

Communication and Culture (CMCL) 313 – Lecture 02
Interdisciplinary Research Methodologies
Fall 2012
Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 – 10:45

Instructor: Dr. Delia Dumitrica
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Office Hours: Tuesday, 15:00 – 17:00 or by appointment

Additional Information

- ▲ This is a reading, writing and research intensive course.
- ▲ The course takes a hands-on approach, where students work on developing a group research project on social media in Calgary.
- ▲ Assessment is based on a combination of individual and group work.

Calendar Description

A critical introduction to interdisciplinary research methodologies. Students will explore, practice, and critique various quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and various perspectives on the processes of knowledge production.

Course Description

This course introduces students to the basic elements of designing and conducting social research. Topics covered in this course include: designing a research project, conducting a literature review, assessing the ethical aspects of social research, quantitative research methods, and qualitative research methods.

Objectives of the Course

The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the process of social research. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Evaluate social research methods.
- Design, conduct and write a social research project.
- Critically evaluate social research done by yourself and others.

Internet and electronic communication device information

All cell phones should be silenced for the entire duration of the class. Laptops, smartphones and tablets can only be used for taking notes or working on the research projects.

Required Textbook:

Neuman, L. & Robson, K. (2009). *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, Canadian Edition*. Toronto: Pearson Allyn & Bacon.

Assignments and Evaluation

This course takes a 'hands on' approach to designing and conducting social research. You will work both individually and in groups, on specific research projects focused on social media in Calgary. Although there is no grade for participation, you are expected to read the required readings ahead of class and to participate in all class activities. Failure to do so will significantly impact your ability to complete the assignments for this course.

You will be graded on the following assignments:

- Group work contract and schedule (individual) (5%) – *September 20, 2012*
- Literature review (individual) (15%) – *October 4, 2012*
- Research proposal (group) (10%) – *October 11, 2012*
- Methods report (group) (20%) – *November 8, 2012*
- Reflective essay (individual) (20%) – *November 22, 2012*
- Final report (group) (30%) – *December 6, 2012*

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. Assignments overdue for more than a week will not be accepted.

Description of assignments

All assignments in this course focus on designing, planning, conducting and evaluating a research project on social media in Calgary. Students will work in groups to develop a research proposal and to reflect on the research methods used to collect data. Each student will choose and apply a specific method individually; the group will then compare and evaluate the members' use of the chosen method. There are two types of assignments:

- **Individual assignments:**
 - **A group contract and a working schedule.** This assignment paves the way for the group project, ensuring a fair distribution of work and a fair grading process for the group assignments. Students will work on developing a group contract outlining the learning objectives for the group project, the responsibilities and expected behavior of each group member, a group and an individual working schedule, as well as a peer and self-

evaluation form. This assignment will be graded individually and will help the group assess each member's contribution to the group work.

- **A literature review** of 5 academic articles (approx. 1000 words). This assignment helps you become familiar with the method that you will use as part of your contribution to the group project. The literature review will contain a summary, as well as an evaluation of the 5 academic articles dealing with your chosen method.
- **A reflective essay** addressing the difficulties and challenges you encounter in the research process (approx. 1500 words). This assignment allows you to reflect on the application of your chosen research method. Using both academic sources and your own experience with the method, you will describe the method and the way you have applied it, and evaluate its suitability for the research project undertaken by the group.
- **Group assignments:** Unless there is compelling evidence to indicate otherwise, all group members will receive the same grade on the assignment. However, should a student's performance deviate significantly from the contract and the working schedule described above, the instructor may choose to grade each student individually and to assess the applicable penalties. A combination of self and peer-evaluation will also be taken into account in assessing group members' contribution to the group project.
 - **A research proposal** (approx. 1000 words). This assignment paves the way for the group research project. The proposal will outline the research question, the specific case pertaining to social media in Calgary, the methods to be applied by each group member and a preliminary assessment of the suitability of these methods.
 - **A methods report** discussing the method to be used in the research project (approx. 2500 words). This assignment allows students to reflect on the advantages and limitations of research methods, paving the way for the final report. The report compares and evaluates the individual experiences with different methods, assessing their suitability to answer the proposed research question.
 - **A final report** discussing the research project and its findings (approx. 4000 words). This assignment prompts students to reflect on the research process, assess the findings and the purpose of social research. The final report will contain a brief description of the research project (including the a discussion of the methods applied by each student) and an interpretation of the findings.

Further information about the assignments will be provided in class and posted on Blackboard.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture: (Revised, effective September 2008)

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Digital Family Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see
<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see
<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:
<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

To be provided on the first day of class and posted on Blackboard.