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Spring 2015 Office Hours:
T, 11:00-12:00 (Macomb)
Th, 3:30-5:30 (Quad-Cities)
F, 11:00-12:00 (Macomb)

ENGLISH 584 – RESEARCH METHODS IN WRITING STUDIES

The “Empirical Turn” in Writing Studies

“Clearly, you won’t be able to answer all your research questions (and others that occur to you) just by looking at the text. You are going to need to talk with people who use writing as a tool and possibly even watch them at work.”

– Donna Kain & Elizabeth Wardle

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This graduate seminar investigates the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches important to the study of writing, preparing graduate students interested in writing, rhetoric, and literacy to function competently as researchers in fields as diverse as writing studies, communication, and education. This course offers tools necessary to form effective research questions, collect valid and reliable data, systematically analyze the data collected, and ethically represent research in publication. It also highlights the ethical dilemmas writing researchers face and explores how digital writing is transforming traditional research methods. Students can expect to design a research study that can be carried out in future contexts.

CORE QUESTIONS:

Seminar participants can expect to leave with emerging responses to the following questions:

1. What is writing studies, and what do writing studies scholars study?
2. What quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches can be used to effectively study writing, and how can I employ these methods within my own research agenda?
3. How is digital writing transforming traditional research methods, such as ethnography?
4. What ethical dilemmas do writing researchers face, and how do they resolve them?
5. What dilemmas do writing researchers face when representing data during publication, and how do they resolve them?

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* by John Creswell (ISBN: 1452226105)
- *Writing Studies Research in Practice: Methods and Methodologies* edited by Lee Nickoson, Mary Sheridan, and Gesa Kirsch (ISBN: 0809331144)
- *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literacy* edited by Peter Mortensen and Gesa Kirsch (ISBN: 0814115969)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

- *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research* edited by Gesa Kirsch and Pat Sullivan (ISBN: 0809317273)
- *Practicing Research in Writing Studies: Reflexive and Ethical Responsible Research* edited by Katrina Powell and Pamela Takayoshi (ISBN: 161289089X)
- *Digital Writing Research: Technologies, Methodologies, and Ethical Issues* edited by Heidi McKee and Daniel Nicole DeVoss (ISBN: 1572737069)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (AT A GLANCE): In addition to the careful reading of course texts and substantial participation in classroom discussion expected at this level, this course requires the following:

- Article Analysis + Discussion Lead
- Problem Statement
- Annotated Bibliography
- IRB Training Module + Reflection
- Research Proposal

GRADING SUMMARY:

Article Analysis + Discussion Lead	200 Points
Problem Statement	50 Points
Annotated Bibliography	300 Points
IRB Training Module + Reflection	100 Points
Research Proposal	350 Points
Total	1000 Points

Letter	Point Range
A	1000-900
B	899-800
C	700-700
D	699-600
F	599-0

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (DESCRIBED):

1. Article Analysis + Discussion Lead: Each of you will have the opportunity to lead two class discussions of readings you select. The first discussion lead will be a course reading you select; the second will be from an article you select from your annotated bibliography. To help you prepare to lead these discussions, you will write up a summary and analysis of the readings you select, which will be submitted before you present.
2. Problem Statement / Research Proposal: This focused on helping you design a research study that can be carried out in future contexts. You will first present ideas for your study through a problem statement and, after receiving feedback from your peers and me, formally propose the project through a research proposal.
3. Annotated Bibliography: One of the most important sections of your research proposal will be the literature review. To help you write this section, you will create an annotated bibliography of at least 15 sources directed toward the project you outline in your problem statement.
4. IRB Training Module + Reflection: Studying the social nature of writing often requires working with people. Anytime a research study involves human subjects, the research project must be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is a university committee responsible for ensuring ethical research. While you will not formally submit materials to the IRB, you will be required to complete the IRB training module and become familiar with the form you would be required to submit if you decide to carry your research study forward.

