

Media Research MED 505

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Office Hours: By appointment.

This course aims to offer a broad introduction to the methodological foundations and tools of inquiry in studying media and communications. Much of the semester focuses on the fundamentals of quantitative and qualitative research methods, including ethics, theory construction, and the logic of discovery. We will scrutinize the relationship between theory and method, analysis and interpretation, research design and practice. We will survey a broad range of designs used in media and communication research, including surveys, discourse analysis, archival research, computational methods, interviewing, and ethnography. We will also *apply* these analytical frameworks to a variety of media from the contemporary cultural sphere.

September 20: Setting Our Course

No readings.

September 27: What Do We Study When We Study Media?

Lisa Gitelman. 2006. "Introduction," *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture*.

John Durham Peters. 1999. "Introduction: The Problem of Communications." *Speaking Into the Air*.

Jeff Pooley. 2018. "The Trials of Media Research" <http://culturedigitally.org/2018/07/the-trials-of-media-research/>

October 4: Media Effects/Audience Research -- or Surveys/Focus Groups

Lance Bennett and Shanto Iyengar. 2008. "A New Era of Minimal Effects? The Changing Foundations of Political Communication." *Journal of Communication*. 58: 707-731.

Zeynep Tufekci and Christopher Wilson. 2012. "Social media and the decision to participate in political protest: Observations from Tahrir Square." *Journal of Communication* 62(2): 363-379

Heather L. Hundley and Leonard Shyles. 2010. "US teenagers' perceptions and awareness of digital technology: a focus group approach." *New Media & Society*. 12(3): 417-433

Optional: Jenny Kitzinger. 2005. "Focus Group Research: Using Group Dynamics to Explore Perceptions, Experiences, and Understandings." *Qualitative Research in Health Care*. Pp. 56-69.

“Guidelines for Conducting Focus Groups.” Available online at:
<https://guides.library.duke.edu/c.php?g=289813&p=1934019>

“Tip Sheet on Surveys” Available online at: <https://psr.iq.harvard.edu/book/questionnaire-design-tip-sheet>

Assignment: Design a survey or focus group or audience research in your area of interest and draft a questionnaire or focus group protocol.

October 11: Ideology Critique/Discourse Analysis/Semiotics

Luke Winslow. 2010. “Comforting the Comfortable: Extreme Makeover Home Edition’s Ideological Conquest.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. 27(3): 267-290.

Stuart Hall. 1995. “The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and Media.” In *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Critical Reader*: 89-93.

Iddo Tavory and Ann Swidler, 2009, “Condom Semiotics: Meaning and Condom Use in Rural Malawi.” *American Sociological Review* 74(2):171-189.

Assignment: Write an ideology critique of a media “text,” whether a set of images, television show, radio program, film, video game, website, or physical installation, using either discourse analysis or ideology critique. This analysis should take the form of an annotated commentary on the media text/object.

October 18: Ethnographic Observations/Interviews

E. Gabriella Coleman. 2010. “Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media.” *Annual Review of Anthropology*.

Alice Marwick and danah boyd, “I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience.” *New Media and Society*.

Debra Spitulnik. 2002. “Mobile Machines and Fluid Audiences: Rethinking Reception through Zambian Radio Culture” In *Media Worlds*. Ed. Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin. 337-54

Optional: Clifford Geertz. 1973. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.” [Selections]

“Tips for Interviews” on Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) website.
<http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/resources/rohotips.html>

Assignment: Plan, conduct, and reflect on an ethnographic observation project. Your observation will focus on the production, circulation, or reception of media.

October 25: Archival Methods/Media Archaeology

Robert Darnton, "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth--Century Paris"

Mills, Mara. 2011. "Hearing Aids and the History of Electronics Miniaturization." *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing*, 33(2).

