

COMM715: Advanced Qualitative Methods in Communication Research

Spring, 2016

Tuesdays, 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. (2127 Skinner Hall)

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Course Description

This is a follow-up course to an introductory qualitative methodology course (Comm714) that focused on qualitative methods for data collection and how to conduct in-depth interviews. In this advanced methodology course, the focus will be on epistemological approaches, ethics, reflexivity, and data analysis techniques. It aims to familiarize students with the different ways of *knowing and doing qualitative communication research* on a more advanced level.

This course is conducted as a seminar. Therefore, its success depends on the students' active participation and constructive engagement. I will introduce topics and some relevant readings; students are then expected to contribute additional readings, experiences, questions, and beliefs to the classroom discussions, in order to enrich the learning experience.

Objectives

The overall goal of COMM715 is to increase students' understanding of qualitative epistemology and methodology. Specifically, by the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- understand different epistemological approaches to qualitative methods;
- understand different qualitative data analysis methods;
- critique techniques that address the "validity" of qualitative studies; and
- complete a conference-quality paper based on a qualitative study.

Required Books

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M. & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wolcott, H. F. (2002). *Sneaky kid and its aftermath: Ethics and intimacy in fieldwork*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Warren, C.A.B. & Karner, Tracy X. (2005). *Discovering qualitative methods: Field research, interviews, and analysis*. CA: Roxbury Publishing Company.

Additional articles and book chapters will be handed out in class and posted on Canvas for this course.

Recommended Books

Wolcott, H. F. (2001). *Writing up qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wolcott, H. F. (1995). *The art of fieldwork*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Teaching Philosophy:

I adopt a “learner-centered” approach, especially in graduate teaching. This means that the major part of the learning process rests on YOU. It is the student who can derive and stimulate the educational process through active and intelligent engagement in all the course activities. The instructor plays the role of the moderator, or the facilitator, who helps the student to achieve the desired learning goals and objectives. In order for this philosophy to be effectively applied, it is of utmost importance that you exhibit maximum involvement, interactivity, and commitment throughout the entire semester. This involves regular class attendance, keeping up with the assigned readings, regularly submitting questions on the readings to stimulate classroom discussions, active in-class engagement in discussions, sharing useful readings and resources with the instructor and other students, and handing over well-written and completed assignments on time.

Grading

Students will be evaluated in this course based on the following:

Research spotlight presentation	10%
Lecture and discussion on epistemological approach	20%
Conference paper	60%
<i>Draft of Intro, Literature Review, Methods</i>	10%
<i>First draft of results/findings</i>	10%
<i>Final completed paper</i>	30%
<i>Paper presentation</i>	10%
Participation and in-class activities	10%
Total	100%

I reserve the right to give an essay exam during the semester and add its score to students' evaluation of the course if it seems the majority of students are not keeping up with the readings and/or not discussing them during class.

Grading will be on a 1000-point system, so the following grades will be given for the following total points at end of the semester:

967 – 1000	=	A+	800 – 833	=	B-	634 – 666	=	D
934 – 966	=	A	767 – 799	=	C+	600 – 633	=	D-
900 – 933	=	A-	734 – 766	=	C	below 600	=	F
867 – 899	=	B+	700 – 733	=	C-			
834 – 866	=	B	667 – 699	=	D+			

Research spotlight presentation

Once during the semester, each student will give a 20 minute presentation (with or without visuals) on an exemplary peer-reviewed journal article employing at least one qualitative method. This presentation should briefly summarize the journal article and then explain why the research is exemplary (e.g., extremely well executed methods section, outstanding theory development, novel data collection method, etc.). **At least one week before the date of this presentation, students must forward to me the full citation of the article they chose, or an electronic copy of it, if possible, so I can post it on Canvas for other students to access and read before coming to class.**

This research spotlight presentation is worth 10% of your final grade in this course.

