

COMM 5000: Communication Research Methods

Instructor: Dr. Matthew Hale



Semester: Spring 2020
Class Meeting: Weekly due dates.
Location: The Interwebs



Course Overview

This course will give you hands-on, practical experience with a wide range of qualitative and quantitative research methods used in communication, cultural studies, media studies, anthropology, and other disciplines. We will explore a number of methods including, but not limited to, textual analysis, archival research and historiography, participant observation, content analysis, and surveys. Emphasis will be placed mostly heavily on qualitative field-based and critical/cultural studies approaches.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- (1) Conduct an efficient and yet rigorous literature review on a topic of your choice.
- (2) Explain the history, development, and current importance of research ethics and the ethical treatment of human and non-human living subjects in research.
- (3) Understand the relative strengths and weakness of a number of methodological approaches.
- (4) Apply social theories and various research methods to generate original data and answer questions about complex social phenomena.

Required Texts/Materials

Texts: "Required:" *Media and Communication Research Methods* by Arthur Asa Berger.

NOTE: **EDITIONS MAY VARY!!!!** I will be reading/referencing the most recent (5th edition). You may use the 3rd edition (possibly even the 2nd) for class. I have found used copies of the 3rd edition for as low as \$1.25. See further details about this text online under the "course materials" announcement on D2L.

Recommended texts for methodology (I recommend you give them a look, but not buy):

Ethnography and Virtual Worlds. Boellstorff, et al.

Tales from the Field. Van Mannen.

Writing Culture. Eds., Clifford and Marcus.

Time and the Other. Fabian.

Course Policies and Procedures

Participation: You will be required to submit weekly reading responses, to generate and analysis original data, and to following along with our weekly readings and methods labs. You will not submit a final research paper, but rather a research portfolio that I hope will benefit your future academic projects and — most directly — your long term post-graduation professional development.

Disability Access: Any student who has a disability that may affect his/her academic performance is encouraged to make an appointment with me to discuss this matter, or you may contact Disability Services; Telephone 221-6230; TTY 221-6278; Fax 221-7102.

Official Communication: AP Mail is the official means of communication at APSU. Correspondence between the university and students will be sent to the students' APSU Mail account; other email accounts will not be utilized. Students are encouraged to check their AP Mail account on a regular basis.

Academic Dishonesty: The Austin Peay State University Student Handbook states: Academic dishonesty may be defined as any act of dishonesty in academic work.

This includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, the changing or falsifying of any academic documents or materials, cheating and giving or receiving of unauthorized aid in tests, examinations or other assigned work. Students guilty of academic misconduct, either directly or indirectly through participation or assistance, are immediately responsible to the instructor of the class. Penalties for academic misconduct will vary with the seriousness of the offense and may include, but are not limited to, a grade of “F” on the work in question, a grade of “F” in the course, reprimand, probation, suspension and expulsion.

***TLDR: If I see credible evidence of plagiarism or any academic misconduct, I will report the transgression as per APSU policy and I will assign you an F for the course.**

Misconduct: Actions such as hazing, harassment, disorderly conduct, and endangering any person's health are considered acts of misconduct which may subject the offending individual or organization to disciplinary sanctions.

Professionalism and Respect: You are expected to behave professionally in your contributions to discussions, feedback given to your peers, interactions with the instructor, and, of course, in the work you do for class assignments. Discourteous, threatening, or harassing behavior will not be tolerated. Respect works both ways. I do my best to be courteous and fair in all situations and at all times. If you ever feel that you are being treated otherwise by anyone (including me), please contact me.

Exceptions: As with any policies, I am willing to make exceptions under certain extenuating circumstances. If you have any conflicts with the schedule or policies outlined here, please contact me and let me know as soon as possible.

Attendance: You must actively participate in class consistently each week throughout the semester. As such, you will need to log into the course website *AT MINIMUM* every single week (minus holidays).

Assignment Submission Policy: All assignments must be submitted to the appropriate “Dropbox” on D2L by the designated time/due date indicated on the syllabus and/or in person. **I will only accept .doc**

or *.docx* files for your MINI-Labs and/or final papers/proposals. You **CAN**, however, submit your weekly notes as PDF files. We will determine the best practices via D2L for video, audio, and other media formats as the we progress through the semester.

Late Assignments: I will not accept any late assignments.

