course description

This course introduces students to some of the core methods of study design, data collection, and analysis in the study of writing. Students in this course will have the opportunity to design, perform and analyze data from a small-scale pilot study related to their area of interest.

This course, then, is divided into three units. In the first unit, we will review some of the core qualitative methodologies in writing studies, including (but not limited to) ethnography, participant observation, literacy history interviews, and discourse analysis. To this end, we will read work about these methodologies and work that takes up these methodologies including work by Theresa Lillis, Paul Prior, Shirley Brice Heath, Beverly Moss, John Duffy, James Gee, and others. Students will also present in groups on a methodology of their choice.

In the second unit, we will begin to develop our own research projects. In addition to reading some sample study proposals, we will read work on developing strong research questions, designing study methods, and aligning methods with those research questions, including work from Herrington and Curtis, Bob Broad, Deborah Brandt, Haas & Takayoshi, and Peter Smagorinsky. At the end of this unit, students will compose a proposal for their pilot study.

In the third unit, students will collect and analyze their data. We will read work on collecting and analyzing qualitative data including work from Kathy Charmaz, James Gee, and Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw. We will also practice grounded theory data analysis with sample qualitative data. At the end of this unit, students will report on their methods and findings and point toward directions for future study.
Course Assignments

More detailed assignment prompts will be distributed as the semester progresses. Grades are based on timely and thoughtful completion of assignments, attendance in class, engagement in class discussion and workshop, attentiveness to peer and instructor feedback, and the quality of the final project.

Methodology Presentations (10%)
In groups of 2-3, you will choose one qualitative research methodology you find particularly interesting and develop a handout and 20 minute presentation on this methodology. Your handout and presentation should include a brief description of the methodology, particular strengths and limitations, and at least one example of a published study which takes up this methodology.

Study Proposal (20%)
For this assignment, you will compose a study 5-7 page proposal for a particular audience. You may, for example, do a mock draft of a dissertation proposal or you might write a mock proposal for a dissertation fellowship or funding from a professional organization (CCC, NCTE, RSA, LRA etc.). The study you design for this project, however should be small, with no more than one or two observation/interview sessions. As such, you may choose a pilot study in the proposal, but hint at what a larger version of this project would look like. You should plan to meet with me sometime before the due date of the proposal to discuss the intersections between the course content and your own area of research.

Research Report (50%)
For this assignment, you’ll write up a 7-10 page report on your methods of data analysis and your findings. In this report, you’ll want to draw from Smagorinsky’s “The Methods Section as Conceptual Epicenter of Social Science Research Reports” in approaching writing about your data analysis and findings.

Personal Reflection (10%)
In this 3-5 page reflection, you should take time to think back on your study design, implementation, and analysis. What have you learned? What went well? What didn’t go so well? What would you do differently? How will apply what you’ve learned intros your future work?

Final Presentation (10%)
In the last weeks of class, we’ll share our studies and findings with the class. You should prepare a one-page handout and plan to speak for about 10 minutes.
Course Policies

- This seminar is meant to be a place where we can bring our experiences and perspectives to a community of scholars who regard difference and diversity as assets.

- Likewise, this seminar is meant to be a place where we can explore nascent ideas and theories in a constructive and supportive environment.

- We are all expected to come to class each week prepared to discuss the readings with open and inquiring minds.

- If you have a disability that may impact your work in this class, regardless of whether you have a McBurney visa, please get in touch with me so that we can arrange accommodations for you to fulfill course requirements. You may also want to consult the McBurney Center (mcburney.wisc.edu) to ensure you are receiving all the services to which you are entitled :)