

J8008: Qualitative Research Methods in Journalism

University of Missouri-Columbia

Summer 2008 (June 9 – Aug. 1)

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 8:40-10:40 a.m.

202 Lee Hills Hall

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Office hours: I am available immediately after class or by appointment. E-mail me if you would like to set up a time to meet.

Course objectives

This course is designed to introduce graduate students to common qualitative approaches applicable to the study of journalism and mass communication. You will learn a variety of approaches, practical methodologies, and tools that will help you prepare to conduct research as part of your continuing work in the graduate program. You also will develop a research proposal for a project that uses qualitative methods.

Seminar format

A seminar is an opportunity for learning through the exchange of ideas amid a small group of people. Our time will be spent as a group reviewing the readings, discussing the assignments, and engaging in exercises that apply the methods and approaches we discuss.

Required course texts

The following two required books are available at the University Bookstore:

- Silverman, David (2005). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Berger, Arthur Asa (1998). *Media research techniques* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Additional readings are available on electronic reserve (ERes). Go to <http://eres.missouri.edu> and search by course or instructor name. The password is **Heim**. Most readings are listed alphabetically by the author's last name, but some readings are out of the order at the bottom. You may have to search for the title or the author's name.

Attendance and participation

In a seminar, attendance is mandatory. You are obligated not merely to attend, but also to participate in each class session. You are expected to have completed all of the assigned readings and assignments before class. If an emergency situation arises that makes it impossible for you to attend class, please notify me by e-mail as soon as possible so we can discuss the situation. I do not hold "make-up" sessions or extend assignment deadlines for students who miss class.

Weekly assignments

You will complete a variety of individual research assignments relevant to the approaches addressed in the course. You should always draw upon the readings to help guide your analysis and discussion. All assignments should be double-spaced and have 1-inch margins. They must be 2 to 3 pages (no shorter or longer). They are due in hard copy form at the beginning of class on Mondays, as noted in the schedule, and will be considered late if you come to class late. **One letter grade will be deducted for each day (or portion of a day) an assignment is late. Extensions will not be granted.**

Research proposal

You will select a topic or issue of interest or a problem to explore. Ideally, you will propose research that you would like to conduct for your project or thesis. The final research proposal should be about 15 pages long (double-spaced with 1-inch margins) and include a statement of the research question(s); an introduction explaining the relevance of the question(s); a literature review of the most relevant scholarly work related to the topic; a discussion of the theoretical framework(s) guiding the work; a description and justification of the research method(s) and tool(s) you wish to use, including references to previous studies that have used similar methods; and a brief conclusion. The proposal must follow an accepted academic citation style (American Psychological Association is preferred). The introduction to the research proposal is due Monday, July 7. The full research proposal is **due Friday, Aug. 1**. You will receive more detailed instructions regarding the research proposal during the course of the summer.

Grading

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. The grading scale and criteria for assignments are as follows:

- A:** The work is error-free and intellectually rigorous, and it shows excellent understanding and command of the material.
- B:** The work has few errors and shows a good effort at understanding the material.
- C:** The work has substantial errors and shows little progress toward gaining an understanding of the material.
- D/F:** The work shows little or no understanding of the assignment or was not completed in a timely manner.

Your final course grade will be determined based on the following point distribution:

Weekly assignments (20 points each)	140 points
Research proposal	120 points
<u>Attendance and class participation</u>	<u>40 points</u>
TOTAL	300 points

270-300 = A 240-269 = B 210-239 = C 180-209 = D 0-179 = F

Schedule (Subject to change)

Note: Readings must be completed by the day on which they are listed. An asterisk (*) indicates that the material is on electronic reserve (ERes).

Week 1 (June 9-13)

Monday, June 9 – Introduction to course, introduction to qualitative research

Assignment 1 (due June 16): A three-page analysis of a piece of qualitative research found in a journalism or mass communication research journal. The research article must have been published within the past five years. Summarize the research question(s) or statement(s), method(s), and findings and then discuss possible strengths or weaknesses of the research related to the methodology used. Did the method(s) seem to be appropriate to the research question(s)? Draw upon the readings addressed in class, and attach a copy of the research article you analyze.

Wednesday, June 11 – What is qualitative research?

Berger, Ch. 1, “Guided Research Projects”
 Silverman, Ch. 2, “What You Can (and Can’t) Do With Qualitative Research”
 * Christians & Carey, “The Logic and Aims of Qualitative Research”

Friday, June 13 – How to begin

* Pauly, “A Beginner’s Guide to Doing Qualitative Research in Mass Communication”
 Silverman, Ch. 3, “The Research Experience I”
 Silverman, Ch. 5, “What counts as ‘Originality’?”
 Silverman, Ch. 6, “Selecting a Topic”

Week 2 (June 16-20)

Monday, June 16 – What makes research good?

