

**Methods in Rhetoric and Composition**

**SU | English 566 | Spring 2016 | Th 7-9:45pm**

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or happily by appointment

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**DESCRIPTION**

*"What we [rhetoric and composition scholars] need . . . is room for multiple research methods, for flexible paradigms and theories that can help researchers adapt to changing needs of participants and the research community."*

--Gesa Kirsch "Ethics and Future of Composition"

*"What shall be the destiny of thought, since we know very well that it must be affirmative methods or nothing at all."*

--Alain Badiou, Ethics

*"Meditative thinking demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea, nor to run down a one-track course of ideas. Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all. (53)"*

--Martin Heidegger

*"The desire for simplicity has long inspired efforts to explain the world in terms of simple systems that function smoothly and simple laws that can be reduced to simple equations."*

--Mark C. Taylor

Methods can be simple or complex; they can close systems or explode systems. Method can lead to inventive thinking or a repetition of the same. For these reasons, we must understand method as a complex concept and tool in research, thinking, and the making of our collective world(s). This course introduces graduate students to varying methods, designs, and methods in rhetoric and composition. It focuses on ways of developing complex research problems and questions, designing studies, and conducting, reading and evaluating research. Yet it will also ask you to think creatively and critically about method. Some of the questions to be explored are:

- What are the major paradigms of research in rhetoric and composition?
- What kind of knowledge have those paradigms produced?
- What new paradigms are emerging?

- What is the nature of empirical research in the field?
- How are research problems and questions made operational and transformed into plans of action?
- What is the relationship between research problems, research design and method?
- What variety of scholarly reading and writing strategies operate within scholarship in rhetoric and composition?
- What is the relationship between these diverse literate practices and the multiple modes of inquiry that comprise the complex arena of research?
- What are the limitations of various research and scholarly methods?

Although this course provides an overview of various kinds of scholarship in the field (e.g., historical, feminist, theoretical, rhetorical), it focuses primarily on the broad, diverse range of empirical methods. Even if you never plan to conduct an empirical study, critical awareness of empirically grounded research in rhetoric and composition is crucial because so much scholarship in the field rests on claims derived from empirical work even when that work is not referenced. Further, regardless of your professional path, you may often be asked to justify curricula, programmatic or other kinds of decisions on empirical research studies; thus, you need to be able to read these reports critically and argue about them from an informed position.

## Course Goals:

- to help you develop a breadth of knowledge about scholarship in rhetoric and composition
- to help you become critical readers of research and scholar in the field
- to help you become familiar with some of the major research and scholarly genres in the field
- to help you gain experience in posing research questions and planning a research design
- to give you experience in writing a research grant proposal
- to contribute to your professionalization in rhetoric and composition

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## MATERIALS

### Required Texts

1. *Composition Research: Empirical Designs*, by Janice M. Lauer and J. William Asher (1988).
2. *What Writing Does and How it Does it: An Introduction to Analyzing Texts and Textual Practices*, by Charles Bazerman and Paul A. Prior (2003).
3. *Writing Studies Research in Practice: Methods and Methodologies*, Ed. by Lee Nickoson and Mary P. Sheridan (2012).
4. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) [optional]
5. *Digital Writing Research* Ed. by Heidi A. Mckee and Danielle Nicole Devoss (2007). [optional]

Additional reading, listening, and viewing materials will be linked from the online course schedule. You will be able to access the additional readings via myclasses. Please bring printed hard copies of all readings to class for discussion.

## POLICIES

# Grading

Your grade will be distributed as follows:

- 20% Thoughtful Reading & Thoughtful Participation
- 20% Blog Posts
- 30% Discussant Role
- 30% Final Project: Research question, Lit. Review & Proposal

Because this is a graduate-level course, these are not exact calculations, rather I'll assess your work holistically towards the end of the course based on these relative weights. We'll meet around mid-term to discuss the progress of the course and \*our\* assessment of your work.

# Attendance / Assignments

Please attend all class sessions and arrive on time. If you are unable to attend class, please let me know. You are allowed one absence without penalty; further absences (two or more) will result in a full letter grade deduction. When you are in class, I expect you to be engaged and fully present (no cell phones or other distractions). Failing to do so will result in an absence. This is a graduate class, so I expect you to act as engaged scholars and researchers.

Assignments are due by the start of class on the due date unless otherwise noted. The format for submitting assignments is noted on the course schedule . Please submit all assignments on time so I can respond to them in a timely manner. If you miss several classes and/or assignments by midterm, I will suggest that you withdraw from the course.

# Communication

I am happy to meet with you to discuss your work throughout the semester, either during my scheduled office hours or by appointment. [Email](#) is generally the best way to get in touch with me.

I will post changes to the schedule on the course website and send updates via email. Emails will be sent to your SU account. If you don't check your SU email regularly, you should set up forwarding to whatever email account you actually use.