Lecture and Discussion on Epistemological Approach

Each student will be responsible for one lecture and discussion pertaining to an epistemological approach for qualitative research. Each student must select readings in advance of their lecture/discussion that will then be assigned to all other students in the course to read for the appointed date of the lecture/discussion. It is expected that the lecture/discussion will consume about 2 hours of the class period on a particular class date (see the schedule of classes and assignments below). The rest of the class time may be set aside to discuss other assigned course readings, answer questions about the final paper, or clarify topics not fully discussed in former class periods.

The readings must not exceed 100 pages of text, excluding references. Readings must include at least the following:

- a) a historical text or classic text from an original author or famous scholar about this approach;
- b) an example of a published qualitative research study using this approach; and
- c) at least one or more readings that highlight a current perspective or relevant aspect of the epistemology: e.g., modifications to it, understandings and applications of it in communication (or other disciplines), critiques of it by critics, dialogues about it found in academic journals, etc.

You should also read other materials and bring other resources with you to class so that students can ask you questions and get details that were not included in the assigned class readings.

The lecture/discussion must include the following components (which come from the assigned readings, as well as the additional resources you read and brought to class):

1. Introduction, history, original creators/scholars of approach, definitions
2. Any evolutions, changes in approach over time
3. Specific characteristics and criteria that make up the current rendition of approach
4. How data might be collected using the approach
5. How data might be analyzed according to approach (think of ways you can use actual data for this)
6. Strengths and weaknesses of epistemological approach for purposes of discipline-specific research (communication, or other disciplines represented in class)

7. Discussion and critique of at least one example of a published qualitative study that illustrates this approach (this should be the one assigned, plus others that can be shared by you in class)
8. Discussion of how the approach is distinguishable from other epistemological approaches discussed in class.

Please Note: All of the students are expected to have read in preparation for your class discussion, so all the above points can be covered through discussion, interactions, and exercises with other students—not necessarily through any lecturing. However, you should be prepared to move forward with lecturing/presenting if need be.

You should forward your assigned readings to me at least two weeks before your presentation date, so I can post them on Canvas for the rest of the class to read.

Please select an epistemological approach and sign up for your presentation date by the second week of classes.

It is possible for two students to select the same epistemological approach and to do the lecture and discussion on it together, provided that I am previously informed about that and a clear, typed explanation of how the work load was divided equally among them is submitted to me on the day of their presentation. This exceptional arrangement may only be permitted if the number of students enrolled in the course allows for it. For example, if there are 8 students in the class and only 6 epistemological approaches. Otherwise, each student is expected to present on a set epistemological approach individually.

The lecture and discussion on the epistemological approach will be worth 20% of your final grade in this course.

Conference Paper

You will complete a quality conference paper by the end of this course, ready to be submitted to a call for papers by a national professional conference, such as PRSA Educator's Academy, International Communication Association (ICA), National Communication Association (NCA), or the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). Please check the calls for papers, submission requirements, and deadlines for these conferences.

Parts of the paper will be turned in to me throughout the semester, so you can receive my feedback and comments early and we can discuss the components of a conference paper while you engage in the writing process. A first draft of an introduction, literature review, and methods sections of the paper will be worth 10% of the final grade for the course. A first draft of the findings/results section of the paper will be worth another 10% of the final grade. The final conference paper will be worth an additional 30% of the grade. The presentation of the paper in class will be worth 10% of the final grade.

The conference paper, as a whole, will be worth 60% of your final grade in this course.

Participation and In-Class Activities

The participation component of your grade in this course will include frank and in-depth discussions in class, as well as active involvement in all in-class activities. To enhance in-class discussions, please come to each class prepared with two typed questions on the assigned readings. You will be asked to turn these questions in to me every class. The purpose of these questions is to aid the process of collective learning, facilitate classroom discussions, and better the students' understanding of assigned readings. It is expected that all students will come to every class fully prepared and actively involved. There are no make-ups for participation points that are accrued in class.

Participation and in-class activities will be worth 10% of the final grade for this course. Please note that this 10% could be the difference between an A and a B grade in this course!

