The School of Journalism and Mass Communication
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

JMC:6333:0002
Seminar in Media Communication: Qualitative Methods

Syllabus
Fall 2019
Tuesdays, 3:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Classroom: E254 AJB
Instructor: Dr. Peter Gross
Office: E341 AJB
E-mail: peter-gross@uiowa.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. or by appointment

Course description

Qualitative research is essential if we are to understand how and why people perceive their surroundings, their institutions and all that they do and provide. The course is designed to acquaint students with the precepts of qualitative research approaches and familiarize them with the main methodologies available, both from the conceptual and practical perspectives.

The course offers a thorough and wide-ranging introduction to qualitative research methodologies employed in media, journalism and communication studies.

Goals and objectives
The aim of the course is to arm students with the tools necessary for studying a wide range of media and journalism issues, among them, relationships between audiences and media, media systems and individual outlets, and media and journalism and other societal institutions, to media and journalism roles and impacts, and comparing media and journalism across the globe.

Students will learn when, how, and why a particular methodology is to be employed, its intrinsic positives and negatives, and those vis-à-vis another potentially useful methodology.

Readings

Other reading materials will be provided in digital format or assigned.

Expectations
1. Weekly attendance is expected, as is meeting assigned deadlines.
2. Class participation = 20 percent of the final grade.
3. A first version of a written presentation of a methodology to be utilized in a specific research project (a detailed outline for this assignment will be provided the third week of the semester and the deadline for completion of assignment is week 9) = 30 percent of the final grade.
4. A final version of the written presentation of a methodology as it might apply to a student’s (a) research paper, (b) master’s thesis, or (c) Ph.D. dissertation (deadline for completion of assignment #4 is week 16) = 50 percent of the final grade.
Note: University regulations require that students be allowed to make up examinations which have been missed due to illness or other unavoidable circumstances. Students with mandatory religious obligations or UI authorized activities must discuss their absences with me as soon as possible. Religious obligations must be communicated within the first three weeks of classes.

Grading
Standard grading: 90-100 pts. = A; 80-90 = B; 70-80 = C; 60-70 = D

A Word about the Date and Time of the Final Exam:
The final examination date and time will be announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. I will announce the final examination date and time for this course at the course ICON site once it is known. Do not plan your end of the semester travel plans until the final exam schedule is made public. It is your responsibility to know the date, time, and place of the final exam. According to Registrar's final exam policy, students have a maximum of two weeks after the announced final exam schedule to request a change if an exam conflict exists or if a student has more than two exams in one day (see the complete policy here).

Weekly topics/schedule

Week 1 (Aug. 27, 2019)
What is research
Choosing a topic
Question(s)
Context
Relationship between methodologies and theories
So what?
How quantitative and qualitative methods differ and why they should be used together
The heuristic approach vs. all others
Culture – why talk about it in regard to qualitative research methods
Testing hypothesis, theories
What NOT to do

Week 2
The ethics of doing qualitative research domestically and internationally – problems, solutions and difficult to resolve issues (language) and legal considerations

Week 3
Interviews – lecture and discussion
Differing types
The questions – open and closed ended
Follow up
Selecting the interviewee

Detailed outline to students for written assignments
Week 4
Focus group interviews - What do they provide that individual interviews can’t
Structuring the questions - Follow ups
Choosing the group – who, why, etc.

Week 5
Practice week: instructor and students will set up individual and/or focus group interviews

Week 6
Participant observation
Pitfalls - What to know and watch out for…. 

Week 7
Legal research methods

Week 8
History - Historical Analysis

Week 9
International and comparative research

First version of written presentation of a methodology to be used in a specific research project

Week 10
Ethnomethodological research

Week 11
Textual analysis – different kinds

Week 12
Oral histories

Week 13
Analysing – cross-referencing - writing

Week 14
Internet – social media as tools

Week 15
Qualitative methodologies and theorizing and hypothesizing and testing

Week 16
Review – summation

Final written presentation of a methodology as it might apply to a student’s (a) research paper, (b) master’s thesis, or (c) Ph.D. dissertation.
Teaching policies & practices

Administrative Home
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and
governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other policies. These policies vary
by college (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook).

Absent Students
All students have the responsibility of attending class and of contributing to the learning of their peers
through active participation. Students are also responsible for knowing the absence policy of their
courses, which will vary by instructor. All syllabi must confirm to the UI policy related to student
absences, including the Holy Day obligations policy.

Accommodations for Disabilities
UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request
academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and
physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The
student should then discuss accommodations with the course instructor (https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/).

Nondiscrimination in the Classroom
UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective
of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to
optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The
University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race,
class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the
University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity
and Diversity (diversity.uiowa.edu).

Academic Integrity
All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the
College's Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension
or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address
(https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code).

Electronic Communication
Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and
must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

Making a Complaint
Students with a complaint should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the
departmental executive officer (DEO), also known as the Chair. Students may then bring the concern
to CLAS (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities).

Final Examination Policies
The final exam schedule for each semester is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are
responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel
plans until knowing this final exam information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before
finals (https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-examination-policies).

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 must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a
safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported
immediately. For assistance, definitions, and the full University policy, see https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/.