

COM 407 (40268): ADVANCED CRITICAL METHODS IN COMMUNICATION
iCourse
Course Syllabus | Summer 2021

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Course Description:

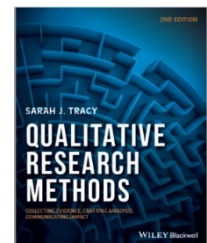
This course is a space where we bring together communication theory, qualitative research methods, and lived experience to examine the ways they inform and influence each other and our lives. Through reading about qualitative methodology and immersing into one's own in-depth project, this course offers experience in a variety of research approaches, accounting for issues of epistemology (ways of knowing), methodology (ways of examining), and representation (ways of reporting). We will examine how these skills attend to important research questions and can act as preparation for a variety of life, work, and activist experiences. The Tracy (2019) *Qualitative Research Methods* book will cover the nuts-and-bolts of qualitative research/analysis, while additional readings will introduce exemplar qualitative research in communication.

The main project the course revolves around involves planning, executing, analyzing, and presenting an original qualitative research project composed individually or collaboratively. Through this project, you will enact and reflect upon research design, negotiation of access, fieldwork, interviews, analysis of field texts, writing, and possible engagement in creative, virtual, and arts-based approaches. You will practice qualitative methods to produce a modified research proposal which will also include some preliminary findings and discussion.

The goal is that you will emerge from the class with first-hand research experience that informs your future interests and passions. The project is facilitated by a series of "stepping stone" assignments (practica) and peer feedback activities designed to help you progress through the research experience in an organized, supportive, informed, and meaningful way.

Course Resources:

- Tracy, S. J. (2019). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact, 2nd Ed.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.
- Exemplar articles and additional resources as listed on Canvas.
- The APA Style Manual (6th ed.) is **recommended** (Online APA resources are available)



Learning Objectives:

1. Design a qualitative research project that exemplifies your interests and passions
2. Understand the value and distinctions of common types of qualitative inquiry
3. Explore potential qualitative research foci
4. Apply theoretical and paradigmatic assumptions to inform qualitative research practice
5. Practice fieldwork and writing fieldnotes
6. Plan an interview guide and conduct and transcribe interviews
7. Summarize and analyze exemplar qualitative research studies that will inform one's own qualitative research
8. Examine and apply data analysis techniques such as coding and claim-making
9. Critically assess and provide recommendations on peers' work in a constructive manner
10. Synthesize, draft, and present activities into a culminating qualitative research project



Grading*: Letter grades are figured as to the following guidelines (out of 500 pts).

Outstanding – above expectations	Good – above average	Satisfactory – meets min. requirements	Unsatisfactory	Failing or academic dishonesty
A+ 490 - 500 pts 98-100%	B+ 435 – 449 pts 87-89%	C+ 385 - 399 pts 77-79%	D+ 335 – 349 67-69%	
A 465 – 489 pts 93-97%	B 415 – 434 pts 83-86%	C 365 – 384 pts 73-76%	D 315 – 334 pts 63-66%	F 299 pts and below 0-59%
A- 450 – 464 pts 90-92%	B- 400 – 414 pts 80-82%	C- 350 – 364 70-72%	D- 300 - 314 60-62%	F - academic dishonesty

Grade Breakdown

Assignments	Points
Peer Feedback Activities	50
Critical Reflection (3) – 3x25pts = 75pts	75
Final Research Insights (Proposal & Preliminary Findings)	100
Final Research Presentation	100
Practica (Practical Practice Activities and Assignments)	150
P1: Topic, Context, & Questions (Project Brainstorm)	10
P2: Final project Idea, Rationale, & Research Design	20
P3: Annotated Bib	20
P4: Fieldnotes	20
P5: Interview Guide + Pilot	20
P6: Interview Transcription & Analysis + Claim Making	20
P7: Intro, Purpose, Rationale, Literature Review, RQs, & Intended Contributions	20
P8: Drafting Methods & Findings	20
Discussion Board Activities	25
DB1: Introduce Yourself	5
DB2: Experience with Peer Feedback	10
DB3: Exemplar Qualitative Article	10
Total	/500

Assignment Descriptions

Peer Feedback Assignments (up to 50 points)

Throughout the course you will provide feedback to your peers on various practica assignments. Much of the best communication research is done collaboratively through sharing ideas and feedback while also providing a space of support. Students can ask questions, share ideas, work through problems, and more during this process. Peer feedback will be done on Canvas via a response to assignment and activity posts in the discussion board forum.