COURSE POLICIES:

Catalogue Description:

ENG 584 Research Methods in Writing Studies. (3sh). Investigation of the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches important to research in writing studies. Also explores issues of ethics and representation. *Prerequisite: Graduate Standing.*

Attendance:

Even though you should not miss any classes at this level, you are allowed to miss one class session for any reason; after this, your final grade for the course may be reduced by five points for each class missed. For example, if your final grade averages 86%, missing three classes will reduce this to a final grade of 76%. Arriving late and leaving early only disrupts the class and are considered absences, so make every effort to arrive before class starts and remain until class ends.

Late Work:

No late work will be accepted. If you know you are going to miss class, make arrangements to turn in work that is due ahead of time.

Inclement Weather:

Traveling to the Quad-Cities during the spring semester can be dicey at times due to the weather. If I should cancel class due to weather, I will inform each of you promptly via email and follow up with a revised course schedule.

Student Decorum:

This course requires ethical and professional conduct, which includes academic integrity, collegiality in class, and professionalism when dealing with the community as part of course activities. Academic integrity violations will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly the course. Refer to the following for WIU's policy on academic integrity:

<http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>.

Students with Disabilities:

In accordance with University policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), academic accommodations may be made for any student who notifies the instructor of the need for an accommodation. For the instructor to provide the proper accommodation(s) you must obtain documentation of the need for an accommodation through Disability Resource Center (DRC) and provide it to the instructor. It is imperative that you take the initiative to bring such needs to the instructor's attention, as he/she is not legally permitted to inquire about such particular needs of students. Students who may require special assistance in emergency evacuations (i.e. fire, tornado, etc.) should contact the instructor as to the most appropriate procedures to follow in such an emergency. Contact Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 309-298-2512 for additional services.

University Writing Center:

The University Writing Center is available to assist you with general and specific questions about writing. The talk about writing that occurs in one-on-one sessions with a consultant is extremely useful, even at the graduate level. The University Writing Center is located in Riverfront 115 on the Quad-Cities campus and Malpass Library on the Macomb campus. Call 309-762-9481 (QC) or 309-298-2815 (Macomb) for an appointment and be sure to bring a copy of your assignment.

Course Calendar: Formal notice will be given if any changes to the calendar need to be made. Bring assigned readings to class on the day we discuss them as we will refer to them often. (RD=*Research Design*; WSR=*Writing Studies Research in Practice*; E&R=*Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literacy*; .pdf=Supplemental Readings on CD)

1/22 **Course Introduction and Core Questions**

Reading:

- “Remediation as Social Construct: Perspectives from an Analysis of Classroom Discourse” by Glenda Hull, Mike Rose, Kay Fraser, and Marisa Castellano (.pdf)
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1/29 **The Theory Wars: What is Writing Studies?**

Readings:

- “Writing Studies” by NCTE (.pdf)
 - “The Death of Composition as an Intellectual Discipline” by Gary Olson (.pdf)
 - “The Case for Writing Studies as a Major Discipline” by Charles Bazerman (.pdf)
 - “Writing Studies as a Mode of Inquiry” by Susan Miller (.pdf)
 - “Disrupting Composition Studies” by Sidney Dobrin (.pdf)
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2/5 **The “Empirical Turn” in Writing Studies**

Readings:

- “NCTE/CCCC’s Recent War on Scholarship” by Richard Haswell (.pdf)
 - “The Methods Section as Conceptual Epicenter” by Peter Smagorinsky (.pdf)
 - “Why This Humanist Codes” by Rebecca Moore Howard (.pdf)
 - “Revisiting Teacher Research” by Lee Nickoson (WSR)
 - “The Selection of a Research Approach” by John Creswell (RD)
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2/12 **Lincoln’s Birthday—No Class**

2/19 **Quantitative Methods: Early Writing Studies Research**

Readings:

- “Quantitative Methods” by John Creswell (RD)
- “Experimental and Descriptive Research in Composition” by Richard Beach (.pdf)
- “Quantitative Methods in Composition Studies” by Richard Haswell (WSR)
- “Effects of Varying the Structure of a Topic on Students’ Writing” by Smith et al. (.pdf)
- “The Effect of Word Processing on the Quality of Basic Writers’ Revisions” by Carole McAllister and Richard Louth (.pdf)

