

Communication Research Methods: CST 399
Spring 2007 Ferguson Building 113 MW 2:00 – 3:15 p.m.

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and by appointment

Communication Studies Program Mission Statement
We teach students the study of the strategic and ethical uses of communication to build relationships and communities.

Course Overview

When you have a need to know something, in what ways can you go about finding the answer? That is the central question that will guide our inquiry into Communication Research Methods. Along the way, we'll discover what counts as "truth" or valid ways of knowing for different research logic systems surrounding communication issues. Developing a strong understanding and use of research methods is a practical and important skill for students of communication studies to use in internships, future careers, and graduate school education.

The growing trend in high education institutions is to get involved in the surrounding communities to address long-standing social, economic, and political concerns. Thus, in this course we will be engaged in community-based research (CBR). Students, faculty, and community members will collaboratively design and implement research that validates multiple sources of knowledge, promotes the use of multiple methods of discovery, and supports wide and varied distribution of the knowledge produced. In doing so, we will extend the capacity of our nonprofit community partners to potentially bring about positive social change in the areas that they operate.

This course carries with it a service-learning (SVL) designation to acknowledge our service to the community through specially designed research programs. As you conduct the research, you will increase your understanding of a specific social issue and the broader community concerns requiring citizen involvement.

Participation in this upper-level undergraduate course requires that you have successfully completed the core department requirements (CST 200, 207, 210, 300) or have received prior permission from the instructor.

Course Objectives

1. Understand the basic methods used by researchers in communication studies for each of the following paradigms—social scientific, interpretive, rhetorical and critical.
2. Develop quantitative and qualitative research programs to investigate communication questions.
3. 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 communication.
4. Critically evaluate communication research.
5. Design and conduct a community-based research project.

Required Resources

Text

Frey, L.R., Botan, C.H. & Kreps, G. L. (2000). *Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods, 2nd ed.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Other Readings

Throughout the semester, I will place readings on e-reserve through Blackboard, including but not limited to:

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I. & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes.* Chicago: University of Chicago.

Fine, M., Weis, L., Weseen, S. & Wong, L. (2000). For whom? Qualitative research, representations, and social responsibilities. In N.D. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research, 2nd ed.*, pp. 107-131. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Goodall, H.L. (2000). *Writing the new ethnography.* Lanham, MD: AltaMira.

Hocking, J. E., Stacks, D. W. & McDermott, S. T. (2003). *Communication research, 3rd ed.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Strand, K., Marullo, S., Cutforth, N., Stoecker, R. & Donohue, P. (2003). *Community-based research and higher education.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wood, M. (2003). From service to solidarity: Engaged education and democratic globalization. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 8*, 165-181.

Blackboard

We will be using Blackboard periodically to post announcements, administer quizzes, etc. Make it a habit to visit Blackboard. Your username and password are the same as your UNCG e-Spartan email account.

Email Communication

You MUST use your UNCG address for email communication with me—please check this account regularly. As needed, I will email you and naturally you may email me as the preferred mode of contact. Alternatively, feel free to call me (336-334-3842) if you need assistance or have questions during the semester.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation (10 points)

Your regular attendance and active participation are imperative to your learning and success in this course. Be prepared for every class by having the assigned reading completed and being willing to initiate and/or contribute to the classroom conversation. Doing so will earn you maximum participation points. Many factors can impact and result in lower attendance and participation points:

- Late arrival (after roll is taken) and early departure count as ½ day absence each.
- More than 3 absences will lower your final grade one full letter (A work with 4 absences will result in a B for the class; A work with 5 absences will result in a C for the class)

- If it becomes clear you have not prepared adequately for class by completing the assigned readings, turning in your work as required at the beginning of class, or you “doze” off or in other way demonstrate you are not engaged with the course conversation, your presence will be noted as an absence. In other words, your body is necessary in class, but so is your active brain. If either is missing, you cannot fully participate in class.

If for some reason you must be absent (university-sanctioned event, accident, death in the family), legitimate documentation must be provided and in-class activities completed to receive maximum participation points for that day. Except in the most extreme of cases, I expect that you will contact me in advance regarding these “excused” absences.