Critical Reflections (up to 75 points)

At three points during the course you will have the opportunity to demonstrate your understanding and integration of key theories, terminology, application, activities, and readings in relation to your work. Here, you will also be able to critically reflect on your project and process thus far.

Research Project Proposal, Preliminary Findings, & Presentation (up to 200 points)

Students will practice doing qualitative research individually or collaboratively in which they will plan, execute, analyze, and present insights from their qualitative research practice. It begins by students identifying a phenomenon that they want to create or bring into the world in the next five years that connects to communication literatures and theories. Examples might include, for instance, “discourse,” “forgiveness”,

“flourishing at work,” “strong social bonds,” “deep listening,” “social media expertise,” “intercultural connections,” “job interviewing skills,” “healthy relationships,” or something else.

You will then qualitatively explore this project and begin with questions such as:

1. What communication-related theories or literatures relate to this issue (preferably those you have familiarity with)?
2. In what field contexts are features of this issue evident (preferably ones that you have access to)? What types of people/interviewees would be able to shed light on this issue?
3. What can I learn through qualitative research (interviews, fieldwork, or arts-based approaches) about this issue and how to create a desired future in relation to this issue?



Each student will engage in 4+ research hours including participant observation and at least one interview. Students can collaborate with up to three other students to conduct their overall project assuming that research foci are interconnected (e.g., all students working together should focus on the same general topic and theoretical/literature areas). Students should make careful choices about collaboration, as all members of the team will receive the same grade for joint practica and the final project. Please make choices about collaboration by Week 2.

Final research proposal & insights (in APA style) should be about 10-12 pages *without* cover page, abstract, references or appendices. They should open with a title, abstract, and key words (~1 page *not included in page requirement*), intro, rationale, and clear purpose (~1-1.5 pages), a review of relevant literature and concepts (~2-3 pages), research questions (or other specific issues to be analyzed) (~½ page), and methods (~2 pages). The methods section should include an overview of participants and data collected (amounts, types), overview of context, and description of analysis. The heart—and most important part—of the paper are the findings and analysis of data where you tell a story of the preliminary findings and insights (~3-4 pages), as well as a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications, limitations, future directions, and a conclusion (~2 pages). Papers should include a reference page with three or more scholarly references per student. The paper appendices should include a detailed log of data collected (dates, time periods, locations, data type), interview guide(s), resulting transcripts, fieldnotes, and any other field records.

Practica + DB Posts (up to 150 + 25 = 175 points) - Practica and DB posts will provide mini building blocks toward your final project and will include activities as noted in course schedule below. **Most of them will be viewable by your fellow classmates to enable collaboration and feedback and should not include confidential details.**

Qualitative methods come in a variety of flavors and forms, with people responding in different ways to the “art” you create. Furthermore, significant learning of interpretive arts comes in the form of sampling other peoples’ craft and thoughtfully responding to it. Indeed, giving and receiving critique is something that is learned, not “natural.” As such, a primary part of this class is engaging in small “chunks” of a qualitative project, sharing your work with the class, reflecting on the method by which peers are practicing their craft, and engaging in transparent, critical, and constructive feedback to one another.

A strict focus on “doing it right” can hamper the creativity and energy that marks imaginative arts like qualitative methods. As such, practica are low-risk assignments with some graded credit/no credit and others marked down only when they are incomplete to the prompt or turned in late. All assigned practica must be completed within one week of their due date to earn a B- or higher in the course. Practica provide building blocks toward your final project. By completing them along the way, you can feel assured you are on the trajectory toward a valuable final project.

DB1: Introduce Yourself (5): Please introduce yourself. What do you like to be called? Where are you from? Why did you take this class? What do you do when you are not in school or not a student? What are your hobbies, interests, and/or passions? What do you spend time doing when you are not in class? What are your future goals? Or anything else you would like to share. Include a picture of yourself if you would like.

DB2. Experience with Peer Feedback (10): Read Berkun, S. (2009). #35 – How to give and receive criticism. Retrieved from <http://scottberkun.com/essays/35-how-to-give-and-receive-criticism/>. What are 3 main take-aways from this essay? What has been your experience with peer feedback? What are your hopes or concerns about sharing your in-process work with others? With transparent critique in this class? **This should be done individually.**

P1. Topic, Context, & Questions (Project Brainstorm) (10): Complete the project brainstorm activity in detail. If you are unfamiliar with communication theories or areas of literature that could guide your project then this is a time for you to revisit some communication theories and literature - either from previous courses or connected to problems/topics you are looking to explore. Be very specific and detailed. The more specific and detailed you are here, the better your project will take shape. Then craft a 1-minute elevator speech to present to the class to find spaces for collaboration. **This should be done individually.**

DB3. Exemplar Qualitative Article Sharing (10): – Each of you will choose one exemplar qualitative article to read (from the course website). You should choose an article that has the potential to inform your final project and become a source on your annotated bibliography. You will create an outline that discusses:

- Purpose of article
- Main theories or literatures that the article draws upon
- The primary methods of data collection and analysis
- Three key findings
- What “struck you” about the article?
- What makes this article credible, rigorous, or interesting?
- What are some questions that the article left you with, or how could the author(s) better fulfilled on the purpose or goal of the article?

