



Jour 804

Mass Communication Methodology I: Qualitative

Section 1100 (26467), Spring 2015

4:30 – 7:00 p.m. Thu.

ST-F 202

Instructor: Genelle Belmas, Ph.D.

Office: ST-F 209D

Office Phone: (785) 864-7667

Email: gbelmas@ku.edu (checked daily)

Office Hours: Mon & Wed, 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and by appointment. I answer email within 18 hours.

NOTE: This class is a hybrid class, with some of the work done online on your own time. You must have both Internet access and a computer capable of connecting to Blackboard. You should also have basic Internet use knowledge and skills that include typing and online navigation. If you have technical difficulties, contact the help desk at (785) 864-8080. It is up to you to troubleshoot your own tech issues. Help for Blackboard is available at blackboard.ku.edu.

About This Syllabus

This syllabus is a contract between you, the student, and me, the instructor. While I take seriously my obligation to provide information about qualitative research methods and give you a chance to think and write about them, I need you to take seriously your obligation to make a sincere effort to learn that information and understand and perform the assignments given to you. Please feel free to ask questions at any time if you are uncertain as to what I expect or what you should do. However, our schedule is not engraved in stone; if we need to take longer on a particular area, we will make accommodations.

Course Description

Statistics are awesome, but sometimes they can't tell the story you want to tell in your research. There are times when only the humanistic approach will do. This graduate seminar provides an overview of applied qualitative research methodologies for the study of communication. Specific methodological approaches we will explore include (but not necessarily be limited to) focus groups, grounded theory, interpretive and critical interpretive approaches, ethnography, content analysis, historical/legal research and narrative. We will think about the advantages and tradeoffs of different methods and how we might integrate them to strengthen the foundations of our research. We also will analyze the ways in which issues of validity and reliability are addressed in qualitative research, and the extent to which conclusions can be drawn from qualitative data.

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to guide students in developing skills in designing, evaluating, and understanding qualitative research methods as they relate to communication. The intent is to prepare students to undertake a qualitative research study and to make methodological choices based on an understanding of the assumptions inherent in the method of choice. By successfully completing the course, students will be able to:

- Identify qualitative research methods prevalent in communication.
- Formulate research design, data analysis, and evaluation techniques for qualitative research.
- Evaluate qualitative research of others in the field of communication.
- Identify potential research designs and select one that will obtain the desired results.

Textbook and Required Readings (to be read BEFORE the class for which assigned)

Readings on Blackboard.

Grading

100 points — Literature review

Pass/fail — Class leadership

200 points — Final paper

300 points — Total

Grades will be based on the total number of points you accumulate. The scale will be:

A+	100%+	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D	60-69%
A	94-99%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	F	0-59%
A-	90-93%	B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%		

All assignments must be completed for a passing grade in the course. Please keep all graded material until you've received your final grade, so we can refer to it if need be.

General Guidelines

Academic misconduct. The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence. Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult me. Some examples:

- If you use or attempt to use any unauthorized materials during a test, or if you give any unauthorized materials to someone else during a test, this is *cheating*. Unauthorized materials include written materials, such as notes. Unauthorized materials include any forms of nonverbal communication (one cough, the answer is A; two coughs, the answer is B, etc.).
- *Plagiarism* is stealing. You take someone else's ideas, thoughts, or words and present them as your own original work. This includes ideas from written sources, such as books, as well as materials on the Internet. Cutting and pasting materials from the Internet and presenting that work as if it was your own is plagiarism. There may be times when you want to incorporate another person's ideas, opinions, and words into the papers you write,

to make a point or to provide background. If you do, it is essential that you attribute that information—that you explain where the information came from and give credit where credit is due. “Recycling” past interviews or research from previous students and presenting it as your own is also plagiarism.

- *Fabrication and falsification* mean that you made it up. This can include making up an entire interview or embellishing a fact, quote, or statistic to make it sound better. Don’t do it.
- *Bottom line*: Do your own original work and don’t copy another student or cheat in any way. Be yourself, not someone else. If I bust you cheating, I will follow up with university administration. In this class, and in all journalism classes (and all KU classes), honesty and integrity are critical. Any work you do must be original and reflect your own ideas, thoughts, and research. In a work setting, if you choose to violate professional standards, you will be fired. In this class, if you choose to violate the standards for academic integrity, you’ll fail the course, and you may be expelled from or denied admission to the School of Journalism.

Special needs. The University of Kansas is committed to helping all students learn. If you have a special need that may affect your learning, please contact me as soon as possible. The KU Office of Student Access Services coordinates accommodations for all students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted this office, please do so as soon as possible. Information about services can be found at <https://disability.ku.edu/>. Or you can visit the office on the first floor of Strong Hall. The phone number is (785) 864-4064. The email is achieve@ku.edu. Please contact me privately regarding your needs in this course.

Weather. In the event of inclement weather, the decision to cancel classes is made by KU officials (NOT BY ME!). To determine whether snow or icy conditions have canceled classes, call (785) 864-7669 ((785) 864-SNOW).

