of the course.

Course fee:

For PhDs of WASS the fee is € 250,-. For all other participants, including WUR staff members (fellows/post docs), the fee is € 500,-. The fee includes drinks, lunches, and access to course materials.

Group size:

Minimum 10 participants, maximum 20 participants.

Registration and admission

Registration is possible electronically via the WASS courses page:

<http://www.wass.wur.nl/UK/courses/registration/> The minimum number of participant is set at 10. The maximum number of participants is set at 20. Registration will proceed on a first come first serve basis.

Please make sure that you provide the most recent contact details so that in case of any changes you will be notified promptly. After your internet registration you will receive a short notification that your name has been registered. At least two weeks before the course you will receive a confirmation about the location and the schedule. WASS will also send an invoice to the address indicated in the registration form.

Please e-mail to Marcella.Haan@wur.nl in case you have any questions about the registration.

Further information

On course content please contact the course coordinator, Dr Severine van Bommel. She can be reached through severine.vanbommel@wur.nl

On WASS: www.wass.wur.nl

For details about the logistics, accommodation, registration, fees, study materials, etc. please contact Marcella Haan

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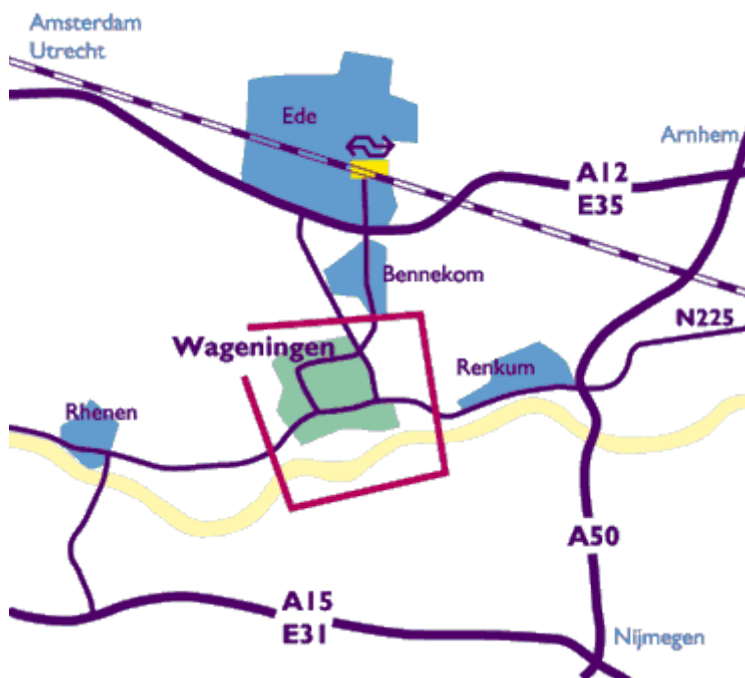
From Schiphol Airport Amsterdam to Wageningen

At the Airport you can buy a train ticket in the 'arrivals' area. You will see the sign "Train tickets" near the exit. Then follow the signs 'Nederlandse Spoorwegen' (www.ns.nl) or 'Trains and busses' to the railway station.

Purchase a one-way ticket to the Ede-Wageningen train station, this will cost appr. € 15,- (plus € 0,50 service charge if you buy the ticket at the ticket counter). It is also possible to buy the ticket from the ticket vending machines in the station.

Every 30 minutes there are direct connections to Ede-Wageningen. Also, twice an hour there is a connection via Utrecht (where you have to change trains). On the platform, you will see signs hanging from the ceiling with all names of the different stations where the train will stop. Check for the names Ede Wageningen or Utrecht and board the train. The trip from Schiphol to Ede-Wageningen takes you a bit more than one hour.

For Dutch train connections use www.ns.nl, www.thalys.com, www.db.de



Wageningen has no railway station. This lack is fully compensated by accurate means of buses and taxis, as described next.

From railway station Ede-Wageningen you can take a taxi (approx.15 min.) Taxis leave at the north side of the station. You can also come by bus (bus 86 (direction Arnhem), bus 88 (direction Wageningen) or bus 84 (direction Wageningen). All busses leave at the north side of the station. You can purchase a bus card "strippenkaart" in the bus for approximately 3 euros.