

**MODEL SYLLABUS**  
**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES:**  
**PHILOSOPHIC PERSPECTIVES**

**CLASS FORMAT AND SCHEDULING:**

Lecture and discussion, with 2 - 2 hour sessions per week.

**CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION:**

The philosophic underpinnings of qualitative approaches to systematic inquiry in communication research.

**CREDIT HOURS:**

5 credits

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

The course is designed as a comprehensive review of the philosophic underpinnings of qualitative approaches to science in communication research, including attention to historical roots, major philosophic contests, principles of rigor, and convergences and divergences with quantitative approaches. While the course focus specifically on philosophic underpinnings relating to qualitative research, the issues involved pervade virtually all discussions of communication design and practice in society today. Students with practical interests will be given opportunity both in class and in assignments to apply class readings and discussions to communication design, practice and policy.

**DEVELOPED IN 1996 BY:**

Brenda Dervin, Ph.D., Professor (Communication), 3016 Derby Hall, 154 N. Oval Mall, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210, USA [dervin.1@osu.edu](mailto:dervin.1@osu.edu). Note: This syllabus was developed for curriculum committee review purposes and as a model for alternative instructors. The readings come solely or primarily from authors writing in the various communication fields. Actual presentations of the class will vary and most versions will rely 30-50% on works from sources in other fields.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

While attendance is not a formal course requirement, there are four ways in which missing class can hurt you. One is in your participation grade for which attendance is a necessary pre-requisite. The second will be in the resources you will be able to bring to bear on the take-home exams because class lectures and discussions will necessarily impact the selection of the exam questions. The third will be in the resources you will be able to bring to bear on your class paper because class sessions will be in part orient toward assisting students with their selected class projects. If you miss a class you must acquire the missing notes from another student and not from the instructor.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

For both undergraduate and graduate students, class grades will be calculated based on:

Class participation & discussion	20%
Two take-home exams	40% (20% each)
Class paper	40%

The two take-home exams with each consist of four sets of three questions from which students are to choose one question per set to be answered in no more than one double-spaced typed page.

The class paper is to be focused on a topic each student selected individually -- a topic to which the student will apply class readings and discussions. For graduate students, this topic is to be focused on their research-related interests. Undergraduates may select either a research-oriented interest or a practice-related interest. Ample time will be provided in class for discussion of possible topics. It is recommended that students hand in drafts of portions of their papers for feedback from the instructor. Drafts may be handed in at any time and will be returned within one week. Paper length for undergraduates is minimum 15 pages; for graduate students minimum 25 pages.

Graduate students will be expected to do graduate level work including covering the extra readings assigned to them as well as preparing a class paper of quality suitable for submission for convention or journal referee.

### **CLASS READINGS**

The class readings consist of a selection of items on reserve at the library. Full citations for all the readings are included in [Master Bibliography for Model Syllabi Focusing on Qualitative Research in Communication Studies](#). In the schedule below, readings are identified by last name of senior author and an abbreviated document title. Reading assignments are marked as follows:

- +items are required readings for both undergraduate and graduate students
- \*items are required for graduate student
- items are available for those who wish to pursue issues in more depth

### **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

Below is the class schedule by week. It is recommended that reading assignments be completed by the first class session each week. Due dates for examples and the paper are marked with a \*\*\*.

### **WK FOCUS, READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

#### **2 INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS**

+Angus, Questioning the institutional boundaries of US comm research...

\*Jankowski, The qualitative tradition in soc science inquiry:

contrib...

+Jensen, Introduction: the qualitative turn...

\*Jensen, Humanistic scholarship in qualitative science: contributions...

- Ritchie, Communication as a symbolic activity...

### **3 PHILOSOPHIC ROOTS: THE INTERPRETIVE TURN**

- Bineham, The hermeneutic medium

+Deetz, Conceptualizing human understanding...hermeneutics and...

\*Felts, Hermeneutic phenomenology...

\*Hawes, Toward a hermeneutic phenomenology of communication...

