
Qualitative Research Methods in Communication

COM 507

Spring 2021 | Mondays | 3:00 PM – 5:45 PM

Stauffer A | Room: 431 | ASU Sync via Zoom

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-11 p.m.
and by appointment (please schedule via email)

Course Overview and Goals

COM 507 is the ideal course to introduce graduate students to the blending of art and science within qualitative inquiry. This entry-level methods course provides students with tools to conduct qualitative investigations in communication and other related social scientific fields. By the end of the course, students will be able to design a qualitative study and critique qualitative research articles. Students will have the opportunity to read about and practice gaining access to research sites, drafting a qualitative IRB protocol, interviewing, ethnography, constant comparative analysis, and content analysis. This course is designed for students unfamiliar with qualitative methods, but who would like to develop new skills for applied final projects, conference papers, theses, and dissertations.

Required Texts:

Tracy, S. J. (2020). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Class readings (articles and book chapters), which will be posted to the course's Canvas website.

Suggested Texts:

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th Ed.)

Objectives:

At the conclusion of the course, students will:

- (a) Understand the differences between post-positivist and interpretive epistemologies.
- (b) Know strategies for improving the quality of qualitative research.
- (c) Be primed for apprenticing in interview and ethnography collection methods.
- (d) Be primed for apprenticing in constant comparative and content analysis methods.
- (e) Be primed to design a qualitative study, obtain access to a research site, and obtain IRB approval

Course Specific Policies and Procedures

Course policies and procedures are implemented and enforced to ensure quality of education and fairness. It is your responsibility as a student to be familiar and comply with each policy.

▪ Student Responsibilities:

Beyond your assignments, you have three core responsibilities in this course: You must **read** all assigned materials, **reflect** on what you have read, and **participate** in class activities and

discussions. Learning is an *active* process. To learn effectively, each of us must be willing to read assignments in advance, reflect on our ideas, and take risks by expressing our thoughts.

- **Courtesy and Classroom Climate:**

Inside and outside our classroom, you will most likely meet individuals whose beliefs and ways of life differ greatly from yours. Being exposed to new ideas is an integral part of university life, not to mention your life beyond ASU. Maintaining a positive classroom climate is essential, especially in a communication class in which students will be encouraged to share their experiences and “sensitive” topics may be discussed. The expectation is that you are respectful of the professor and of your classmates, even if you do not agree with the comments made. Please avoid using sexist, racist, and homophobic language in your writing and speaking; it will not be tolerated in this environment. Students are required to adhere to the behavior standards listed in the Arizona Board of Regents Policy Manual Chapter V – Campus and Student Affairs: Code of Conduct (<http://students.asu.edu/srr/code>). A professor may withdraw a student from a course when the student’s behavior disrupts the educational process under USI 201-10 (<http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/usi/usi201-10.html>).

- **Course Communication:**

My primary means of contact and communication for this course will be ASU Student Email and our CANVAS course page. Therefore, it is important that you check both regularly. Email is the best way to reach me when necessary. My personal email policy is to respond to all email correspondence from students within one business day.

- **Course Concerns:**

If for any reason you find that you are in grade trouble, or if you have any questions or concerns about your performance in the course, please consult me.

University Policies and Procedures

- **Academic Integrity Policy:**

Plagiarism is intentionally or unintentionally using another’s work (including wording, phrases, or original ideas) without giving the person proper credit. This includes representing anyone else’s words as your own. Exact words can be used ONLY in direct quotes, clearly presented as such.

Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, or allowing another student to copy your work, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination.

If you have turned the work in for another class, it is considered self-plagiarism and violates University policy. Even within this course, each assignment must be a new paper; you may not duplicate material across assignments.