Submitting Assignments Correctly and Completely: It is *your* responsibility to ensure that I receive what I need to grade. Check your files. Double check to ensure your upload worked. If I attempt to open your file and there is nothing there, an unfinished draft, or the incorrect file format by the due date, I will grade what has been submitted as is. No exceptions.

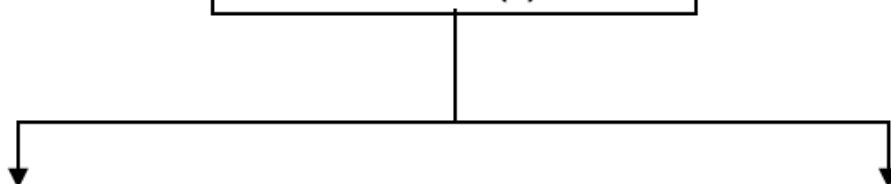
Unethical Requests For Special Treatment: It is unethical for me to provide extra credit opportunities or to artificially inflate any student's grade. Please do not ask me to increase your grade on any assignment or your final overall score for the course. If you find a grading error, please content me. I am happy to correct it. I will treat all students equally within the classroom and with respect to grading.

Email Replies: I will do my very best to reply to all emails within a 24 hour period excepting holidays and weekends. If you do not hear from me within 48 hours, I may have missed your email in the digital piles of emails I get each week. Feel free to re-send the email and/or to contact me during office hours or before/after class.

Office Hours: Please feel free to visit me during office hours for any help you might need. I'm there for a reason and I'm happy to help. Now, since this is a digital class, we will often communicate via email and perhaps via other digitally mediate channels. I will be asking students if they would like to meet on campus once each month during the semester for informal discussion. This will not be a requirement.

Grading Turnaround: I will try my best to always return graded materials with extensive feedback within one week. There are times where assignments may be longer/more involved. Accordingly, my response time my be slower.

**You have (2) pathways
through the course.
Choose (1).**



Grading Points Breakdown Option # 1 ("Labs")

ASSIGNMENT	POINT VALUE	% FINAL SCORE	DUE
MINI-ASSIGNMENTS (5 X 60 PTS EACH)	300	60%	Various
READING NOTES (10pts x 10)	100	20%	Various
RESEARCH AGENDA & OPPORTUNITIES LIST	100	20%	May 4
TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	500		N/A

Grading Points Breakdown Option # 2 (Project)

ASSIGNMENT	POINT VALUE	% FINAL SCORE	DUE
READING NOTES (10pts x 10)	100	20%	Various
PROJECT PROPOSAL (REVISIONS LIKELY)	100	20%	Feb 16
FINAL RESEARCH PAPER	300	60%	May 4
TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	500		N/A

See the following page for more details.



Grading Points Breakdown Option # 1 (“Labs”)

ASSIGNMENT	POINT VALUE	% FINAL SCORE	DUE
MINI-ASSIGNMENTS (5 X 60 PTS EACH)	300	60%	Various
READING NOTES (10pts x 10)	100	20%	Various
RESEARCH AGENDA & OPPORTUNITIES LIST	100	20%	May 4
TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	500		N/A

Grading Points Breakdown Option # 2 (Project)

ASSIGNMENT	POINT VALUE	% FINAL SCORE	DUE
READING NOTES (10pts x 10)	100	20%	Various
PROJECT PROPOSAL (REVISIONS LIKELY)	100	20%	Feb 16
FINAL RESEARCH PAPER	300	60%	May 4
TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE	500		N/A

Grading

Please keep the following scales and criteria in mind as you complete your assignments:

- A** - Achievement is outstanding.
- B** - Achievement above the level necessary to meet requirements.
- C** - Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
- D** - Achievement worthy of credit. Fails to meet course requirements fully.
- F** - The work was either completed but at a level of achievement not worthy of credit or was not completed.

Final Letter Grade to Point Chart Conversion Table

LETTER GRADE	POINT RANGE
A	450-500
B	400-449
C	350-399
D	300-349
F	0-299

Incompletes: A grade of incomplete (“I”) will be given only in a genuine emergency, and generally only for work which is due during the last two weeks of the course. The student must make arrangements with the instructor for an incomplete before the last day of class.

Grade Disputes: If you have a question or dispute about your grade, please wait 24 hours before you contact me with your dispute. Take some time to think about the situation and carefully formulate your argument as to why a grade should be changed. When you do contact me, you should have a specific rationale for why you deserve a higher grade.