Silverman, Ch. 14, “Quality in Qualitative Research”
 Silverman, Ch. 15, “Evaluating Qualitative Research”

Assignment 1 is due at the start of class. Each of you will discuss the assignment in class, so come to class prepared to talk about the article you chose and its strengths and weaknesses.

Assignment 2 (due June 23): (1) Identify your topic of research interest and explain how it relates to the characteristics of qualitative research addressed in the course readings. (2) Create

two research questions related to your topic that can be answered using qualitative methods. For each question, include a paragraph explaining why this question is of interest to you. (3) Identify a concept or theory relevant to either or both of the research questions and include a paragraph that briefly defines that concept or theory and explains how it relates to the research question(s).

Wednesday, June 18 – Concepts, theories, and approaches

- * Becker, “Concepts”
- Silverman, Ch. 7, “Using Theories”
- * Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”
- * Lang & Lang, “Theory Development: Studying Events in Their Natural Settings”

Friday, June 20 – Choosing research methods

- Silverman, Ch. 4, “The Research Experience II”
- Silverman, Ch. 8, “Choosing a Methodology”
- * Jensen, “Introduction: The Qualitative Turn”
- * Jankowski & Wester, “The Qualitative Tradition in Social Science Inquiry: Contributions to Mass Communication Research”

Week 3 (June 23-27)

Monday, June 23

No readings

Assignment 2 is due

Assignment 3 (due June 30): Choose either (A) or (B): (A) Conduct an in-person structured interview with a subject and topic of your choice. Develop a formal set of questions in advance, and include these with the paper. In the paper, discuss the interview process, analyze both the subject’s behavior and your behavior as the interviewer, and assess the value of the information acquired; OR (B) Conduct a participant or nonparticipant observation. Observe and describe a situation, event, or activity. In the paper, analyze and interpret your observations. You should also critique your own specific interpretations of the observations.

Wednesday, June 25 – Interviewing

- * Fontana & Frey, “Interviewing: The Art of Science”
- Berger, Ch. 6, “Depth Interviews: Favorite Singers and Recordings”
- Leech, “Asking Questions: Techniques for Semistructured Interviews”

Downes & McMillan, "Defining Interactivity: A Qualitative Identification of Key Dimensions"

Friday, June 27 – Ethnography, participant observation, nonparticipant observation

- * Atkinson & Hammersley, "Ethnography and Participant Observation"
 - * Morley & Silverstone, "Communication and Context: Ethnographic Perspectives on the Media Audience"
 - Berger, Ch. 11, "Participant Observation: Video Game Players"
 - * Fraser & Brown, "Media, Celebrities, and Social Influence: Identification with Elvis Presley"
 - * Sumpter, "Daily Newspaper Editors' Audience Construction Routines"
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Week 4 (June 30-July 2)

Monday, June 30 – How to begin writing a research proposal

Silverman, Ch. 10, "Writing a Research Proposal"
Silverman, Ch. 20, "The First Few Pages"

Assignment 3 is due

Assignment 4: Introduction to your research proposal. This introduction should be about 2 pages long. It must introduce the topic, clearly explain the purpose of the study, briefly describe the theoretical/conceptual framework through which you will examine the topic, explicitly state the research question(s), and explain why the research is important and relevant.

Wednesday, July 2 – Incorporating visuals into interviewing and ethnography

Harper, "Talking About Pictures: A Case for Photo-Elicitation"
Clark-Ibanez, "Framing the Social World With Photo-Elicitation Interviews"
Heisley & Levy, "Autodriving: A Photoelicitation Technique"
Samuels, "Breaking the Ethnographer's Frames: Reflections on the Use of Photo Elicitation in Understanding Sri Lankan Monastic Culture"

Friday, July 4 – No class. Have a happy Fourth of July!

Week 5 (July 7-11)

Monday, July 7 – Data analysis

Silverman, Ch. 12, “Developing Data Analysis”

* Glaser & Strauss, “Ch. 5: The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis”

Assignment 4 is due

Assignment 5 (due July 14): Conduct an oral history, open-ended interview with a retired person regarding his or her career or life story. During your interview, try to incorporate some of the oral history techniques addressed in this week’s readings. Your paper should provide an analysis of the interview process.