You will share these outlines with the rest of the class via course discussion board. Please place your name and article citation in APA format on the top of your outline. **This should be done individually.**

P2. Final Project Idea & Rationale, & Research Design (20): First, in about 2-3 pages, and referencing material provided in Tracy Chapters 1, 2, and 3, describe the topic, context, and questions you plan to explore during the summer session. In doing so, note several sensitizing concepts from experience or research that will help you focus this research. Briefly describe your purpose (WHAT you are doing), your rationale (WHY it is important), the contribution you are making, and how you are approaching your research from a communication framework. Close this discussion with one or more research questions that could guide this study.

Next, as a bricoleur, what types of data could you piece together to answer your research questions? Name two potential field sites and/or group of participants for your study, and for each, discuss:

- How these data of interest are complementary with your theoretical, practical, or professional interests;
- How your background and experience affect the ability to gain access and meaningfully interact with these contexts or people; and
- Your plan of having access to these data by the close of week two.

Lastly, review Tracy, Chapters 4 & 5 on research design and exploratory methods. Discuss your plans for research design in about 1.5 pages. What kinds of data collection will you engage in over the summer session? With whom will you be participating (e.g., what is your sampling plan)? Craft a case of how these choices are appropriate (Chapter 5 can help with this), and how they make sense given your research questions and purposes? **This can be turned in collaboratively with group members.**

Provide an updated version of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.

P3. Annotated Bib (20): You should each identify, read, and annotate at least three to four scholarly sources that will support your final paper. Annotate these articles by providing the reference in APA style, summarizing the article, and writing three to five sentences about how the article informs the project at hand. Make sure that two of your chosen articles are “empirical qualitative models” that exemplify (at least in part) what you hope to accomplish in your own qualitative project (see the exemplar articles on course website). **If working**

collaboratively, each group member will find and review three to four scholarly articles that inform the same project. This assignment can be turned in collaboratively with group members.

Provide an updated version of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.

P4. Fieldnotes (20): Review Tracy, Chapter 6 and especially the tips on p. 173. Turn in 3-4 single-spaced typed pages of fieldnotes representing at least 2 hours of fieldwork. Use pseudonyms for confidential names or places. These should evidence incorporation of best practices for good field records (e.g., headings, time markings, thick description, dialogue and more as described in our course readings). **This should be done individually so you can practice participant observation and writing up informal and formal fieldnotes.**

Provide an updated rendition of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.

P5. Interview Guide & Pilot (20): Read Tracy, Chapter 7. 1 - In about 1.5 pages, identify: a) your ideal interviewees; b) the type (or types) of interviews you will engage in; and c) the stance(s) that you will take. 2 - Then write the actual queries and probes (in numbered order) for your interviews, annotating the guide by **identifying the types of questions asked** (aim for a mix and ensure you use demographic questions). 3 - Pilot the interview with the technology planned and note in a paragraph what you learned through piloting it. **This can be turned in collaboratively with group members and EACH group member should pilot the interview and write a paragraph about what they learned through piloting it.**

Provide an updated version of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.

P6. Interview Transcription & Analysis Codebook (20): Review Tracy, Chapter 9. After conducting and transcribing at least one interview, open code your data, first using first-level codes, and then second-level codes. Then develop a codebook that focuses in on 4-6 (individually) or 6-8 (collaboratively) primary codes that relate directly to your research focus (based on pilot and interview practice). Include the name of the code, its explanation, and a real or hypothetical example from the data. Identify different levels or types of codes. **Note: all members of the collaborative research team must conduct/transcribe at least one interview each, but the analysis codebook should be based on all the data analyzed together.**

Provide an updated rendition of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.

