Appendix G: “Research Methods in Composition and Literacy” Syllabus

Rhetoric 565: Research Methods in Composition and Literacy  Spring 2014
Instructor: Dr. William FitzGerald

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Overview

This course is a practical guide to researching literate activity in the classroom and other spheres in which writing is produced and circulates. Introducing methods and methodologies for analyzing texts and their composition, the course prepares you to conduct genuine research and thus contribute to scholarship in composition and literacy. We will survey--and practice--methods and methodologies for archival, empirical and ethnographic research; learn the value of qualitative, quantitative and mixed modes of analysis; form meaningful research questions; and design cogent, practicable research studies in light of epistemological and ethical principles.

Specifically, you will learn to locate and interpret historical material through the paradigm of the archive; identify and collect qualitative data through interview and observation; code data using methods of grounded theory; and develop a “case study” approach to address a research question. Along the way, we will consider traditional and emergent sites of writing research in institutional and community contexts as well as in online settings. The projects you undertake in this course can serve as a springboard to teacher-research or a starting point for a future thesis or dissertation or other scholarship.

Objectives:

In this course, you will learn to
-- recognize the dominant research methods and methodologies in composition and literacy;
-- identify and formulate meaningful research questions in writing studies;
-- develop methodologically sound approaches to conducting research;
-- consider and apply ethical principles of text-based and human subject research;
-- design and articulate a research study reflecting mastery of intellectual and practical issues.

Texts:


The above texts are available for purchase at the campus book center or online. Other readings, in academic journals, may be accessed through the internet or the Rutgers library.
Expectations and Policies

Evaluation: Course grades will be determined as follows:

- Class participation * 15%
  (attendance, discussion, postings, professionalism)
- Minor Assignments 15%
  - Research Question log 5%
  - Practitioner Report 5%
- Journal Report 5%
- Major Assignments 70%
  - Archive Project 15%
  - Empirical Project 15%
  - Ethnography Project 15%
  - Final Project: Research Proposal 25%
- Total 100%

Attendance: This class involves engaged discussion and assigned contributions; weekly attendance is mandatory. In addition, you will lead discussion of an assigned article or chapter twice in the semester and write (and on occasion) post responses to readings prior to class.

Integrity: I place a high value on ethics and expect students to conduct themselves with integrity in classroom performance and in research and writing. You are strongly encouraged to clarify misunderstandings you might have about responsible methods of research and proper documentation. In addition, you are advised to consult the university policy on integrity (http://www.camden.rutgers.edu/RUCAM/Academic-Integrity-Policy.php)

Accommodation: If you have a documented disability, please inform me and we will work together to develop a reasonable accommodation.

Outline

The course is organized around three units focused on research domains: archival, empirical and ethnographic. Each of these units provides an opportunity to perform a small-scale study. A final unit allows you to design a substantial study that could be completed in the future. Any of these projects can serve as

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES
Readings and Activities (subject to revision)

Week One (January 21) -- Course Overview/Introduction to Research Methods
Rickly, Rebecca. “Messy Contexts: The Required Research Methods Course as a Scene of Rhetorical Practice” (read)


**Week Two (January 28) -- Introduction to Historiography and Archival Research**

*Writing Studies Research and Practice*, Introduction; Journet; Rohan

*Working in the Archives*, Introduction and readings in Part One (Glenn and Enoch; Gaillet; Ostergaard; Gold; Mortensen)


**Week Three (Feb 4) -- Archival Research Methods (cont.)**

*Working in the Archives*, Morris and Rose; Ramsey; Warnick; Zinkham


Bordelon, Suzanne. “Composing Women’s Civic Identities during the Progressive Era: College Commencement Addresses as Overlooked Rhetorical Sites.” College Composition and Communication. 61:3 (Feb 2010): 510-533.

**Week Four (Feb 11) -- Archival Research Methods (cont.)**

*Working in the Archives*, Yakel, Marshall, Masters, Tirabassi; Johnson


*Due*: Journal Report
Week Five (Feb 18) -- Archival Research Methods (cont.)

*Working in the Archives*, Ritter, Lerner, Graban, Lucas and Strain


Week Six (Feb 25) -- Empirical Research

*Writing Studies Research and Practice*, Hass, Takayoshi and Carr; Blair; Lamos


*Due*: Practitioner Report

Week Seven (Mar 4) -- Empirical Research (cont.)

*Writing Studies Research and Practice*, Hesse, Haswell, Broad, Fishman


*Due*: Archival Study Project

Week Eight (Mar 11) -- Empirical Research (cont.)
Writing Studies Research and Practice, Sheridan Fleckenstein


Week Nine (Mar 18) -- Spring Break (no class)

Week Ten (Mar 25) -- Ethnographic Research Methods

Writing Studies Research and Practice, Sheridan, Nickoson, Canagarajah


Brooke, Robert. “Ethnographic Practice as a Means of Invention: Seeking a Rhetorical Paradigm for Ethnographic Writing”


Due: Empirical Study project

Week Eleven (Apr 1) -- Ethnographic Research Methods (cont.)

Writing Studies Research and Practice, Selfe and Hawisher; Inoue; Grabill


**Week Twelve (Apr 8) -- Digital Research and Case Studies**

*Writing Studies Research and Practice*, Palmquist, Mullin and Blalock; McKee and Porter

McKee, Heidi and Danielle DeVoss. “Introduction” to Digital Writing Research.


Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (daln.osu.edu) and IRB protocols

*Due:* Research Question Log

**Week Thirteen (Apr 15) -- Digital Research and Case Studies (cont.)**

*Writing Studies Research and Practice*, Lunsford


*Due:* Ethnographic Study project

**Week Fourteen (Apr 22) -- Literacy Research and Case Studies**

*Writing Studies Research and Practice*, Rickly


Proposal Workshop

Due: Project Proposal drafts

Week Fifteen (Apr 29) -- Case Studies and Presentations


Presentations I

Week Sixteen (May 5) -- Presentations

Presentations II

Course Evaluations

Due: Research Project Proposal