Fall 2007, Mondays 3:35-6:25 p.m., Machmer W-27

Professor Emily West
Office: 303 Machmer
Phone: (413) 545-6345
Email: ewest@comm.umass.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Course Description

This course is designed to a) introduce you to the logic and epistemological underpinnings of qualitative methods, including relationships among research questions, theory, methods, and findings, and b) expose you to practical issues in using qualitative methods. Topics to be discussed include but are not limited to: textual analysis, participant observation, interviewing, focus groups, visual analysis, discourse and conversation analysis, qualitative computing, and research ethics. We will divide our focus between familiarizing ourselves with discussions of “how to,” reading and evaluating examples of qualitative research that demonstrate different methodological approaches, and getting our feet wet by trying out some different qualitative methods.

Course Requirements

Detailed instructions will be distributed for each of the following assignments during the semester.

Participation (10%)
This portion of the grade includes attendance, in-class contributions to discussions and group work, and in-class written reflections.

Presentation of Reading (10%)
Everyone in the class will take special responsibility for a particular reading and present it to the class. You should consider what “added value” for the class you can achieve through your presentation. This might involve contextualizing the reading in the larger work that it comes from, in relation to other sources you’re familiar with, in relation to literature that the piece draws upon, or other things the author has written. Alternatively, you might apply or compare the reading to an empirical problem. You are encouraged to speak with me in advance about your strategy.

Assignment #1 (5%)
A research memo in which you propose a question or area to focus on that is suitable for qualitative research. You will relate the rest of the course assignments to this research area.
Assignment #2 (15%)
Journal Article Review – In this assignment you will find three journal articles in Communication journals that relate to your stated research interest, using the library databases. The articles should primarily use qualitative methods and different ones so that you can compare them. You will write a short paper comparing the articles’ methodological approaches.

Assignment #3 (20%)
Field Methods – For this assignment you will carry out a very short term ethnography OR you will carry out one or two interviews and then write a short paper reflecting on the process. For ethnography this would include discussion of site selection, access, rapport, field notes, and initial observations; for interviewing you should discuss recruitment, rapport, informed consent, your interview schedule, transcript, and initial findings. Completion of the online IRB certification is a pre-requisite to doing this assignment.

Assignment #4 (20%)
Media analysis – For this assignment you have the option of working with a partner. You will design some kind of textual analysis that can be textual, visual, or both. The resulting short paper should include: identification and rationale for texts, sampling procedure, analysis procedure, and initial findings.

Assignment #5 (20%)
Mini-proposal - Develop a proposal for a project based on your research area for the semester. Use insights from the assignments throughout the semester to argue for what methods best fit your question. Draw on course readings and class discussion to argue for the soundness of your research design. You will deliver a short presentation about your proposal-in-progress during one of the last two class meetings.

Grading Scheme

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of Reading</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 1 – Research Memo</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 2 – Journal Article Review</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 3 – Field Methods</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 4 – Media Analysis</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 5 – Mini-proposal &amp; Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Readings

REQUIRED TEXTS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE AT FOOD FOR THOUGHT, IN AMHERST:
These books are also on print reserve in the library.


The other readings for the class are on E-Reserve, or on our class SPARK site, or will be handed out during the semester. The location of each reading will be made clear on SPARK. Instructions will be distributed for how to access the online resources.

The department’s computer lab is not meant for printing out class readings.

**Policies**

*Meeplings Outside of Class* If you cannot make my office hours and would like to meet, then please email me, suggesting 2 or 3 times that you could meet, and we’ll make another arrangement. If you have simple questions about the class, expectations, etc., feel free to use email. If your questions are more in-depth, please come to see me in person or call my office.

*Style for Assignments* Please use a consistent and widely accepted citation style for assignments, be it APA, Chicago, or MLA. The main principle is that when ideas come from a source, that source should be acknowledged, and specific quotes or facts should be identified with a page number so that readers can verify them. Major assignments should have complete referencing, be double-spaced, and be handed in as hard copies to Office 303 or my mailbox or in class.

*Late Assignments and Incompletes:* Papers will not be accepted more than 2 weeks after the assignment was originally due, unless there are extenuating circumstances (such as an illness that can be documented), in which case the student and instructor will come to an agreement together. Barring truly extenuating circumstances, incompletes will not be granted. Students should plan their work and research projects with the principle of complete-ability in mind.

