
Interpretive communication theory and research

Instructor: Carles Roca-Cuberes

Course description

This course is an advanced interpretive theory and qualitative research methods of communication. It presents the most important interpretive theories and qualitative research methods in the field of communication. It provides students with an advanced understanding of qualitative inquiry in the social sciences, the prospect to learn how to design research that uses qualitative methodology and an opportunity to conduct fieldwork using tools for data collection such as participant observation, interviewing, focus group interviews and qualitative content analysis. It introduces students to techniques for analysing qualitative data documented in field notes, interview transcripts or communication content. Finally, this course aims to familiarize students with the art of writing and presenting qualitative research.

ECTS Credits

4 ECTS

Specific competences

- Obtain knowledge of the interpretive theories of communication and their methodological foundations.
- Acquire the capacity for critical analysis of communication phenomena.
- Be able to apply theoretical and methodological knowledge to qualitative research.
- Be able to design qualitative research in communication.
- Understand the qualitative communication research process in its different phases.
- Be able to make proposals for qualitative communication research.
- Acquire general knowledge of qualitative research methods, including ethnography, interviews, focus groups, and content analysis.
- Understand and practice the writing and presentation of qualitative communication research.

Learning outcomes

- Acquire an extensive knowledge of interpretive theory and qualitative communication research.
- Know how to place interpretive theory and qualitative research within the broader framework of communication theory and research.
- Critically examine and evaluate interpretive theories and communication research.
- Be able to put into practice the acquired knowledge in order to plan, design and execute qualitative communication research.

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- Engage actively in discussions on case studies of qualitative theories and communication research.

Sustainable development goals

- Quality education.
- Gender equality.
- decent work and economic growth.
- responsible production and consumption.

Content

1. Introduction to qualitative research: scientific knowledge, social research and the scientific method.
2. Theoretical traditions in the interpretative perspective: symbolic interactionism, the Palo Alto Group, socio-constructionism and ethnomethodology.
3. The conduct of qualitative research in communication – main areas: organizational communication, health communication, strategic communication, applied communication and media and technology studies.
4. Designing and planning qualitative research: stages and concepts.
5. Qualitative research techniques for researching people: interviews, focus group research, ethnography and virtual ethnography.
6. Qualitative research techniques for researching communication content: qualitative content analysis.
7. Qualitative data analysis.
8. Writing and presenting qualitative research.

Method of presentation

In-class activities (30 hours):

- Lectures (15 hours)
- Debates and class discussion (2 hours)
- Practical exercises and activities (8 hours)
- Tutorials (5 hours)

Out-of-class activities (70 hours):

- Personal study & work: 70 hours

The teaching method includes traditional lectures with case-studies, debates and class discussion from previous readings, and practical activities.

Total workload: 100 hours.

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Course assessment

The assessment includes the following elements:

- Qualitative communication research proposal (40% of final grade)
- 6 exercises (10% each) (60% of final grade)

Late Assignments

If you are unable to turn in an assignment on time because of a documented illness or family tragedy, you will not be penalized for turning in work late, provided you present your written excuse within one week of returning to class. If you must turn in work late for other reasons, **2 points** will be deducted from the grade on the assignment for each day (each weekday, not class day) that it is turned in late. The first late day begins right after the assignment's deadline, unless another time is designated. Thus, if an assignment's deadline is at 19:00h, a student submitting his/her assignment at 19:01 will lose 2 points. This policy applies to all assignments, including the research proposal. As per the syllabus, I will not accept any assignments emailed to me. You can always upload an assignment after the due date, and I will mark it late as appropriate.