# Academic Honesty

If you plagiarize, you will fail this course, and a report will be made to the Chair of the English Department.

# Disability Accommodations

If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this class, you may obtain adaptation recommendations from the [Student Disability Support Services](#)

# Other Services

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## COURSE Projects

[Participation](#) | [Discussant](#) | [Blog Posts](#) | [Final Project](#)

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## Participation, Presentations, and Deep Reading

I'm asking a lot of you in this course: critical engagement with readings and each other in person as well as online, plus a willingness to push your own research and scholarly self to a new place.

As a graduate-level course, this class depends on every student's active participation—through in-class and online discussions of the assigned texts, as well as presentations, thoughtful responses to each other and thoughtful engagement with course projects. You are expected to complete the required reading/listening/viewing/writing/production assignments before coming to class. You are further expected to come to class with thoughtful and quality things to say about the assigned texts and your classmate's comments.

## Discussant Role (2 class meetings)

Throughout the semester, each student will sign up for two "discussant" days. A discussant (sometimes present at conferences and academic functions) is someone who extends the ideas of the class and works to connect those ideas to others in the class and/or to current events. During the week that you are assigned to be a discussant for this course, you will: connect the week's readings to other themes that have developed in the course; extend the ideas from the readings into current events or academic trends; apply the ideas to our research and teaching practices; ask questions for further research and discussion. To do this, you will post to the course blog by the MONDAY BEFORE CLASS meets to seed discussion, then follow up with another post or comment by the FRIDAY AFTER CLASS meets to synthesize the ideas from our online and offline discussions. During our class meeting, you will give a 15 minute presentation on ideas from the readings and your connections to them. You are not responsible for leading the entire discussion, but I expect you to launch discussion and to be particularly active in discussion that week by probing your peers' comments with thoughtful questions. You are the local "expert" on the themes for that week. This role will begin the second week of class, and there will be one or two discussants per week.

## Blog Posts

Our course blog (<https://methodsrhetcomp.wordpress.com/>) is a site for discussion outside of class. It is public, but you are welcome to use a pseudonym on it. Each week, by the TUESDAY BEFORE CLASS, you will write a 300-500 word post wrestling with ideas relevant to the topics and readings in class that week. I encourage you to pull in outside resources in these posts: links, videos, articles, etc. that are relevant. Your post can either comment on the discussant's post of the week or be a separate post, asking your own questions about the issues for the week. Blog posts are due every week, the Tuesday before class, starting Feb 2 (no post over Spring Break). A wrap-up reflection on your blogging is due online May 10. You're encouraged to read and comment on other students' posts before coming to class.

## [Final Project](#): Research question, Review of Literature, & Research Project Proposal

The final project of this course will consist of 3 parts: the research question, the lit. review, and finally, the research proposal. They will be due in sequence at different times throughout the semester. These 3 parts are the components of a successful research endeavor (like an MA capstone, dissertation, or original research in the field). On the last day of class, you will give mini-presentations of your research proposal. Assignment details [here](#).

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## SCHEDULE

[JAN 29](#) | [FEB 5](#) | [12](#) | [19](#) | [26](#) | [MAR 5](#) | [12](#) | [19](#) | [26](#) | [APR 2](#) | [9](#) | [16](#) | [23](#) | [30](#) | [MAY 7](#) | [Final](#)

*All dates and assignments are tentative and subject to change with advance notice.*

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## 28 Jan | Researcher/self | Course Introduction

### COURSE INTRODUCTION

1. Treat sign-up
2. Discussant Sign-up

### READ:

1. [Forward pp vii-xvi and Introduction pp xix-xxxiv](#) in *Ethics and Representation* [on myclasses]
2. [Introduction pp 1-8 and Ch. 1 "Composition Research: Issues in Context"](#) pp 8-27 in *Composing Research* [on myclasses]

### In Class:

1. Discuss Excerpts

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## 4 Feb | Composition and Empirical designs

### READ:

1. Lauer and Asher, Introduction, Ch. 1, Ch. 2, & Ch. 3 pp 3-53

### DUE:

1. Discussant (Lisa) posts online Feb 1, presents Feb 4, synthesizes online Feb 5
2. Blog 1 | Feb 2--Class responds to discussant or makes own post in preparation for discussion

## **11 Feb | Quantitative Methods**

**READ:**

1. Lauer and Asher, Ch. 4, Ch. 5, & Ch. 7 pp 54-108 and 129-151

**DUE:**

1. Discussant (Mike) posts online Feb 8, presents Feb 11, synthesizes online Feb 12
2. Blog 2 | Feb 9: Respond to discussant or make own post for discussion
3. Treats: Lisa

