Course description and objectives

This seminar provides an introduction to qualitative research methods for the study of media content, production, and reception. The course will be useful for graduate students interested in learning about and applying qualitative research for media and communication across the social sciences and humanities. Media in this course include a wide range of avenues for communication, from the traditional print format and broadcast media to online, interactive, and mobile media.

Methods covered in this course include textual analysis, ethnography, interviewing, case studies, and archival and historical research for addressing a wide range of questions related to media institutions, media production, media products/content/messages/texts, media reception/audiences, and interactive media consumption and production. Steps, tools, techniques, crafting the research design, data collection and management, and effective writing to disseminate qualitative research are emphasized.

We will consider many dimensions and subsets of these various approaches, and study and discuss diverse examples of their use, sometimes drawing on readings outside our field. We will examine the contexts from which various methods have emerged, types of knowledge that methodological choices will yield, the role of the researcher in the research process, ethical issues, and challenges and problems encountered in using these methods in specific research projects.

The course is intended to help you:

1. Develop a good grasp of the tools and techniques frequently employed in qualitative methods for media and communication research;
2. Develop the ability to thoughtfully select suitable methods for the research questions at hand;
3. Develop appropriate research designs to study aspects of media and communication using these methods;
4. Communicate your research efforts and outcome through effective writing and presentation;
5. Develop a paper that will lead to conference presentation and publication.

The following prescribed book for the course should be available at the University Bookstore at the Capitol Mall. Please check with the Resource Center at AJB also for copies placed on reserve.


Other readings will be uploaded periodically to the course ICON.
Course requirements:

For the most part, we will use student-generated reading responses to readings as “discussion starters" for each class period of assigned readings. Presentations will be sorted out in the first class session for the semester.

Assignments: Please adhere strictly to the deadlines set in the course calendar. See the grading section below for more details on each assignment. Guidelines for each assignment will be discussed in class and posted to ICON where I consider they are necessary. Writing is a critical part of communicating qualitative research and there are class sessions incorporating this element into the methods and analyses. This same care has to be shown in all writing assignments in this course. I strongly advise the use of the Writing Center for help with assignments before they are submitted to me. Please refer the following web site http://www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/ for details.

Course grading:

Attendance and participation (10%)
In this seminar, students will animate a good part of the discussion in class, and the instructor will moderate it. Good discussions depend on your preparation with readings before coming to class, so please ensure that you come to class prepared. To facilitate readings-based participation, each week students will bring in two discussion questions each based on assigned readings, to start class discussions. More details will be discussed in class.

Contributions to the discussion have to relate to the topic(s) on hand. Students come from diverse backgrounds and can bring insights to the class that will make for a rich learning experience all-round, and indeed this discussion space is (and should be treated as) a privilege. Every effort will be made to maintain a friendly environment conducive to productive and engaging discussions.

Effective participation assumes regular attendance. Regular attendance is assumed.

The attendance and participation grade does not include the reading responses – see number 1 below for reading responses.

Assignments (guidelines will be discussed for each):

1. 3 reading responses (readings you have selected) @ 5% = 15%
2. Research proposal = 10%
3. Article analysis – assigned groups will select an article that serves as an illustration of a method, present to the class, and write an individual report = 15%
4. Exercise in field research = 10%
5. Research paper = 40%

Pilot study (refer course calendar for workshop and due dates)
You will write a term research paper, 18-20 pages in length, on any aspect of the media that interests you. You will develop a study design using one or more of the qualitative methods we will have covered, collect pilot data, and write a paper that should be suitable for submission to a professional conference. We will have workshop sessions in class where you will get productive feedback from all of us on your draft paper.

Teaching Policies & Resources — CLAS Syllabus Insert

Administrative Home
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.
Electronic Communication
University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11).

Accommodations for Disabilities
A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Honesty
All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

CLAS Final Examination Policies
The final examination schedule for each class is announced around the fifth week of the semester by the Registrar. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the dates and times of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

Understanding Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather
In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.

A note on personal communication devices
When class is in session, please keep cell phones turned off. If you use laptops or handhelds, please keep to class materials and your notes and refrain from checking e-mail and social media accounts until the class session is over.
CALENDAR

**Note:** The calendar provides a general plan of materials for the course; deviations may be necessary. It is the student’s responsibility to keep informed of the correct schedule.

**Week 1 Jan. 23 Introduction**

People and course introduction, logistics, and so on.

Becker reading, ICON

LT (Lindlof & Taylor), Chapter 1

Jankowski & Webster reading, ICON

**Week 2, Jan. 28, 30 Issues and concepts**

Jackson, Drummond, & Camara reading, ICON

LT, chapter 2


Hine, chapter 1

**Week 3, Feb. 4, 6 Beginning the research project**

*Possible presentation by the communication bibliographer at Main Library, this week*

LT, chapter 3


LT, chapter 4

Hine, chapter 2

**Feb. 6 – Research proposal due**

**Week 4, Feb. 11, 13 Textual analysis I**

Pauly reading, ICON

Wester et al reading, ICON
Schroder reading, ICON

Prior reading, ICON

Due Feb. 13: Team 1 will submit a study/article using any form of qualitative textual analysis

Week 5, Feb. 18, 20   Textual analysis II

Hall reading, Encoding/Decoding. ICON.

Tonkiss reading, ICON

LT, chapter 7

Feb. 20: Team 1 presents article analysis of study using qualitative textual analysis

Week 6, Feb. 25, 27   Ethnography I


Sanday reading, ICON


Singer reading, ICON

Due Feb. 27: Team 2 will submit a study/article using ethnographic research

Week 7, Mar. 4, 6   Ethnography II


Kraidy, Marwan & Murphy, Patrick. 2008. Shifting Geertz. Communication Theory. UI Libraries E-journals

Vidich reading, ICON

Mar. 4: Team 2 presents analysis of study using ethnography

Due Mar. 4: Team 3 will submit a study/article using interviews or the participant observation method.

Week 8, Mar. 11, 13   Field research

LT, chapter 5

LT, chapter 6
Schwartz & Schwartz reading, ICON

**Mar. 13:** Team 3 presents analysis of study using interviewing or participant observation

Due **Mar. 13:** Team 4 will submit an example of a study using the case study method

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**Week 9, Mar. 18, 20** Spring break, no classes

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**Week 10, Mar. 25, 27** Case studies

Gerring reading, ICON

More readings TBA

Due March 25: Field observation assignment

**Mar. 27:** Team 4 presents analysis of study using the case study method

Due **Mar. 27:** Team 5 will submit an example of a study using historical methods

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**Week 11, Apr. 1, 3** Historical methods

Jordanova reading, ICON

Thies reading, ICON

Possible guest lecture,

**April 3:** Team 5 presents analysis of study using historical methods

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**Week 12, Apr. 8, 10** Feminist methodology

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**Week 13 Apr. 15, 17** Legal research methods

Readings TBA, possible guest lecture

**April 10** – Begin discussion of readings on Data Analysis and Writing

LT, chapter 8

Hine, chapter 3

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**Week 14, Apr. 22, 24** Data Analysis and Writing

LT, chapter 9

Hine, chapters 4, 5, 6
Week 15, Apr. 29, May 1  Research week

Week 16, May 6, 8  Presentations

Five presentations on each class period, structured as two conference sessions, with student moderators.

FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 13

Have a good summer!