

COMS 605 Media Research Methods
Concordia University
Department of Communication Studies
Dr. Stefanie Duguay
Winter 2023

Please note: You are viewing the publicly available version of this syllabus, which has been modified for distribution. If you are a student in the course, please access the full version, which includes Concordia's teaching and learning policies, from the internal course site.

1. Course Information

Office Hours: Thursdays 4:15-5:15pm and other times by appointment – for all office hours appointments, please email at least 1 day in advance to book a time. If I have not heard from anyone in advance of office hours, they may be cancelled for that week.

Email: [redacted]

Include COMS605 in subject line; responses generally sent within 24 business hours.

Calendar Description

This seminar prepares students to critique literature from any of the major research traditions; to make basic connections between epistemology and problems of basic communication research; to be able to identify the research method most appropriate to personal areas of interest; to design a basic research project.

Prerequisites

The following course must be completed previously or concurrently: [COMS 600](#).

Course Description¹

Media Studies, a relatively new field, entered the academy in the 1940s drawing on social science and humanities theories and research traditions of the mid-century. Contemporary Media Studies has developed a body of theory and methods that are diverse, highly contentious, and exciting. The related methodologies, often interdisciplinary, that are used in Media Studies do not function as grids or templates that are mechanically applied to social phenomena. They are dynamic approaches to the study and creation of media. Different methodological programs are in a constant state of dialogue and evolution with various theories and socio-cultural developments. They constitute a linked set of practices – conceptualizing, gathering evidence, interpreting, writing, and media making.

This course is intended to give you knowledge of the vocabularies associated with doing research and should enable you to understand and to critique literature from within communication and cultural studies from a methodological point of view. You will gain an understanding of the connection between theory and methods, and the epistemological problematics and pragmatics (ethical and political) of doing research. This can mean studying an issue or set of issues in communication, media or cultural studies or knowing how to research to produce a project that uses media technologies. The primary goal of the course is to provide you with research skills to help you develop your research practice, including the task of writing a project or a thesis proposal, a very particular genre of academic prose. This will be

¹This syllabus was developed in consultation with previous iterations of the course, incorporating pedagogical approaches from Drs. Kim Sawchuk, Mia Consalvo, and Fenwick McKelvey. I wish to express gratitude for their guidance as well as other scholars' syllabi and research practices that have served as further inspiration.

introduced in incremental stages through a series of practical exercises. You should develop the capacity to adapt appropriate methods to your research questions and creative endeavors, whether they be for a project or a thesis, both of which are forms of production that will be inscribed and made material. The assignments are *experiments* and intended to assist you in the development of a first draft of a research proposal, which may nurture the proposal you develop after this class is over.

Course objectives/learning outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain the function of methods and methodology in the production of knowledge, especially in relation to qualitative research in media, communication, and cultural studies.
- Apply principles of research design to develop and establish alignment across a project's framing, research questions, theoretical framework, and methodology.
- Apply principles of ethical research conduct and demonstrate reflexivity in relation to the researcher's role in conducting a study.
- Exercise skills pertaining to a range of research methods and understand how to find literature expanding upon, and moving beyond, the methods discussed in this course.
- Demonstrate an enhanced capacity to present knowledge according to established academic formats for proposals, papers, and presentations.

Course materials

All readings and related materials will be available through Concordia Course Reserves.

Required readings are listed first and must be completed for each week; **additional readings** are provided for further exploration and application to course assignments, and their completion is not mandatory on a weekly basis. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus during the semester as necessary with the goal of fully addressing class needs and improving your learning experience.

I can recommend additional texts based on your interests and needs. However, part of your task is to research not only your subject, but also the methods that you will employ to investigate it.

2. Assignments and Grading

Assignment	Weighting (%)	Due date
Participation	10	Ongoing
Discussion Leadership	15	Sign up by January 24
Exploratory Questions	10	February 6
Research Proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial draft • Final Research Proposal 	15 30	March 6 April 20
Pilot Project and Final Presentation	20	April 13

Participation – 10%

Participation involves demonstrating a desire to learn as well as the ability to actively listen and is not just about speaking in this seminar. Seminar courses rely on active learning through participation, which will require you to discuss topics with other students and contribute to group work. There will also be some in-class time dedicated to skills application, peer learning, and presentations – participating during this time will help you to manage the workload for the course and should help to enhance the quality of your assignments. It is up to you to engage with course content and challenge yourself throughout the semester. As a learning community, we can move together through the energizing possibility of new ideas, the discomfort and vulnerability of solving problems and learning, and the accomplishment of developing new understandings.

Participation tip: Consult the checklist in Kim Sawchuk’s “Thinking about Methods” on p. 14-15 for considerations when reading and discussing an article, such as:

- What is this article about? (main points and positions)
- What is the intent of the author in writing the article? (e.g. exploration, interpretation, intervention)
- What standpoint is taken (e.g. detached scholar; autobiographical; advocacy, etc)?
- What is the line of argument (the logic) if any?
- What sort of evidence is used?
- How is the material organized and structured?

Discussion Leadership – 15%

You will sign up to co-lead the class discussion for one week of the course. To fulfill this assignment, you must do the following:

1. **Select and present** a reading that is relevant to the week’s topic. You can select from the additional readings listed for the week or choose another reading that is relevant (if you choose a reading that is not listed, it would be preferable to pick a reading that deepens our understanding of the topic, such as a study that applies the method or a critique/alternative perspective on the method). You should collaborate with the other co-leaders for the week on selecting this reading, analyzing it, and developing the presentation. **Important:** Two weeks in advance of your presentation, email the instructor identifying the reading you have selected and send a copy if it is not on the syllabus.