P7. Intro, Purpose, Rationale, Literature Review, RQs, & Intended Contributions (20): Based on your findings from your review of scholarly sources and in consideration with Tracy Chapter 4, write a 4-page modified research *proposal* in APA style including: 1) title, abstract, and key words; 2) introduction, purpose, and rationale; 3) literature review/conceptual framework (what do we already know about related issues from past literature and what theories helps explain the chosen phenomenon); 4) updated version of your guiding research questions; 5) intended contribution to the field of communication and your audience. **This can be turned in collaboratively with group members.**

P8. Drafting Your Methods and Findings (20) –Review Tracy Chapters 9, 10, Tips and Tools 4.3, Researcher's Notepad 12.3, and affiliated material about methods section. With your collaborators, write a rough draft of your paper's methods section, including a table or visual that shows details on data collection. Then draft your findings by indicating the theme or code, description of the code, and evidence of this theme or code in your data. Essentially you are taking the codebook and writing it up in narrative form to tell a story with your data.

This can be turned in collaboratively with group members.

Provide an updated rendition of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.

Note: The goal is to utilize all practica as building blocks for the next practica. Therefore, you can copy, paste, and edit any relevant previous practica into new practica assignments. Each of these practica are designed to give you practice doing qualitative research, while also drafting parts of your final project along the way.

Grading & Attendance

Due Dates, Late or Incomplete Work: Assignments will be marked down as much as 10% each day and will not be accepted more than 5 days past their due date (none will be accepted after the last day of class). Incompletes are discouraged and only available if you: 1) experience serious documented illness or emergency; 2) finish more than half the coursework, 3) negotiate incomplete before class end.

If you miss a due date because of an unavoidable emergency, notify Professor Razzante within 24 hours, following up with documentation / explanation.

Communication Procedures

Virtual Office Hours and Appointments: Office hours provide an opportunity for you to have one-on-one time with your Instructor to discuss issues and/or questions that you might have related to the course, your specific project, or advanced critical research methods generally. If you would like to meet virtually for office hours, please reach out to Professor Razzante (recommended: at least 24 hours ahead of your ideal meeting time). In order for Professor Razzante to help you get the most out of a meeting, come ready with your materials / questions. If you cannot make a scheduled appointment, notify in advance.

Contacting the Instructor: The information and teaching materials made available in the syllabus and on Canvas are designed to answer the vast majority of questions. Please consult them thoroughly before approaching Professor Razzante. Note that contacting the Instructor at the last moment does not shift your responsibility for completing an assignment. Also, do not expect a response ASAP simply because you waited until the last moment. Allow up to 48 hours for a response to any correspondence.

NOTE: When sending an email, you must include the following:

- subject line that includes COM407
- address the party (e.g., Dear Professor Razzante; Hi/Hello, Professor Razzante; etc.)
- sign your name in conclusion
- use professional, grammatically correct language and sentence structure

University & Class Policies & Procedures

Unique Academic Needs: Students with unique academic needs who would like to coordinate special accommodations should contact Professor Razzante in the first couple sessions to discuss options and document their needs with ASU's disability resource center (<https://eoss.asu.edu/drc>).

Academic Integrity: Students should understand ASU's policies for academic integrity, available here: <https://provost.asu.edu/index.php?q=academicintegrity>. Students are warned against cheating or plagiarizing on any assignment or exam. Such activity includes excessive "help" or "editing" on assignments from others (if in doubt, ask), copying, misrepresenting research hours / activity, not following exam instructions, and using past coursework, the Internet, the text, or other sources without proper citation. Students are responsible for knowing APA 6th edition style for citing outside sources.

Course content, including lectures, power-points and course website resources are copyrighted material and students may not sell notes taken during the conduct of the course (see ASU's "Commercial Note Taking Services" policy: <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd304-06.html>). Students in violation of any of these expectations will face disciplinary action which may include being suspended or expelled from the Course, College or University; given an XE; referred to Student Judicial Affairs; and/or having his/her name kept on file.

Instructor's Mandated Reporting of Sexual Violence and Discrimination: Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person shall be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic

support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at <http://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs/students>.

As a mandated reporter, I am obligated to report any information I become aware of regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence. ASU Counseling Services, <https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling>, is available if you wish discuss any concerns confidentially and privately.

Online Course Requirements

This is an online course. There are no face-to-face meetings. You can log into your course via your myASU portal. Please ensure you have an online presence, and let's work together to create a virtual classroom climate that is comfortable and inspiring for all.

Please expect to spend *at least* 16 hours each week preparing for and actively participating in this course. The course is divided into 6 modules. Each module consists of several course readings, interactive materials and assignments. To optimize your learning experience and cater to different learning styles, every module has been designed differently, and includes varied types of textual, audio-visual, interactive, and experiential learning tasks. This course is designed for students who already have basic experience with computers and the Internet. You are expected to have access to a reliable computing device with appropriate software, and reliable, high-speed internet access. This course requires a computer with Internet access.

