

CST 399

Communication Research Methods

Spring 2008 (9:30-10:45 @ Cury 303)

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Office Hrs: T&R 12:30-1:45p.m. & by appt.

COMMUNICATION STUDIES MISSION STATEMENT

*We research, teach, and practice communication
to cultivate the ethical voices of people that speak in critical, constructive, and
transformative ways to identities, relationships, and communities.*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces you to a variety of communication research methodologies. The field of Communication includes three general paradigms—social scientific (behavioral, “discovery”), interpretive, and rhetorical and critical—and these paradigms are more or less linked to specific research methods. We will survey the methods to understand how each paradigm conceptualizes and studies human communication. By familiarizing ourselves with the methods, our goal is to become more informed, critical consumers of Communication research and theory.

This is a writing intensive (WI) course. We will not simply read about a variety of methods, but we will practice, analyze, evaluate, and reflect on them to gain working knowledge of the methods. Be prepared to put significant amount of time in writing. Please visit the writing center’s website (<http://www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter/index.html>) for further information regarding the writing emphasis resources available to you.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the relationship between paradigms and methodologies. That is, what types of questions different paradigms ask about human behavior, relationships, and interactions and how they go about finding answers to the questions. Concomitantly, you should be able to appreciate that different methods must be understood and evaluated in the context of the paradigms that underlie the methods.
2. Explain the basic research methods and processes used in communication studies for each of the three paradigms—social scientific, interpretive, and rhetorical and critical.
3. Understand and utilize the criteria for evaluating various types of Communication research.
4. Increase your working knowledge of the role of primary sources, including the use of journal articles and other research publications, as a tool for understanding human communication.
5. Utilize communication research methods as a means to improve critical thinking, reading, and writing to inform our everyday lived practices so we may enact our lives in a manner reflecting the mission statement of the department.

TEXTS

Merrigan, G., & Huston, C. L. (2004). *Communication research methods*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Several required readings are on blackboard. Print out the readings and bring them to class.

REQUIRED ONLINE TOOLS

Blackboard. We will use Blackboard extensively in this class for a number of purposes including posting announcements, assignments, and grades, and submitting assignments. Visit Blackboard daily, because I make announcements between class periods.

E-mail Communication. You must be reachable at your UNCG e-mail address. Please check your e-mail everyday.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Further information of each assignment will be provided in class as the assignment comes up.

Class participation	20%
Interview transcriptions (5% each)	10%
Fieldnotes	5%
Qualitative methodologies reflection	15%
Exam	25%
Rhetorical criticism presentation	10%
Rhetorical criticism paper	15%

Class Participation. We will engage in many in-class activities (e.g., responses to films, experiential exercises) to enhance our understanding of course material. You must be in class and actively participate in these activities to earn points for the activities. Missed activities may not be made up.

Interview Transcription. This assignment provides you with an opportunity to practice your interviewing skills and prepare data for analysis. Your transcribed data will be used in class for an analysis exercise.

Fieldnotes. You will visit a “field” to conduct an ethnographic fieldwork and produce fieldnotes. Your fieldnotes will be used in class for an analysis exercise.

Qualitative Methodologies Reflection. You will summarize and reflect on your qualitative methodologies, linking your interview and fieldwork experiences with the course material.

Rhetorical Criticism Presentation & Paper. Based on one of the rhetorical criticism methods, you will analyze a “text.” You will share your analysis through a presentation and a paper.

Grade Scale. A=90-100%; B=80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F=below 60% (plus and minus are in thirds of these categories).

Grading System. This course follows the UNCG Grading System (visit www.uncg.edu/reg/Catalog/current/AcaRegs/Grading.html for additional information).

- A: EXCELLENT**—indicates achievement of distinction and excellence in several if not all of the following aspects:
 - 1) completeness and accuracy of knowledge; 2) intelligent use of knowledge; 3) independence of work; 4) originality.
- B: GOOD**—indicates general achievement superior to the acceptable standard defined as C. It involves excellence in some aspects of the work, as indicated in the definition of A.
- C: AVERAGE**—indicates the acceptable standard for graduation from UNCG. It involves such quality and quantity of work as may fairly be expected of a student of normal ability who gives to the course a reasonable amount of time, effort, and attention. Such acceptable standards should include the following factors: 1) familiarity with the content of the course; 2) familiarity with the methods of study of the course; 3) full participation in the work of the class; 4) ability to write about the subject in intelligible English.

