Advanced Topics/Methods: Content and Discourse Analysis

COMM594

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Course description

The seminar will focus on the research methods of discourse and content analysis. Students will be oriented to both methods of conceptualizing, designing and conducting scholarly analysis. The seminar is divided into three parts.

1.   In the first part, graduate students learn about the theoretical assumptions and design principles that apply to discourse and content analysis. During this part, students propose a study that they would like to conduct during the semester, using content or discourse analysis, or both. It is expected that students will also submit this proposal in abstract form to conferences with Spring deadlines (NCA/AoIR in Feb, AEJMC/IAMCR in April, other). Pick your topic carefully and think about scope: You will be expected to finish this project by the end of the semester.

2.   In the second part of the course, we practice coding and analyzing content, reading various examples of studies illustrating both research methods and practice coding/analyzing content from various genres (music, magazines, reality TV, drama, film, news, online interaction, expression online, and other). We attempt an extensive and exemplary, but not comprehensive overview of genres. During the second part of the seminar, students put together their literature reviews, their theoretical frameworks, finetune their method design and begin to run their own studies, so readings are light. The second part of the study is focused on providing students with opportunities to try out what they learned in the first part, make mistakes and learn from them, and finalize their own design.

3.   The third part of the seminar is devoted exclusively to running studies, writing up results and analyses, and otherwise completing your work. Class time will be used to schedule appointments with all of you, where we address questions that come up, deal with statistical or analytical roadblocks, and otherwise solve any problems you may be encountering. You are also encouraged to meet with me in office hours, but you must schedule time to meet with me at least twice during this time during class hours, and **you must come to the meeting prepared.** During the entire course students will be expected to read carefully and participate actively in criticizing, evaluating, and appraising their own and others' research.

Course Objectives
- To learn what a content analysis is and how to run one.
- To learn what a discourse analysis is and how to conduct one.
- To run a study and produce a research paper submitted to a conference and scholarly journal.
- To learn how to promote your own work.

Reading materials

Readings will be available online, through the blackboard site for the course. All registered students have been registered to the blackboard site by default.

Requirements

Grades for the course will be based on in-class performance, short blog reactions/statements, a research paper, and a research presentation.

Research Project – to be completed in five parts
1. **Research Proposal**
You will formulate a research question, review the relevant theory and research, and propose a study (content or discourse analysis, or both) that investigates this question. No more than 250 words, excluding references. You will submit this to me and to a conference in your field of study.
2. **Literature Review:**
Flesh out your proposal into the first part of your research paper, including your introduction, literature review, and leading into your research question(s).
3. **Method/Analysis:**
Revise and resubmit your literature review, with the addition of a method (content analysis) or an analysis (discourse analysis) section, which describes your research design.
4. **Results and Discussion – Themes/Discussion:**
Write a description of the results and conclusions of the study.
5. **Paper Presentations:**
Create a powerpoint and/or multimedia summary of your work and present to the class, during the last two class meetings. Presentations will be followed by question and answer sessions.

As each part of the project is turned in, earlier parts will be revised as necessary during the semester, until the final version is turned in at the end of the semester. Only the final version of the paper and your presentation will be graded, although you will get direct feedback on your progress throughout the semester. For your presentation, you must specify conference presentation, publication and promotion plans for your work. Late submissions are not accepted and incompletes not granted. Pick your projects wisely, so that they are executable within the timeframe of a semester.   **50% for final version, 10% for presentation**

Participation
Your attendance and participation to class discussions is essential and expected. This is a graduate seminar, meant to inform you on this topic but to also teach you to articulate your own opinions with confidence. All readings should be completed before the assigned date, and you should come to class prepared to talk. Worth 20% of your grade.

Online scholarly statements
For this class, you will start a blog or microblog, and link it to your twitter account. I recommend wordpress (blog) or tumblr (microblog), but if you have a something you like already, feel free to use that and link it to your existing or new twitter account. Every week you will post an example of content (take a photograph, link to content, or post a screen shot of something) followed by your comments on it. Your comments should not exceed 150 words (a paragraph), and should involve a brief scholarly interpretation of the content as artifact. You may apply a theory toward interpreting the content. You may pose research questions regarding this content. You might suggest coding or analyzing schemes for this content. You could write about anything, but your point of view should be scholarly. You are not graded on individual statements, but you do receive credit for completing them. This is worth 20% of your grade. How much of that 20% you accumulate depends on a) completing these, b) not exceeding the word limit, c) originality, d) theoretical soundness of argument. These are due every week, starting January 25. You will tweet them out using the hashtag #comm594, anytime during the week, but you must post at least one a week.

Special Needs
It is our desire that all students participate fully in the curriculum of our department. If you have a disability or special condition that compromises your ability to successfully participate in this class, please notify me as soon as

possible and make sure you register with the appropriate University office. All efforts will be made to accommodate your needs.

Honor Code
All students are expected to read and observe the UIC Honor Code Policy concerning academic integrity.

Plagiarizing
When facts or other material are obtained from an outside source, that source should be cited properly in the text and the bibliography/references section of your work. Plagiarism is defined as taking the words or ideas of another person and presenting them as one's own without proper credit. Plagiarizing is considered cheating, and a student who plagiarizes will receive a zero for that assignment and/or a failing grade for the course. If you are not certain that you are citing materials properly, feel free to double check your citations with me.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

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Reading assignments should be completed prior to the date for which they are assigned. You should come to class prepared to discuss what you have read. This schedule is tentative – you will be advised of changes. Readings will be made available online.

DATE	TOPICS	READINGS
Jan. 11	Course overview	
Jan. 18	Content+Discourse Analysis	• Babbie-Unobtrusive Research • Van Dijk-Discourse Analysis • Krippendorf-Content Analysis"
Jan. 25	Content Analysis Theory and Design	• Berelson-Content Analysis in Comm Research • Holsti-Content Analysis: An Introduction • Stempel-Content Analysis • Thomas-Artifactual Study
Feb. 1	Discourse Analysis Theory and Design	Fairclough TBA
Feb. 8	Content Analysis **PROPOSAL ABSTRACTS DUE**	Andrew Rojecki, Guest Lecture on Framing Content, Readings TBA
Feb. 15	Discourse Analysis	Patty Harkin, Guest Lecture, Readings TBA

Feb. 22	News and Ads	TBA
Mar. 1	Reality TV Drama/Comedy **LITERATURE REVIEWS DUE**	TBA
Mar. 8	Magazines Music	TBA
Mar. 15	Online interaction and self presentation **REVISED LITERATURE REVIEWS WITH METHOD DUE**	• Hine/Kendall/Boyd- Online and Offline Data, Baym&Markham-*Internet Inquiry* • Baym -Quality in Qualitative Research-*Internet Inquiry* TBA

March 21-25 Spring Break

Mar. 29	Research Paper	•Tue 3-7:30pm
Apr. 5	Research Paper	•Tue 3-7:30pm
Apr. 12	Research Paper	•Tue 3-7:30pm
Apr. 19	Research Paper	•Tue 3-7:30pm
Apr. 26	**Completed Research Papers, Work dissemination plan and Presentations due**	