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ENG 4776-600: Research and Rhetoric in Professional Writing

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Overview

Research and Rhetoric in Professional Writing

Qualitative Research Methodologies and Methods in Writing Studies (Professional Writing and Composition)

Spring 2021 | 3 credits

Course Description

How is knowledge about writing developed? What questions do researchers ask about how writing works in classrooms, in professional organizations, and in society in general? How do we choose the right methods to answer our questions? What makes an interview effective? What ethical concerns should writing researchers have? How do theory and practice come together through research?

In this special topics course, we will explore some of the core issues in qualitative research about writing. During the course, you will have the opportunity to complete small-scale research activities and to develop research plans to address real problems/questions.

By the end of the semester, you should be able to meet the following objectives:

- Demonstrate understanding of the key research methodologies and methods that support and connect the work of writing studies
- Use sound, appropriate qualitative research methods--including both primary and secondary sources--to answer carefully developed research questions
- Edit documents globally for organization, content, style, and design
- Adapt editing to specific rhetorical situations
- Implement effective collaborative strategies for working with peer and clients
- Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication

A note to graduate students: As graduate students in a cross-listed course, you are expected to meet a higher standard of both theory and practice. Your requirements will differ in several ways. Expect to have additional reading assignments as well as more complex research-based assignments.

If you are taking this course as part of the Graduate Certificate in the Teaching of Writing, note that you will have the option of pursuing pedagogy-related projects for this course. For the final project, one assignment option will allow you to develop your own primary research unit for a high school classroom.

Required Course Materials

- Powell and Takayoshi, eds. *Practicing Research in Writing Studies* (available through TRS)
- Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Research Designs* (available through TRS)
- Individual articles as assigned (available as PDFs on D2L)

Technology needs:

To complete this course successfully, you will need to have access to the following:

- **Regular access to a computer with reliable internet.**
- **D2L and Zoom** (available through D2L). The majority of our course will take place within D2L, and we will use a range of features, including email, discussion boards, content, and dropbox. Our live sessions will take place within Zoom, which you can access from inside our course. Sessions will be recorded for those students who are completing this course asynchronously.
- **Google Drive.** We will use Google Drive at several points in the semester for collaboratively completed assignments, survey design, and even some class sessions.
- **Microsoft Word.** For the purposes of our course, the Office 365 version available to all students should be sufficient.
- **Adobe Reader or Adobe Acrobat.** You will need to open and read PDFs.
- **[maybe] A scanner, digital camera, or Smartphone camera.** If one of your research projects involves analysis of physical objects and/or print-based texts, you will need to be able to share images of those objects/texts with me. You will have the option to submit scans of images.
- **Headphones or speakers** that can be plugged into your computer.
- **[optional] Access to a printer.** I've designed this course so that nothing needs to be printed, but if you prefer to have print copies of articles and assignment sheets, you will want to have access to a printer.

With the exception of Google Forms, Excel, and possibly Qualtrics (all of which we will work on together), we won't be using advanced features of any technologies. You should be able to use help menus and internet resources to help you carry out any tasks outside of D2L. I will try to

provide assistance in using any D2L technologies, but if you're unsure how to complete a task in D2L, let me know, and I'll provide more information, if I can. You can also call the ITS Help Desk at (217) 581-HELP. Be sure to ask for help well in advance of assignment deadlines.

Course Requirements

Below, I have briefly summarized the work you can expect to complete in this class. You will receive more detail about each project as it comes up.

Homework/Quizzes: This course has a higher reading load than most professional writing courses (but less than a graduate composition course). Plan to stay on top of the reading and journaling assignments, so you will be ready to apply the material during in-class discussions and assigned activities. There will be some open-note quizzes over the assigned readings. You will also complete a number of homework assignments, individually and in groups, throughout the semester.

Researcher interview: You will read research written by an assigned researcher and then interview that researcher about their work. The researcher will then assign you to read additional articles that they consider exemplary of the type of work they do. Based on your reading and interview, you will present your findings to the class in essay form.

Small-scale research projects: You will practice several of the research principles we learn by carrying out small-scale research projects using the techniques of interview, survey, observation/thick description, and textual analysis.

Research article or report analysis: You will analyze a published research report or article and analyze its methods, methodologies, and underlying philosophical assumptions.

--OR--

Client project: You will work on behalf of different clients to develop a research plan that will help the client to answer one or more questions that they have. In each instance, the client will have an opportunity to respond to your plan and to request revisions to the plan. You will present the results of your research planning to the class in a report and/or presentation.

--OR--

Pedagogy unit: You will develop a teaching unit for a high school or college classroom that teaches students some key information about research methodologies and methods and then asks them to carry out their own small-scale research project.

Assessment

Assignments will be graded holistically in areas such as content, organization, expression/delivery, correctness, and layout/visual impact as adapted to the audience, purpose, and context for which you are communicating. Each assignment will include specific assessment criteria.

Students have the option to request evaluative feedback (but not a grade) on a draft of the assignment prior to the submission deadline. To do so, schedule an appointment during office hours. If possible, email a copy of the draft prior to the meeting, so I will have time to review it prior to our meeting. I recommend that you choose an appointment time that is at least 24 hours before the assignment deadline, so you will have time to make substantive revisions based on my feedback.

The grade breakdown for assignments is below. Note: I reserve the right to make additions and alterations to this assessment breakdown should the need arise. Students will be informed in class and in writing prior to any changes being made.