Professors who find compelling evidence of academic dishonesty will actively pursue one or more of the following actions: Assigning a grade of XE (“failure through academic dishonesty”) to the student, advocating the suspension or expulsion of the student from the C College, and/or referring the student to Student Judicial Affairs. If a student who is charged with academic dishonesty is found to be in violation, then one or more of these disciplinary actions will be taken. For further information, please read the Student Academic Integrity policy and the code of conduct for Arizona State University: <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

- **Student Safety & Equity Policy:**

Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at <http://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs/students>. As a mandated reporter, I am obligated to report any information I become aware of regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence. ASU Counseling Services, <https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling>, is available if you wish discuss any concerns confidentially and privately.

- **Disability Accommodation:**

Students needing accommodations in this course due to disabilities must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) before requesting accommodations. Please contact me at the beginning of the semester, as I will work with you to make the necessary arrangements and accommodations. The DRC is located on the first floor of Matthew's Center. They can be contacted at <http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc/>. They can also be contacted at 480-965-1234 (voice)/480-965-9000 (TDD).

- **Technology in the Classroom**

Laptops are permitted for academic purposes. If you use a laptop during class, please note:

- be prepared for me to monitor your use
- accept moments when you are requested to put away electronic devices
- I reserve the right to override electronic use at any time

- **Cell Phone Policy:**

As a member of the Arizona State University's learning community, each student has a responsibility to other students who are members of the community. When cell phones or pagers ring and students respond in class or leave class to respond, it disrupts the class. All such devices must be turned off or put in a silent (vibrate) mode and ordinarily should not be taken out during class. Be prepared to be asked to leave class if you are using your cell phone during our short time together during a non-emergency situation. Other exceptions to this policy may be granted at the discretion of the professor.

Assignments and Grade Distribution:

Grades will be assigned using a standard point-based system (i.e., 1000 pts. Total). Evaluations of your progress throughout the semester will be made on the following basis:

1. **Participation & Proposal Progress** Active engagement with course materials is critical to learning. Ask thoughtful questions; be ready to listen and respond thoughtfully to one another. Participation in the course will also require students to make meaningful progress towards drafting their proposal, and in turn provide feedback for improvement to their peers. Proposal Progress assignments include the following:
 - a. Proposed Research Questions **10 pts.**
 - b. Rationale **30 pts.**

- c. Proposed Survey/Focus Group/Interview Protocol or Data Capture Method **10 pts.**
 - d. Proposal Outline **20 pts.**
 - e. Class Discussion and Active Engagement **30 pts.**
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Total points awarded in this category: **100 pts.**

2. **Discussion Assistant(s):** Students will serve as “discussion assistant” twice this semester. In this role, students will, in pairs or individually:
 - a. Thoroughly immerse themselves in the week’s readings,
 - b. Each prepare a 5-10-minute synthesis of points they thought were most compelling, present these in a dynamic way
 - c. Provide students with a handout summarizing these points, and
 - d. Facilitate one class activity to help students understand one or more of the main points of the readings

Maximum time allotted for discussion assistant reading synthesis and activity is 30 minutes. Students should consult Dr. Zanin’s power points to integrate their activity into the class. 50 pts. per discussion assistant presentation, **100 pts.**
 3. **General Exam-style Questions:** Students will answer 3 general exam-style questions during a designated class meeting period. Each response will be between 3-5 pages in length and will draw from class readings. **300 pts.**
 4. **Rejoinder:** Students will comment on one another’s answers to the comprehensive questions by explaining one strength and three ways to improve a colleague’s arguments. Improvements may be addendums, deletions, or refinements on at least two different question responses. Improvements may be major or minor. **100 pts.**
 5. **Manuscript Review:** Students will be given an actual qualitative research manuscript. They will write a concise (about 1-2 page, single spaced) argument, which explains whether to recommend publication, rejection, or revision to a journal editor. **100 pts.**
 6. **Method Design Proposal:** The final paper will be a brief proposal. This document will be about 15 pages in length (double spaced) and will include an abstract, rationale embedded within a brief literature review, research question(s), and a comprehensively argued qualitative method (in terms of both data collection and analysis) for answering the research question(s). **300 pts.**
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