The presentation will take place at the beginning of the discussion leadership time. Not only should it summarize the reading, but it should emphasize key points and articulate

the reading's relationship to the week's topic and the course more broadly. It should be approximately 10 minutes (12 minutes if three people are co-leading).

2. Develop and pose 4-6 questions to co-lead our class discussion. These questions should be open-ended and unbiased (i.e. not 'yes/no' or leading questions). They can seek clarification on a point in the required readings, raise critique, develop directions for further exploration, or inspire classmates to reflect on how they would grapple with different aspects of a method.
Questions can be posed for discussion by the whole group, discussion in pairs or smaller groups, as writing exercises or small activities. A mix of approaches can be a good idea!

Points to consider as you prepare your presentation and questions:

- Who is/are the authors of the text? What are their epistemological and ontological assumptions, obligations, and positionality in relation to the research?
- What are the main arguments, points, procedures, concerns, and concepts in the text?
- How do these relate to the required readings, the week's topic, and the course more broadly? Do you notice links, parallels, or contradictions?

Your learning and the quality of your discussion leadership will be enhanced through collaboration. Unless you email the instructor to request to be graded individually, then you will receive one grade as a group. If conflict arises during collaboration, you are encouraged to work on resolving this among yourselves (see adrienne marie brown's "Transformative Justice Tools" pp. 257-263) and if this is not effective, to then contact the instructor to help mediate a resolution.

You are encouraged to BE CREATIVE in your discussion leadership! Feel free to incorporate media (audio, video) into your presentation, base questions on examples drawn from real world situations and media, and incorporate creativity in other forms. Please ensure that all materials shared with the class attend to classmates' different positionalities – if in doubt about including certain media or materials, run them by the instructor.

Altogether, your discussion leadership will run for 40-60 minutes (with interjections and contributions from the instructor) until a logical break in the discussion. Presentations should be in PowerPoint, Google Slides, or PDF (not Canva or a platform requiring login).

Presentations slides and discussion questions must be emailed to the instructor by 9:00pm the evening before the class to which they pertain. Arrive to class 15 minutes early to discuss your questions and discussion leadership plan with the instructor.

Exploratory Questions for Research Design – 10%

Congruent with keeping a research journal for your project's development, these questions are intended to inspire you to take stock of your project's current motivation and framing while diving deeper into modes of investigation relating to your research topic.

This is a lightweight brainstorming activity for your own research development – do not agonize over whether your responses will change; some most certainly will. Responses should be in full sentences and long enough to address the questions for a total of approximately 1,200-1,500 words or 5 pages double-spaced.

1. What is my subject/topic and method, in approximately 100 words?

2. What are my research questions stemming from this subject/topic? Consider: Are there several? Is there an overarching question along with sub-questions? Are all questions of equal priority in relation to the research topic?
3. Why do I want to do this? What is my relationship to this topic?
4. Do I have any opinions or prior knowledge or experience with this subject? If so, what are they?
5. Is this a public issue? Go to news sources and cite 3–5 instances in which this topic is discussed as a news story. What is the range of opinion you see here? How is it discussed publicly? What language is used? What tone? What are the public concerns expressed?
6. How is this an academic issue? Go to the academic journals and find 6–8 articles that deal with this topic. How do they discuss it? What is the range of perspectives and disciplinary approaches you see? How is the issue discussed theoretically? Using what methods? What language is used? What is the tone? What are the concerns expressed or conclusions drawn?
7. What are 3 or 4 key concepts and terms that emerge from this preliminary research? Are there any sub-concepts that I can name? Why are these terms important?
8. What will be the specific challenges (practical or ethical) that I anticipate I will encounter in doing this project? How will I address these challenges?
9. What are the various methodological strategies that could be used to approach this thesis, major research paper, or research-creation project? In what ways could they be applied?
10. What methodological approach am I learning toward at this point? As such, what might my pilot project look like?

Research Proposal – Partial draft (15%) and Final Research Proposal (30%)

Below is the basic and suggested structure of a research proposal. The goal of these assignments is to give you experience in the formulation and design of media research projects and experience writing in the generic style of a proposal. The structure follows the general format for funding agencies in the social sciences and the humanities (excluding an extensive monetary budget). It is also a prototype for a thesis proposal or a project proposal. The proposal format is the same for research and research-creation projects.

The BASIC and MOST IMPORTANT point to remember about this GENRE:

A thesis or project proposal is not a summary of work done. It is a “pitch” to the committee and a plan to help you achieve your research goals. It is called a proposal because it is propositional in nature. You are describing what you will do and not just what you have done. You will, however, need to show some preliminary knowledge of what has been done by others in order to situate your own investigations into the subject of your thesis.

Partial Draft, complete sections 1-4. For section 5:

- Broadly identify your methodological approach in one paragraph
- Describe the pilot project you will carry out, how it relates to your methodological approach, and how it will be conducted – your pilot project should inform the methods, procedures, and details in your final research proposal

This partial draft should be approximately 2,000-2,500 words (8-10 pages) plus bibliography.

Final Research Proposal – A complete version of the research proposal, 16-18 pages (4,000-4,500 words) plus bibliography. Refine sections 1-4 based on your learning since the partial draft, provide a full Methodology, and complete the rest of the sections.

Research Proposal Template

1. Title and Abstract (150 words maximum)

2. Introduction to the Project (Research Problematic)

Provide a brief introduction to the subject of your research that captures the attention of the reader, and the main research question to be investigated. Position the object(s) of inquiry within social contexts of significance and pertinence. Position the study in terms of your own interests and intellectual history. Briefly mention the key terms to be investigated in relationship to the research question(s).

