

University of Calgary
Department of Communication and Culture

Communication and Culture CMCL 313 LO1
Interdisciplinary Research Methodologies

Fall 2014

Tuesday, September 9 – Thursday, December 4

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 – 10:45

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| Instructor: | Gerald Bartels |
| Office: | SS 307 |
| Office Phone: | N/A |
| E-Mail: | TBA |
| Web Page: | D2L available through MyUofC |
| Office Hours: | Thursday 11:00 – 13:00, or by appointment |

Calendar Course Description

A critical introduction to interdisciplinary research methodologies. Students will explore, practice, and critique various quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and various perspectives on the processes of knowledge production.

Course Description

This course will introduce students to fundamental theoretical ideas in the area of methodology in social sciences as well as to essential practical components of qualitative and quantitative research methods in communication studies and social sciences in general. As students will bring to class their specific disciplinary background the course will address how interdisciplinary and complex social phenomena can be investigated and understood by means of modern and effective research methodologies and techniques.

Students will learn to critically engage with social research conducted by others and design, plan and complete their own ethically sound research projects. Thereby, the course also attempts to inspire and facilitate students' personal research interests and, if applicable, prepare them to start thinking and designing research projects conducive to the completion of their respective degree requirements.

During the course students will complete individual assignments and participate in small group research projects. They will also implement fieldwork exercises and data collection procedures on and off campus.

Additional Information

Research is exciting and helps us to obtain answers to questions that are both personally engaging and professionally compelling. Information will be presented in the lectures, but it will be also expected that students will have read the required weekly readings prior to class so that the lectures can be conversational. After week one, I will have a detailed overview of students' disciplinary backgrounds and academic needs and will provide a weekly outline for the course. While the readings will concentrate on research that has already been conducted, the lectures will take you through each step of the research process, with an emphasis on forming research questions, choosing methods, designing research projects, thinking through ethical concerns, collecting and analyzing data, and, finally, writing and presenting the final research report. The course will include hands-on tasks that allow students to practice research methods and techniques.

The course will also make use of the interactive communication tool called D2L available through MyUofC portal. Students will be able to engage in online discussions, post questions or comments, upload their learning journal entries and also access additional readings assigned for the respective week. Assignments will be posted on D2L and students will submit their work in WORD (Windows) or PAGES (Apple) format through D2L as well.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the term, students should be able to:

- articulate the value of research in communication and cultural studies;
- understand the differences between major methodological traditions and research techniques within social sciences;
- understand the interdependency of research and social theory
- command data gathering and analysis processes;
- know how to use databases for secondary research and recognize their value in primary research;
- design ethically sound research projects;
- understand sampling strategies and how to use them;
- make use of interdisciplinary approaches to social research;
- know how to gather information using qualitative and quantitative research methods and create basic research tools for each;
- critically analyze research results of others;
- interpret research results and report the findings in academic and professional settings.

Textbooks and Readings

- Flick, U. (2011). *Introducing research methodology: A beginner's guide to doing a research project*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Additional readings via D2L

Internet and electronic communication device information

Students are welcome to use their computers during class time to take notes or to look up information related to class content and discussions. Other usage of electronic devices will not be allowed. Cell phones or other communication devices and tools have to be switched off prior to the beginning of each class.

Assignments and Evaluation

This course will not include final examinations or any other in-class tests. Students will complete throughout the course individual assignments and small group work projects. Assignments will be explained in class and a detailed description for each will be posted on D2L.

Small group assignments:

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|---|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Initial Research Proposal (1) | 5-7 double-spaced pages | 10% of final grade | Due September 23, 2014 |
| Research Proposal: Methodology, research methods and techniques (2) | 10-15 double-spaced pages | 15% of final grade | Due November 4, 2014 |
| Final Research Report & Class Presentation | 15-20 double-spaced pages | 25% of final grade | December 2, 2014 |

World class research is mostly conducted in teams; therefore the course will require students to work and complete the assignments and research tasks in groups of four. Students should not underestimate the logistically and mentally challenging phenomenon of group work. If the work is divided wisely within the group and members meet regularly to merge their individual work components into a meaningful group assignment then the group work will also prepare students for future group and team work in academic and professional work setting.

