



# Qualitative Research Methods in Media

CMCI 7051, Fall 2013

*Mondays, 4-6:30pm, Armory 218*

## Course Description

This reading-intensive course introduces qualitative methodologies used in journalism, media studies, and APRD scholarship. We'll learn about various human and text-based approaches, as well as the strategies and limitations of each. We will also examine the relationship between theory building and method development, and the role of the self as a research instrument in qualitative approaches.

By the end of the term you should be able to:

- Design and execute a cohesive research study
- Apply multiple kinds of qualitative methodologies
- Address the ethical, reflexive, and reactive issues that accompany qualitative research

## Instructor Information

Dr. Kathleen M. Ryan, Armory 1B35.

**Office Hours** Monday 2:30-3:30pm, Tuesday 2-3pm, and by appointment

**Office Phone** 303-735-2940 (email is the best way to reach me for quick responses)

**Email** [kathleen.ryan@colorado.edu](mailto:kathleen.ryan@colorado.edu)



## Required Books

### Techniques of Close Reading

Barry Brummet (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications 2009)

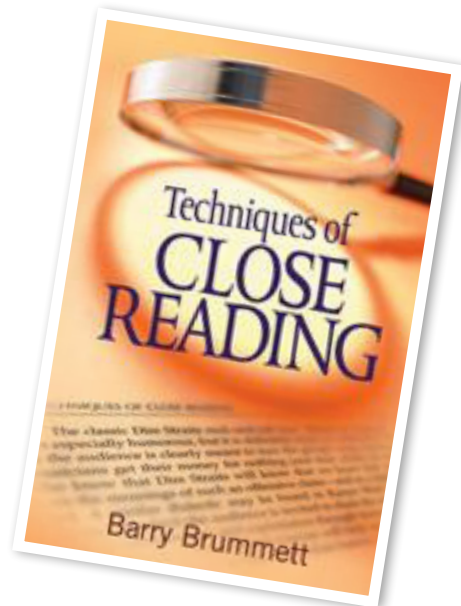
### Research Design

John Creswell (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013)

### Qualitative Communication Research Methods, Third Edition

Thomas R. Lindlof and Brian C. Taylor (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2011)

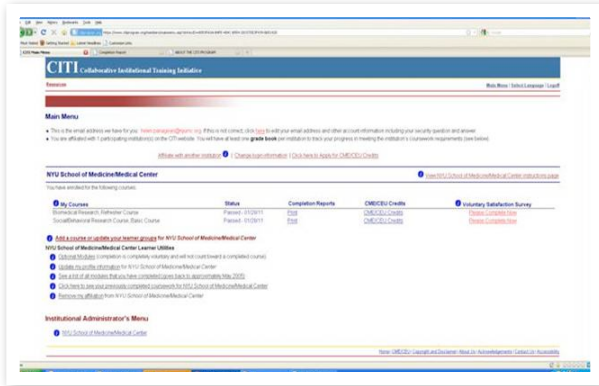
**Other weekly readings will be included as PDFs on Desire2Learn including selections from the Recommended Books list.**



## Course Assignments

The course will build toward a final research paper on a single research topic. The paper must include research demonstrating both human subjects and textual data methodologies.

You also must identify an archive relevant to your topic (not mandatory to use in your research), and will sign up to lead discussions on course readings.



### CITI Certification

Researchers using human subjects must undergo training to demonstrate the understand the ethics of working with humans and the proper treatment of research participants. You should also know if your research is “expedited” or not in terms of the university Institutional Review Board (IRB). CITI certification is required for this class and must be completed by class period on **September 5th**; make a PDF of your verification of completion certificate and email it to me (the 5th is a holiday, so early submissions are welcome if you have holiday plans).

### Research Abstract

Your research topic should be selected by **September 12th**, and written up as a short abstract (150-200 words, electronic submissions preferred), with 2-3 research questions. You should also include a preliminary bibliography.

### Historical Archive Assignment

Using your research topic, investigate and identify archive collections (either online archives or bricks and mortar collections) that are related to your subject. What are some of the key pieces the archive holds that can help you investigate your topic? Does the archive demand an in-person visit or can you find/review everything you need online? Place a link on D2L and be prepared to present your findings in class.

