

Journalism 409 Section 2

Qualitative Research Methods in Journalism

Winter 2002
Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30 – 4:45 p.m.
Lee Hills 101

Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Bonnie Brennen

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 2-3:30 p.m., and by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed to introduce graduate students to common qualitative approaches applicable to the study of journalism and mass communication. Students will learn a variety of approaches, practical methodologies, and tools that will help them to prepare to conduct research as part of their continuing work in the graduate program.

COURSE TEXTS:

Jensen and Jankowski, eds. *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research*.

Berger. *Media Research Techniques*, Second Edition.

Additional Course Readings on reserve in the Journalism Library. All reserve readings are also available electronically, under J409, password “bonnie”

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Participation:

In a seminar, attendance is by nature mandatory. Each student is obligated not merely to attend, but also to participate in each class session. To participate, each student must have prepared by completing all of the assigned readings and assignments and by thinking critically about each of those readings and assignments. Students will be assigned to specific groups that will take turns serving as “super readers” for each of the class sessions. No additional preparation is required of “super readers” but they will be expected to contribute significantly to the class discussion. The general class format will include class discussion on weekly readings each Tuesday and class discussion of weekly assignments on each Thursday.

Weekly Research Assignments:

Students will complete a variety of individual research assignments relevant to the approaches addressed in the class. Each assignment is intended to give students the opportunity to learn more about the method under consideration. Students should always draw on the weekly readings to help guide their analysis and discussion. All assignments should be typed, double-space, and are due at the beginning of class on the Thursday of the week assigned.

The first assignment is a three page analysis of a piece of quantitative research found in a research journal. Students should briefly summarize the research findings and then discuss possible strengths and weaknesses of the research specifically related to the methodology used. Be sure to draw on some of the readings addressed in class these first two weeks to help guide your analysis and discussion. Please attach a copy of the research article under analysis. This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, January 31.

The second assignment is a semi-structured interview, conducted in person, with a subject of the student's choice. After the interview is completed, please include a list of all questions asked and complete a three page paper which discusses the interview process, analyzes both the subject's and the interviewer's behavior, and assesses the value of the information acquired. This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, February 7.

The third assignment is a participant observation. Students will observe and describe a situation, event, or activity. After the observation, students should complete a three page analysis and interpretation of their observations. In addition they should also critique their own specific interpretations of the observations. This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, February 14.

The fourth assignment is a three page analysis of a piece of historical research. Each student should evaluate the evidence found in the text and all of the footnotes in a piece of historical research of the student's choice. Be sure to attach a copy of the historical research and base your analysis on the concerns raised in this week's readings. This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, February 21.

The fifth assignment is an oral history open-ended interview with a retired person regarding his/her career. During your interview, try to incorporate some of the oral history techniques addressed in this week's readings. Following the interview, complete a three page analysis of the interview process. Be sure to compare your experiences during this interview with the semi-structured interview you did for February 7. This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, February 28.

The sixth assignment is an analysis of legal research. Using the legal side of the Lexis/Nexis database, compile a bibliography of ten sources from law reviews that document the evolution of statements of opinion in libel law as it relates to the 1991 *Milkovich v. Lorain Journal* case. Drawing on these ten sources, complete a three page paper which explains what scholars have been saying about Milkovich during the last ten years and describe the various approaches these authors use to make their case. This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, March 7.

The seventh assignment is a textual analysis of a newscast or a news program. Student should complete a three page analysis of the basic themes, focus, language, and intention of the program of their choice. The assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, April 4.

The eighth assignment is a three page rhetorical or psychoanalytic analysis of a feature article found in a women's or men's magazine. Be sure to include a copy of the article you chose as well as commentary on why you picked the article. The assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, April 11.

The ninth assignment is a three page ideological critique of a newspaper photograph using a specific theoretical orientation (such as feminism, cultural studies, or political economy) to frame the analysis. Be sure to include a copy of the photograph and draw on this week's readings to guide your critique. The assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, April 18.

The tenth assignment is a three page semiotic analysis of a print advertisement. Be sure to include a copy of the advertisement with your analysis and to draw on this week's readings to inform your analysis. The assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, April 25.