Requirements for All Written Work

All written work must be typed, double spaced, printed in black ink, and be in 12-point type. Points will be deducted if these criteria are not met. In addition, errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling will hurt your grade. Most importantly, all work will be graded on comprehensiveness of ideas, depth of analysis, rigor of effort, whether all directions were followed accurately, in terms of both content and format requirements, and whether the assigned work was handed over on time.

Canvas

In addition to sending messages and information to students via course e-mail, the professor will also utilize the Canvas system to post important announcements, assignments, readings, and grades on a regular basis. Thus, it is expected that students will check their e-mails, in addition to the course's Canvas space regularly, to keep up with any course-related information or materials.

Policy on E-mail

E-mail is welcome and appropriate for minor questions or relaying brief (but necessary) information to the instructor. More complex information related to class discussions or assignments should be obtained through scheduled office hours or by appointment. No grades will be given out via e-mail. If you wish to discuss your grades, please use office hours or schedule an appointment. Also, the professor will be happy to answer short, specific questions about assignments via e-mail, but will NOT review completed assignments sent via e-mail, or any other method, prior to the actual submission date of the assignment.

Policy on Late Assignments

Except for documented illness or family emergency, any student expecting to miss an assignment or other course deadline must have my approval at least one week in advance. Students who miss an assignment or a deadline due to illness or family emergency must notify me within 2 days of the assignment or deadline in question. Failure to meet a deadline or turn in an assignment at the scheduled time without explicit approval by me, and without notification to me within 2 days of the assignment, will result in a score of 0 on this assignment.

Academic Integrity

Students have the responsibility to behave honorably in an academic environment. Academic

dishonesty including cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism, will be not tolerated. Examples of academic dishonesty include: taking credit for someone else's words; failure to give credit for paraphrased or actual quotations; cheating on an assignment or helping another student to cheat on an assignment. Any abridgement of academic integrity standards will be referred to the Assistant Dean and forwarded to the University's Office of Judicial Affairs. Confirmation of such incidents can result in expulsion from the University. Students who are uncertain as to what constitutes academic dishonesty should consult the University publication entitled Academic Dishonesty or the website: <http://www.inform.umd.edu/jpo/>

Honor Pledge

The University has a nationally recognized Honor Code, administered by the Student Honor Council. The Student Honor Council proposed and the University Senate approved an Honor Pledge. The University of Maryland Honor Pledge reads:

I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.

Unless you are specifically advised to the contrary, the Pledge statement should be handwritten and signed on the front cover of all papers, projects, or other academic assignments submitted for evaluation in this course that is worth 20% or more. Students who fail to write and sign the Pledge will be asked to confer with me.

Policy on Sexual Harassment

We will adhere to the University of Maryland Policy and Procedures on Sexual Harassment. This includes “unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational working environment.” For more information consult: <http://www.inform.umd.edu/Pres/policies/vil20a.html>

Students with Disabilities

Students with special needs have a legal right to receive appropriate accommodations for this class. If you need special accommodations, please schedule a meeting with me at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

Religious Observances

The University of Maryland policy provides that students should not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs; students shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances. It is the student's responsibility to inform me of any intended absences for religious observances at least one week in advance.

Policy on Incompletes

The grade of “Incomplete” is given only to a student whose work in a course has been qualitatively satisfactory, and when, because of illness or other circumstances beyond his/her control, he/she has been unable to complete some small portion of course work. In no case will a grade of “I” be recorded for students who have not completed major course assignments or the conference paper in this class.

Online Course Evaluation

The University of Maryland started a system of online course evaluation. The purpose of this system is to enable UMD students to voice their opinions and feedback openly, freely, and confidentially. It is very important that you offer your feedback on this course in the most honest and objective manner through this channel. By doing so, you can contribute to enhancing the educational process in this prestigious institution of higher education.

Flu Prevention and Preparedness

What you should do to prevent getting sick from the flu:

- Get vaccinated: young adults up to 25 are priority for new vaccine against this flu.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible.
- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Use your shirt sleeve or elbow to cover nose and mouth instead of your hands, if no tissue available.
- Purchase and carry your own hand sanitizer, to use after each class and other public areas.