Netiquette requirements

Each student is expected to conduct himself/herself in a professional manner during the class - taking full advantage of the learning opportunities available. This includes completing all online discussions and assignments, adhering to proper netiquette, and so on. Netiquette refers to a set of behaviors that are appropriate for online activity - especially with email and threaded discussions. The core rules of netiquette can be found at the [Netiquette website](#). Please read through these netiquette rules to ensure that you are familiar with what will be the expected online behavior for this course.

Canvas and Technology Help: Students can navigate directly to the course Canvas website via myASU or <http://canvas.asu.edu>. If you need technical assistance, it is available via the Canvas "Help" icon located on the left-hand navigation menu and phone and live chat support are available 24/7 at <http://contact.asu.edu>. ASU Tech Studios provide a variety of walk-in support services on all ASU campuses: <https://uto.asu.edu/services/campus-it-resources/techstudio>. To learn the basics, refer to the Student Guide: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701> and the Canvas Glossary: <http://links.asu.edu/student-canvas-glossary>.

Student Success

To be successful:

- check the course site daily
- read announcements
- read and respond to course email messages as needed
- complete assignments by the due dates specified
- communicate regularly with your instructor and peers
- create a study and/or assignment schedule to stay on track



Course Schedule (Subject to modification via an in-class or virtual course announcement)

Modules & Units	Readings & Course Learning Materials	Assignments & Peer Feedback – due at 11:59 p.m. unless otherwise noted	Practice & Recommended Activities
Module 1: 7/1 – 7/7 Unit 1 <i>Introduction and Overview of Qualitative Research</i>	-Review Syllabus -Berkun -Preface, Ch 1, 2, 3 (thru p. 61) - Videos	DB1: Introduce Yourself (Thurs. 7/1) DB2: Experience with Peer Feedback (Sun. 7/4) P1: Topic, Context, & Questions (Project Brainstorm) (Mon. 7/5) Peer Feedback on P1 (Tues. 7/6)	-Contact key participants & contexts -Begin research -Begin finding scholarly sources
Module 2: 7/8 – 7/14 Unit 2 <i>Access, Research Design, and Qualitative Exemplars</i> Unit 3 <i>Exploring the Scene and Intro to Fieldwork</i>	-Ch 4, 5, & 6 -Exemplar Qualitative Article -Videos	DB3: Exemplar Qual Article (Fri. 7/9) P2: Final Project Idea, Rationale, & Research Design (Mon. 7/12) Peer Feedback on P2 (Tues. 7/13) Critical Reflection #1 (Tues. 7/13)	-Conduct fieldwork & write raw notes (2hrs); Begin writing formal fieldnotes -Continue finding & reviewing sources for annotated bibliography (exemplar article counts as a source)
Module 3: 7/15 – 7/21 Unit 4 <i>Formal Fieldnotes, Interviewing Planning, Practice, and Transcription</i>	-Ch 7, 8, 3 (pp. 61-71) -Appendix. A (pp. 367-368) & B -Videos	P3: Annotated Bib (Fri. 7/16) P4: Fieldnotes (Sun. 7/18) P5: Interview Guide & Pilot Interview (Tues. 7/20)	-Finish writing up formal fieldnotes -Conduct interviews (pilot & formal) -Begin transcribing interviews
Module 4: 7/22 – 7/28 Unit 5 <i>Interview Transcription, Data Analysis, Qualitative Quality</i>	-Ch 9, 11 -Videos	Peer Feedback P5 (Wed. 7/21) P6: Interview Transcriptions & Analysis Codebook (Mon. 7/26) Peer Feedback P6 (Tues. 7/27) Critical Reflection #2 (Tues. 7/27)	-Finish interviews & interview transcriptions - Start and finish coding of interviews and field notes

Module 5: 7/29 – 8/4 Unit 6 <i>Proposal Writing, Theorizing, Drafting, Writing & Polishing</i> Unit 7 <i>Exiting and Completing</i>	- Ch 12, 13 & 14 - Videos	P7: Intro, Purpose, Rationale, RQs, & Intended Contributions (Fri. 7/30) Peer Feedback on P7 (Sun. 8/1) P8: Drafting Methods & Findings (Tues. 8/3) Critical Reflection #3 (Tues. 8/3)	-Begin writing final paper. Piece & weave together parts you already wrote and revise, edit, add, & delete accordingly
Module 6: 8/5 – 8/11 Unit 8 <i>Wrap-up and Sharing your research</i>		<i>Final Paper</i> (Mon. 8/9) <i>Final Presentations</i> (Tue. 8/10)	- Finalize project - Record and upload final project presentation