3. Brief literature or media review

Frame and name your research question(s) in relation to what you anticipate to be the relevant literature on the subject. It is useful to think of 3 areas of inquiry into which your own research will make an intervention or a contribution. You will not have read or viewed all of these works, however, you should see patterns and connections that you will investigate. Literature and media reviews can be intensive or extensive, the former typically being a more humanities-based approach, the latter more akin to approaches in the social sciences.

4. Brief description of the theoretical perspective

Name the paradigm, set of concepts or authorial allegiances that will be your analytic touchstones or points of theoretical reflection. There may be some overlap with the literature review here, but you can still distinguish between them: the theoretical perspective demarcates the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of your inquiry as well as the mode of interpretation that you will try to follow. You can be general, e.g. *I am influenced by the rhetorical tradition*. It is often better to be specific, e.g. *More specifically I am influenced by the recent debates on ideograms and iconographic visual rhetoric. This is best exemplified by Robert Harriman's recent work on photography OR I am influenced by the tradition whereby post-structuralism intersects with post-phenomenology. In particular, I find the writings of Elizabeth Grosz on architecture and Charles Stivale on affect relevant and inspiring as a mode of interpretation and analysis of the affective dimensions of communicative interaction.*

Note: In theses or projects that are more theoretical, there will be more emphasis on explicating the literature review and the theoretical perspective. Less time is usually spent on methodology.

5. Methodology

Provide a detailed discussion of the methodological program that you will follow. This includes a discussion of your research on the specific methodologies that you will employ throughout the various stages of the research.

What is your corpus of primary material, the set of subjects, or the site that you will use for your analysis of your research topic? Why have you chosen these limits?

It is often useful to ask whether your project will be singular in methodological perspective, or whether different methodologies will be used in different chapters and throughout different stages of the project or thesis to help you “triangulate” or “crystallize” your insights into the phenomena under investigation.

What interpretive strategies will you likely use? Here again, you may make reference to previous sections of the proposal, including the literature review and the theoretical section. Are there any ethical or political considerations that you need to discuss? Do you need to fill out the ethics forms available from Concordia’s Office of Research site? Will you need to use consent forms? If time allows, include these documents with the final proposal.

6. Requested Resources

What resources do you need to implement this project or thesis? Do you need to travel and do you require subsistence support? Do you need equipment and materials, such as access to computers, software, audio recorders, film or video equipment, editing resources? What will the costs of this research be, if any?

7. Timetable of Research

Chart how long it will take you to do what. What is the temporal ordering of the various stages of the research program? It is crucial to make yourself aware of the deadlines set out by the School of Graduate Studies. You may need to consider the turn around time needed for effective feedback from your supervisor (if you have one) and their schedule.

It may be important to distinguish between the timetable for doing the research, and the order in which you will produce written chapters or components of your project. The stages in which you do the research do not always correspond directly to the stages in which you will present the work.

ADVICE: Don’t get stuck on your introduction, on the theoretical framework, or on the method. It is important to keep writing and to get your ideas down on paper or recorded as soon as possible so you have your own material to work from. It is also crucial to keep momentum going once you start. If you are stuck, work on what you know best. Start with what you are most passionate or knowledgeable about, but do not over-write or over-produce each section. Keep moving.

8. Potential chapter breakdown or form of the project

It is often very helpful to think of the written thesis as 2 or 3 linked papers of 5–6,000 words (each) at the core (i.e. about 50–60 pages). What can you imagine the papers that you want to write? For creative projects, it is important to name the anticipated elements of your project, e.g. will it primarily be presented as a website? If so, how will it be structured? Will it be a 30–minute podcast of an event? A video? A digital game? If so, how would you imagine the script or design document for such projects? For projects, it is also necessary to consider what will be in the project itself and what will be contained in the written component. In this respect, documenting the research that you do and keeping a process journal can be vital and very useful for writing a reflection on your project: these will be your field notes.

9. Bibliography and Mediography

Pilot Project and Final Presentation – 20%

You will organize and conduct a small pilot project, upon which you will reflect in your final presentation. The pilot project is a practical assignment intended to furnish you with the opportunity to try out a particular research technique and to work on refining your research questions. A pilot project is a preliminary trial run or testing of some of your ideas and will provide an opportunity to gather some information, data, or to work with a small corpus of literature (or other materials) for your research proposal. It is akin to a preliminary and limited case study. The Exploratory Questions assignment should prepare you for the pilot project, which in turn is intended to prepare you for the full thesis/project proposal.

While it is up to you to decide what you will do for your pilot project, it is suggested that it relate to the methods covered in the course if relevant, and can be:

- a) Collection and analysis of a small set of publicly available online content/data, conducted using a digital research tool or a manual approach
- b) A time-limited observation of a potential research site
- c) A limited set of interviews, individually with 1-2 participants, or a focus group
- d) A small-scale prototype or design for a media production
- e) A small textual (or discourse) analysis of a delineated corpus of images, texts, sounds, etc.
- f) A preliminary visit to a publicly accessible archive (physical or online) and analysis of material(s) therein
- g) Systematic coding (applying grounded theory, thematic analysis, etc.) of a small set of research materials

Other pilot projects, pertinent to your proposal, are possible. Please come and talk to me if you have an idea. The most important aspect of a pilot project is that it is an opportunity to experiment and to try your ideas out.

