# STV4030B Qualitative Data in Political Science

## Revised course presentation

**Course content**

Students will learn how to construct and collect data for various types of small N-studies, with a prime focus on single and comparative case studies. Qualitative interviews and qualitative document assessment will get specific attention. The course will prepare master students to develop and deploy sound data strategies in their own research projects. During the course, participants will reflect on how data gathering, data construction and data availability constrain and enable varying research strategies.

Students will discuss the role of qualitative research in varying types of political science research. Research at different stages of a research cycle, or relating to differing research programs, will require different types of data and research designs. We will highlight advantages and disadvantages of varying qualitative data construct and/or collection methods in terms of reliability, validity, rigor, and credibility. The course enables students to develop the tacit skills required to gather, construct, organize and assess data. For instance, students will learn how to identify interviewees and to prepare, conduct, and assess interview data. We will also discuss the role of various types of documents, and students will learn how to use text material, with a particular emphasis on archival data.

The course provides an overview of relevant strategies for analysing qualitative data. We encourage participants to explore and combine different kinds of qualitative data and think carefully about the purpose of varying types of data in their forthcoming master projects. The course will also address research ethics, data protection and digital security during fieldwork.

**Knowledge**

You will learn how to:

* Efficiently and appropriately gather and/or construct qualitative empirical data.
* Plan, carry out, systematize, and assess qualitative interviews.
* Gather, systematize, assess and measure data from documents.
* Combine, compare and contrast different types of data.
* Address challenges of research ethics and data protection
* Specify and assess the role of qualitative research within larger scientific programs and discussions.

**Skills**

You will be trained in:

* Developing and executing qualitative data gathering and/or construction strategies.
* Strategically adjust research questions, hypotheses and data sources to each other throughout the research process.
* Identifying generalization potentials in small N-research drawing on varying qualitative data.
* Identify the qualitative research techniques that fits best with various research objectives.

**General competencies**

After the course you will be able to

* Develop a sound research method for your qualitative master thesis project.
* Assess methodological strengths and weaknesses of small N-research publications.

## Teaching

**Lectures**

10 lectures will be given.

Compulsory activities:

* Attend first lecture
* Attend at least six of the following nine lectures.

**Seminars**

Seminars will clarify possible solutions to tasks discussed in individual written memos handed in advance of seminars. A workshop in the software NVivo will also be offered during the course.

Compulsory activities:

* Attend first seminar
* Attend two of the following four seminars

Students hand in three written memos in advance of seminars (1500-2000 words each). In addition they hand in a group report (2500 – 3000 words). Each memo is associated with a specific seminar in which students present their work and discuss it with seminar leader and their fellow students.

The three written memos serve as the individual components of a portfolio exam.

Absence from compulsory activities:  
  
For many courses, UiO requires participation in the form of compulsory activities. These must be approved before you can sit for the examination.  
  
If you are ill or have another valid reason for being absent from compulsory activities, your absence may be approved or the compulsory activity may be postponed.  
  
Report absence from or the need for a postponed deadline on a compulsory activity.

**Examination**

Portfolio exam consisting of three submissions that are also discussed during the seminars. The three submissions cover:

* Development of an interview guide.
* Coding of qualitative data.
* Critical assessment of qualitative methods applied in published scientific publications.