OVERVIEW: This course is an introduction to qualitative research methods. The focus is on approaches and tools for investigating media and mass communication, but the course should be useful for graduate students interested in learning about and applying qualitative forms of inquiry across the social sciences and humanities.

The topics covered include archival and historical research, ethnography, interviewing, textual analysis, case studies, and other modes for addressing a wide range of questions related to media institutions, media production, media products/content/messages/texts, and media reception/audiences.

We will consider many dimensions and subsets of these various approaches, and study and discuss diverse examples of their use, often drawing on readings outside our field. We also will examine the contexts from which various methods have emerged, the politics of choice and attendant ways of knowing associated with their use, the role of the researcher in the research process, ethical issues and implications of research practice, and other challenges and problems. We’ll identify practical steps, tools and techniques of different methods, and you will have a chance to select and employ at least two approaches that are appropriate for specific research questions that interest you.

The course is intended to provide you with knowledge and skills necessary to evaluate qualitative research by other scholars, help prepare you to incorporate appropriate qualitative methods and study design into your own original research, and enhance your abilities to communicate your research efforts and results through effective writing and presentation.

General expectations for members of this seminar include consistent and punctual attendance at our weekly session, keeping up with all readings, careful and complete preparation for class, active and constructive class participation (including taking responsibility for selected presentations and leading discussions), completion of assigned projects and writings, and adherence to the highest standards of academic integrity.

READING & RELATED ASSIGNMENTS: All required readings, as well as many supplementary ones, are posted on the class ICON site. Please download, print out and read ahead (highlighting and marginalia recommended) in preparation for class discussions. In sophistication and volume, these readings have been selected with graduate students in mind.
Most weeks, all students will complete a common set of readings; in addition, for
two class sessions, you and one or two classmates will prepare handouts, make
presentations and lead discussions on these core readings along with selected
additional readings.

**RESEARCH PRACTICE:** Each student will design and conduct two research exercises
that employ an appropriate qualitative method to investigate a media/mass
communication question of interest to you. Consider these mini-studies that could
become components of larger projects. Students will prepare written reports as well as
class presentations on their experiences and findings, and then revise their writings for
submission at the end of the semester.

**GRADING:** We do this for the love of it, of course—not for money, nor for grades.
Nevertheless, your work will get graded, and if you are conscientious and determined,
some of it might even get you started on some journal publications. Expectations of all
students are high, but your own demands on yourself should be the highest of all.

Work will be graded as follows: A=exceptional work, B=very good work,
C=average work, D=unacceptable work, F=failing.

Elements are weighted as follows in your final letter grade for the semester:

- Two reading presentations with handouts @ 10 percent each: 20 percent.
  Evaluated for understanding of material, clarity and thoroughness of presentation and
  handout, provision of guidance for others, leadership of class discussion.

- Two research exercises, including presentation and final written report @ 30
  percent each: 60 percent. Research design and execution evaluated on appropriateness
  for question under study, sensible and systematic application of methods, sensitivity to
  research context and subjects, transparency, rigor; class presentation and written report
  evaluated for clarity, logic, coherence, organization, writing mechanics.

- Attendance, participation, short exercises, meeting deadlines, etc.: 20 percent.
  This includes class preparedness, constructive participation and collaboration,
  following instructions, completing readings, fulfilling responsibilities, etc.

**HOUSEKEEPING**

- **Please use your uiowa.edu e-mail account** (or if you use a different account, make
  sure it is linked to the **uiowa** address).

- **Check ICON regularly** for class updates and communications.

- **Plan ahead and pay attention to detail.** Take time and care with all assignments;
  revise, edit and proofread your writing conscientiously before sharing or submitting
  anything; make backups of all files, and keep copies of any printouts.

- **Meet your deadlines.** Start on time, work steadily, plan ahead and finish on time, if
  not ahead of time. Everyone in the seminar depends on everyone else keeping up.
OTHER COURSE POLICIES & INFORMATION

» Attendance is not optional. Except in cases of death in the family, serious illness, or other genuine emergencies or crises, you are expected to attend all class meetings. If you unavoidably must miss a class, notify the instructor in person or by e-mail in advance; if advance notice is impossible, provide written explanation/documentation of your absence as soon as possible.