On the last day of class, we will have a research symposium for sharing and feedback on the development of your research project. The presentation should be an overview of your research proposal including a discussion of how your pilot project has informed the development of your methodology. A suggested format for your presentation is:

- Introduction to the research topic and research questions
- Briefly discuss literature review and theoretical framework
- Methodology
 - Your chosen methodological approach
 - The pilot project and its rationale
 - Pilot project findings
 - Reflection on how the pilot project has informed your methodology
- Remaining parts of the research proposal

Since this is a methods course, you should aim to spend most of the presentation time on the methodology. Presentations will be 10 minutes in duration followed by 5 minutes for questions and feedback. We will discuss as a class how to format the symposium (e.g. the entire day, two afternoons) and your supervisor will be invited to attend (if applicable).

If using slides, please submit them in Moodle by 9:00pm the night before your symposium presentation (in PowerPoint, PDF, or Google Slides format).

Guidelines for all written assignments:

- All written work must consistently follow a recognized citation style (e.g. APA, Chicago, MLA, etc).
- Respect the word limit; word counts exceeding +/- 10% of the word limit will affect your grade
- All written work should be in 12-point font, Times New Roman (Arial, Calibri, and Cambria are also acceptable) and double-spaced with regular (MS Word default) page margins
- Include page numbers at the bottom of each page
- Electronic submissions **must** be Microsoft Word documents (**not PDF** or other formats)
- File names should follow the format lastname_short assignment title_course code (e.g. Duguay_Project Proposal_COMS 605)

Attendance – Attendance is not directly graded but I care about what is happening with you. If you are unable to make it to class, please email me, or complete the [Short-Term Absence form](#) if you feel more comfortable doing so. I do not require a doctor's note or detailed description of sensitive personal or medical situations. If you are going to miss multiple classes, we will need to discuss a plan so that you do not fall behind in the course. If you are repeatedly late or leaving early from class, please let me know what is impeding you from remaining present the entire time, otherwise this behaviour will affect your participation grade. If you encounter technical difficulties accessing the course materials through Moodle or Course Reserves, please contact the instructor immediately.

If you miss a class, you must do the following to ensure you do not fall behind:

- Ensure you have read the required readings
- Review any resources (e.g., slides, etc) posted to Moodle after the class
- Contact a classmate for their notes and to discuss anything missed
- If you still feel unsure about the content covered, contact the instructor for further resources or an office hours appointment to discuss

Accommodations for joining over Zoom:

We are still existing within a pandemic situation, which means that extenuating circumstances may prevent some individuals from attending class in person in particular instances, such as when caregiving for an immunocompromised individual or if you are sick (though if you are ill, it may be most advisable to follow the instructions above and take the week to rest). Outside of extenuating circumstances, you are expected to make appropriate arrangements (e.g. transportation, scheduling) for attending class in person. **If you will need to attend online, please email me in the morning prior to class by 10:00am** to let me know. You do not need to include details about the situation in your email; just notifying me that you will be online will help me to plan and adjust class activities. If I do not hear from anyone in advance of class, I may not connect the Owl, as I will assume no one is joining online. Please be aware that the use of Zoom via the Owl is an accommodation and this is not a hybrid course; as such, your

learning experience through this modality may not be as rich as attending in-person and this online option is not intended to replace in-person learning when it is possible.

Once you have notified me that you will be joining via Zoom, use the link in Moodle to connect at least 5 minutes prior to the class start time. Individuals in class will be asked to attend to the chat box and help facilitate communication.

Late assignments – All assignments are due on the date specified and must be submitted by the deadline. If you will require an extension, you must bring this to my attention by email **in advance** of the deadline and generally **one week or more in advance**. If I have not granted an extension, the following late policy will apply: 1 grade point will be deducted from the total grade for every 24 hours that an assignment is late for a maximum 3-point deduction. Late assignments may not receive written comments or feedback. There are no extensions or make-up days for Discussion Leadership or the Final Presentation, as these assignments are time-sensitive. Speak to the instructor well in advance of these dates if you have concerns.

Language and subject matter – At times, course content and discussions are likely to concern subjects of power, oppression, exclusion, discrimination, violence, or other material that may be disturbing. I encourage you to practice care, taking breaks and discussing your responses to these subjects with supportive others. If there is a particular reading or week in which you are unable to engage with the subject matter for personal reasons, then I invite you to instead focus your efforts and assignments on the other materials or weeks of content. As we discuss challenging topics in the classroom, some examples of harmful behaviour, media, or language may be involved in critical analysis. This discussion does not condone the use of these terms outside of analysis or with harmful intention toward others. At all times, the instructor strives toward the use of anti-oppressive language and encourages others to do so. I am not always likely to get it right and I welcome compassionate correction.

Questions, emails, and grade reassessment – If you have a question about any aspect of the course, assignments, readings, or concepts, please ask it during class so that others can also benefit from hearing the response. If you do not wish to ask your question during the class, please discuss it with me immediately following the class or during my office hours. I will stay for 5-10 minutes after class or until I have addressed all questions. If you send a question by email, you may have to wait up to 24 business hours for a response. If you wish for an assignment to be reassessed, you will need to send me a written explanation over email for why the piece should be reassessed and then arrange to discuss the assignment during office hours or by appointment.

Grading approach – Since your assignments will outline a range of projects relating to a variety of subjects, some of which you have deeper expertise in than I do, grades will be allocated based on the adherence to, and fulfillment of, assignment criteria. I will look for you to apply the key principles of research design, ethical conduct, and reflexivity considered throughout the course, and to demonstrate rigour in developing your project and methodological approach.

Scent-free classroom – Please refrain from wearing perfume, cologne or other strong scents to class, as these can trigger negative health reactions. The use of regular soap, deodorant, etc., is completely fine.

3. Concordia Policies, Resources, and Grading Scale

Removed for public distribution – please access full version if enrolled in the course.