**Due September 19th at the start of class.**



### **Literature Review**

This should offer a brief introduction to your research subject and then summarize what has been said in the past about it. What have past studies said? What is missing? You are setting up why your study is important. This is typically approximately 8-10 pages of a 20-25 page research paper, plus references (see Final Research Paper, below).

**Due October 3rd at the start of class (electronic submissions preferred).**

### **Participant Observation Write-Up**

We will take a (nearby) field trip to engage in some participant observation. Write up a brief summary (2-3 pages) of what you saw.

**Due October 31st at the start of class (electronic submissions preferred).**

### **Preliminary Data**

Summarize your two approaches (human subjects/textual; this would be the methods section of your Final Research Paper, see below). Then, offer a preliminary summary of your data. This can be transcripts of interviews, a detailed write up of participant observation, a chart or other visualization of your notes about your textual analysis, a demonstration of your coding documents for grounded theory, etc. I am not looking for you to analyze the data; I'm more interested in the data you gather. If you are doing a visual analysis or an analysis of a media text, links to the text are necessary but you also want to demonstrate how you're "looking" at the text.

**Due November 7th at the start of class (electronic submissions preferred).**

### **Meeting with Professor**

While you are welcome to meet with me at any time over the term, during Week Thirteen you are required to meet with me to discuss your preliminary data and how you will write up your research paper.

**Due November 17th by 5pm. Times will be scheduled the week of November 7th.**

### **Research Presentation**

Your research presentation will summarize your preliminary findings in an in-class conference-style presentation. We'll set up thematic panels, with a question and answer session for the panelists afterward. You will have 12 minutes to present your findings. You will be cut off at 13 minutes if you run long.

In the research presentation you should:

- Explain (briefly) your research topic and questions (1-2 minutes)
- Summarize what past scholars have said (1-3 minutes)
- Summarize your textual findings (3-4 minutes)
- Summarize your human subjects-based findings (3-4 minutes)
- Offer a summary, including how the human subjects and textual data complement each other - or don't! (2-3 minutes)

- Complete your presentation in the time for a standard conference research presentation
- Be sure to include any images, interview clips or other data which can be helpful for us to understand your research
- You don't have to use Power Point, but if you do, be sure to summarize data/texts and don't just read what is on the screen (I'll offer an example during week 13 in how to give effective presentations)
- Be prepared to answer questions from your professor and peers.

When you are in the audience, you should listen to the presentations and ask questions. This is part of good academic citizenship.

**Due November 28th or December 5th at the start of class. We'll set up the research presentation schedule the week of November 7th**

### **Final Research Paper**

Your final paper combines your research data with your literature review to present your findings on your research subject.

In the paper you should include the following elements:

- Abstract: Rework your abstract from the beginning of the semester to include your revised study focus and preliminary findings. (150-200 words)
- Introduction: Why specifically do you want to investigate? What are you hoping to learn about the topic? (1-2 pages)
- Literature Review: Outline what past scholars have said about the topic. What are the strengths in their approaches? What are the weaknesses or areas that they missed? In other words, how does your study fit into what past scholars have said? This section should also lead you to a theoretical framework for your research. (5-7 pages)
- Research Questions: What are you asking of your data? This should grow naturally out of your literature review. (1 page)
- Methodology: How will you answer your research question(s)? For the purposes of this class, you must use at least one approach from the "Talking About Texts" section of the course and one approach from the "Human Subjects" section of the course. For instance, in the chapter I wrote that you'll be reading, I used a visual semiotic analysis combined with oral history interviews. (4-5 pages)
- Findings: What does your data tell you? (5-7 pages)
- Conclusion: What is the take-away to the study, or how does it relate to what others have said about the subject? What are the limitations of your study? What are your recommendations for future research.

Your paper should be 20-25 pages long. It should include a complete bibliography, plus any images, transcripts and/or field notes included in previous submissions (revised, if needed). These are not a part of the page count.