» Common courtesy. Otherwise known as common sense, or what you learned in kindergarten. Arriving to class late/leaving class early is disruptive and inappropriate behavior. If other classes or obligations overlap with times scheduled for this course, rearrange the other matters or drop this course. Ringing cell phones are rude; texting during class is insolent; personal e-mailing in class is discourteous and distracting; and instructors hope they do not have to remind you of any of this.

» Unethical conduct. Plagiarism (i.e., expropriating words and ideas of others without due attribution) and cheating of any sort are grounds for a failing grade in the course. Please note also that you are expected to do original work specifically for this course; under no circumstances may you submit the same content for assignments required of you in other courses. For details on definitions and consequences of academic misconduct, see http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code

» Special accommodations. Academic arrangements for students with disabilities are handled with the cooperation of Student Disability Services, Burge Hall lower level, tel. 335-1462. Students needing special accommodations for any aspect of the course are urged to contact SDS and to speak with the instructor early in the semester. The Student Disability Services website is http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/

» Sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the School, College or University. For definitions, assistance, and the full University policy, see http://www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu/; on sexual misconduct involving students, see http://www.uiowa.edu/~our/opmanual/iv/02.htm

» Severe weather. If a weather event disrupts class, we will seek appropriate shelter in the building; and class will resume if possible when the event is over.

» Complaints. Show up during office hours, make appointments, and/or contact me by e-mail with thoughts and concerns. If you feel uncomfortable bringing a concern directly to your instructor or the course coordinator, you may consult David Perlmutter, director of the School of Journalism & Mass Communication; Dale Wurster, Graduate College senior associate dean of academic affairs; the University Ombudspersons; and/or other relevant authorities. Procedural information may be found under the “Student Rights” section of student policy guidelines, at: http://dos.uiowa.edu/current-policies-and-regulations-affecting-students-2010-2011-academic-year/
### Week 1
**M. Aug. 22**
**FOCUS, VISITORS, ETC**
**READINGS**
**OTHER PREPARATIONS**

### Week 2
**M. Aug. 29**
Overview of qualitative methods
wk 2 readings due
\textit{everyone presents}
potential research projects: topics, key concepts, central questions, appropriate contexts, possible methods, relevant challenges & problems

### Week 3
**Labor Day, No Class**

### Week 4
**M. Sept. 12**
Archives, historiography
3-4 pm: Frank Durham, historical mystery
wk 4 readings due
\textit{presenters:}
\underline{________________}
\underline{________________}
discussion questions for Prof. Durham
preliminary plans for two research exercises

### Week 5
**M. Sept. 19**
More on history & interdisciplinarity
3-4 pm: Cameron Thies of polisci, historical analysis
wk 5 readings due
\textit{presenters:}
\underline{________________}
\underline{________________}
discussion questions for Prof. Thies
preliminary bibliographies for two research exercises
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Ethnographic authority</th>
<th>wk 6 readings due</th>
<th>proposal for research exercise #1 – swap &amp; discuss</th>
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<tr>
<td>M. Sept. 26</td>
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<td>presenters:</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 7</th>
<th>Ethnographic approaches 3-4 pm: Jane Singer, ethnography in mcr</th>
<th>wk 7 readings due</th>
<th>discussion questions for Prof. Singer research updates</th>
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<td>M. Oct. 3</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Studying media production; international news</th>
<th>wk 8 readings due</th>
<th>proposal for research exercise #2 – swap &amp; discuss</th>
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<td>M. Oct. 10</td>
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<th>Week 9</th>
<th>Studying media content; discourse analysis, memory studies</th>
<th>wk 9 readings due</th>
<th>research updates</th>
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<td>M. Oct. 17</td>
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<td>presenters:</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Studying media reception; feminist ethnography, health comm. studies</th>
<th>wk 10 readings due</th>
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<td>M. Oct. 24</td>
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<td>Week</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Case studies; studying &quot;new&quot; media</td>
<td>wk 11 readings due everyone presents</td>
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<td>M. Oct. 31</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Ethical concerns, special issues &amp; challenges</td>
<td>wk 12 readings due presenters:</td>
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<td>M. Nov. 7</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Catchup</td>
<td>Finalize bibliographies</td>
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<td>M. Nov. 14</td>
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<td>Draft research reports– swap &amp; discuss</td>
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<td><strong>THANKSGIVING BREAK!</strong></td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Research presentations</td>
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<td>M. Nov. 28</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Research presentations</td>
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<td>M. Dec. 5</td>
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**FINAL WRITEUPS DUE BY 4 PM FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9TH**