Wednesday, July 9 – Oral history

Browse the Step-by-step Guide to Oral History, online at

http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html

Feldstein, “Kissing Cousins: Oral History and Journalism”

* Anderson & Jack, “Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses”

* Morrissey, “On Oral History Interviewing”

* Brennen, “Toward a History of Labor and News Work: The Use of Oral Sources in Journalism History”

Friday, July 11 – History and memory

* Schudson, “Media Contexts: Historical Approaches to Communications Studies”

* Smith, “Ch. 16: The Method of History”

Berger, Ch. 12, “Images of Shopping Malls in the Popular Press”

* Hume, “The ‘Forgotten’ 1918 Influenza Epidemic and Press Portrayal of Public Anxiety”

Brennen, “From Headline Shooter to Picture Snatcher: The Construction of Photojournalists in American Film, 1928-39”

Week 6 (July 14-18)

Monday, July 14 – Textual/discourse analysis

* Dijk, “The Interdisciplinary Study of News as Discourse”

* Larsen, “Textual Analysis of Fictional Media Content”

* Lester-Roushanzamir & Roman, “Global Village in Atlanta: A Textual Analysis”

Assignment 5 is due

Assignment 6 (due July 21): Choose either (A) or (B) or (C): (A) A textual analysis of three newspaper stories about the same topic. Identify the basic themes, focus, language, and intention of the selected material. Attach copies of the newspaper articles to your paper. (B) A rhetorical criticism of a speech or a print advertisement using any of the approaches to rhetorical criticism outlined by Foss (such as metaphor or pentadic criticism). Identify which elements the rhetor uses frequently or intensely. Remember that this is a critical approach, so your paper must make a strong argument based on what you observe. Attach a transcript of the speech or a copy of the advertisement to your paper. (C) A visual analysis of two or more related photographs published in a newspaper or magazine. Drawing upon the cultural studies approach outlined by Lister & Wells, discuss such elements at photographic conventions, semiotics and codes, pictorial conventions, and relationship to power and ideology. Attach copies of the photos.

Wednesday, July 16 – Rhetorical analysis and criticism

- * Foss, Ch. 1 (“The Nature of Rhetorical Criticism”) and Ch. 2 (“Doing Rhetorical Criticism”)
- * Foss, Ch. 9 (“Metaphor Criticism”) OR Foss, Ch. 11 (“Pentadic Criticism”)
- * Brockriede, “Rhetorical Criticism as Argument”
- Berger, Ch. 7, “Rhetorical Analysis: Magazine Advertisements”
- * Winch, “Constructing an ‘Evil Genius’: News Uses of Mythic Archetypes to Make Sense of Bin Laden”

Friday, July 18 – Visual analysis

- Collier, “Approaches to Analysis in Visual Anthropology”
- Lister & Wells, “Seeing Beyond Belief: Cultural Studies as an Approach to Analyzing the Visual” (this is included in the same file as the Collier reading above)
- Anden-Papadopoulos, “The Abu Ghraib torture photographs: News frames, visual culture, and the power of images”

Week 7 (July 21-25)**Monday, July 21 – Writing the research proposal**

- Silverman, Ch. 21, “The Literature Review Chapter”
- Silverman, Ch. 22, “The Methodology Chapter”

One-on-one meetings about your research proposals**Assignment 6 is due**

Assignment 7 (due July 28 via e-mail): A reception analysis of a television show. 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 over, interview them on their reasons for watching the show, their opinions of the show, and their level of interest in this type of show. Your analysis also should include your response to the other individuals' response to the show.

Wednesday, July 23 – Focus groups

- * Greenbaum, “Ch. 1: Focus Groups: An Overview”
- * Greenbaum, “Ch. 4: Common Mistakes in Focus Groups”
- Berger, Ch. 9, “Focus Groups: Reasons for Attending Films”
- * Adams, “How People Watch TV as Investigated Using Focus Group Techniques”

Friday, July 25 – Reception analysis

- * Hall, “Encoding/Decoding”
- * Jensen, “Media Audiences: Reception Analysis: Mass Communication as the Social Production of Meaning”
- * Kavoori, “Discursive Texts, Reflexive Audiences: Global Trends in Television News Texts and Audience Reception”

Week 8 (July 28-Aug. 1)

Monday, July 28

We will not meet as a class. Use this time to work on your research proposals.

Assignment 7 is due by e-mail

Wednesday, July 30

Class presentations of research proposals. Bring an abstract (one-page summary of your research proposal) for each class member.

Friday, Aug. 1

Class presentations of research proposals (con't.). Bring an abstract (one-page summary of your research proposal) for each class member.

Research proposals due at the beginning of class

Academic honesty

Any act of academic dishonesty as defined in the Missouri catalog, 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.

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 have special needs as addressed by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and you need assistance, please notify the instructor immediately. You may notify me privately after class. A reasonable effort will be made to accommodate your special needs. All students seeking ADA assistance should be registered with MU's Office of Disability Services, A038 Brady Commons, 882-4696. 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.