Late Assignments: Late assignments will not be accepted unless prior arrangements are made or in case of special circumstances.

Course Calendar

Week 1: (Jan 22-26)

Research as Craftsmanship

Read: C. Wright Mills. (1959). "On Intellectual Craftsmanship."

Read: John Storey. (1996). "Cultural Studies: An Introduction."

Read: Colin Sparks. (1996). "The Evolution of Cultural Studies."

Reading Notes due Everyday Sunday by 11:59PM (see "Assignment Instructions" on D2L for further details).

Week 2: (Jan 27-Feb 2)

Getting Started

Read: "Writing a Literature Review"

<https://www.csus.edu/indiv/f/foss-snowden/litreviewhowto.pdf>

Read: "The Research Process"

Read: "Dr. Karen's Foolproof Grant Template"

<https://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/05/dr-karens-foolproof-grant-template/>

Week 3: (Feb 3-9)

Research as Design: Tools with Strengths and Weaknesses

Read: "Communication Theory and Philosophy" (D2L)

Read: "Quantitative Methodology" (D2L)

Read: "Qualitative Methodology" (D2L)

Week 4: (Feb 10-16)

Research Ethics and Human Subjects

Read: "Five Principles for Research Ethics" (APA)

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/jan03/principles>

(SU) Feb 16 — Due: Project Proposal (OPTION # 2 ONLY!!)

**Week 5: (Feb 17-23)
Ethnomethodology**

Read: “Ethnomethodological Research.” Chapter in Berger textbook.

DO: Ethnomethodology Breach Experiment (these will be assigned to you at random. See “Assignment Instructions” for further details).

**Week 6: (Feb 24-Mar 1)
Content Analysis**

Read: “Content Analysis”

Due: Ethnomethodological research (design statement, findings, and analysis) by 11:59PM on Sunday, March 1st!! (OPTION # 1 ONLY!!)

**Week 7: (Mar 2-8)
Textual Analysis/Historiography (no textual analysis mini-lab, just reading...a lot of it)**

Read: “Semiotic Analysis.” Chapter in Berger textbook.

Read: “Rhetorical Analysis.” Chapter in Berger textbook.

Read: “Ideological Criticism.” Chapter in Berger textbook.

Read: “Discourse Analysis.” Chapter in Berger textbook.

Read: “Historical Analysis.” (Chapter in Berger textbook.

Due: Content analysis (design statement, findings, and analysis) due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, March 8!! (OPTION # 1 ONLY!!!)

Week 8: SPRING BREAK — NO CLASS!! (March 9-13)

Week 9: (Mar 16-22)
Participant Observation, Part I

Read: "Participant Observation." Chapter in Berger textbook.

Watch: *Stranger with a Camera*. (1999).

<https://vimeo.com/channels/676200/54465749>

Week 10: (Mar 23-29)
Participant Observation, Part II

Read: "A Brief History off Ethnographic Methods"

Read: "Data Analysis." Chapter in the Berger textbook.

Due: Ethnographic field data (jottings, fieldnotes w/ analysis, photos, and photo caption/log) due by 11:59PM on Sunday, March 29!! (OPTION # 1 ONLY!!)

Week 11: (Mar 30-Apr 5)
Interviews, Part I

Read: "Interviews"

Read: "Best Principles and Practices" Oral History Association.

<https://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices-revised-2009/>

Week 12: (Apr 6-12)
Interviews, Part II

Watch: *Dear Zachary: A Letter to a Son About His Father*. (2008)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDSgMIVWbfU>

Due: Interview (raw footage/audio, interview log, and transcription sample) by 11:59PM on Sunday, April 12!! (OPTION # 1 ONLY!!!)

Week 13: (April 13-17)
Surveys and Questionnaires
I'll be away at PCA conference

Read: "Surveys." Chapter in the Berger textbook.

Recommended: "What Can Uber Teach Us About the Gender Pay Gap?"

<http://freakonomics.com/podcast/what-can-uber-teach-us-about-the-gender-pay-gap/>

Week 14: (Apr 20-26)
Surveys and Questionnaires

Read: No Readings

Due: Questionnaire (instrument, raw data, write up) by 11:59PM on Sunday, April 26!! OPTION # 1 ONLY !!!

Week 15: No Class Meetings

(May 6) — FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 11:59PM!!!! (EVERYONE!!!)