What you should do if you become ill:

- Stay home when sick.
- Stay away from your classes and limit interactions with other people (self-isolation) for at least 24 hours AFTER you no longer have a fever without fever-reducing medication.
- We can communicate messages about class and other situations affecting class through the e-mail listserv.

Expected Classroom Conduct

All students in this course should meet the following classroom conduct expectations:

- Please ensure that you come to class on time and remain in class until the end of class. Walking in late and leaving early, or walking in and out of class periodically during class time, is disruptive to students' concentration and teaching effectiveness.
- It is assumed that you will adopt a mature and respectful behavior towards your classmates and the instructor.
- It is the class policy that all pagers and cell phones should be turned off throughout the entire class.
- Laptops should not be used in class, except for the purpose of typing notes. Any unrelated uses, such as chatting, checking e-mail, posting on Facebook or tweeting, etc. are prohibited.
- You should always come to class fully prepared by reading all the assigned readings before coming to each class and bringing along the required questions on the readings
- You are expected to effectively participate by taking part in in-class discussions and activities
- All your assignments should be submitted on time in a professional and neat format.
- All of your submitted work should be authentically your own.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

- Feb. 2 Introduction to the course; going over the syllabus; orientation to qualitative methodology; brainstorming on topics; going over IRB application guidelines
- Feb. 9 **Interviewing; research design; coordinating your research project**
Miles, Huberman & Saldana (chs. 1 and 2)
Warren & Karner (chs. 1, 6 and 7)
(Students to inform the instructor of the date of their “research spotlight presentation”, their selected epistemological approach, and their conference paper topic for approval)
- Feb.16 **Fieldwork; issues in compiling and organizing secondary research**
Miles, Huberman & Saldana (ch.4)
Transforming Qualitative Data (Wolcott) (pp. 1-54)
Warren & Karner (chs. 3 and 5)
(IRB applications should be submitted to the instructor for approval)
- Feb.23 **Ethics, Laws and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research**
Miles, Huberman & Saldana (ch. 3)
Warren & Karner (chs. 2 and 4)
Sneaky Kid and Its Aftermath (Wolcott) (chs. 1, 2, 3 and 8)
- March 1st **Types of Qualitative Data Analysis**
Warren & Karner (ch.9)
Miles, Huberman & Saldana (chs. 5 and 6)
Transforming Qualitative Data (Wolcott) (pp.55-172)
- March 8th **Types of Qualitative Data Analysis (Cont.)**
Miles, Huberman & Saldana (chs.7, 8 and 9)
Transforming Qualitative Data (Wolcott) (pp.173-310)
(Introduction, literature review and methods draft DUE)
- March 15th **Types of Qualitative Data Analysis (Cont.)**
Miles, Huberman & Saldana (ch.10)
Transforming Qualitative Data (Wolcott) (pp.311-373)
(Practical in-class exercise on analyzing qualitative data)
- March 22nd **Writing and Presenting Qualitative Research**
Warren & Karner (ch.10)
Miles, Huberman & Saldana (chs. 11, 12 and 13)
Writing Up Qualitative Research (Wolcott) (pp.109-183)
(Practical in-class exercise on analyzing qualitative data)
- March 29th Student Lecture and Discussion: Grounded Theory

April 5th Student Lecture and Discussion: Symbolic Interactionism

April 12th Student Lecture and Discussion: Phenomenology
(Results and findings draft: DUE)

April 19th Student Lecture and Discussion: Ethnomethodology

April 26th Student Lecture and Discussion: Feminist Epistemology/Black Feminist Epistemology

May 3rd Student Lecture and Discussion: Cultural Studies Approach
(Conference paper DUE)

May 10th **In-class Presentations of Papers**
Last day of classes

*Please note that this syllabus is subject to change. Other readings and handouts could be provided by the instructor, either as hard copies or as electronic copies on Canvas. Students are also encouraged to share additional readings and handouts with the instructor and other students. Guest speakers may be occasionally invited to speak to the class on different topics.

Good Luck ☺