

Communication 5311: Qualitative Research Methods
CRN: 11038
Fall 2023
Classroom Building C203

General Information

Professor: Dr. Sarah De Los Santos Upton

Office: Quinn Hall, 102B

Email: smupton@utep.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 12:00-1:30 p.m., and by appointment

Course Overview

This course is an introduction to methods used in conceptualizing, planning, and designing critical or interpretive methods for communication research problems.

Course Objectives

1. To explore the relationship between theory, methods, and interpretation in research.
2. To understand the appropriateness of different analytical strategies for particular qualitative studies.
3. To analyze methodologies in existing research.
4. To collect qualitative data apply one or more analytical approaches.
5. To develop writing and research skills.
6. To critically reflect on how chosen methods impact communities where research is conducted.

Learning Outcome: Competence in research methods used in communication contexts

Learning Outcome: Competence in evaluating qualitative research

Learning Outcome: Competence in developing and conducting qualitative research projects

Learning Outcome: Competence in understanding and applying ethics in multiple communication contexts

Course Materials

The course syllabus, readings, and other materials will be available on Blackboard.

Course Format

In this course we will use a combination of discussions, presentations, analysis activities, and research. It is therefore important that you come to class having done the assigned reading, and prepared to discuss and apply the method we are covering for that week. In addition, this course will involve an ongoing participatory action research project in partnership with a community organization, and you will be joining an established research team while also incorporating your own methodological approach to data analysis. It is therefore important to start thinking about your methodology early in the semester to ensure that you have time to select the best method for your topic, collect and analyze data, and describe the significance your findings. I will, of course, be here to help you along your research journey.

COVID-19 Protocols

We need to look out for one another — always, but especially in these difficult times.

Please stay home if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19. If you wish to receive a test, you can find information on how to do so here: <https://www.utep.edu/ehs/covid/>.

Exercise caution and good judgment. The last thing I want is for anyone to feel they must come to class because they're worried about their grade or that they may fall behind. I have mechanisms in place to allow everyone to stay on top of things. If you have to miss class, it's okay. Really. As long as you communicate with me and put in the effort, we will keep you on track. In addition, please do everything you can to keep yourself and those around you safe and healthy. I will provide disposable masks to anyone who hasn't brought one to class, which can be taken and worn on a voluntary basis.

If you have not yet been vaccinated and would like to be, you can find information here:

<https://www.immunizeelpaso.org/>. The vaccines are free, safe, and effective and play a significant role in reducing personal risk as well as the rate of infection in the community. If you would like to know more about the vaccines, you can also reach out to me, and I'll be happy to share more information with you.

Course Evaluation

- 1. Internal Review Board (IRB) Training (5 points):** In order to be added as a member of the research team you will need to complete IRB training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Further instructions and links to the training can be found on Blackboard. **Due September 5th.**
- 2. Research Critiques (3 @ 10 points each):** You will select three of the different methods of data analysis studied in class (weeks 5-14). For each method identify a journal article representative of the analytical strategy chosen, and write a 1-2 page critique. The critique and article will be shared with the class on Blackboard on the day we cover the method you have chosen, and should address the following questions:
 - What does the researcher want to find out by analyzing the data or text?
 - What are the data analyzed? What are the primary units, dimensions, or characteristics of the data or text that the analysis identifies?
 - What is (are) the analytical strategies employed? How?
 - Any weaknesses or gaps in this article?
 - What is particularly useful in this article for my own research projects?

This assignment is designed to help you understand not only how researchers have used data analysis, but also how to find useful models for your own research projects in this class and the future.

- 3. Methodology Paper (20 points):** In this paper you will outline the method you will be using for your research project. Your paper should include a discussion of your positionality as a researcher, the paradigm informing your research, and your approach to data collection and analysis. Detailed instructions will be available on the assignment sheet posted to Blackboard. The paper will be 4-5 pages in length, double-spaced with one-inch margins and 12-point font, **due on Blackboard on October 24th.**
- 4. Individual Interview (10 points):** You will complete one audio recorded individual interview, as well as a transcription of the interview. **Due date TBD.**
- 5. Focus Group Interview (10 points):** You will complete one focus group interview involving 4-6 participants, as well as a transcription of the interview. **Due Date TBD.**
- 6. Data Analysis Paper (20 points):** In this paper you will write up the findings from your analysis. You should include a discussion of how you conducted your analysis, the major themes/findings which emerged, and the larger implications of these findings as they relate to your specific topic and to your discipline more broadly. Detailed instructions will be available on the assignment sheet posted to Blackboard. The paper will be 8-10 pages in length, double-spaced with one-inch margins and 12-point font, **due on Blackboard on December 15th.**
- 7. Oral Presentation (5 points):** You will present the results of your individual projects to the class in the format of a 15-minute academic conference presentation. You may use visual aids such as PowerPoint, but these are not required. Specific guidelines for presentations will be provided on the assignment sheet on Blackboard.