+Macksoud, Phenomenology, experience and interpretation

### **4 PHILOSOPHIC ROOTS: THE INTERPRETIVE TURN (CONTINUED)**

- Brown, Narrative analysis and organizational development

+Fisher, The narrative paradigm

+Fiske, Semiological struggles

\*Lucaites, Reconstructing narrative theory: a functional perspective

\*Schroder, Audience semiotics, interpretive communities, and the...

### **\*\*\* TAKE HOME EXAM #1 DUE AT BEGINNING OF FIRST CLASS SESSION THIS WEEK**

### **5 PHILOSOPHIC ROOTS: THE CRITICAL/CULTURAL TURN**

- Altman, Making a critical difference...

- Arneson, Situating three contemporary qualitative methods in applied...

+Avery, Making a difference in the real world

- Condit, The critic as empath: moving away from totalizing theory

- Cox, Memory, critical theory, and the argument from history

+Deetz, Critical interpretive research in organizational comm...

- Farrell, Critical models in the analysis of discourse

\*Hardt,...Critical theory, cultural studies, and Am mass comm res...

\*Kersten, Philosophic foundations for the construction of critical know...

- Schudson, Historical approaches to communication studies...

- 6 PHILOSOPHIC ROOTS: THE CRIT/CULT TURN (CONTINUED)**
- Beiner, Hermeneutical generosity and social criticism
  - \*Burnowes, From functionalism to cultural studies...
  - +Carbaugh, The critical voice of ethnography in communication research
  - Huspek, The idea of ethnography and its relation to cultural critique...
  - +Mumby, Feminism, postmodernism, and organizational studies...
  - \*Splichal, Critical theory and empirical critique in mass communication research
- 7 WHO TALKS? WHO'S TALKING? INDIVIDUAL, SELF, SUBJECT, VOICE AND REPRESENTATION**
- +Anderson, The nature of the individual in communication research
  - +Ang, Wanted: audiences -- on the politics of empirical audience studies....
  - \*Crnkovic, ...Why should you write about 'the other'?
  - \*Ganguly, Accounting for others...
  - Lannamann, Outside the boundary: a critique of comm as representation..
  - Shome, Postcolonial interventions...an 'other' view...
  - West, Ethnography and ideology: the politics of cultural representation...
- 8 PRINCIPLES OF RIGOR IN QUALITATIVE SCIENCE**
- Carlson, How one uses evidence determines its value
  - +Fitch, Criteria for evidence in qualitative research
  - +Hoijer, Reliability, validity, and generalizability: 3 questions for qual...
  - \*Philipsen, Two issues in the evaluation of ethno studies of comm...
  - \*Price, On the place of validity...
  - Tompkins, Principles of rigor for assessing evidence in 'qualitative'...
- 9 PRINCIPLES OF RIGOR IN QUALITATIVE SCIENCE (CONTINUED)**
- Albrecht, The study of...through the use of method triangulation
  - \*Beach, relevance and consequentiality
  - \*Benoit, A case for triangulation in argument research
  - +Hawes, Revisiting reflexivity
  - +Sigman, Some notes toward ethnographic responsibility and critique...

**\*\*\* TAKE-HOME EXAM #2 DUE AT BEGINNING OF FIRST CLASS SESSION THIS WEEK**

**10 WHERE QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE MEET**

\*Bybee, Qualitative and quantitative abductive inquiry

\*Cahn, Perspectives on...behaviorism, phenomenol, and an integrated...

+Glik, Integrating qualitative and quantitative...

- Kazoleas, A compar of the persuasive effectiveness of qual vs quant...

+Olson, Renewed alchemy: science and humanism in comm epistemology

- Waitskin, Interpretive anal...: dealing with limitations of quant and qual...

**EX SCHEDULED EXAM WEEK TIME**

**\*\*\* FINAL CLASS PAPER DUE AT END OF REGULARLY SCHEDULED EXAM PERIOD FOR THE CLASS**

**This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request. Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor and for seeking available assistance in a timely manner.**