

Further details of Professor Rhodes' presentation are:

"The lecture will assess the pros and cons of observational fieldwork illustrated with stories from my fieldwork on the everyday life of ministers and permanent secretaries in British central government departments and on the Chiefs of Staff (CoS) of Australian Prime Ministers.

*Everyday life in British Government* reports my shadowing of ministers and senior civil servants in three British government departments and seeks to answer the question 'how do things work around here?' It explores the reasons and actions of the ministers and permanent secretaries. It describes the governing elites' world through their eyes, and explores how their beliefs and practices create meaning in politics, policy making and public service delivery. It analyses how such beliefs and practices are embedded in traditions; in webs of protocols, rituals and languages. It describes how the political-administrative elite use protocols and rituals to domesticate rude surprises and cope with recurrent dilemmas.

*Lessons in Governing* reports my analysis of the job of the CoS to the Australian Prime Minister based on two focus groups with former CoS and extended elite interviews with recent incumbents. CoS are said to be the hidden face of power, but they no longer lurk in the background. How have Chiefs of Staff adjusted to the personalities, preferences and working styles of prime ministers? How have they navigated the murky networks and pressures of life at the centre of government? The fieldwork answers the questions.

I conclude that such fieldwork has many advantages:

- It is a source of data not available elsewhere,
- It is often the only way to identify key individuals and core processes,
- It identifies 'voices' all too often ignored,
- By disaggregating organizations, it leads to an understanding of 'the black box' or the internal processes of groups and organizations,
- It recovers the beliefs and practices of actors,
- It gets below and behind the surface of official accounts by providing texture, depth and nuance, so our stories have richness as well as context,
- It lets interviewees explain the meaning of their actions, providing an authenticity that can only come from the main characters involved in the story,
- It admits of surprises - of moments of epiphany, serendipity and happenstance - that can open new research agendas,
- It helps us to see and analyse the symbolic dimensions of political action."