

CMST 3470 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies	FALL 2018
Section: 001	
Room: Old Main 117	MWF: 1:30-2:20 PM

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Office Hours: MW: 11:00 AM–1:00 PM
Also available by appointment.

Ethnographic truths are inherently partial, committed, and incomplete – James Clifford

The analyst creates a meta story about what happened by telling what the interview narratives signify, editing and reshaping what was told, and turning it into a hybrid story, a ‘false document.’ – Catherine Riessman

Required Texts:

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

**Other readings/materials will be available on CANVAS. Check the syllabus.

Course Description/Objectives

This course will expose you to the qualitative paradigm, allowing you to understand the arguments qualitative researchers advance to explain the merits of qualitative methodologies. In doing so, we will explore how a researcher’s ontological concerns and epistemological orientations are what influence their research pursuits. As students of qualitative methodologies, you will be given the opportunity to engage in fieldwork, providing you with an opportunity to engage in observations, analysis, and making conclusions about a certain phenomenon. By the end of this course, the goal is for us to have a better understanding of the qualitative paradigm. Students will learn that:

- Truth is situational and intrinsically partial.
- Context is of extreme importance, calling for the need for thick descriptions.
- As researchers, we ought to pay attention to issues of power and representation.
- Because of the importance of the researchers’ positionality, research ought to be reflexive.
- Research methodologies, including those used by qualitative researchers, are only useful to the extent that they capture and fulfill the goals of the research project.

COURSE POLICIES

Written Assignment Format: All written assignments will be in typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins on all sides of the document. No extra spacing between paragraphs or before or after lines. Everyone is expected to follow APA 6th edition manual

(unless otherwise negotiated) when citing sources for your written assignments.

Late Work/Missed Assignments:

- Late work will not be accepted unless a valid reason is provided. When accepted, you may receive a 5-point deduction per 24 hours for up to 5 days after the due date (including weekends). No papers will be accepted beyond 5 days and will result in a zero on that assignment.
- If you miss **any assignment** due date because of a documented illness or emergency situation, you **MUST** provide me with an official note (doctor, police, etc.) justifying why you were not able to make the due date. All notes must be accompanied by a contact number, as this number will be called to verify your illness or emergency.

Special Needs and Accommodations

Disability Resource Center at Utah State University will work with students needing additional accommodations to academically succeed in this class. Students with ADA-documented physical, sensory, emotional or medical impairments may be eligible for reasonable accommodations. Veterans may also be eligible for services. All accommodations are coordinated through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) in Room 101 of the University Inn, (435)797-2444 voice, (435)797-0740 TTY, (435)797-2444 VP, or toll free at 1-800-259-2966. Please contact the DRC as early in the semester as possible.

24/7 Rule Regarding Assignment and Grade Discussions

You are encouraged to discuss assignments and course grades with me frequently to assess your progress throughout the semester and so we can discuss ways to achieve your goals in this course. In general, grades will not be discussed via email or phone. If you should have a question or complaint regarding a grade, please wait 24 hours before bringing it to my attention. After 24 hours, call or email me with a brief description of your concern. As a general approach, please review any assignment feedback in detail and prepare specific questions and concerns you have before our meeting. In essence, develop your argument before you set up the meeting. You must, however, address the issue within one week of receiving the grade/feedback. After one week, the issue is no longer open for discussion (this time will obviously be truncated for the end of semester assignments). This policy ensures that you think through the points you wish to make, review feedback against assignment criteria, and make improvements for future assignments.

Attendance and Participation

You are required to attend class and participate in different activities with your peers. Failure to miss class with greatly affect your participation grade for both the class and group. You have two excused absences that you can use for family emergencies. Any subsequent absences will result in lowering your participation grade 4 points. You should also know that being late twice will count as an absence. This will come from your class participation. You will receive a ZERO = for anything done in your absence unless your absence is excused (a result of a documented illness or a university sponsored travel).

Professionalism

Professionalism includes respecting others' opinions, being respectful to those who are speaking during lectures and discussions. It also includes working together in a spirit of cooperation. This

is an extremely interactive class, and it is important that we all respect one another, participate to the best of our abilities, and learn to feel comfortable with one another. I will not allow you to be disrespectful toward others.