4. General Research Resources

Textbook(ish)

You will see the following book recurring throughout the syllabus, as I have found it to be a useful methods go-to. It is available as an ebook through the library.

Gaudet, S. & Robert, D. (2018). *A journey through qualitative research: From design to reporting*. Sage.

Additional General References on Methods

- Sage Research Methods (through the library): <http://0-srmo.sagepub.com.mercury.concordia.ca/>
- Barrett, Estelle and Barbara Bolt. *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Inquiry*. New York: IB Tauris, 2010). (Research-creation)
- Belcher, Wendy. *Writing your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 2009. (The title says it all)
- Berger, Arthur Asa. *Media and Communication Research Methods: an introduction to qualitative and quantitative approaches*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2011. (Introductory)
- Boellstorff, Tom, Nardi, Bonnie, Pearce, Celia and TL Taylor. *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Methods*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Consalvo, M. & Dutton, N. (2006). *Game analysis: Developing a methodological toolkit for the qualitative study of games*. *Game Studies*, 6(1). Available at: http://gamestudies.org/0601/articles/consalvo_dutton
- Creswell, R. John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: Sage, 2009.
- Denzin, Norman and Yvonne Lincoln, eds. *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Numerous editions.
- Fernandez Vara, Clara. *Introduction to Game Analysis*, New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Hine, Christine, ed. *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*. New York: Berg, 2005.
- Kovach, Margaret Elizabeth. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts*. Toronto: UofT Press, 2009.
- Lindlof, Thomas R. and Bryan C. Taylor, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* 2nd ed. Sage: Thousand Oaks, 2002. Three editions
- McKee, Alan. *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003.
- Miles, M., Huberman, A., Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Richards, L., & Morse, J. (2012). *Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods* (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rose, Gillian. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012. Companion website: <http://studysites.sagepub.com/rose/default.htm>

- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies*. London and Dunedin NZ: Zed Books and University of Otago Press, 1999.
- Spencer, Stephen. *Visual Research in the Social Sciences: Awakening Visions*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Stokes, Jane. *How to do Media and Cultural Studies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003.
- Sword, Helen. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2012. Available as an e-book through the library.
- Clarke, A. E., Friese, C., & Washburn, R. (2017). *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory After the Interpretive Turn* (Second edition). Sage Publications.
- Clarke, Adele, Washburn, Rachel and Friese, Carrie (eds.) *Situational Analysis in Practice: Mapping Research with Grounded Theory*. New York: Routledge, 2015

Qualitative Data Analysis Software

Many scholars choose to organize and analyze their materials through qualitative data analysis software. At a basic level, this can simply be software for memoing and keeping your research journal, such as Evernote or Notion. Specialized qualitative analysis software allows for in-depth coding and analysis of materials, and includes programs like NVivo, Atlas.ti, Maxqda, and [Dovetail](#) (free trial available).

I have arranged for you to have access to a trial version of MAXQDA 2022 Analytics Pro qualitative data analysis software throughout the semester. You will need to install the software, using the instructions posted to Moodle, and have it ready to use for Week 12 when we will work with it for a class exercise. Other use of MAXQDA is completely **optional**, as the software is provided as a tool and resource but we will not spend much class time discussing how to use it. However, use of the software and coding techniques can be easily self-taught through [MAXQDA's online help resources and tutorial videos](#) as well as through books about qualitative data analysis. If you find it helpful to use software to organize your thoughts, materials, and analysis, then I invite you to do so. If you'd rather stick to paper journals, post-it notes, and other avenues, then go with what works for you but be open to exploration.

5. Schedule

First day of classes for Winter 2023 semester – January 9

WEEK 1: January 12 – Intro to the course, research methods, and developing research questions

In this week, we will review the course topics, assignments, and expectations. Then we will engage in a preliminary discussion of how we can think of research, methods, methodologies, and the formulation of research questions. Mentally prepare by considering the key aspects of your research topic and what you want to find out.

Required reading:

- a) Agee, J. (2009). Developing qualitative research questions: A reflective process. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(4), 431-447.

Recommended reading (especially if unfamiliar with qualitative research methods):

- a) Sawchuk, K. (2011). "Thinking about Methods," in W. Straw, S. Gabriele & I. Wagman (eds), *Intersections: Concepts and Critical Frameworks*, pp. 19-36. Emond Montgomery Publishers.

WEEK 2: January 19 – Research Design: Thinking and Doing

Kovach (2021) writes, "Research methodology includes the belief system and methods that guide the research, or more colloquially – 'the thinking' and 'the doing' of research" (p. 30). Her writing about Indigenous methodologies in relation to qualitative research will start our discussion of how worldviews shape research decisions. Then we will examine the components of research design involved in developing a project, identifying the need for alignment across a study's research questions, theoretical framework, and methods.

Required reading:

- a) Gaudet, S. & Robert, D. (2018). Chapter 1: Choosing qualitative inquiry. *A journey through qualitative research: From design to reporting*. Sage, p. 1-19.
- b) Kovach, M. (2021). Chapter 1: Indigenous methodologies and qualitative inquiry. *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts* (2nd Ed). University of Toronto Press, p. 23-40.
- c) Lindlof, T.R. & Taylor, B.C. (2019). Chapter 1: Introduction to qualitative communication research. *Qualitative communication research methods* (4th Ed). Sage, p. 1-45
 - a. "Sampling" in Chapter 5 Design II: Implementing Research Projects, p. 143-152.