- D: BELOW AVERAGE**—indicates work which falls below the acceptable standards defined as C but which is of sufficient quality and quantity to be counted in the hours of graduation if balanced by superior work in other courses.
- F: WELL BELOW AVERAGE**—indicates failure that may not be made up except by repeating the course. The performance is characterized by more than one major flaw and an extraordinary amount of minor flaws.

COURSE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Academic Honor Policy. Misconduct such as cheating (e.g., using unauthorized information during an exam), fabrication (e.g., inventing and using false data or information), and plagiarism (e.g., presenting someone else's idea as your own or without citation; allowing your work to be used by others without citing you) will result in disciplinary sanction ranging from a failing grade for the assignment to expulsion from the University depending on the seriousness of the misconduct.

You may study with other students, but each of you must write your own paper/answer based on your own insights and understanding of the issue at hand. Two or more papers/answers that share much resemblance will be considered as a case of plagiarism, and the authors will receive zero for the assignment.

Please familiarize yourself with the Academic Honor Policy described in the current Student Handbook. Each student is required to sign the Academic Integrity Pledge on all major work submitted. For the details of the types of violations, sanctions, and the hearing process, please visit <http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/policy/academicintegrity>.

Attendance and Participation. Your regular attendance and active participation are imperative to your learning in this course. Here are the definitions of attendance-related concepts I use for this class:

- Complete attendance:** Come to class on time and pay thoughtful attention to class until the class session is over. No activities unrelated to our class (e.g., text-messaging, surfing on the net, homework). I will ask you to leave the classroom if you engage in irrelevant activities.
- Partial attendance (= ½ attendance):** Late arrival (arrive after the roll is taken) and early departure (leave before the session is over). It is your responsibility to let me know of your presence if you arrive after the roll is taken.
- Excused absence:** The absence is due to a university-sanctioned event, a sudden illness, a traffic accident, death in your family, or a jury duty. The absence will be excused after providing legitimate documentation (e.g., doctor's note) and completing any activities that you missed during the class session in question.
- Unexcused absence:** All other absences not included in the "Excused absence."

You may be excused for two absences without penalty. Use this privilege wisely for doctor's appt. or any other reasons other than the excused absences defined above. After the first two absences (or 4 partial attendances), you will lose 2% from the final grade for every unexcused absence.

Whether your absence is excused or unexcused, you are responsible for catching up with any information and assignments you missed.

As a member of the class, you are expected to demonstrate the following:

- Evidence of careful reading of the assigned readings. Bring a well thought-out question or two from the assigned reading(s) to class as part of your participation.
- Frequent, thoughtful, respectful and reflexive contributions to class activities.
- Listen to all opinions carefully and respond to them as co-equals, not antagonists.

Communication with the Instructor. Maintaining timely and consistent communication with me is absolutely CRITICAL to your successful participation in the course. Bring my contact information

everywhere you go. Please make an appointment with me if you cannot make it to my office hours. I will be happy to make an arrangement to meet with you at a different time.

Discrimination and Harassment. The University policies regarding affirmative action and sexual misconduct are enforced in this class. If you feel discriminated against or harassed by students, faculty, or staff on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, or disability, please contact the office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (334-5099). You can find the details of the policies and procedures at <http://saf/dept.uncg.edu/conduct/>.

Incomplete Grade. An incomplete grade is given only when a student has completed most of the assignments successfully and has attended class regularly but was unable to finish the final project or the final exam due to an extreme circumstance such as being hospitalized for an illness or an accident.

Keeping Track of Your Grades and Progress. Your grades will be posted on Blackboard so you can keep track of your progress and grades. Come to talk to me within a week after a grade is posted when you have questions about the grade or you need my assistance in improving your future grades. I want everyone to succeed in my course, but I will not know what concerns you have until you initiate a conversation with me.


Learning Difficulties. If you have a documented disability or medical condition that may affect your participation in this class, please contact Disability Services, 208 Elliot University Center, 334-5440 (voice & TTY) as soon as possible. During the first week, please bring me a copy of the documentation from the Access Center describing the accommodations that you need in the course.

Saving Assignments. Save your assignments in your computer or through other secure means and keep all written assignments that are graded and handed back to you until the final grade is posted. I will keep exams and papers for one semester after you completed my course. You are welcome to come to my office to collect your papers/exams. After a semester, I will discard all remaining exams/papers from the previous semester.

Submission of Assignments. All written assignments must use the APA style and must be typed, double-spaced with 1" margins all around. Use 12 font size Times New Roman. Proof-read all papers. A paper that fails to meet these guidelines will automatically receive a one letter grade deduction.

