

Interpretive Works in Political Science, International Studies, and Related Fields

A Resource Bibliography

Compiled by Christina V. Harris, Nancy Y. J. Kim, and Julie Radomski

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As we were organizing resource materials in January 2021 to use in the 1st of the online Methods Clinics that we organized, we pulled up the “Interpretive Political Science — Readings by Subfield” bibliography that we had revised in 2015 from a 2011 original. We had designed that bibliography to highlight award-winning publications, mostly empirical, appearing in major outlets, in two or three versions: (1) a full-length treatment of the research topic; (2) a shorter piece on that same research which could be used in teaching; and/or (3) a more reflective engagement on the doing of that research, if available.

Recognizing how outdated the bibliography was, we approached Christina Harris, Nancy Kim, and Julie Radomski, then doctoral students at American University, to whom we were introduced by Dr. Robert Adcock, to ask if they would be interested in updating it. They took on that project; the result follows below, after much more work than any of us had imagined.

It is gratifying to see the extent to which interpretive work has blossomed in the various subfields of political studies, and we thank the bibliographers for making it possible for us to see that variety. We hope readers will find the bibliography of use in their own research and teaching, and if their own interpretive empirical research is not listed in the bibliography, that they will make the effort to bring it to others’ attention by posting the information to the various outlets available for that research (e.g., the APSA Connect page for the IMM Conference Group; the IMM listserv).

*Dvora Yanow (Wageningen University) and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (University of Utah)
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Preface

This resource bibliography builds on *Interpretive Political Science - Readings by Subfield plus some supplemental methodological works (updated June 2015 [November 2011])* by Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow. It was compiled at the invitation of (and with guidance from) Professors Schwartz-Shea, Yanow, and Robert Adcock. Like the former reading list, this set of readings is not meant to be exhaustive. However, recognizing that interpretivism holds a different place in political science in 2022 than it did twenty years ago,¹ we have sought to produce a document that allows users to easily access a vast range of interpretive works across political science, international studies, and associated fields, with a focus on post-Perestroika² publications. Although we are unable to capture all interpretive

¹ Several events took place in the early 2000s propelling discussions and publications on interpretive methods in political science, including the first Western Political Science Association (WPSA) Interpretive Methods workshop in 2003 and the American Political Science Association (APSA) Methods Café in 2005, as well as the Perestroika Movement (see footnote 2).

² Started in 2000, the Perestroika Movement in political science called for methodological pluralism in response to an American Political Science Association (APSA) dominated by quantitative and neo-positivist methods. Following this call for methodological pluralism, the APSA Qualitative and Multi-Method Research Section (originally called “Qualitative Methods”) was founded in 2003 and approaches such as interpretivism began to flourish through initiatives like Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea’s “Methods Café” started in 2005. See Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2004. “Perestroikan Straw Man Answers Back: David Laitin and Phronetic Political Science.” *Politics & Society* 32(3): 389-416; Funk, Kevin. 2019. “Making Interpretivism Visible: Reflections after a Decade of the Methods Café.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 52(3): 465-469; Monroe, Kristen Renwick (Ed.). 2010. *Perestroika!: The raucous rebellion in political science*. Yale University Press; and Yanow, Dvora and Peregrine

research publications here, we encourage others to document and share interpretive works beyond the scope of this project.

Given the large quantity of work published in recent years that might be described as interpretive, we opted to include only *explicitly* interpretive publications, meaning works that self-identify within the text of the publication as taking an interpretive approach. Across and within political science, international studies, and related fields, definitions of interpretivism vary. Broadly, prominent interpretive methodologists describe it as research that is centrally concerned with context-specific and shared social meanings (Bevir and Blakely 2018, Lynch 2014, Schaffer 2016, Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). However, there is divergence even among interpretive scholars regarding key concepts such as reflexivity, causality, and methodological pluralism, among others (see for example Schwartz-Shea 2019, Jackson 2020). Focusing on explicitly interpretive publications allows us to take a “big tent” approach to interpretivism that is inclusive of various definitions and scholarship that unambiguously embraces the interpretive label.

On the other hand, by selecting only explicitly interpretive publications we omit publications that may implicitly meet one or more of the definitions favored by the interpretive methodologists cited above.³ While we came across many such works, given the abundance of potential works to include on this bibliography and the thorniness of adjudicating whether publications are or are not interpretive, we agreed upon this conservative approach.

The readings in this bibliography are listed alphabetically by author last name and separated into two categories: “Methods and Methodology” (p. 5) and “Empirical and Theoretical” (p. 10). We used three methods to select the works. First, we included all of the works from Professors Schwartz-Shea and Yanow’s original resource document, *Interpretive Political Science - Readings by Subfield plus some supplemental methodological works (updated June 2015 [November 2011])*, as we were originally tasked with expanding upon and updating this document. These works are marked with an asterisk (*). Second, we added works that explicitly identify themselves as interpretivist or taking an interpretive approach AND that cite at least one of the following nine “touchstone” interpretive works, which are bolded in the bibliography:⁴

- Bevir, Mark and Asaf Kedar. 2008. "Concept formation in political science: An anti-naturalist critique of qualitative methodology." *Perspectives on Politics* 6(3): 503-517.
- Bevir, Mark and Jason Blakely. 2018. *Interpretive Social Science: An Anti-Naturalist Approach*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2018. *Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lynch, Cecelia. 2014. *Interpreting International Politics*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Pachirat, Timothy. 2018. *Among wolves: Ethnography and the immersive study of power*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Schwartz-Shea. 2010. "Perestroika ten years after: Reflections on methodological diversity." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 43(4): 741-745.