Course Assignments

Each of the following assignments will be thoroughly detailed in class:

IRB Training	5 points
Research Critiques	30 points
Individual Interview	10 points
Focus Group Interview	10 points
Methodology Paper	20 points
Data Analysis Paper	20 points
Oral Presentation	5 points
Total	100 points

Course Policies

1. **Attendance:** You are expected to attend class. If you choose not to attend regularly, your grade is likely to suffer because you will not have had the benefit of the material and ideas covered in class. Read the assignments for the day before you come to class so that you can participate fully and thoughtfully in class discussions and activities.
2. **Late work:** All assignments are due in hard copy at the beginning of class. If you are scheduled to give a presentation, or turn in work, you should be in class and on time. If you will not be able to attend class when an assignment is due I reserve the right to approve or deny credit for late work. Late work that is accepted will receive a **10 percent deduction for each calendar day the assignment is late.**
3. **Academic Misconduct:** The University of Texas El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence and students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting work for credit that is attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act that gives or attempts to give unfair advantage.
4. **Diversity:** The course encourages different perspectives related to such factors as gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and other relevant cultural identifies. The course seeks to foster understanding and inclusiveness related to such diverse perspectives and ways of communicating. Students are expected to be respectful and supportive of other students in order to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable to express their thoughts.
5. **Accessibility:** If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at (915) 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu. Or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. CASS Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

Policy on Children in Class

Currently, the university does not have a formal policy on children in the classroom. The policy described here is just a reflection of my own beliefs and commitments to student, staff and faculty parents.

1. All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as necessary;
2. For older children and babies, I understand that unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to miss class to stay home with a child. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable;
3. I ask that all students work with me to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status;
4. In all cases where babies and children come to class I ask that you sit close to the door so that if your little one needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students, you may step outside until their need has been met;

Finally, I understand that often the largest barrier to completing your coursework once you become a parent is the tiredness many parents feel in the evening once children have finally gone to sleep. While I maintain the same high expectations for all students in my classes regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem-solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school-parenting balance.

About My Teaching Style

My approach to teaching and learning is focused mainly on the creation of an environment which recognizes various learning styles, maintains accessibility, promotes equality, and invites the critical analysis of texts. My approach is also informed by Karen Foss, Sonja Foss, and Cindy Griffin’s theory of Invitational Rhetoric (Foss & Griffin, 1995; Foss & Foss, 2002). I believe that many college courses are developed based on a model of traditional rhetoric, characterized by a desire to change others, gaining control over others, deriving self-worth through power over others, and the devaluation of the life worlds of others (Foss & Griffin, 1995). To challenge traditional rhetoric, Foss, Foss, and Griffin propose an alternative rhetoric guided by feminist values including: a commitment to the creation of relationships based on equality, recognition of the imminent value of all living beings, and allowing individuals to make their own decisions about how they wish to live their lives. I aim to structure my courses based on these feminist assumptions. Invitational rhetoric approaches communication with the goals of understanding as the purpose of communication, acknowledging the equality of the speaker and audience, viewing diverse perspectives as resources, understanding change as self-chosen, and finally a willingness to yield. I aim to understand the experiences of my students, and create an environment where they can understand mine. Additionally, I acknowledge the equality of myself as instructor, and my students, choosing not to use my position as one of power. I ultimately hope to invite students to become equal participants in their learning.

***This syllabus is intended to serve as a guideline for Comm 5311. Both University of Texas at El Paso and your instructor reserve the right to make modifications in content, schedule and requirements as necessary to promote the optimal educational experience within prevailing conditions affecting this course.

Tentative Course Schedule				
Week	Day	Topic	Reading	Due
1	8/29	Introduction to the course and each other		
2	9/5	Qualitative Inquiry Paradigms	Guba & Lincoln Heron & Reason	IRB Training
3	9/12	Introduction to Qualitative Methods	Lindlof & Taylor Ch. 1, 2	
4	9/19	Starting your Qualitative Research Project	Lindlof & Taylor Ch. 3	
5	9/26	Participatory Action Research	Kemmis & McTaggart Fals Borda Langdon	
6	10/3	Online Class: Professor at Conference Negotiating the Research Process	De Los Santos Upton Jones & Jenkins	
7	10/10	Rhetorical Criticism	Foss Ch. 1,2 Flores Chávez	
8	10/17	Grounded Theory	Charmaz Ch. 1,2 Coleman et. al	
9	10/24	Sensory Ethnography	Pink Ch. 1, 2 Sunderland et. al	Methodology paper
10	10/31	Autoethnography	Johnson & LeMaster	

11	11/7	Cultural Studies	Saukko Ch. 1,2 Starr	
12	11/8	Decolonizing Methodologies	Tuhiwai-Smith Intro, Ch. 2 Stanton	
13	11/14	Online Class: Professor at Conference Analyzing Data and “Tidying Up”	Mason Foss Ch. 7 LeCompte	
14	11/28	Borderland Feminist Perspectives	Saavedra & Nymark Saavedra & Pérez	
15	12/5	Presentation of findings		Oral presentations
16	12/15			Data analysis paper