Additional reading:

- a) Collins, P. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought. *Social Problems*, 33(6), 514-532.
- b) Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599.
- c) Kovach, M. (2021). Chapter 3: Epistemology and research: Centring Indigenous knowledges. *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts* (2nd Ed). University of Toronto Press, p. 63-88.
- d) Gaudet, S. & Robert, D. (2018). Chapter 2: Designing an iterative research project. *A journey through qualitative research: From design to reporting*. Sage, 20-39.

- e) Markham, A. (2020). Qualitative research is... Retrieved from <https://annettemarkham.com/2020/03/qual-research/>

Course add/drop (DNE) deadline January 23

*****Sign up for a Discussion Leadership week by January 24*****

WEEK 3: January 26 – Research Ethics

We will discuss the development of ethical codes and regulatory bodies in relation to core ethical principles of research. Then we will examine alignments and disconnects between standardized protocols and broader ethical obligations.

Required reading:

- a) Esterberg, K.G. (2002). Chapter 3: Ethical issues. *Qualitative methods in social research*. McGraw Hill, pp. 43-56.
- b) Baily, M. (2015). #transform(ing)DH writing and research: An autoethnography of digital humanities and feminist ethics. *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 9(2).
- c) Liboiron, M. (2021). Introduction. *Pollution is colonialism*. Duke, pp. 1-38.

Have a look at Concordia's research ethics forms at <https://www.concordia.ca/research/for-researchers/ethics.html> - specifically, review the following:

- Summary Protocol Form (SPF)
- Information and Consent Form Template
- Instructions for Writing a Consent Form

Additional reading:

- a) Tiidenberg, K. (2018). Ethics in digital research. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*, pp. 466-479. SAGE.
- b) Franzke, A.S., Bechmann, A., Zimmer, M., Ess, C. & the Association of Internet Researchers. (2020). *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0*. Retrieved from <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>
- c) CLEAR. (2021). CLEAR Lab Book: A living manual of our values, guidelines, and protocols, V.03. St. John's, NL: Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador. <https://research.library.mun.ca/15034/1/Public%20version%20of%20CLEAR%20Lab%20book-2021.pdf>
- d) Markham, A. N., Herman, A., & Tiidenberg, K. (Eds.). (2018). Special Issue: Ethics as Method. *Social Media + Society*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/page/sms/collections/ethics-as-method>

WEEK 4: February 2 – (Some) Digital Research Methods

While digital research methods can include a range of approaches, this week will focus on the accessing digital content and examining it within the context of platforms and apps. We will consider the benefits and drawbacks of digital research tools, the potential and limitations of (big) digital data, and the implications of digital affordances and contexts for analyzing online content.

Required reading:

- a) Rogers, R. (2013). *Digital Methods*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Available online through Concordia library: <https://concordiauniversity.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1124342788>
 - Ch. 1 The end of the virtual: Digital methods, pp.19-38.
- b) Bainotti, L., Caliandro, A., Gandini, A. (2020). From archive cultures to ephemeral content, and back: Studying Instagram Stories with digital methods. *New Media & Society*, 23(12), 3656-3676.
- c) Southerton, C. (2020). TikTok Methods [YouTube]. *Breaking Methods Webinar Series*, UNSW Sydney. [18 minutes] <https://youtu.be/cts7BDyoH9E>

Explore digital media research tool databases:

- University of Amsterdam Digital Methods Initiative Tools database: <https://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ToolDatabase>
- TMU Social Media Lab Tools & Apps: <https://socialmedialab.ca/apps/>

Have a look at the YouTube Data Tools created by Bernard Rieder and used by Bainotti et al: <https://tools.digitalmethods.net/netvizz/youtube/>

Additional reading:

- a) Sandvig, C. & Hargittai, E. (2016). How to think about digital research. In E. Hargittai and C. Sandvig (Eds.), *Digital Research Confidential: The Secrets of Studying Behavior Online*, pp. 1-28. MIT Press. (ebook available through Concordia Library)
- b) Foucault Welles, B. (2016). Big data, big problems, big opportunities: Using internet log data to conduct social network analysis research. In E. Hargittai and C. Sandvig (Eds.), *Digital Research Confidential: The Secrets of Studying Behavior Online*, pp. 223-242. MIT Press.
- c) Dieter, M., Gerlitz, C., Helmond, A., Tkacz, N., van der Vlist, F. N., & Weltevrede, E. (2019). Multi-situated app studies: Methods and propositions. *Social Media + Society*, 5(2), 1-15.
- d) Highfield, T., & Leaver, T. (2016). Instagrammatics and digital methods: Studying visual social media, from selfies and GIFs to memes and emoji. *Communication and Research Practice*, 2(1), 47-62.

*****Exploratory Questions for Research Design due in Moodle on February 6*****

WEEK 5: February 9 – Ethnography and Observation

Ethnography can be understood as a way of deepening our understanding of cultures through a combination of methods, and observation is one of the key methods in ethnography. We will discuss the nuances of ethnography, looking at how it is conducted across physical and digital field sites. Then we will discuss and practice techniques of observation.

Required reading:

- a) Gaudet, S. & Robert, D. (2018). *A journey through qualitative research: From design to reporting*. Sage
 - "Ethnography" pp. 66-75
 - "Observation" pp. 79-92
- b) Hine, C. (2017). Ethnography and the Internet: Taking account of emerging technological landscapes. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 10(3), 315-329.

- c) Bejarano, C.A., Juárez, L.L., García, M.A.M., & Goldstein, D.M. (2019). Chapter 1: Colonial anthropology and its alternatives. *Decolonizing ethnography: Undocumented immigrants and new directions in social science*. Duke.