## **18 Feb | Methods for Experimental Studies + Methods for Analyzing Texts**

**READ:**

1. Lauer and Asher, Ch. 8 and Ch. 9 pp 152-203
2. Begin Bazerman and Prior, Introduction and Ch. 1 pp 1-32

**DUE:**

1. Discussant (Mike) posts online Feb 15, presents Feb 18, synthesizes online Feb 19
2. Blog 3 | Feb 16: Respond to discussant or make own post for discussion
3. Treats: Dylan

## **25 Feb | Methods for analyzing texts: discourse analysis and intertextuality**

**READ:**

1. Bazerman and Prior, Ch. 2, Ch. 3, Ch. 4 and Ch. 5

**DUE:**

1. Discussant (Dylan) posts online Feb 22, presents Feb 25, synthesizes online Feb 26
2. Blog 4 | Feb 23: Respond to discussant or make own post for discussion
3. Treats: Prof. C

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### **3 Mar | Methods for analyzing texts: multiple media + tracing**

**READ:**

1. Bazerman and Prior, Ch. 6, Ch. 7, and Ch. 8 pp 123-237

**DUE:**

1. Discussant (Lisa) posts online Feb 29, presents Mar 3, synthesizes online Mar 4
2. Blog 5 | Mar 1: Respond to discussant or make own post for discussion
3. Treats: GERALYN

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### **10 Mar | Methods for analyzing textual practice: Rhetorical Analysis, speech acts, genres, and activity systems | 2 discussants this week**

**READ:**

1. Bazerman and Prior, Ch. 10, Ch. 11 pp 279-339
2. Shipka and Prior's "[Chronotopic Lamination: Tracing the Contours of Literate Activity](#)"
3. Syverson, Introduction and Ch. 1 pp 1-74

**DUE:**

1. Discussant 1 (Geraldyn) and 2 (Nick) post online Mar 7, presents Mar 10, synthesizes online Mar 11
2. Blog 6 | Mar 8: Respond to discussant or make own post for discussion
3. Treats: Dylan

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### **14 - 18 Mar | SPRING BREAK**

**DUE:**

1. Research question + Rationale [myclasses]
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## **24 Mar | Reimagining Traditional Research Practices|**

**READ:**

1. From *Writing Studies Research in Practice*, Forward, Introduction, Ch. 1-Ch.7 pp xi-97

**DUE:**

1. Discussant (Dylan) post online Mar 21, presents Mar 24, synthesizes online Mar 25
2. Blog 7 | Mar 22: Respond to discussant or make own post for discussion
3. Treats: Josh

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## **31 Mar | Revisioning Research in Composition**

**READ:**

1. From *Writing Studies Research in Practice*, Ch. 8-13 pp 101-182

**DUE:**

1. Discussant (Josh) post online Mar 28, presents Mar 31, synthesizes online April 1
2. Blog 8 | Mar 29: Respond to discussant or make own post for discussion
3. Treats: Lisa

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## **7 Apr | No class | Professor at CCCC's**

**DUE:**

1. Review of Literature[myclasses]

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## 14 Apr | Reconceptualizing Methodologies & Sites of Inquiry

### READ:

1. From *Writing Studies Research in Practice* Ch. 14-After Words pp 185-268

### DUE:

1. Discussant (Geralyn) post online April 11, presents April 14, synthesizes online April 15
2. Blog 9 | April 12: Respond to discussant or make own post for discussion
3. Treats: Nick

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## 21 Apr | Methods for Digital Writing Research

### READ:

1. From *Digital Writing Research Forward & Introduction* pp ix-24
2. Ch. 2 pp 49-69
3. Ch. 9 pp 185-200
4. Ch. 14 and Ch 19 pp 287-301 and 377-397

### DUE:

1. Discussant (Nick) post online April 18, presents April 21, synthesizes online April 22
2. Blog 10 | April 19: Respond to discussant or make own post for discussion
3. Treats: Josh

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## 28 April | The Problem with Methods

### READ:

1. From *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples Forward*, Introduction and Ch. 1-4 pp ix-98
2. Ch. 12 and Conclusion pp 217-234

### DUE:

1. Discussant (Josh) post online April 25, presents April 28, synthesizes online April 29
2. Blog 11 | April 26: Respond to discussant or make own post for discussion
3. Treats: Nick

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## **5 May | Project discussion and Worskhop**

**DUE:**

1. Rough Draft Research Proposals

## **12 May | Last Class | Final Project Presentations | Course Wrap-up**

**DUE:**

1. FINAL BLOG POST | May 10: A wrap-up reflection on your blogging
2. Presentations

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## **FINAL**

**Final Project - Due midnight, May 16th [to myclasses]**

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### **Resources**

- **WordPress**
- [Writing Posts](#)
- [Embedding SoundCloud tracks](#)
- [Embedding YouTube videos](#) / [Embedding Vimeo videos](#)

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