Initial Research Proposal (1): Students will prepare a research proposal that will address a social phenomenon, problem or interest that they would like to approach and investigate throughout the course. This proposal is the first step towards a more detailed comprehension of a social phenomenon that goes beyond a day-to-day and superficial “small talk” understanding. Students are asked to narrow down the chosen social phenomenon and start thinking about a preliminary research question that will subsequently emerge also by virtue of the following literature review.

Research Proposal: Methodology, research methods and techniques (2): Once the individual literature reviews will be completed, the group will integrate the individual literature reviews into a coherent document. Students will then be able to design their specific research project. They will choose a meaningful methodology that addresses their research question(s) and consequently suggest reasonable research methods, tools and techniques to implement their own ethically sound research project(s).

Final Research Report & Class Presentation: The four group work assignments are of interrelated nature. The initial research proposal (1) will inform the literature review, which in turn will help students to identify a clear research question and to design their subsequent research activities. The final research report will incorporate the previous work done by the group. It is a stringent document that introduces the selected research topic, includes parts of the literature review, the chosen methodology and utilized research methods, and a preliminary analysis and interpretation of the research data. The project groups will report their research findings in written form and also present them in class.

The research report will also include a reflective section about the overall research process. Students will comment on their chosen research methodology, explain why they decided to utilize a specific research method and describe their own research experiences. Details will be explained in class and comprehensive examples will be provided as well.

Students will also present their research projects and findings in class.

Individual assignments and class participation:

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|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Learning Journal | 1-3 double-spaced pages | 20% of final grade | Ongoing |
| Literature Review | 5-7 double-spaced pages | 20% of final grade | Due October 23, 2014 |
| Course Participation | N/A | 10% of final grade | Ongoing |

Learning Journal: The learning journal will prompt students to reflect on the weekly readings and encourage them to comment on their ongoing research projects. Students will upload weekly prior to class one to three double-spaced pages on D2L. Emphasis for the evaluation of the learning journals will be placed on students' engagement with the readings and on their thoughtful and critical comments. This is the place to critique meaningfully the weekly readings, ask comprehensive questions related to the content of the course or state difficulties concerning the research project. Students should bring their learning journals to class, ask relevant questions and contribute to class discussions by sharing their remarks.

Literature Review: The literature review will enable students to put their social topics of interest into an academic context. Students will review previous conducted research and thereby identify which research question(s) might be meaningful to be answered by their own research endeavours. The literature review will include and respond to seven to ten academic resources relevant to a group's specific research topic. The individual literature reviews will inform the research proposal (2).

Course Participation:

Students have to regularly attend class. Participation in discussions will provide an interactive and fruitful educational environment. Students are expected to listen respectfully to their fellow students' contributions and respond meaningfully to enhance class discussions.

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments: Assignments, essays and group work projects have to be uploaded to D2L.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than 14 days after the start of the course.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System & Dept of Communication and Culture Grade Scale

Work in this course will be graded using percentage grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in Communication and Culture:

| Grade Point Value | Description | Grade | Department grade scale equivalents | Letter grade % equivalent for calculations |
|-------------------|--|-------|------------------------------------|--|
| 4.00 | Outstanding | A+ | 96 - 100% | 98.0% |
| 4.00 | Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter. | A | 90 - 95.99% | 93.0% |
| 3.70 | | A - | 85 - 89.99% | 87.5% |
| 3.30 | | B+ | 80 - 84.99% | 82.5% |
| 3.00 | Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete. | B | 75 - 79.99% | 77.5% |
| 2.70 | | B- | 70 - 74.99% | 72.5% |
| 2.30 | | C+ | 65 - 69.99% | 67.5% |
| 2.00 | Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter. | C | 60 - 64.99% | 62.5% |
| 1.70 | | C- | 55 - 59.99% | 57.5% |
| 1.30 | Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject | D+ | 53 - 54.99% | 54.0% |
| 1.00 | | D | 50 - 52.99% | 51.5% |
| 0.00 | Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements. | F | 00 - 49.99% | 0% |

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words

and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/node/208> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/research/research-ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

| For information about . . . | Visit or contact . . . |
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| ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC) | SS 102 403-220-3580 picarts@ucalgary.ca |
| CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program | http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ |
| DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support | http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/stud |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line | ents 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca |
| <p>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App | http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents |
| <p>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman | http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds |
| <p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips | 403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p> |

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Posted on D2L.