Assignments

Literature review. This assignment is your opportunity to get a running start on your paper or proposal. The lit review should consist of a summary of every book and article you can find that addresses your proposal topic, woven together to tell the story of what’s already been done, and a bibliography in APA style. Your references should include background information on your topic and anything that relates to your topic, major theories that inform your research, and pieces that describe research methodologies that you might use in your study. The lit review should include a *minimum* of 15 sources, at least 10 of which should be scholarly. *Hint*: Be sure to incorporate both quantity *and* quality in your bibliography. A separate handout will follow.

Class leadership. You will select at random both a topic and date for presentation on the first day. For your topic, you’ll provide me in advance several research papers that use your topic and be ready to discuss both the content and methodological approach to those papers.

Final paper. This is the culmination of your experience in the class. You already have a topic in place because of our conference commitments. Your final paper must include, at minimum: a statement of the research question; an introduction addressing the “who cares” question, a discussion of the theoretical framework that will guide the research; a discussion of your methodology; a literature review of the most relevant scholarly work related to your topic; a findings section and a conclusion. A separate handout will follow.

Attendance and Class Participation

The foundations of this class are the discussions we engage in and the opportunity to exchange ideas, comments and criticisms among your graduate peers. Excessive absenteeism will reflect poorly on your grade! You are expected to attend every class. Extenuating circumstances, like illness or other emergencies, need to be documented for special consideration. *You* are responsible for all notes, handouts, and assigned readings. If an emergency arises that necessitates your missing a class, it is up to you to get notes and materials from fellow students. Develop a buddy system and exchange phone numbers and other contact information! Please notify me *in advance* if you must miss a class.

Email

While many of us are addicted to email, and it is a wonderful tool for communication, there need to be a few policies. I read email several times each day, and I welcome your communication, but some things need to be discussed in person—in-depth questions about the material, inquiries about grades, excessive absences. Email is best for quick clarifications and to schedule meetings. It shouldn't be considered a substitute for face-to-face visits.

Questions? Criticisms? Comments? Suggestions?

If at any time something seems unclear or unreasonable to you, please come discuss it with me. I am open to your comments, criticisms and suggestions. This class is meant to be an open forum for learning and discussion, and I am dedicated to making it an enjoyable experience to the extent I am able. I am also extremely open to student suggestions for improvements. If something's not working for you, let's talk about how to fix it.

One More Thing ... A Few Ground Rules for Jour 804

The foundation of the freedoms that the mass media enjoy is the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. We must also remember that it contains protection for "freedom of speech." That said, I need to make clear a few ground rules for discussion.

Our classroom is an open forum for the free flow of information. Disagreement between students or between students and instructor, and perhaps heated discussion, is to be expected. Please do not hesitate to question what I say or what others say. *If you disagree with me, I will not hold it against you!* I know you think that is easy to say but not to do, but if you believe your points of view are being held against you, please talk to me about it. We need many points of view to have a good discussion, and I look forward to hearing yours. However, that does *not* give us the right to attack each other on a personal basis. We can and must disagree respectfully, and I expect that you will conduct yourself appropriately, even if you disagree vehemently.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments (subject to change)

Week/ Day	Topic	Readings	What's due?
Week 1/ Aug. 25	Welcome! Introduction of class	Review of syllabus and schedule	
Week 2/ Sept. 1	Introduction to qualitative research What is culture?	Geertz, "Thick Description" Frey <i>et al.</i> , "Naturalistic Inquiry" Assignment of leadership dates	Bring a computer and your abstract to class for sharing and evaluation.
Week 3/ Sept. 8	History of qualitative mass communication research Finding literature and theory Gathering data	Wahl-Jorgensen, "How Not To Found a Field" Christians and Carey, "Logic and Aims"	
Week 4/ Sept. 15	Validity, reliability Institutional Review Boards Understanding and using theories Ethics of research	Babbie, "Field Research" Wimmer and Dominick, "Research Ethics" <i>Recommended:</i> Creswell, "Data Collection" Christians, "Ethics and Politics" and "Symposium"	
Week 5/ Sept. 22	Legal and ethical research Leader: Genelle	Readings on Bb	
Week 6/ Sept 29		Readings on Bb	
Week 7/ Oct. 6		Readings on Bb	
Week 8/ Oct. 13		Readings on Bb	
Week 9/ Oct. 20		Readings on Bb	
Week 10/ Oct. 27		Readings on Bb	Literature review, end of class
Week 11/ Nov. 3	MAPACA: Atlantic City!	----	
Week 12/ Nov. 10	Conference discussion/debriefing	Notes from your session and one other that you attended	
Week 13/ Nov. 17	Final paper work day		Bring computers and work.
Week 14/ Nov. 24	THANKSGIVING BREAK— NO CLASS!	----	----
Week 15/ Dec. 1	Final paper work day		Bring computers and work.
Week 16/ Dec. 8	Final paper peer review		Bring computers to review others' work.
Finals Week	Final paper due	Due Thu., Dec. 15, noon via email (gbelmas@ku.edu)	