Class conduct:

- No student is permitted to create a threatening, intimidating, or harassing environment in this course. Classroom civility is a part of the Student Code, and infractions will be pursued through the Student Conduct Coordinator. This course will be conducted in a safe and tolerant environment, and any person who detracts from that environment will be first given a verbal warning about the behavior. If said behavior persists, the student will be asked to leave the class and will not be able to return until the case is settled to the satisfaction of the professor.
- Cellular phones and other electronics are not to be utilized during class time as they distract both the user and the rest of the class. Laptops are permitted for note taking and collaboration, so you should not have your laptop open unless it is time to take notes.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

DUE ON CANVAS BY 11:59 PM ON THEIR DUE DATE.

The following assignments will be completed by each student. You can determine your percentage (and grade) by totaling the points you have accumulated and dividing those points by the number of points possible. It is your responsibility to keep track of your scores. All assignments must be typed in Times New Roman 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins unless otherwise indicated.

Assignments	Points	Your Points Earned
I - CITI TRAINING	20	
II – Field Project		
Exploration of Field Sites	25	
Research Proposal	40	
Narrative Map Tour	30	
Field Notes	35	
Formal Field Notes & Field Log	50	
Rough Draft	50	
Final Paper	100	
III– Workshops 6 @ 5	30	
IV – Exams 2 @ 50	100	
V – Participation	40	
TOTAL POINTS	520	

Grading System

The following grading scale will be used in the course:

A = 93%-100%	A- = 90%-92%	
B+ = 87%-89%	B = 83%-86%	B- = 80%-82%
C+ = 77%-79%	C = 73%-76%	C- = 70%-72%
D+ = 67%-69%	D = 63%-66%	D- = 60%-62%

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule provides an outline for our time together this semester. The schedule is displayed by week and day below. Please note that this schedule is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

Week	Date	Topic	Reading Due * On CANVAS	Assignments Due
1	Aug 27 th	Intro to the Course		
	Aug 29 th	Qualitative Research & Issues of Context	Textbook Ch. 1	
	Aug 31 st	Introduce Field Project		
2	Sep 3 rd	LABOR DAY	NO CLASS - LABOR DAY	
	Sept 5 th	The Qualitative Conversation	Textbook Ch. 2	
	Sept 7 th	<i>Continued ...</i>		CITI Training
3	Sept 10 th	Paradigmatic Considerations	Textbook Ch. 3	
	Sept 12 th	<i>Continued ...</i>		
	Sept 14 th		FIELD DAY	Exploration of Field Sites
4	Sept 17 th	Reflecting on Fieldwork	Textbook Ch. 4	
	Sept 19 th	Writing Proposal	Textbook Ch. 5	
	Sept 21 st	<i>Continued ...</i>		
5	Sept 24 th	Fieldwork, Fieldnotes, & Field Focus	Textbook Ch. 6	
	Sept 26 th	<i>Continued ...</i>		
	Sept 28 th		FIELD DAY	Research Proposal
6	Oct 1 st	Interviewing	Textbook Ch. 7	
	Oct 3 rd	<i>Continued ...</i>		
	Oct 5 th	MIDTERM REVIEW		

7	Oct 8 th	Advanced Interviewing	Textbook Ch. 8	
	Oct 10 th	<i>Continued ...</i>		
	Oct 12 th		<u>MIDTERM EXAM</u>	
8	Oct 15 th	Data Analysis	Textbook Ch. 9	
	Oct 17 th		FIELD DAY	Narrative Map Tour
	Oct 19 th	FALL BREAK	NO CLASS – FALL BREAK	
9	Oct 22 nd	Advanced Data Analysis	Textbook Ch. 10	
	Oct 24 th	<i>Continued ...</i>		
	Oct 26 th	Pause and Reflect	Sharing Field Experiences	
10	Oct 29 th	Qualitative Quality	Textbook Ch. 11	
	Oct 31 st	Writing Qualitative Tales	Textbook Ch. 12	
	Nov 2 nd	<i>Continued ...</i>		
11	Nov 5 th	Qualitative Research Matters	Textbook Ch. 14	
	Nov 7 th	<i>Continued ...</i>		
	Nov 9 th		FIELD DAY	Field Notes
12	Nov 12 th	Workshop – Coding		
	Nov 14 th	Workshop – Coding		
	Nov 16 th	Workshop – Coding		
13	Nov 19 th		FIELD DAY	Formal Fieldnotes and Field Log
	Nov 21 st		THANKSGIVING BREAK	
	Nov 23 rd		THANKSGIVING BREAK	

