

CMUN 246 | Naturalistic Research Methods | Fall 2010

Mon/Wed @ 1:00-2:15 in Corboy 426

Instructor	Dr. Adrienne Massanari
Email	amassanari@luc.edu
Course Web site	Blackboard
Office hours	Monday 2:30-4:30 PM; other times by appointment
Office location	SOC #204

Course description and learning objectives

First and foremost, this class is designed to get you to think critically about communication research. In this course, we'll also be focusing on learning to observe and describe communication behavior using qualitative methods (interviewing, content analysis, discourse analysis, etc.). You will be encouraged to “think like an ethnographer” – that is, pay closer attention to the seemingly mundane aspects of the culture that surrounds you on a daily basis.

By the end of this semester, you will be able to:

- (1) Describe the “world view” and approach that communication scholars use when conducting research;
- (2) Explain the way communication researchers present arguments;
- (3) Find, analyze, and critique communication scholarship that employs different methodological approaches;
- (4) Understand what kinds of questions might be best answered using the methods we'll cover;
- (5) Practice observing and analyzing communication behavior in various environments;
- (6) Create and present your own research study applying concepts we've discussed in class.

No prior knowledge of research design is assumed.

Required texts and materials

A fair warning: this class has a lot of reading. In general, you should read for the key ideas in the pieces we're discussing, rather than trying to remember every detail. Some of these readings introduce challenging topics in difficult language, so take lots of notes, and bring your questions to class.

There are two required physical texts we'll be using this semester:

Rose, G. (2007). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Nathan, R. (2005). *My freshman year: What a professor learned by becoming a student*. New York: Penguin Books.

In addition, a number of additional readings are posted as edocs on the Blackboard course site (abbreviated BB in the course schedule below). You should print these readings out and bring them to class on the days we're discussing them. At the very least, you need to bring your notes about the readings, as we'll refer to them throughout the class period.

Assignments

Four components comprise your grade in this class: a quiz, two writing assignments, and a final group project and poster presentation. The final portion is based on your participation in class activities. Pop quizzes are more likely to appear if I believe few people are doing the assigned reading.

All written work for this class should be properly sourced and cited using APA 5th or 6th edition guidelines.

Quiz	15%
Methods assignment	10%
Research article critique	20%
Final group project	30%
Group project poster	10%
Participation (in-class activities, discussions, homework, writing workshops)	15%

Methods assignment (10%)

For this assignment, you will observe some aspect of communication behavior, take extensive field notes about it, and submit a short report detailing your findings. I'll provide more specific information about this assignment in class.

Research article critique (20%)

You will analyze a qualitative article that I provide and write a critique in the form of a peer review. In your 4-5 page review, you will analyze the author's study and carefully review its theoretical framework and methodology, offering a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the study. More information about this assignment will be forthcoming.

Final project (30%) and poster (10%)

Working with a team that you choose, you will create and design a research study around a communication topic of interest. As a group, you will write a 10-12 page paper that: (a) introduces the area of interest; (b) contains a literature review of previous research; (c) presents your research questions; (d) details your methods; and (e) provides some preliminary results. Your group will also present your study and initial findings in the form of an academic poster during the last week of class. More information about this project will be forthcoming.

Methods of evaluation

For all written assignments in this class, I will use a rubric to ensure clear and consistent grading. A version of the rubric I typically use is listed below.

A range	Excellent analysis that critically examines a text through interpretive frameworks discussed in class. Digs deep beneath the surface. Creative and innovative approach to the problem/question being considered. Outstanding content, clarity of writing, and organization of research material. Sophisticated, appropriate use of language. Thorough research and documentation of ideas, arguments, and comments. Free of mistakes: no typos; no misspellings; no punctuation or grammatical glitches; no errors of fact. All the necessary details, documentation, quotes, citations, and
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specifics are there.