Due: Problem Statement

2/26 **The “Social Turn” in Writing Studies**

Readings:

- “Activity Theory: An Introduction for the Writing Classroom” by Donna Kain and Elizabeth Wardle (.pdf)
 - “How Texts Organize Activities and People” by Charles Bazerman (.pdf)
 - “Toward a Unified Social Theory of Learning” by Natasha Artemeva (.pdf)
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3/5 **Qualitative Methods: The Case Study**

Readings:

- “Qualitative Methods” by John Creswell (RD)
- “Strategies and Passions in Empirical Qualitative Research” by Bob Broad (WSR)
- “The Narrative Roots of the Case Study” by Thomas Newkirk (.pdf)
- “‘Fan Fic-ing’ English Studies: A Case Study Exploring the Interplay of Vernacular Literacies and Disciplinary Engagement” by Kevin Roozen (.pdf)

3/12 **Qualitative Methods: Ethnography**

Readings:

- “Ethnography and Composition: Studying Language at Home” by Beverly Moss (.pdf)
- “Ethnography as Method, Methodology, and ‘Deep Theorizing’: Closing the Gap Between Text and Context in Academic Writing Research” by Theresa Lillis (.pdf)
- “Making Ethnography Our Own: Why and How Writing Studies Must Redefine Core Research Practices” by Mary Sheridan (WSR)
- “A Stranger in Strange Lands: A College Student Writing Across the Curriculum” by Lucille McCarthy (.pdf)

3/19 **Spring Break**—No Class

3/26 **Mixed Methods and Longitudinal Research**

Readings:

- “Mixed Methods Procedures” by John Creswell (RD)
- “Longitudinal Research in (and for) the Twenty-First Century” by Jenn Fishman (WSR)
- “Tracing Discursive Resources: How Students Use Prior Genre Knowledge to Negotiate New Writing Contexts in First-Year Composition” by Mary Jo Reiff and Anis Bawarshi (.pdf)
- “Methodological Pluralism: Epistemological Issues” by Gesa Kirsch (.pdf)

4/2 **Spotlight: Annotated Bibliographies**

Due: Annotated Bibliographies

4/9 **Data Gathering and Analysis**

Readings:

- Selections from *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* by Hebert Rubin and Irene Rubin (.pdf)
 - “An Introduction to Codes and Coding” by Johnny Saldana (.pdf)
 - “Coding Data: Issues of Validity, Reliability, and Interpretation” by Keith Grant-Davie (.pdf)
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4/16 **Ethical Dilemmas in Writing Studies Research**

Readings:

- “Ethical Issues to Anticipate” by John Creswell (RD)
- “Seduction and Betrayal in Qualitative Research” by Thomas Newkirk (E&R)
- “Still-Life: Representations and Silences in the Participant-Observer Role” by Brenda Jo Brueggemann (E&R)
- “Dealing with the Data: Ethical Issues in Case Study Research” by Cheri Williams (E&R)
- “Dilemmas of Fidelity: Qualitative Research in the Classroom” by Helen Dale (E&R)

4/19 **The Crisis of Representation in Writing Studies Research**

Readings:

- “Ethnography and the Problem of the ‘Other’” by Patricia Sullivan (E&R)
- “Turning in Upon Ourselves: Positionality, Subjectivity, and Reflexivity in Case Study and Ethnographic Research” by Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater (E&R)
- Selections from *Academic Literacies* by Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater (.pdf)
- Selections from *Women Writing the Academy* by Gesa Kirsch (.pdf)

Due: IRB Training Module + Reflection

4/23 **Article Analysis + Discussion Lead**

Readings: TBD

4/30 **Article Analysis + Discussion Lead**

Readings: TBD

5/7 **Article Analysis + Discussion Lead**

Readings: TBD

Research Proposals Due by Our Final Exam (May 14th, 6:00 p.m.)