Additional reading:

- a) Ellis, C., Adams, T., & Bochner, A. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Historical Social Research*, 36(4), 273-290.
- b) Markham, A. (2017). Ethnography in the digital internet era: From fields to flows, descriptions to interventions. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, pp. 650-668. Sage.
- c) boyd, d. (2016). Making sense of teen life: Strategies for capturing ethnographic data in a networked era. In E. Hargittai and C. Sandvig (Eds.), *Digital Research Confidential: The Secrets of Studying Behavior Online*, pp. 79-102. MIT Press.
- d) Abidin, C. & de Seta, G. (2020). Special Issue: Doing digital ethnography: Private messages from the field. *Journal of Digital Social Research*, 2(1).
<https://jdsr.se/ojs/index.php/jdsr/issue/view/3>

A few examples of ethnographies:

- Cho, A. (2018). Default publicness: Queer youth of color, social media, and being outed by the machine. *New Media & Society*, 20(9), 3183-3200.
- Roberts, S. (2021). *Behind the screen: Content moderation in the shadows of social media*.
- Stuart, F. (2020). *Ballad of the bullet: Gangs, drill music, and the power of online infamy*. Princeton University Press.

WEEK 6: February 16 – Interviewing

We will discuss different types of interviews, from focus groups to one-on-one interviews, and the forms these can take (e.g. structured, semi-structured). We will get into the nitty gritty of developing an interview guide, creating effective questions, and practicing active listening. We will also explore the use of technology to conduct interviews and consider the interviewer's role in relation to a study's aims.

Required reading:

- a) Gaudet, S. & Robert, D. (2018). *A journey through qualitative research: From design to reporting*. Sage
- "Interviews" pp. 92-107.
- b) Kvale, S. (2007). Conducting an interview. *Doing interviews*. Sage. (Concordia ebook).
- c) brown, a.m. (2017). Tools for emergent strategy facilitation. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. AK Press, pp. 213-270.
- *adrienne marie brown is a social justice facilitator; read this section reflecting on what elements of her facilitation approaches could be insightful for running focus groups or interviews, especially in relation to more participatory and/or creative research projects; not all parts of this section may be applicable but consider how she positions the facilitator's role in comparison and contrast to the scholarly perception of the interviewer's role.*

Additional reading:

- a) Møller, K., & Robards, B. (2019). Walking through, going along and scrolling back: Ephemeral mobilities in digital ethnography. *Nordicom Review*, 40(s1), 95–109.

- <https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2019-0016>
- b) Brennen, B.S. (2021). Chapter 4: Focus groups. *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. Routledge.
 - c) Cook, K.E. (2012). Stigma and the interview encounter. In J.F. Gubrium, J.A. Holstein, A.B. Marvasti, & K.D. McKinney, *The Sage Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*. Sage.
 - d) Phillips, R., Ali, N., & Chambers, C. (2020). Critical collaborative storytelling: Making an animated film about halal dating. *Cultural Geographies*, 27(1), 37-54.
 - e) Oliffe, J.L., Kelly, M.T., Montaner, G.G., Yu Ko, & W.F. (2021). Zoom interviews: Benefits and concessions. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406921105352>

WEEK 7: February 23 – Individual Discussions

Book a session with the instructor during this week for a personalized discussion of your research. Further instructions will be posted to Moodle.

Mid-term break February 27-March 5: No class on March 2

*****Partial Research Proposal due in Moodle on March 6*****

WEEK 8: March 9 – Research-Creation

Dr. Kim Sawchuk will be joining us to share about her development and application of research-creation methods.

Required reading:

- a) Chapman, O. & Sawchuk, K. (2012). Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis, and 'Family Resemblances'. *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37(1), 5-26.
- b) Others TBD

Additional reading:

- c) Ratto, M. (2011). Critical making: Conceptual and material studies in technology and social life. *Information Society*, 27(4), 252–260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2011.583819>
- d) Loveless, N. (2019). Introduction. *How to Make Art at the End of the World*. Duke University Press. Available at: <https://www.dukeupress.edu/how-to-make-art-at-the-end-of-the-world>
- e) Powell, K. (2015). Breathing photography: Prosthetic encounters in research-creation. *Qualitative Inquiry* 21(6), 529-538.
- f) Vaughan, K. (2005). Pieced together: Collage as an artist's method for interdisciplinary research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 4(1), 27-52.

WEEK 9: March 16 – Textual and Discourse Analysis

This week we will discuss how to examine texts, broadly defined as “something that we make meaning from” (McKee, 2003). We will consider a range of approaches, from textual analysis of media to critical discourse analysis approaches hailing from linguistics as well as Foucauldian

theories of power. We will also consider how critical discourse analysis has been adapted to understand meaning-making in digital environments.

Required reading:

- a) McKee, A. (2003). *Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide*. Sage. (Concordia ebook)
 - Chapter 1: What is textual analysis?
 - Chapter 3: What's interpretation got to do with it?
 - Chapter 4: How do I know what's a likely interpretation?
 - Chapter 5: Can't we make it a bit more scientific?
- b) Gaudet, S. & Robert, D. (2018). *A journey through qualitative research: From design to reporting*. Sage.
 - "Discourse analysis" pp. 54-59
- c) Brock, A. (2018). Critical technocultural discourse analysis. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 1012-1030.

