

Department of Communication and Culture
Communications Studies COMS 615- Seminar 01
Research Methods in Communication and Culture
Winter 2014
Tuesdays 1:00-15:45 SS 202

Instructor: Dr. Barbara Schneider
Office/Phone Number: SS 320; 220-7738
Office Hours: By appointment
Email: baschnei@ucalgary.ca
Website: www.ucalgary.ca/baschnei

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the major research approaches used in the fields of communication and culture studies.

Course Objectives

- To examine major methodological traditions and research tools within communication and culture studies.
- To examine connections between theories and research methods.
- To experience the data gathering and analysis process.
- To develop skill in writing effective research proposals.
- To understand the social context of the research process, including the practical, political, and ethical dimensions of research.

Textbooks/Readings

- Seale, C. (Ed.). (2012). *Researching culture and society*. 3rd edition. London: Sage.
- Additional readings on Blackboard
- Research articles TBA.

Assignments and Evaluation

1. Seminar presentation

Various dates

15%

Once during the term, prepare to lead discussion on the readings for one of the research methods covered in the course (in pairs, depending on the number of students in the course). This requires that you do extra reading on the method. There are a number of research methods handbooks that will help you. You have 20 minutes for a presentation that addresses some of the following aspects of the method: theoretical underpinnings, including why and how the method developed (i.e. in response to particular theoretical and/or methodological debates or problems); a brief description of how the method is usually carried out; debates among proponents of the method; critiques of the method. You will be expected to meet with me and to provide a published study using the method related your research interests two weeks before your presentation so I can approve it and it can be posted on Blackboard. Be prepared to lead discussion of how this application of the approach/method illustrates its main characteristics, strengths, and limitations. Other students will be expected to read the study. Please submit your presentation notes to me in written form after your presentation.

2. Data gathering exercise**February 25****20%**

Carry out a research interview with someone who is a potential research “subject” for a research project related to your interests and write a paper (8-10 pages) discussing it. More information will be provided in class. I will obtain ethics approval for the class for this assignment.

3. Research proposal.**March 25****25%**

Write a research proposal (5 pages) on a topic of your choice. If you are planning to carry out your thesis research next year, I encourage you to begin (or continue) your planning with this assignment. If you are not yet ready to choose a topic and site for your final project, this assignment will give you practice in writing a research proposal.

A proposal typically has the following components. See the Kelly article (in Seale) for more detailed information.

Title

Background/Problem Statement (including research question(s))/Relevance of study

Literature review/Theoretical framework

Methods/Research design

Schedule of research

Bibliography

You must have a clearly conceived research question. Your literature review must cite at least five empirical studies on your topic (i.e. studies in which the author has conducted research on human subjects using one of the methods studied in the course). You may, of course, also cite theoretical sources. As this is a methods class, your methods section will be of particular interest. Please do not just mention the approach you will use; provide an elaboration of the application of this method. For example if you are planning interviews or focus groups, describe how you will carry out the interviews/focus groups and provide sample questions.

4. Critical Essay (10-12 pages)**April 16****40%**

Write a critical essay that examines theoretical issues related to a method of your choice. If you know which method you will use for your thesis/project, I encourage you to discuss that method. This essay will provide you with material that could drop right into the method section of your thesis. Each method exists in a number of versions, each of which has strengths and weaknesses, proponents and critics. Discuss philosophical, theoretical, and methodological aspects of these debates, and the ways in which methodological and analytical choices are embedded in theoretical choices. Also discuss limitations of the method and the politics and ethics of its application.

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

Note: Please hand in your papers directly to your 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's- scheduled exam: No

Policy for late assignments: At the discretion of the instructor, assignments submitted after the deadline **may** be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

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. You will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up any assignments 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 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 Writing Support Services. 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 for all Graduate courses:

Letter Grade	Grading Scale	Grade Point Value (see U of C Calendar: Academic Standing)
A+	96-100	4
A	90-95.99	4
A -	85-89.99	3.7
B+	80-84.99	3.3
B	75-79.99	3
B-	70-74.99	2.7
C+	65-69.99	2.3
C	60-64.99	2
C-	55-59.99	1.7
D+	53-54.99	1.3
D	50-52.99	1
F	0-49	0

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 Writing Support Services (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital 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 Graduate 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 Student Accessibility Services (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 www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/su

Graduate Students' Association

For details on the Graduate Students' Association, please see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/GSA/>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman, please see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/GSA/services/ombudsperson.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly Points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and assembly points, please 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 (ie. surveys, interviews, observation) as a 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:

Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB)
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics/cfreb>

Reading List

- Schneider, B. (2012). Participatory action research, mental health service user research, and the Hearing (our) Voices projects. *International Journal of Qualitative Research*, 11(2), 152-165.
- Balcazar, F. E., Keys, C. B., Kaplan, M. A. & Suarez-Balcazar, (1998). Participatory action research and people with disabilities: Principles and challenges. *Canadian Journal of Rehabilitation*, 12, 105-112.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. Ch. 1.
- Gubrium, J. F. & Holstein, J. A. (2000). Analyzing interpretive practice. In Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), *Sage handbook of qualitative research*, second edition. Pp. 487-508. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2012). Feminist research: Exploring, interrogating, and transforming the interconnections of epistemology, methodology, and method. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis*, second edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage. Ch. 1. pp. 2-26.
- Sparkes, A. (2002). Autoethnography: Self-indulgence or something more? In A. Bochner & C. Ellis (Eds.), *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature, and aesthetics* (pp. 209-232). New York: Altamira Press.

Schedule of Lectures

Jan. 14	Introduction and course overview. The research process.
Jan. 21 Crotty, Seale 2, 3, 4, 5	Paradigm, methodology, method. The qualitative-quantitative dichotomy. Ethics in research.
Jan. 28 Seale, 8, 9, 30	The logic of positivism. Causality, sampling, measurement, reliability, validity.
Feb. 3 Seale 11, 18, 19	Surveys. Content analysis. Quantitative data analysis.
Feb. 11 Seale 12, 13	Interviews. Focus Groups.
Feb. 18	Reading Week. No Class
Feb. 25 Seale 14, Sparkes,	Ethnography. Autoethnography. Data gathering paper due
Mar. 4 Seale 23, 24, Gubrium & Holstein	Discourse analysis. Conversation analysis.
Mar. 11 Seale 22, 21	Grounded theory. Qualitative data analysis. Bring Seale textbook to class.
Mar. 18 Seale 16, 6, 7, 10, 25	Analyzing images. Narrative. Writing a proposal and a thesis.
Mar. 25 Balcazar et al., Hesse-Biber	Participatory action research. Feminist approaches. Proposal due
Ap. 1 Seale 27, 31	Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Rescuing your project
Ap. 8	The Politics of Research. Wrap up. Critical essay due Ap. 16