Jussi Parikka. 2012. *What is Media Archaeology?* Pp. 1-16

Assignment: Go to an archive, manuscript collection, or museum in Istanbul and locate a "primary source" of interest to you. Bring to class a scan or photograph of the document/image/object as well as a written page describing its historical context and its socio-political meaning.

November 1: Comparative Methods and Transnational Analysis

Arjun Appadurai. 1990. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Theory Culture Society*. (7): 295-310.

Rodney Benson, Mark Blach-Orsten, Matthew Powers, Ida Willig, and Sandra Vera Zambrano. "Media Systems Online and Off: Comparing the Form of News in the United States, Denmark, and France." *Journal of Communication*.

Omar Al-Ghazzi and Marwan Kraidy. 2014. "Neo-Ottoman Cool: Turkish Popular Culture in the Arab Public Sphere." *The International Journal of Media and Culture*.

Assignment: Pick a research topic of interest to you and design a comparative study with one of the methods we have discussed so far.

November 8: Political Economy of Media

McChesney, Robert W. 2013. *Digital Disconnect*. New York: The New Press. [Selections]

Terranova, Tiziana. 2000. "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy." *Social Text*. 18(2): 33-58.

Assignment: The study of media is not limited to analyzing individual texts. We must also look at the politics, policies, and economics that undergird how media circulate in our lives. Your assignment will do this by creating a critical profile of a single media company OR current rates of user-generated content/free labor in two different social media platforms or on one social media platform over time.

November 15: Content Analysis

Michael Messner and Cheryl Cooky. 2010. *Gender in Televised Sports: News and Highlight Shows, 1989-2009*.

November 22: Paranoid Reading and Good Writing

Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick. 2003. "Paranoid and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You." *Touching Feeling*.

Kimberlé Crenshaw. 1992. "Whose story is it anyway? Feminist and Antiracist appropriations of Anita Hill." In *Race-ing for Justice, En-Gendering Power*. Selections.

Assignment: Choose an article or book in media and communications that inspires you, and analyze its method as well as its writing.

November 29: Research Question/Theoretical Framework

"He told me about attending a party of Columbia graduate students in sociology, and his account of it seemed to sum up the impasse he had reached with the academic side of his profession. 'I simply sat in a chair in a corner,' he said, 'and one by one these guys would come up to me, sort of like approaching the pariah – curiosity stuff. They were guys working on their Ph.D.'s, you see, and after they'd introduced themselves I'd ask, "What are you working on?" It would always be something like "The Impact of Work-Play Relationships among Lower Income Families on the South Side of the Block on 112th Street between Amsterdam and Broadway." And then I would ask –' Mills paused, leaned forward, and his voice boomed, 'Why?'"

—Dan Wakefield on C. Wright Mills

Assignment: Write down your topic and research question(s) as precisely as possible. Then discuss a theoretical tradition and methodology that may help situate or explain the phenomena that you find interesting (500-750 words). Spare a few sentences to the "Why" question.

December 6: Literature Review/Annotated Bibliography

Kristin Luker. 2008. *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Selections from Chapter 5: Reviewing the Literature, pp. 84-97

Assignment: What important books or articles have been written about your topic, and how can they help you write a strong research proposal? Pick at least 8 scholarly sources (books, articles, or chapters) related to your research question. For each source, you will write a description of the text's argument, and how this text will be useful for your proposal (100-150 words). Based on this review, in a paragraph (250 words), explain what gaps exist in this area, and how your research might address that gap.

December 13: Research Design/Planning/Ethics

Kristin Luker. 2008. *Salsa Dancing Into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Selections from Chapter 6: "On Sampling, Operationalization, and Generalization."

Assignment: Describe the kinds of data you plan to collect or the materials you will analyze (textual/visual/sonic/etc.); and then elaborate the research and interpretive methods you will use. Outline a time plan for your research, and conclude with what kind of ethical/political considerations your research takes into account (750-1000 words).

December 20: Concluding Remarks & Final Presentations

Assignment: Skim <https://activistresearchmethods.wordpress.com/about/>