Quizzes (10 points)

Quizzes will be administered via Blackboard to encourage your attention to course readings and to facilitate meaningful classroom learning. You will have 20 minutes to take the quiz within a few days before the readings are discussed in class. There are no make-ups available for these quizzes for any reason, including computer malfunctions.

Library Assignment (10 points)

Using the library resources effectively is a necessary requirement for quality research. In this assignment, you will use the library research tools to locate 3 primary sources (journal articles or other original research) and 2 secondary sources (books or writings about original research) relevant to your research topic. With the scholarly resources at hand, you will prepare a literature review in 4-7 typewritten pages discussing what the findings demonstrate to help you in crafting your Community Based Research project (see Chapter 3 as you do this assignment).

Fieldnotes and Community Based Research (20 points)

Each week you are working in the community (the “field”), you will prepare a 2 page typewritten summary of your work, relating it to the course material we are learning.

Interview Assignment (10 points)

Part of your research project will necessarily involve interviewing. This assignment provides you with the opportunity to practice your interviewing skills by paying close attention to the formation of questions, acquiring consent, and writing up your interview findings (see Chapters 8 & 10 as you do this assignment).

Rhetorical Analysis (10 points)

Recorded or visual messages are vital to any community based research program. Therefore you will be responsible for analyzing a “text” (see Chapter 9 as you do this assignment) related to your project.

Poster Presentation of Community Based Research (30 points)

In lieu of a final research paper, your research group will prepare a poster presentation that meets the standards necessary for an academic conference presentation. You will need visuals and handouts that include the following: **Introduction** (including your research question and literature review), **Method** (how you conducted the research, ethical considerations, analyses), **Results**, and **Discussion** (interpretations of the study, community use of the research, limitations, possible future studies).

Grading Scale

The scale is based on the University's standard grading system (for more information, see www.uncg.edu/reg/Catalog/current/AcaRegs/Grading.html). 94-100=A; 90-93+A-; 87-89=B+; 84-86=B; 80-83=B-; 77-79=C+; 74-76=C; 70-73=C-; 67-69=D+; 64-66=D; 60-63=D-; 0-59=F.

Community Based Research Opportunities and Cautions

What we are doing in this class is work that has important implications for our community partners. This is not an exercise for them, nor "just a class project" for you. Treat your participation and work in the community with the care and seriousness that it deserves. The instructor will be the PROJECT DIRECTOR for each of our projects and thus EVERYTHING you do must first get approval from ME. Do not undertake ANYTHING without first discussing it with me in class, in my office, and/or through email.

I need to be aware of all activities at all times in order to uphold the integrity of the academic research process. **Students' failure to obtain necessary approval on any aspect of the project or inability to adhere to the Project Director's research protocol will result in immediate dismissal from class.**

Course Policies and Expectations

1. If at any time you have questions or concern about the course subject matter or assignments, please contact me by phone, during office hours, or through email.
2. Writing is a process, not a one-time event. I expect that your writing will evolve through drafts prior to turning in assignments for grades. Engaging in the rewriting process enables you to polish your content as well as your style. All written work must be computer-generated and checked carefully for spelling and grammatical errors. I encourage you to visit the Writing Center if you need additional assistance in this area.
3. All students are expected to adhere to the University's Academic Integrity Policy (<http://saf.dept.unch.edu80/studisp/Honor.html>).
4. Be sure to keep electronic and hard copies of everything you turn in for a grade—this is a good habit to get into that will save you time and trouble.
5. If you want to question a specific grade on an assignment or discuss ways to improve your performance, make an appointment with me within one week of receiving your grade to discuss.
6. Disruptive behavior in the classroom in the form of discrimination, harassment or disrespect will not be tolerated for it interferes with a classroom culture of inquiry. You can find the details of the policies and procedures at <http://saf/dept.uncg.edu/conduct/>.
7. If you have any special needs that require accommodation, please let me know early in the semester so that we may develop a plan to meet your learning needs. If you have a disability, you will need to provide documentation from the Disability Services Office (334-5440).
8. All written assignments must be submitted using APA style (5th edition), typed in Times New Roman, 12 point. All assignments due in class must be submitted at the BEGINNING of class. Late work loses 20% per calendar day, including weekends.