HARD COPIES are required for all paper assignments. No electronic submission is accepted unless otherwise specifically instructed. An assignment that is due outside class should be turned in to the Department office (Ferguson #103) between 8a.m. and 5p.m. or hand it to me BEFORE the due date. DO NOT slide your paper under my office door. A late paper maybe accepted for a week after the deadline with a penalty: -5% after the deadline (the beginning of the class) but on the due date before 5p.m. and -10 % per calendar day including weekends.

COURSE CALENDAR

*This schedule is tentative and subject to revision by the instructor. Changes are announced in class and on blackboard prior to the dates that are affected by the changes.  indicates readings from a textbook, and **BB** means readings from Blackboard. Have the readings done before you come to class.*

Week 1

Jan. 15 Course overview: Goals, expectations, and requirements.

Jan. 17 Essential questions in communication research (📖 Merrigan & Huston, chs. 1-2)

Week 2

Jan. 22 Essential questions in communication research (📖 Merrigan & Huston, chs. 3-4)

=== **Interpretive Research** ===

Jan. 24 Qualitative interview (**BB** Warren & Karner, chs.6-7)

Week 3

Jan. 29 Protection of human subjects and ethical issues in qualitative research
APA style

Jan. 31 Ethnographic research (📖 Merrigan & Huston, ch.11; **BB** Warren & Karner, chs. 4-5)

Week 4

Feb. 5 Ethnographic research (cont.)

Feb. 7 Autoethnography (**BB** Tillmann-Healy; Neumann)

February 8: Shades of color conference (8:00am- 5:00 pm, EUC)

Theme: "The Politics of Perception: Race, Gender, and Cultural Identity." Presented by the Office of Multicultural Affairs in partnership with African American Studies.

<http://maf.dept.uncg.edu/training/SOCC/index.html>

Week 5

Feb. 12 Analyzing qualitative data (**BB** Warren & Karner, ch. 9)
Interview transcriptions due (bring two copies)

=== **Social Scientific/Discovery Research** ===

Feb. 14 Survey research (📖 Merrigan & Huston, ch. 5)

Week 6

Feb. 19 Experimental research (📖 Merrigan & Huston, ch. 6)
Fieldnotes due (bring two copies)

Feb. 21 Content and interaction analyses (📖 Merrigan & Huston, ch. 7)

Week 7

Feb. 26 Descriptive statistics and hypothesis testing (📖 Merrigan & Huston, ch. 8)

Feb. 28 Qualitative methodologies discussion
Qualitative methodologies reflection paper due

Week 8

Mar. 4 Testing differences and relationships (📖 Merrigan & Huston, ch. 9)

Mar. 6 Conversation and discourse analysis (📖 Merrigan & Huston, ch. 10)

Week 9 Spring break

Week 10

Mar. 18 **Exam**

Mar. 20 *Harriett Elliott Lecture Series –EUC Auditorium*
Dr. Brenda Allen: “Communicating Difference Matters” (Interactive lecture)

==== **Rhetorical Criticism & Critical Studies** ====

Week 10

Mar. 25 Neo-Aristotelian analysis (**BB** Foss, Ch. 3 and a sample essay by Gary Brown)

Mar. 27 Cluster analysis (**BB** Foss, Ch. 4 and a sample essay by Kimberly Elliott)

Week 12

Apr. 1 Fantasy-theme criticism (**BB** Foss, Ch. 5 and a sample essay by Kimberly McCormick & David Weiss)

Apr. 3 Ideological criticism (**BB** Foss, Ch. 8 and a sample essay by Derek Buescher & Kent Ono)

Week 13

Apr. 8 Metaphor criticism
 📖 Foss, Ch. 9 (including sample essays by Ryan Blum and Maria Kanengieter-Wildeson)

Apr. 10 Narrative criticism (**BB** Foss, Ch. 10 and a sample essay by Yuko Kawai)

Week 14

Apr. 15 Critical studies (📖 Merrigan & Huston, ch. 10; **BB** Battles & Hilton-Morrow)

Apr. 17 Critical studies (**BB** Tretheway; Allen)

Week 15

Apr. 22 Critical studies_(**BB** Gunkel; Delgado)

Apr. 24 Critical studies wrap-up

Week 16

Apr. 29 **Rhetorical criticism presentations (& 1 page outline)**

May 1 **Rhetorical criticism presentations (& 1 page outline)**

Final Exam Period - Thursday, May 8, 12 noon-3p.m.

Rhetorical criticism presentations (& 1 page outline)

Rhetorical criticism paper due