- B range** Very good attempt to link analysis to class themes, but more connections could be made. Very good to excellent; above average work and research. Some improvement needed in content, clarity, organization, or documentation. Occasional typos or other glitches say more about the lack of close proofreading than failure to master the mechanics of spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage. More details, quotes, citations, or examples needed. Errors of fact (incorrect spelling of a title, reference name, source, or date, etc.) show inattention to detail and accuracy although content of the paper is above average.
- C range** Average analysis that lacks clear connections to class themes. Average, acceptable writing and research that meets basic expectations. Needs much work on content, clarity, organization, and documentation. Although basic facts most likely are there, lacks elaborating and supporting documentation or quotes. Errors indicate need for improvement in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word usage: material was not proofread carefully. Errors of fact (incorrect spelling of a title, reference name, wrong source, date, or page number, etc.) show inattention to detail and accuracy.
- D range** Weak, unfocused work. Organization is below average, with numerous grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. Documentation and details are scanty or superfluous, with errors of fact. Paper may reflect a lack of understanding of the assignment or a lack of research effort.

Grading scale

A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	84-86%
B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%
C	74-76%
C-	70-73%
D	60-69%
F	Below 59%

Participation/Attendance policy

One of the goals of this course is for you to be able to engage with the material in a supportive environment that is conducive to your learning. To do this, you need to come to class having carefully read the readings (making note of and asking any questions you might have during class) and ready to fully participate in discussions and activities. Behavior that disrupts the learning environment (including talking during lectures, texting in class, sleeping, etc.) will adversely affect your participation grade.

It is important for you attend class, both for you to master the course material and to contribute positively to the classroom learning environment. I take attendance every session at the beginning of class. **Only two unexcused absences during the semester are allowed without penalty. After that, each absence will reduce your final grade by one-third of a letter (e.g. a B will become a**

B- if you miss or are late to two classes and so on). Arriving more 15 minutes late or longer, or leaving more than 15 minutes early without notifying me beforehand, also counts as one absence. Arriving late after a break mid-class may count as “late” if that privilege is abused.

Excused absences are those that result from documented personal or medical emergencies. Additionally, if you anticipate participating in athletic meets or other university-sanctioned activities, I need to be notified of these well in advance (preferably at the beginning of the semester).

Late assignments

Unless you have a documented medical or personal emergency, late assignments will not be accepted. If an emergency happens, please contact me as soon as possible so we can make other arrangements. The only other case in which late assignments will be accepted is if you are participating in an athletic meet or other university-sponsored event. Please let me know of any potential conflicts at the beginning of the semester.

You must complete **all assignments** in order to pass this course.

Academic integrity/Plagiarism

Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Plagiarism in your work will result in a minimum of a failing grade for that assignment. The case may carry further sanctions from the School of Communication or the university, the most serious being permanent expulsion from Loyola. Avoid turning in work that could be interpreted as plagiarism or academically dishonest (e.g. failing to properly credit a source or using someone else’s ideas without clarifying that they are not yours).

If you have questions about what proper source referencing looks like, see someone at the Tutoring Center in the Sullivan Center, Suite 260, extension (773) 508-7714. Also consider investing in an APA (American Psychological Association) or MLA (Modern Language Association) manual. Online resources are also available through the Loyola libraries Web site. Be especially careful citing online sources. This is an academic community; being uninformed or naive is not an acceptable excuse for not properly referencing your sources.

Special needs

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student’s needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student’s responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Other policies

- It is important that you check your LUC e-mail account regularly, as I send important updates about the class and often return assignments over e-mail.
- Please set your phone to vibrate when you enter class and refrain from texting or checking voicemail/e-mail while class is in session. You may be asked to leave the class (and lose credit for any assignments handed in that day) if you do not comply with this request.
- Please turn off your monitor during lectures in the computer lab. When we’re completing in-class exercises using the computers, please don’t IM, chat, e-mail, browse the web, or

complete coursework for other classes. You may be asked to leave the class (and lose credit for any assignments handed in that day) if you do not comply with this request.