³ The use of the "interpretive" label is not common in some political science and international studies subfields, including our own disciplines of International Development Studies and International Peace and Conflict Studies. As such, our criteria inevitably exclude many of these subfield publications.

⁴ We acknowledge that there are many significant interpretive works beyond this list. The selections we chose include contemporary works highly cited within the interpretive community and utilized in qualitative and interpretive methods classes in American, and to some extent other Western, political science and international studies institutions.

- Schaffer, Frederic Charles. 2016. *Elucidating social science concepts: An interpretivist guide*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine and Dvora Yanow. 2012. *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Yanow, Dvora and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (Eds.). 2014/2006. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Wedeen, Lisa. 2010. "Reflections on ethnographic work in political science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 255-272.

To identify publications that cited these foundational sources, we entered each touchstone into Google Scholar's search engine⁵ and used the "cited by" feature. As many of these touchstone works have numerous citations on Google Scholar, to further limit the scope of our search we generally only reviewed works that cite a touchstone if they themselves had 25 or more citations.⁶ Because newer touchstones (published in or after 2017) have fewer citations, we generally reviewed works that cited these touchstones if they themselves had 10 or more citations.

Third, we included explicitly interpretive works that we identified during the course of our own research but that do not fall into the first two categories; these works are marked with a Latin cross (†). We also opted to not list individual interpretive chapters contained within interpretive edited volumes. Such volumes include: Bevir and Rhodes (2015), Schatz (2009), and Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2014/2006).

As a result of our backgrounds and the scholarly communities in which we are embedded, the publications included are skewed toward authors represented on the Interpretive Methodologies and Methods (IMM) Webpage of the American Political Science Association (APSA) (<https://connect.apsanet.org/interpretationandmethod/>) and works published in English by Western journals and publishing houses.

Other Resources

Beyond this list, there are several resource hubs that showcase and provide useful information about interpretive scholarship. Such resources include Syracuse University's Center for Qualitative and Multi-Method Inquiry (CQMI) (www.maxwell.syr.edu/cqmi/), which publishes *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (QMMR)* bi-annually (<https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/moynihan/cqrm/QMMR/>). The online journal *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research (FQS)* (<https://www.qualitative-research.net/>) also provides valuable interpretive methodological reflections. Additionally, the Social Science Research Network (SSRN) (<https://www.ssrn.com/>) publishes working papers that take an interpretive approach. Notably, series such as the Routledge Series on Interpretive Methods highlight books that provide methodological grounding for interpretive approaches. We have included the books from the Routledge Series in the bibliography below.

⁵ Although there are other powerful search tools such as Scopus, we decided to use Google Scholar because it is publicly accessible.

⁶ Google Scholar's "cited by" feature allows one to see all of the works that cite a specific publication. When using this feature, a popular publication may yield a list of hundreds if not thousands of works that have cited it. In such cases, Google Scholar's "sort by relevance" feature is useful as it lists the works generated by the "cited by" feature in order of their own citation count, thereby allowing one to prioritize which works to review.

Alongside an increasing acknowledgement and use of explicitly interpretive approaches in political science, international studies, and related fields since the early 2000s, there have been many formal recognitions of interpretive scholarship. Some of the most well-known awards are those offered by the IMM group at APSA: the Charles Taylor Book Award for interpretive methodologies and methods, the Lee Ann Fujii Award for Innovation in the Interpretive Study of Political Violence, the Hayward R. Alker Best Student Paper Award, and the Grain of Sand Award for longstanding contributions to interpretive studies in political science.

As of the writing of this resource, one can also join a number of interpretive research and discussion groups including, but not limited to, the APSA IMM group and Digital Discourse listserv (see <https://connect.apsanet.org/interpretationandmethod/>); APSA's IMM and Women's Caucus in Political Science monthly online Methods Clinic initiated in 2021 (<https://connect.apsanet.org/interpretationandmethod/methods-clinic/>); the British International Studies Association (BISA) Interpretivism in International Relations (IIR) Working Group (<https://www.bisa.ac.uk/members/working-groups/iirg/>); the Interpretation, Method and Critique (IMC) Network and Research Cluster at Australian National University (ANU) (<https://politicsir.cass.anu.edu.au/research/projects/interpretation-method-critique/>); the Interpretive Methods in Political Science (IM) Virtual Community (VC) hosted by the Western Political Science Association (WPSA) (<https://wpsavc.com/interpretive-methods-in-political-science/>); and the Interpretive Policy Analysis network (<https://ipa.science/>) linked to the journal of *Critical Policy Studies* and the annual Interpretive Policy Analysis Conference.

For PhD students and others looking to enhance their understanding of interpretive methods, the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR) at Syracuse University and the new Methods Excellence Network (<https://www.methodsnet.org/home>) are well-known for including courses dedicated to interpretivism. The European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Methods School offerings could also be checked. The International Studies Association-Northeast (ISA-NE) conference also hosts an annual one-day graduate student workshop on Interpretive and Relational Research Methods. Lastly, Nick Cheesman of ANU hosts the Interpretive Political and Social Science podcast through the New Books in Political Science Network where he features interviews with authors and editors of books on interpretive epistemologies and methodologies (<https://newbooksnetwork.com/category/academic-partners/interpretive-political-and-social-science>).

Methods and Methodology

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- Aradau, Claudia and Jef Huysmans. 2014. "Critical Methods in International Relations: The Politics of Techniques, Devices and Acts." *European Journal of International Relations* 20(3): 596-619.
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Empirical and Theoretical

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