14	Nov 26 th	Workshop – Peer Reviewers		Full Length Rough Draft
	Nov 28 th	Workshop – Peer Reviewers		
	Nov 30 th	Workshop – Peer Reviewers		FINAL PAPER
15	Dec 3 rd		Ch. 13. Drafting, Polishing, and Publishing	
	Dec 5 th	FINAL REVIEW		
	Dec 7 th	CLASS WRAP-UP	FINAL REMARKS	

FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 10th, 1:30-3:20 PM

Appendix

I - CITI Training

To participate in this class, you must take ethics training (CITI). First, go to <https://rgs.usu.edu/irb/training/> and click, “start CITI training.” Create an account to affiliate yourself with USU. Once you do that, go to “My Learner Tools for Utah State University.” Click on “Add a Course.” Select the first option, “Human Research Curriculum (satisfies IRB certification requirements, not RCR) **Basic Course**” then click “Next.” Select the first option, “Group 1: Social & Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel.” Complete this training.

II - Field Project

1. Exploration of Field Sites

In 2 pages, describe three potential field sites and/or group of participants for your study. For each, discuss: (1) The site or people you want to work with and the general research issue(s) you want to explore; (2) How the site or people of interest are complementary with your theoretical, practical, or professional interests; (3) How your background and experience affects the ability to gain access to these contexts or people; and (4) Your plan for having access to this site by [specified time]. See Tracy, Chapter 1, for details.

2. Research Proposal

In 2–3 pages, describe a social and/or theoretical issue or “problem” you plan to explore in your research site. Phrase your approach in the form of one or more research questions (see Chapter 1). Describe why an emic qualitative study of this phenomenon is especially warranted and valuable. Explain several sensitizing concepts from past experience or research that align with your interests. How will these concepts help focus your research? As a bricoleur, what types of data could you piece together in order to answer your research questions? These research issues/problems/questions may change; this is a place to start. See Chapter 2 for details.

3. Map and Narrative Tour

Complete a detailed map and narrative tour of your site (or a key part of your site). Note key people (or types of people), artifacts, and objects and their relation to each other. Accompany the map with a narrative tour – a mini interpretation of the scene – that explains what the map says about research participants’ values, rules, priorities, ways of being, status, power, and so on. Ask the question: What does this tell me, conceptually about this place? (try to see things as “evidence” of certain arguments). Include as many “senses” (sight, sound, smell, taste, feel, mood) as possible. Provide an updated version of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum. See Chapter 4 for details.

4. Fieldnotes

Write a set of fieldnotes that represents at least 10 hours of participant observation that reflect the guidelines for good field records and observations. Provide an updated rendition of your guiding research question(s) at the front page of your fieldnotes. See Chapter 6 for details.

5. Formal Fieldnotes

Prepare and turn in at least 5 hours of formal field notes that represent thick descriptions. You should review Chapter 6 for guidelines on developing formal field notes. You must hand in a date/time log that reflects your 10 hours of fieldwork. Failure to turn in either the formal fieldnotes or field log results in a zero for the assignment.

6. Research Paper

- a. Introduction/Purpose/Rationale
- b. Literature Review
- c. Research Questions
- d. Methodology (fieldwork, participation, observation etc.)
- e. Analysis/Findings
- d. Conclusion
- e. References

III – Exams

There are **TWO** examinations this semester. Both exams will cover assigned readings and lectures. Early exams or make-up exams will rarely be given, and only to students who have unavoidable conflicts—that can be documented—with the exam time. The exams will consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions.

IV – Workshops

Throughout this semester, you will participate in workshops that are meant to provide you with the opportunity to learn from your peers. You are expected to attend these workshops and come prepared to participate in them. Preparedness requires that you finish any required tasks before coming to class on a workshop day.

V – Participation

Because this is a 3000-level class, a high level of individual participation is expected of each student. As you cannot participate if you are not in class, regular attendance is therefore vital to your overall success in this course. Please arrive *on time* having already completed the assigned reading, ready to engage in our discussion of the materials.

NOTE: Please see Attendance and Participation for more information on how your participation grade will be calculated.