Tentative Course Calendar

Please note...FIRST, this calendar is tentative and subject to the revision of the instructor as needed. Changes, if required, will be announced in class. **Second**, readings noted are DUE FOR THE GIVEN DAY. In other words, complete the readings for that day prior to coming to class.

Week 1

Jan. 8 Course overview; introduction to Blackboard.
Posing research questions

Jan. 10 Introduction to Community Based Projects
Read: Strand et al., pp. 8-15 (handout)

Week 2

Jan. 15 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday—No Class

Quiz 1—January 10 & 17 readings (take quiz on Blackboard by 10:00 a.m., January 17).

Jan. 17 Conceptualizing Communication Research
Read: Text, Chapters 1-2

Homework: UNCG Library Research Tutorial, ch. 8 (cite your sources). Complete and bring in printed certificate to class on January 22.

Week 3

Jan. 22 Institutional Review Board, APA Citation Style, and Service-Learning
Read: Wood (e-reserve)

Quiz 2—January 24 readings (take by 10:00 a.m., January 24)

Jan. 24 Library Resources in Research
Read: Text, Chapter 3

Week 4

Jan. 29 Library research—finding primary and secondary resources
Meet in CITI classroom in the library with Ms. Nancy Fogarty

Quiz 3—January 31 readings (take by 10:00 a.m., January 31)

Jan. 31 Observing and Measuring Communication—Variables (social science)
Read: Text, Chapter 4
Due: Homework—APA, 5th edition listing of your literature review sources

Quiz 4—February 5 readings (take by 10:00 a.m., February 5)

Week 5

Feb. 5 Observing and Measuring Communication—Patterns and Episodes (interpretive)
Read: Text, Chapter 10
Due: Literature Review

Feb. 7 Fieldnotes
Read: Goodall (e-reserve), pp. 83-98

Quiz 5—February 12 readings (take by 10:00 a.m., February 12)

Week 6

Feb. 12 Validity and Reliability
Read: Text, Chapter 5

Quiz 6—February 14 readings (take by 10:00 a.m., February 14)

Feb. 14 Research Group Meetings & Reflections
Due: Fieldnotes #1 incorporating 2/7 reading

Quiz 7—February 19 readings (take by 10:00 a.m., February 19)

Week 7

Feb. 19 Ethics and Politics
Read: Text, Chapter 6

Feb. 21 Survey Design
Read: Text, Chapter 8

Week 8

Feb. 26 Research Group Meetings & Reflections

Feb. 28 Interviewing—Critical Reflections
Due: Interview Assignment

Quiz 8—February 21 readings (take by 10:00 a.m., February 21)

Week 9

Mar. 5 Spring Break

Mar. 7 Spring Break

Week 10

Mar. 12 Research Group Meetings & Reflections—Completing the Tasks

Quiz 9—March 14 readings (take by 10:00 a.m., March 14)

Mar. 14 Textual Analysis
Read: Text, Chapter 9
Due: Fieldnotes #2

Quiz 10—March 19 readings (take by 10:00 a.m., March 19)

Week 11

Mar. 19 Analysis and Critique
Read: Hocking, Stacks & McDermott, pp. 114-118 (e-reserve)
Due: Rhetorical Analysis

Mar.21 Observing, learning and reporting
Read: Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, pp. 39-65 (e-reserve)

Week 12

Mar.26 Research Group Meetings & Reflections
Due: Fieldnotes #3, incorporating 3/21 reading

Mar.28 Representation and Voice
Read: Fine et al., pp. 107-131 (e-reserve)

Quiz II—April 2 readings (take by 10:00 a.m., April 2)

Week 13

Apr. 2 Discussing Research Findings
Read: Text, Chapter 15

Apr. 4 Poster Presentation Workshop with Dr. Mary Crowe, Director of Undergraduate Research

Week 14

Apr. 9 Interpretive Choice Points
Read: Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, pp. 66-84 (e-reserve)

Apr.11 Group Dynamics Revisited
Due: Fieldnotes #4, incorporating 4/9 reading

Week 15

Apr.16 Research Group Meetings & Reflections

Apr.18 To be determined

Week 16

Apr.23 Research Group Meetings & Reflections
Due: Poster Presentation Materials, Draft

Apr.25 Research Group Meetings
Due: Fieldnotes #5

Week 17

Apr.30 Poster Presentations—Location to be Announced