Assignment	% grade
Small-scale focus group	10
Small-scale survey	10
Small-scale observation	10
Experiment design	10
Researcher interview project	10
Client project --OR--	
Research article analysis --OR--	20
Pedagogy unit	
Homework / quizzes / participation	30

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

90–100	A
80–89.9	B
70–79.9	C
60–69.9	D
59.9 and below	F

In some cases, a student may receive a "redo" on an individual assignment if that assignment does not meet the minimum requirements for that assignment. The student must then complete the assignment by the assigned deadline to receive a number grade on the assignment.

Policy on rounding up grades: I consider rounding up grades to be a privilege that is extended to students who have demonstrated maximum effort to learn throughout the semester. At the end of the course, if a student's grade is within 2% of the next highest letter grade, I will use the following information to determine whether the grade will be rounded up:

- Student attended most weekly synchronous class sessions and/or completed the alternative asynchronous activities.
- Student met almost all homework and project deadlines. All work was complete at the time of submission.
- Student took regular, timely advantage of assistance (e.g., opportunities to revise or submit drafts for feedback, one-on-one meetings with Dr F)
- Student was a productive and positive partner to peers during group activities and assignments

Deadlines

Due dates for homework and assignments are available in the course modules on D2L.

- Unless otherwise indicated, homework assignments must be completed by 11:59 pm on the date indicated. In some instances, you will be asked to complete an activity for a live class session. In these instances, the deadline for completion will be 2 pm, the start time for our course.
- If you find that you need to adjust a deadline to accommodate your work schedule or a deadline in another course, please be proactive in speaking with me about this prior to the assignment deadline. When contacting me, be prepared to propose an alternate submission day and time. Please try to remain caught up with the rest of the class as much as possible. I encourage you not to push deadlines too far or too frequently because the obligations of an online course can snowball and become increasingly difficult to manage as the semester goes on.
- Typically, deadlines that impact other students as well (e.g., the deadline to make a post that peers will respond to, a collaboratively written activity) cannot be pushed.

Course Etiquette

In an online course, most communication is done through written messages either in private posts or public discussions. It is important that students in online courses be especially sensitive to how messages and sentiment are communicated and received. Please keep the following in mind:

Remember you are communicating with real people.

Students and instructors in your course have feelings, lives, jobs, families and a myriad of other

issues that you may know little about. Once you have finished writing something, and before you send it, re-read it looking at your words from someone else's perspective. How would they see it? Could it be misinterpreted? Could you rephrase to make it clearer or more on topic?

Write clearly and professionally.

In any course-related communication (emails, chats, discussions), use standard proper English with correct grammar. Using slang, errors in mechanics, and shortcuts maybe difficult for others to understand. Avoid ALL CAPS, bolding and underlining. It could be misinterpreted. Avoid offensive language. Also make sure to sign your name to any post.

Be kind and ethical.

Do not belittle others. You should certainly be willing to disagree with others, but focus on the issue, not the person. Behave online as you would in person. If others challenge your ideas, your writing, or even your behavior, try to be open to that feedback. Remember that willingness to engage with someone--including in offering criticism--can be a sign of caring.

Help others.

If someone asks a question, answer it if you are sure of the correct answer or if you have insight that could be helpful.

Additional expected conduct

This class focuses on communication in professional settings. As in a workplace setting, certain types of conduct are expected. In addition to the policies pertaining to attendance and deadlines, pay attention to the following course policies:

- Class correspondence (e.g., emails, discussion posts, text messages) should be written professionally according to the expectations of the business world. Expect to receive feedback from me on the style, content, and organization of your emails, texts, etc.
- In this course, you will need to use advanced features of common software such as Microsoft Word, and you may be asked to use programs that are new to you. I will give you advice and out-of-class assistance at your request, but I expect you to be willing to develop the software skills you need to complete projects effectively.
- Keep copies of all work you produce for this class. Do not store assignments only on a single flash drive. If I have given you a hand-written evaluation on an assignment or activity, save that evaluation until you have received your final grade in the course. You will be allowed to consult your notes during pop-quizzes.

- Class time is for doing work related to the course. Limit your use of email, the internet, cell phones, etc. to course-related work during class time.
- All assignments listed in the table above must be completed in order to pass the course.
- Scholarly integrity and ethics: students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in [EIU's Code of Conduct](#). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards. Primary research can create challenges in terms of identifying sources (e.g., need to protect confidentiality, unusual sources for information not covered under typical style guides), but scholarly integrity remains important. When you are unsure of the appropriate way to identify your source, speak with me prior to the assignment deadline so we can determine your most ethical course of action.

If circumstances arise that may impact your ability to maintain our course policies, address the situation as you would in the workplace—professionally, courteously, and in advance.

Contact Information

Contact information for Dr. Fredrick is available on the homepage of our D2L course.

Writing Intensive Course

Any individually written text-based assignment of 750 words or more may be submitted from this class to the Electronic Writing Portfolio (EWP). If you choose to submit an assignment from this class to the EWP, you must do so by Thursday, April 29.

Information for Students with Disabilities

Most accommodations may be easily met in this class. If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by McAfee 1210, or call (217) 581-6583 to make an appointment.

The Student Success Center / Writing Center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student

Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call (217) 581-6696, or go to McAfee 1301.

Students who would like assistance with writing assignments from this or any other course may go to the Writing Center. The Writing Center works with students from all disciplines, majors, and academic backgrounds at any stage of the writing process. To make an appointment, go to eiu.edu/writing.