Additional reading:

- a) Fursich, E. (2009). In defense of textual analysis: Restoring a challenged method for journalism and media studies. *Journalism Studies* 10(2), 238-252.
- b) Wong, T.S-T. (2022). Crazy, rich, when Asian: Yellowface ambivalence and mockery in *Crazy Rich Asians*. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 15(1), 57-74.
- c) Wodak, R., & Matouschek, B. (1993). "We are dealing with people whose origins one can clearly tell just by looking": Critical discourse analysis and the study of neo-racism in contemporary Austria. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 225-248.
- d) Avdeeff, M.A. (2021). TikTok, Twitter, and platform-specific technocultural discourse in response to Taylor Swift's LGBTQ+ allyship in 'You Need to Calm Down'. *Contemporary Music Review*, 40(1), 78-98.
- e) Rose, G. (2016). Chapter 8 – Discourse analysis I: Text, intertextuality and context. *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials (4th edition)*, pp. 186-219. London: Sage.

WEEK 10: March 23 – Participatory Action Research and Social Justice Approaches

Participatory action research (PAR) seeks to bring about change by working *by* and *with* research participants. Such collaborations can take on many forms and they often involve working within networks, communities, and environments in which we are already situated. We will discuss how approaches from PAR can inform us more broadly about the nuances of situating ourselves and our identities in relation to the very real people who may be impacted by our research.

Required reading:

- a) Grimwood, B.S.R. (2022). Participatory action research: Democratizing knowledge for social justice. In C.W. Johnson and D.C. Perry (eds.), *Fostering social justice through qualitative inquiry: A methodological guide*, pp. 196-217. Routledge.
- b) Others TBD – speakers' suggestions to be added

Additional reading:

- c) Potts, K. L. and Brown, L. (2015). Becoming an Anti-Oppressive Researcher. In S. Strega and L. Brown (Eds.) *Research as Resistance, 2nd Edition: Revisiting Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches*, pp. 17-42. Canadian Scholars' Press.

- d) Renzi, A. (2020). Introduction: Co-researching Teletreet as a form of connective activism. *Hacked Transmissions: Technology and connective activism in Italy*. University of Minnesota Press, pp. 11-18.
- e) Costanza-Chock, S. (2020). *Design Justice. Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*. The MIT Press. (open access at MIT Press)
- f) Brown, K. & Nash, C.J. (2010). Queer methods and methodologies. In C.J. Nash and K. Browne (eds), *Queer methods and methodologies: Intersecting queer theories and social science research*, pp. 1-23. Routledge.

WEEK 11: March 30 – Archival Research

This week considers varying forms of archives online and off as well as how they accumulate, who compiles them, and how they can be accessed. We will discuss approaches to, and experiences of, conducting archival research. We will also explore the process of compiling and analyzing histories of websites and digital media.

Required reading:

- a) Rogers, R. (2019). Ch. 5 Website history: Screencast documentaries with the Internet Archive. *Doing digital methods*. London: Sage, pp. 87-106
- b) Hill, M.H. (1993). *Archival strategies and techniques*. Sage. (Concordia ebook)
 - Introduction
 - Archival Sedimentation
 - Structure, Control, and Technology
 - Getting Started: “Targets” and “Tool Kits”
 - Methodological Complexities
- c) McKinney, C. (2015). Body, sex, interface: Reckoning with images at the Lesbian Herstory Archives. *Radical History Review*, 122, 115-128.
 - Read McKinney’s piece and, if time allows, watch some of the documentary The Archivettes and imagine what it would have been like to be a researcher in that space: <https://concordiauniversity.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1272904156>

Additional reading:

- a) Ankerson, M. S. (2018). *Dot-com design: The rise of a usable, social, commercial web*. New York: NYU Press.
 - Introduction: Web histories and imagined futures, pp. 1-24
- b) Ankerson, M.S. (2016). Read/write the digital archive: Strategies for historical web research. In E. Hargittai and C. Sandvig (Eds.), *Digital Research Confidential: The Secrets of Studying Behavior Online*, pp. 29-54. MIT Press.
- c) Marchessault, J. (2020). Expo 67 and the missing archive, the anarchive, and the counter-archive. In M.K. Gagnon and L. Johnstone (eds), *In Search of Expo 67*. McGill-Queen’s University Press, pp. 194-203.
- d) Keilty, P. (2019). The Sexual Representation Collection at the University of Toronto. *Porn Studies*, 6(2), 272-277.
- e) Archive Counterarchive: <https://counterarchive.ca/>

WEEK 12: April 6 – Analysis: Coding, themes, and grounded theory

This week takes up a common approach to analyzing research materials (interviews, documents, etc.): qualitative coding. Many researchers use a systematic process to organize, label, and develop theories and/or themes from their materials. We will discuss grounded theory

as a longstanding approach to analysis and consider its evolution over time as well as discuss similar approaches like thematic analysis.

Required reading:

- a) Saldaña, J. (2021). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Sage.
 - Chapter 1: An introduction to codes and coding, pp. 1-24
 - Chapter 2: Fundamental coding methods and techniques, pp. 25-56
- b) Charmaz, K. (2008). Grounded theory as an emergent method. In. S.N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Handbook of Emergent Methods*, pp. 155-172). The Guilford Press.

Additional reading:

- a) Clarke, A.E., Friese, C., Washburn, R.S. (2018). *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the interpretive turn*. Sage. (Ch. 1, 2 and Part II).
- b) Kovach, M. (2021). Chapter 9: Analysing, interpreting, and meaning making. *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts* (2nd Ed). University of Toronto Press, pp. 201-225.
- c) Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage. (Ch. 1,3,4).
- d) Habib, S. & Hinojosa, R. (2015). Doing grounded theory with video-based research. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 10, 42-52.

WEEK 13: April 13 – Final Symposium

Exact timing of presentations to be determined in class. Submit your slides in Moodle by 9:00pm the night before.

Last day of classes April 17

*****Final Research Proposal due in Moodle on April 20*****