The eleventh assignment is a reception analysis of a television game show. Each student should watch the program with at least two other individuals who are not members of this class. Be sure to note their response to the show. After the program is complete, interview them on their reasons for watching the show, their opinions of the program, and their level of interest in this type of show. Your three page analysis should also include your response to the other individual's response to the show. The assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, May 2

Research Proposal:

Each student will select an area of interest and an issue or problem that you would like to explore. At best students will propose research that they would like to conduct for their project or thesis. The final research proposal should be approximately fifteen pages long and should include a statement of the research question; an introduction explaining the relevance of the question; a discussion of the theoretical framework guiding the work; a description and literature review of the method and research tools you wish to use; and a brief literature review of some of the most relevant scholarly work related to the proposed topic. The final research proposal is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, May 9.

Grading:

The instructor will use a percentage scale for computing grades:

90-100	A	The work is error free, intellectually rigorous, and shows and excellent understanding and command of the material
80-89 %	B	The work has few errors and shows a good effort at understanding the material
70-79%	C	The work has substantial errors and shows little progress toward gaining an understanding of the material
69 & below	F	The work shows no understanding of the assignment or was not completed in a timely manner

Grades are based on a 100% scale. The weight of assignments will be as follows:

Class Participation, Including group presentations	15%
Weekly Research Assignments	50%
Research Proposal:	35%

Expectations:

Students are expected to attend each class session. Make-ups or excused absences are given for illness, university excused activities, and for family and personal emergencies. If you know that you will be absent, please notify me, in advance. Assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the date they are due. One full letter grade will be deducted for each day an assignment is late. Your written work should be of professional quality; spelling, grammar, and punctuation count. Please make sure that all work is your own and that all sources of information are accurately quoted and represented.

Any act of academic dishonesty as defined in the Missouri catalogue, the Journalism Master's Program Handbook (p. 7), or the M Book will result in a failing grade on the assignment. In addition, the student will be reported to the administration for official action. The following statement for academic dishonesty comes from the Provost's Office:

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honestly acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that range from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting to collaboration, consult the course instructor.

Academic misconduct includes the following: extensive use of materials from another author with or without citation/attribution, extensive use of materials from past assignments, or from current assignments in other classes. For in-class exams, academic misconduct includes conferring with classmates, copying/reading someone else's test and using notes and materials without prior permission. The School of Journalism is committed to the highest standards of academic and professional ethics and expects its students to adhere to those standards. Students are expected to observe strict honesty in academic programs and as representatives of school-related media. Should any student be guilty of plagiarism, falsification, misrepresentation, or other forms of dishonesty in any assigned works, he/she will be subject to a failing grade from the course instructor and disciplinary action will be recommended pursuant to University regulations. Classroom misconduct will not be tolerated. Forgery, obstruction or disruption of teaching, physical abuse or safety threats, theft, property damage, disruptive, lewd, or obscene conduct, abuse of computer time, repeated failure to attend class and/or repeated failure to participate or respond in class all constitute misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.

Instructor's Academic Freedom Policy:

Some of the material dealt with in this class may be perceived as controversial or offensive to some students. While students are encouraged to respond to the material and to freely offer their opinions, if any student becomes uncomfortable with any of the topics, or finds any of the material questionable, that student is urged to see the instructor about an alternative assignment.

Religious Holidays:

Students are excused for religious holidays. Students should notify the instructor in advance if they plan to observe a religious holiday.

Statement for ADA:

If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. You may see me privately after class, or during my office hours.

To request academic accommodations (for example, a note taker), students must also register with Disability Services, AO38 Brady Commons, 882-4696. It is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting academic accommodations, and for accommodations planning in cooperation with students and instructors, as needed and consistent with course requirements. Another resource, MU's Adaptive Computing Technology Center, 884-2828, is available to provide computing assistance to students with disabilities. For more information about the rights of people with disabilities, please see ada.missouri.edu or call 884-7278.