*Syllabus Changes:* This syllabus is a contract between professor and students. However, it is subject to change in consultation with students.
COURSE SCHEDULE

PLEASE NOTE: The course schedule on SPARK will reflect any changes or adjustments made as the semester progresses.

Monday, September 10th
INTRODUCTION

Monday, September 17th
WHAT IS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?
Readings
- Lindlof & Taylor, Ch.1, plus pp.63-77 from Qualitative Communication Research Methods
- Maxwell, Ch.2 “Goals” from Qualitative Research Design
- Becker, Ch.1, “Tricks” from Tricks of the Trade.
- Assignment #1 Distributed

Monday, September 24th
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN & INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS
Readings
- Maxwell, Chs.1, 3, 4, and 5
- Becker, Ch.3 from Tricks of the Trade (Sampling)

Example:
- Bird, S.E. Ch.4. Imagining Indians: Negotiating Identity in a Media World, pp.86-117.
- Assignment #2 Distributed
Monday, October 1st

ETHNOGRAPHY PART I & LIBRARY SESSION

Readings
- Lindlof & Taylor, Chs. 4 and 5

Examples:

Monday, October 8th – NO CLASS, COLUMBUS DAY

Tuesday, October 9th

ETHNOGRAPHY PART II

Readings
- Lindlof & Taylor, Ch.8 “Qualitative Research and Computer-Mediated Communication”

Examples:

- Assignment #3 Distributed
- Assignment #2 Due

Monday, October 15th

INTERVIEWING and OPEN-ENDED SURVEYS
- Guest Speaker: Eve Ng
Readings

- Lindlof & Taylor, Ch.6, plus pp.90-98

Examples:

- Eve’s Article on Lurkers. TBA.

Monday, October 22nd

**FOCUS GROUPS**

Readings


Examples:


Monday, October 29th

**ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES: ETHNOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION AND CONVERSATION ANALYSIS**

Readings


Examples:


Monday, November 5th

**MEDIA ANALYSIS PART I – TEXT**

**Readings**


**Examples:**


- Assignment #3 Due
- Assignment #4 Distributed

Monday, November 12th – NO CLASS, VETERANS DAY

Wednesday, November 14th

**MEDIA ANALYSIS PART II - IMAGE**

• Guest Speaker: Chris Boulton

**Readings**


Examples:

- Chris Boulton article on The Mother’s Gaze. TBA.

Monday, November 19th

**HISTORICAL METHODS: POLITICS AND TECHNOLOGY**

Guest Speaker: Marty Norden

**Readings**


**Example History articles:**


**THANKSGIVING**

Monday, November 26th

**THE BLACK BOX: ANALYZING QUALITATIVE DATA**

**Readings**

- Lindlof & Taylor, Ch.7
- Becker, Chs.4 and 5 (Concepts and Logic)

**Example:**

Monday, December 3rd

EVALUATING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- Presentations of Mini-proposals

Readings
- Lindlof & Taylor, pp.85-90
- Maxwell, Chs.6, 7 and Appendix A

Example Proposals:
FROM FUNDING SITES - TBA

Monday, December 10th – OUR LAST DAY

WRITING AS METHOD, MULTIPLE METHODS

- Presentations of Mini-proposals

Readings
- Lindlof & Taylor, Ch.9

Examples:

Mini-proposal (Assignment #5) due Tuesday, December 18th
Comm 620 Schedule – Fall 2007

Monday, September 10th

Monday, September 17th
• Assignment #1 (Research Memo) Distributed

Monday, September 24th
• Assignment #2 (Journal Article Review) Distributed

Friday, September 28th
• Assignment #1 Due

Monday, October 1st
• Library Session

Monday, October 8th
• No class – Columbus Day

Tuesday, October 9th
• Assignment #3 Distributed
• Assignment #2 Due

Monday, October 15th

Monday, October 22nd

Monday, October 29th

Friday, November 2nd

Monday, November 5th
• Assignment #3 Due
• Assignment #4 Distributed

Monday, November 12th
• No class – Veterans Day

Wednesday, November 14th

Monday, November 19th

Monday, November 26th
• Assignment #5 Distributed

Friday, November 30th
• Assignment #4 Due

Monday, December 3rd
• Some Mini-Proposal Mini-Presentations

Monday, December 10th
• Rest of Mini-Proposal Mini-Presentations

Tuesday, December 18th
• Assignment #5 Due