**DUE: December 12th at 1:00 pm.**

### **Class Discussion**

Once during the term, you will be asked to facilitate a course discussion based upon the readings of the week. Your grade will be based upon how well you use the reading you select (one chapter or essay) to engage your fellow students, how well you demonstrate an understanding of the reading, and what sort of external artifacts (links, photographs, etc.) you introduce to help illustrate the readings. I'll lead the discussion during the second week so you have an idea of how to facilitate the online forum.

**Due: TBD**

### **Participation**

This is a seminar and you're expected to attend every class on time and participate in all in-class discussions. You get one "free" absence – any other unexcused absences will mean a drop in your overall grade by a letter grade for each missed date, as will repeated late attendance. Reasons for an excused absence include illness (please don't come to class sick), a conference presentation, or an emergency such as a death in the family. To receive an excused absence, contact me via phone or email in advance of class with the reason for the absence, and present verification of the reason for your absence upon return.

### **Grade Distribution**

CITI Certification	5%
Research Abstract	10%
Historical Archive Assignment	5%
Literature Review	10%
Participant Observation Write-Up	10%
Preliminary Data	15%
Research Presentation	15%
Final Paper	20%
Class Discussion Facilitation	5%
Participation	5%

# Course Calendar

## *Theoretical Grounding*

### **Week One, August 22: Course Overview**

Question of the week: What are my expectations of you and what do you hope to learn from this course?

**Required Readings:** Lindlof and Taylor, Chapter 1.

### **Week Two, August 29: Philosophical Underpinnings**

Question of the week: What constitutes qualitative research?

**Required Readings:** Creswell, Chapter 9; Ien Ang, “On the Politics of Empirical Audience Research” in *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, Gigi Durham Meenakshi and Douglas M. Kellner, eds. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2001), 177-197; Mark Y. Hickson III, Jean Bodon, and Theresa Bodon, “Modeling Cultures: Toward Grounded Paradigms in Organizations and Mass Culture,” in *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*, Don W. Stacks and Michael B. Salwen, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 280-298; Annie Lang, “Discipline in Crisis? The Shifting Paradigm of Mass Communication Research,” *Communication Theory* 23-1 (2013), 10-24.

### **Week Three, September 5: Research Ethics**

**No class this week due to Labor Day holiday.**

Question of the week: What constitutes ethical research and what role does the investigator play in the research process?

**Required Readings:** University of Colorado Office of Research Integrity (Compliance), <http://www.colorado.edu/vcr/ori> (review entire site, but focus on the following sections: Human Research and IRB, Conflicts of Interest & Commitment, Responsible Conduct of Research).

**Required Assignment:** Complete CITI training (print out your CITI completion report) at [www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org). Due September 5th at xpm.

### **Week Four, September 12: Designing the Research Project**

Question of the week: How exactly does a researcher plan a research project?

**Required Readings:** Creswell, Chapters 1-4; Lindlof and Taylor, Chapters 2-4.

**Required Assignment:** Write a one paragraph abstract (including title) of your proposed research topic for the term. Be prepared to talk about your research topic in class. Due by the beginning of class.

## Talking About “Texts”

### Week Five, September 19: Historical Approaches & The Archive

Question of the week: What is the danger of research that is ahistorical, or, why do we need to know about something that happened decades ago?

**Required Readings:** Herta Herzog, “On Borrowed Experience: An Analysis of Listening to Daytime Sketches” in *Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts 1919-1968*, John Durham Peters and Peter Simonson, eds. (New York: Roman and Littlefield, 2004), 139-157; Ian S. Lustick, “History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias,” *American Political Science Review* 90-3, 21996, 605-18; Wolfgang Ernst, “Dis/continuities: Does the Archive Become Metaphorical in Multi-Media Space?” in *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thoman Keenan, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 105-124; Mél Hogan, “Caching and Crashing the Mediatheque,” *FLOWtv.org*, 2010, available online <http://flowtv.org/2010/05/caching-and-crashing-the-mediatheque-mel-hogan-concordia-university/>.

**Required Assignment:** Identify and add to course D2L site one archive that relates to your research subject. Be prepared to talk about the archive and its relevance to your subject in class. Due by the beginning of class.

### Week Six, September 26: Techniques of Close Reading

Question of the week: How do we make sense of media texts?

**Required Readings:** Brummet (whole book).

### Week Seven, October 3: Textual Analysis

Question of the week: What is a text?