Class Schedule

Week 1: January 22 & 24 -- Introduction to Qualitative Research

READ: Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture"
Christians and Carey, "The Logic and Aims of Qualitative Research"
Chapter 1, Jensen and Jankowski
Chapter 1, Berger

Week 2: January 29 & 31 -- Charting the Landscape

READ: Pauly, "A Beginners Guide to Doing Qualitative Research"
Chapter 2, Jensen and Jankowski
Chapter 8, Berger

Assignment 1 is due at the beginning of class of Thursday, January 31

Week 3: February 5 & 7 – Interviews

READ: Fontana and Frey, "Interviewing"
Sumpter, "Daily Newspaper Editors' Audience Construction Routines"
Chapter 4, Jensen and Jankowski
Chapter 6, Berger

Assignment 2 is due at the beginning of class of Thursday, February 7

Week 4: February 12 & 14 -- Ethnography and Participant Observation

READ: Bloch, "Political Bumper Stickers as a Communication Event in Israel"
Atkinson and Hammersley, "Ethnography and Participant Observation"
Chapter 11, Berger
Chapter 8, Jensen and Jankowski

Assignment 3 is due at the beginning of class of Thursday, February 14

Week 5: February 19 & 21 – History

READ: Yodelis Smith, "The Method of History"
Smythe, "The Reporter, 1880-1900"
Chapter 12, Berger
Chapter 10, Jensen and Jankowski

Assignment 4 is due at the beginning of class of Thursday, February 21

Week 6: February 26 & 28 -- Oral History

READ: Thompson, "The Voice of the Past"
 Anderson and Jack, "Learning to Listen. Interview Techniques and Analyses"
 Brennen, "The Use of Oral Sources in Journalism History"
 Morrissey, "On Oral History Interviewing"

Assignment 5 is due at the beginning of class of Thursday, February 28

Week 7: March 5 & 7 -- Legal & Policy Research

READ: Barzun and Graff, "Truth, Causes, and Conditions"
 Davis, "Personal Jurisdiction in Online Expression Cases"
 Gillmor and Dennis, "Legal Research in Mass Communication"

Assignment 6 is due at the beginning of class of Thursday, March 7

Week 8: March 12 & 14 -- Focus Groups

READ: Adams, "Television as Investigated Using Focus Group Techniques"
 Greenbaum, "Focus Groups: An Overview"
 Greenbaum, "Common Mistakes in Focus Groups"
 Chapter 9, Berger

Be prepared to participate in a focus group during class on Thursday, March 14

Week 9: March 19 & 21 -- Public Opinion Research/ Research Proposals

READ: Traugott and Lavrakas, "Why Do Pollsters Use Samples?"
 Traugott and Lavrakas, "Problems and Complaints About Polls."
 Leshner and Thorson, "Overreporting Voting"

Bring three research questions to class on Thursday, March 21

Week 10: March 26 & 28

NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Week 11: April 2 & 4 -- -- Textual Analysis

READ: Lester-Roushanzamir and Roman, "Global Village in Atlanta: A Textual Analysis"
 Chapters 5 & 6, Jensen and Jankowski

Assignment 7 is due at the beginning of class of Thursday, April 4

Week 12: April 9 & 11 – Rhetorical and Psychoanalytic Analysis:

READ: Berger, “Psychoanalytic Criticism”
 Coupland, “Styling Selves & Relationships in Over-50s Dating Advertisements”
 Palmer & Duffy, “The Reality of Virtual Hate”
 Chapter 7, Berger

Assignment 8 is due at the beginning of class of Thursday, April 11

Week 13: April 16 & 18 -- Ideological Criticism

READ: Berger, “Ideological Criticism”
 Cormack, “Methods of Analysis”
 Cormack, “Opening the Wall”

Assignment 9 is due at the beginning of class of Thursday, April 18

Week 14: April 23 & 25 -- Semiotics

READ: Manning and Cullum-Swan, “Narrative, Content, and Semiotic Analysis”
 Berger, “Semiotic Analysis”
 Strinati, “Structuralism, Semiology and Popular Culture”

Assignment 10 is due at the beginning of class of Thursday, April 25

Week 15: April 30 & May 2 -- Reception Analysis

READ: Lotz, “Assessing Qualitative Television Audience Research”
 Chapter 7, Jensen and Jankowski

Assignment 11 is due at the beginning of class of Thursday, May 2

Week 16: May 7 & 9 -- Ethics of Research

READ: Punch, “Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research”
 Bok, “Deceptive Social Science Research”

Research Proposals Due at the Beginning of Class, Thursday, May 9