
Interpretive communication theory and research

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Course description

This course is an advanced interpretive theory and qualitative research methods of communication. It presents the most important interpretive theories and qualitative research methods in the field of communication. It provides students with an advanced understanding of qualitative inquiry in the social sciences, the prospect to learn how to design research that uses qualitative methodology and an opportunity to conduct fieldwork using tools for data collection such as participant observation, interviewing, focus group interviews and qualitative content analysis. It introduces students to techniques for analyzing qualitative data documented in field notes, interview transcripts or communication content. Finally, this course aims to familiarize students with the art of writing and presenting qualitative research.

ECTS Credits

4 ECTS

Specific competences

- Obtain knowledge of the interpretive theories of communication and their methodological foundations.
- Acquire the capacity for critical analysis of communication phenomena.
- Be able to apply theoretical and methodological knowledge to qualitative research.
- Be able to design qualitative research in communication.
- Understand the qualitative research process in its different phases.
- Be able to make proposals for qualitative communication research.
- Acquire general knowledge of qualitative research methods, including: ethnography, interviews, focus groups and content analysis.
- Understand and practice the writing and presentation of qualitative communication research.

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Learning outcomes

- Acquire an extensive knowledge of interpretive communication theory and qualitative communication research.
- Know how to place interpretive theory and qualitative research within the broader framework of communication theory and research.
- Critically examine and evaluate interpretive theories and communication research.
- Be able to put into practice the acquired knowledge in order to plan, design and execute qualitative communication research.
- Engage actively in discussions on case studies of qualitative theories and communication research.

Content

1. Introduction to qualitative research: scientific knowledge, social research and the scientific method.
2. Theoretical traditions in the interpretative perspective: symbolic interactionism, the Palo Alto Group, socio-constructionism and ethnomethodology.
3. The conduct of qualitative research in communication – main areas: organizational communication, health communication, strategic communication, applied communication and media and technology studies.
4. Designing and planning qualitative research: stages and concepts.
5. Qualitative research techniques for researching people: interviews, focus group research, ethnography and virtual ethnography.
6. Qualitative research techniques for researching communication content: qualitative content analysis.
7. Qualitative data analysis.
8. Writing and presenting qualitative research.

Method of presentation

In-class activities:

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- Lectures (20 hours)
- Debates and class discussion (5 hours)
- Practical exercises and activities (10 hours)
- Tutorials (5 hours)

Out-of-class activities:

- Personal study & work: (60 hours)

The teaching method includes traditional lectures with case-studies, debates and class discussion from previous readings, and practical activities.

Course assessment

The assessment includes the following elements:

- Qualitative communication research proposal (40% of final grade)
- 6 exercises (10% each) (60% of final grade)

Required reading

Baran, S. J., & Davis, D. K. (2014). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Berger, A. A. (2015). *Media and communication research methods: An introduction to qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. London: Sage.

Croucher, S. M. (2015). *Understanding Communication Theory: A Beginner's Guide*. New York: Routledge.

DeFleur, M. L. (2016). *Mass communication theories. Explaining origins, processes and effects*. New York: Routledge.

Flick, U. (Ed.) (2014). *The sage handbook of qualitative data analysis*. London: Sage.

Harding, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis from start to finish*. London: Sage.

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Silverman, D. (2016). *Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

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Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Recommended reading

Altheide, D. L., & Schneider, C. J. (2012). *Qualitative media analysis*. London: Sage.

Brennen, B. S. (2012). *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. New York: Routledge.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage.

Durham, M. G., & Kellner, D. (2006). *Media and cultural studies: Keywords*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Gibbs, G. R. (2008). *Analysing qualitative data*. London: Sage.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed.). Taylor and Francis e-Library.

Hennink, M. M. (2014). *Understanding focus groups*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hine, C. (2015). *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, embodied and everyday*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Sapleton, N. (Ed.). (2013). *Advancing research methods with new technologies*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.