- If you come in late to class, please enter quietly. (See attendance policy for more information about tardiness).
- If you need to leave early, please let me know ahead of time and make an effort to sit by the door. (See attendance policy for more information about leaving early).
- If you are not in class and miss announcements, assignments or lecture materials, it is your responsibility to get them from a classmate. If you have a legitimate reason for missing class (e.g. official university travel for sports or documented illness), I will be glad to meet with you to catch you up, but we will generally follow the course schedule you have received with only minor adjustments from time to time.
- Your syllabus, the reading schedule, and assignment descriptions serve as my “contract” with you. All evaluation of your work is based on the criteria outlined within these documents. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the expectations (and relative weight) for each assignment.
- Please treat everyone in the class with civility and respect.

Course schedule and readings*

The date that articles are listed indicates when we will be discussing them in class. Please come having read the assigned texts and prepared with questions.

Week 1	August 30 (Mon)	What’s this class all about? Introductions
	September 1 (Wed)	Ways of knowing, theories, history of communication paradigms (Part 1) Read: Merrigan Ch. 1 (BB)
Week 2	September 6 (Mon)	NO CLASS – Labor Day
	September 8 (Wed)	Ways of knowing, theories, history of communication paradigms (Part 2) Read: Merrigan Ch. 3 (BB)
Week 3	September 13 (Mon)	Goals of research Read: Ragin Ch. 2 (BB)
	September 15 (Wed)	Research design Read: Maxwell Ch. 1 (BB)
Week 4	September 20 (Mon)	Quiz on research design and ways of knowing
	September 22 (Wed)	Finding and reading qualitative research Read: Rubin Ch. 3-4 (BB)

* I reserve the right to modify the reading schedule if necessary.

Week 5	September 27 (Mon)	Learning to observe Read: Silverman Ch. 1 (BB); Nathan Ch. 1
	September 29 (Wed)	Collecting qualitative data (writing fieldnotes) Read: Wolfinger's "On writing fieldnotes: collection strategies and background expectancies" from <i>Qualitative Research</i> (BB); Nathan Ch. 2
Week 6	October 4 (Mon)	Method: Interviewing Rubin & Rubin Ch. 1 (BB); Nathan Ch. 4
	October 6 (Wed)	Method: Content analysis Read: Rose Ch. 4; Nathan Ch. 5
Week 7	October 11 (Mon)	NO CLASS – Fall break
	October 13 (Wed)	Method: Semiology Read: Rose Ch. 5
Week 8	October 18 (Mon)	Method: Semiology Bring something to class to analyze using semiology (magazine advertisement, video, film clip, etc.) Due: Methods assignment
	October 20 (Wed)	Method: Discourse analysis Read: Rose Ch. 7
Week 9	October 25 (Mon)	Method: Discourse analysis Read: Rose Ch. 8 Due: Topic and groups for final project
	October 27 (Wed)	Method: Audience studies Read: Rose Ch. 9
Week 10	November 1 (Mon)	Method: Ethnography Read: Van Maanen Ch. 1-2 (BB); Rose Ch. 10 Due: Research questions for final project

	November 3 (Wed)	Interpreting qualitative data (reliability and validity) Read: Maxwell Ch. 6 (BB); Nathan Ch. 7
Week 11	November 8 (Mon)	Ethics and research Read: Guillemin & Gillam's "Ethics, Reflexivity, and 'Ethically Important Moments' in research" in <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i> (BB); Nathan, Afterword: Ethics and Ethnography
	November 10 (Wed)	Final project working session Due: General research design for final project
Week 12	November 15 (Mon)	Final project working session Due: Article critique
	November 17 (Wed)	Final project working session
Week 13	November 22 (Mon)	Final project working session
	November 24 (Wed)	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving
Week 14	November 29 (Mon)	Writing workshop Due: Rough draft of your poster
	December 1 (Wed)	Final project poster session Due: Poster
Week 15	December 6 (Mon)	Writing workshop Due: Rough draft of your paper for peer review
	December 8 (Wed)	Wrapping up + final questions about projects
Week 16	December 16 (Thurs)	Final projects due at 9 AM