**Required Readings:** Creswell, Chapter 5; Lindlof and Taylor, Chapter 7; Alan McKee, “What is Textual Analysis,” in *Textual Analysis: A Beginner’s Guide* (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 1-33.

**Required Assignment:** Introduction and literature review for your final paper. Due at the beginning of class.

### Week Eight, October 10: Visual Texts & Signs

Question of the week: Can you extract what you see from what you interpret?

**Required Readings:** Michael Emmison, Phillip Smith and Margery Mayall, “Visual Research: The Disciplinary Core,” *Researching the Visual* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 18-61; Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics for Beginners*, 1994, available online <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/>.



## Week Nine, October 17: Discourse Analysis

Question of the week: What role does power play in mediated messages?

**Required Readings:** Tuen A. Van Dijk, "Critical Discourse Analysis" in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton, eds. (Malden, MA; Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2002), 352-371; Lanita Jacobs-Huey, "...BTW, How Do YOU Wear Your Hair?" Identity, Knowledge and Authority in an Electronic Speech Community," in *From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women's Hair Care* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 89-104; Dick Hebdige, "Posing... Threats, Striking... Poses: Youth, Surveillance, and Display" in *The Subcultures Reader*, Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 393-405.

## Human Subjects

## Week Ten, October 24: Ethnographic Approaches

Question of the week: What does it mean that the researcher is the research instrument, or, how self-reflexive do I need to be?

**Required Readings:** Lindlof and Taylor, Chapter 5-6; Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 3-30.

## Week Eleven, October 31: Participant Observation/ Participant Participation

Question of the week: How can I be a fly on the wall ... or should I?

**Required Readings:** Arthur Asa Berger, "Participant Observation," *Media and Communication Research Methods* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2014), 215-228; Michael Emmison, Phillip Smith, and Margery Mayall, "Lived Visual Data," *Researching the Visual* (London: Sage Publications, 2012), 152-182; Maggie O'Neill, "Ethno-Mimesis and Participatory Arts," in *Advances in Visual Methodology*, Sarah Pink, ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2012), 153-172.

**Required Assignment:** Participant observation write up. Due at the beginning of class.

## Week Twelve, November 7: Oral History

Question of the week: What do life stories tell us about a culture?

**Required Readings:** Oral History Association, "Principles and Best Practices," Oral History Association, 2009, available online <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/>; Linda Shopes, "Making Sense of Oral History," *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, February 2002, available online <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/>; Kathleen M. Ryan, "From Propaganda to the Personal: WAVES, Memory, and the 'Prick' of Photography," in *Oral History and Photography*, Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson, eds, New York: Palgrave-McMillan, 133-148.

**Required Assignment:** Preliminary research findings, final paper. Due at the beginning of class.

## *Pulling it All Together*

### **Week Thirteen, November 14: Writing and Presentations**

Question of the week: How do I begin to analyze the data?

**Required Readings:** Lindlof and Taylor, Chapter 9; Creswell, Chapters 6-7.

**Required Assignment:** Meet with professor to discuss your preliminary research findings and how to write it up into a final paper. Due by Thursday, November 17 at 5pm.

### **Week Fourteen, November 21: Fall Break/Thanksgiving**

### **Weeks Fifteen and Sixteen, November 28 and December 5 : Final Project Presentations**

Question of the week: What did you learn over the course of the term?

**Required Readings:** None.

**Required Assignment:** Research Presentation, due in class.

**Tuesday, December 12, 1:00 pm: Final Paper Due** email submissions preferred

## *University of Colorado Policies*

### **Honor Code**

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-honor-code-policy>

### **Classroom Behavior**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-and-course-related-behavior>

### **Discrimination and Harassment**

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities. (Regent Law, Article 10, amended 11/8/2001). CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or veteran status. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-diversity-recruitment-admission-and-support-programs>

### **Religious Observance**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, I will make reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students who have conflict between religious observances and course evaluations. See policy details at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/observance-religious-holidays-and-absences-classes-and-or-exams>

### **Disability**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671 or [www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices](http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices) If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Medical Conditions: Injuries, Surgeries, and Illnesses guidelines under Quick Links at Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.