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ENG 4776-001: 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 2020 | 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.

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)
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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. 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. We will also have unannounced, open-note quizzes over the assigned reading. (Notes must be handwritten or printed out prior to the start of the quiz.)

Researcher interview: You will read research written by an assigned researcher and then interview that researcher about their research. The researcher will then assign you to read additional research articles that they consider exemplar. Based on your reading and interview, you will present your findings to the class.

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.

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.

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	15
Client project --OR-- Research article analysis	20
Homework / quizzes	15
Participation	10

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 missed no more than three class periods. Student had no more than one instance of significant tardiness or early departure.
- Student met all assignment deadlines. All assignments were complete at the time of submission.
- Student missed no more than one homework assignment.
- Student earned a 90% or better for participation.
- Student took advantage of optional opportunities to revise or submit drafts for feedback.

Attendance

According to the *Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills* published by the Department of Labor, the number one reason employers cite for firing employees in their first post-collegiate jobs is absence and tardiness. Your classes, therefore, offer you an excellent opportunity to practice the professional skill of prompt attendance.

- You may use up to three days of vacation and sick time as needed. Each additional absence will reduce your semester grade by 2%.
- If you must miss a class, you are still responsible for completing homework activities, meeting assignment deadlines, and completing in-class writing assignments. Submit assignments via D2L email or dropbox, as appropriate.
- Missing a class that has been designated a "team meeting" will result in the penalty established by the team in its contract for missed meetings.
- Assignment sheets and most handouts will be available on D2L. Consult with a classmate for notes you may have missed. If there is material from the handouts or notes that you do not understand, please come to office hours to ask questions. (Pro tip: "Can you tell me what I missed in class?" is not a good question.)

Deadlines

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

- Unless otherwise indicated, homework assignments must be completed prior to the start of class. D2L-based homework questions will be set to deactivate at 3:00 pm on class days.

- Drafts must be submitted by the beginning of class time on the date listed. Late drafts will not be accepted for credit. Alternate submission methods are possible in the event you must miss class on the day a draft is due.
- Unless otherwise noted, the major assignments in the table above must be submitted by 11:59 pm on the date listed. Late projects will be docked 5% or 2 points (whichever is greater) each day until they are turned in.

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 and Ms. Poorman are available on the homepage of our D2L course.

Writing Intensive Course

Any individual 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 30.

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 Ninth Street Hall, Room 206, 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 Ninth Street Hall, Room 1302.

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, call (217) 581-5929, or go to Coleman Hall, Room 3110.