Plagiarism

All written work submitted in this course is to be expressed in your own words. Text copied from a book, a website, another student's paper, your own previous work or any other source is not acceptable if not clearly quoted. In any individual or group assignment or presentation, you must indicate the sources of all borrowed texts, ideas or facts that go beyond common knowledge. Using third-party sources without being duly attributed would be considered plagiarism, be it intentional or not. Any work written, developed, created, or inspired by artificial intelligence (AI) is considered plagiarism and will not be accepted, unless otherwise instructed. For quoting sources you must always use the recommendations of the APA style. **Penalties** for plagiarism may range from a failing grade on the assignment with no make-up opportunity, to a failing overall grade in the course and notification to the BSM Dean.

Qualitative communication research proposal

1. INTRODUCTION
 - a. Overview
 - b. Topic
 - c. Problem statement (purpose statement & research questions)
 - d. Limitations
2. LITERATURE REVIEW
 - a. Interpretive theoretical traditions and currents of thought for framing the question
 - b. Review and critique of related qualitative empirical research
 - c. Theoretical framework
3. DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY
 - a. Overall approach and rationale
 - b. Site or population selection and sampling strategies
 - c. Data collection (qualitative) methods
 - d. Data analysis procedures
 - e. Anticipated ethical issues
 - f. Significance of the study (for knowledge, for practical problems and/or for action)
 - g. Expected outcomes

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4. RESEARCH TIMELINE
5. REFERENCE LIST

Formatting and style: APA (American Psychological Association),
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1/>

3.000-4.000 words, including all sections. Please provide wordcount. **Due date: 17/12/2024**

Course schedule

Class	In-class Activity	Before-class Activity
1 01/10/2024	T1	
2 08/10/2024	T2 & T3	
3 15/10/2024	T4	
4 22/10/2024	T5 interviews	Read article 1 from Reading List
5 29/10/2024	T5 focus group research	Read article 2 from Reading List
6 5/11/2024	T5 ethnography	Read article 3 from Reading List
7 12/11/2024	T6 qualitative content analysis	Read article 4 from Reading List
8 19/11/2024	T7	
9 26/11/2024	T7	
10 3/12/2024	T8	

Required reading

Baran, S. J., & Davis, D. K. (2014). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Berger, A. A. (2015). *Media and communication research methods: An introduction to qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. London: Sage.

Croucher, S. M. (2016). *Understanding Communication Theory: A Beginner's Guide*. New York: Routledge.

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- DeFleur, M. L. (2016). *Mass communication theories. Explaining origins, processes and effects*. New York: Routledge.
- Flick, U. (Ed.) (2014). *The sage handbook of qualitative data analysis*. London: Sage.
- Harding, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis from start to finish*. London: Sage.
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Silverman, D. (2016). *Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Tracy, S. J. (2020). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Recommended reading

- Altheide, D. L., & Schneider, C. J. (2012). *Qualitative media analysis*. London: Sage.
- Brennen, B. S. (2017). *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. New York: Routledge.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage.
- Durham, M. G., & Kellner, D. (2006). *Media and cultural studies: Keywords*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Gibbs, G. R. (2008). *Analysing qualitative data*. London: Sage.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed.). Taylor and Francis e-Library.
- Hennink, M. M. (2014). *Understanding focus groups*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hine, C. (2015). *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, embodied and everyday*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. London: Sage.
- Sapleton, N. (Ed.). (2013). *Advancing research methods with new technologies*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Reading list

1. O'Neil, J., Kinsky, E. S., & Ewing, M. E. (2023). Insights from senior communicators: Navigating obstacles, leveraging opportunities, and leading teams to capitalize on data and analytics. *Public Relations Review*, 49(4), 102362..
2. Banjac, S., & Hanusch, F. (2022). A question of perspective: Exploring audiences' views of journalistic boundaries. *New Media & Society*, 24(3), 705-723.
3. Azarova, M., Hazoglou, M., & Aronoff-Spencer, E. (2022). Just slack it: A study of multidisciplinary teamwork based on ethnography and data from online collaborative software. *New Media & Society*, 24(6), 1435-1458.
4. Hogsnes, M., Grønli, T. M., & Hansen, K. (2024). Exploring Influencers' Commercial Content on Instagram. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 24(2), 156-168.