Aims
This course introduces students to media and cultural research techniques and methods. It prepares students to produce a substantial piece of research (4,000-5,000 words) in media and cultural studies. The course examines the historiographies of knowledge production and research in the field. It focuses on the histories, uses, and limitations of empirical research. It also engages students with problems around research ethics and politics. This course teaches students how to write research proposals; conduct research using empirical methods, including participant observation, interviews, focus groups, surveys, archival research, discourse and textual analysis. The course also prepares students for the methodological shifts and challenges within media studies that are brought about by the development of online and social media research. It invites students to critique and rethink methods of media research in light of Media Studies 2.0.

Intended Learning Outcome
In line with the program learning outcomes of acquiring the skills required for further academic writing, in terms of structuring and argumentation, as well as oral communication skills such as public speaking and debating, this course enables students to acquire the following skills:

1) Subject-specific skills:

Students taking this course will be able to:
- understand the traditions of communication research and why researchers approach their work in a “scientific” manner
- pursue research on an original research problem concerned with a well-defined aspect of media, culture and society;
- combine skills acquired in the practical areas of the programme with theoretical issues encountered in other taught courses in order to formulate and address a valid research question of their own devising;
- demonstrate the ability to present an extended piece of scholarly writing of a high academic standard
2) Core academic skills:

Students successfully completing this course will have:

- formulated a precise research question and considered the kinds of evidence required to answer it.
- reviewed and critically assessed the body of literature that is relevant to their research;
- designed and carried out their own research project, based on appropriate methods and evidence, relating it to the pre-existing work in the field.

3) Personal and key skills:

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- use their acquired knowledge of research methods and data gathering for future research;
- write good, clear research proposals when applying for research grants and PhD scholarships;
- confidently present their ideas and defend their arguments in public.

LEARNING/TEACHING METHODS

The course is based on weekly lectures (one hour) and seminars (two hours):

One-hour lectures: These sessions introduce theoretical topics and demonstrate opportunities to apply the topics to relevant cultural products. The lectures introduce the development of media and cultural studies as a discipline, highlighting its theoretical origins and its contributions to cultural and media critical analysis. Extra learning resources, including technical and multimedia tools such as Power Point presentations, short recordings and videos, notes, etc., will be provided for students’ use after the lectures.

Two-hour seminars: Seminar hours will focus on assigned readings and corresponding discussions on the significance of selected texts. The readings will be provided to the students before the start of the semester.

ASSIGNMENTS

Article critique: Students will be required to conduct a critique of peer-reviewed communication research articles. The article critique may focus on methodological and/or theoretical issues in research.

ASSESSMENT

- Final Exam (30%): A two-hour final exam will assess students’ grasp of the concepts discussed in the course.
- Research paper (50%): A 4000 word research examining a specific topic that is related to the study of media, culture and society. The paper must have a clear research question, and includes method, results/findings, and discussion sections.
• Article (20%): A 1000 words article based on the oral presentation at the symposium is weighted at 20% of the course’s overall mark.

Presentation of Your Research Papers
Students will present their proposals in both written and oral form. The symposium that is organised towards the end of the course will allow students to present their dissertation proposal in front of both their peers and members of staff.

Both the written and the oral proposals should include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working title</th>
<th>Describe the breadth and depth of the research, preferably using a title and subtitle.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Rationale</td>
<td>Describe the main issue, or problem, that you intend to examine in your dissertation and how your research builds on a body of existing knowledge. You should state whether you are going to build on existing work, fill a gap, or challenge conventional wisdoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims and Objectives</td>
<td>General statement on the intent and direction of the research – what you intend to research and discover. Be specific about the intended outcomes of the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>Describe the scope of your analysis, for example, the time frame, subject areas, regions and sample.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of the Literature</td>
<td>Briefly describe the key studies that provide background to your research topic. Indicate how the methodological and theoretical reasoning in the body of literature relevant to your topic relates to your own aims and objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>A concise justification for the methodological approach you intend to use and the type(s) of data collection and analytical techniques that will be used in your research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference List</td>
<td>Include all works cited in your proposal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


SYLLABUS PLAN

Week 1: Introduction: Researching Media, Culture and Society
This lecture will introduce students to the course and its different components. It will engage students with the politics of knowledge production in media and cultural studies. The lecture will also trace the relationship between quantitative and qualitative research and their origins in the enlightenment and its scientific, empiricist project.

Week 2: Choosing a research question
This lecture will invite students to think creatively about devising research questions. They will be encouraged to think about the implicatedness of the media in everyday life and ordinary human experience. They will also be prompted to think about different aspects of culture and how these can be objects of scientific enquiry.

Week 3: Background research: Literature review versus method
This lecture will teach students how to write a critical literature review. It will focus on aspects of writing, critique and contextualisation. This lecture will highlight the importance of choosing
an adequate research method. It will introduce students to the three main components of a methodology chapter: a) choosing and rationalising a method, b) justifying the use of the method, and c) rationalising the conduct of the research and reflecting on methodological limitations.

**Week 4: Theories and definitions; evaluating academic research.**
This lecture will present ways of critiquing and assessing academic research in media and cultural studies. Students will be asked to critique peer-reviewed research and assess the strengths of research, and discusses the validity and reliability of different research methods.

**Week 5: Quantitative and qualitative research strategies: an overview**
This lecture will introduce students to the debate and issues surrounding the use of quantitative and qualitative research inquiries. The history and context of the debate will be presented.

**Week 6: Qualitative research methods: participant observation, interviews and oral histories**
This lecture will introduce students to ethnography as a qualitative research method. It will focus on participant observation and oral histories. Examples will be given from different anthropological studies.

**Week 7: Qualitative research methods: interviews and focus groups**
In this class students will be introduced to the interview and the focus group as qualitative research methods. Examples will be given from different case studies to highlight the advantages and challenges of the two methods. The lecture will also provide students with a detailed description of how interviews and focus groups are conducted, from sampling to material/data analysis.

**Week 8: Qualitative research methods: textual analysis, discourse analysis**
This lecture will introduce students to two further qualitative methods: textual analysis and discourse analysis. It will discuss key aspects of semiotic analysis and give examples from important discourse analysis research.

**Week 9: Quantitative research methods: survey research**
This lecture will introduce students to the first major quantitative research method: survey questionnaire. The lecture will demonstrate, using examples from research, how questionnaires are constructed and surveys are conducted.

**Week 10: Quantitative research methods: content analysis**
This lecture will introduce students to the second major quantitative research method: content analysis. The lecture will demonstrate, using examples from research, how content analysis is conducted.

**Week 11: Working with Stats and NVIVO**
The lecture introduces some of the most popular research software: NVIVO and SPSS. The tutorials used will explain some of the basic techniques to conduct a descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS, and explain how to use NVIVO.

**Week 12: Online research methods**
In this class, students will be introduced to how traditional communication research methods are applied in online/digital environments. Students will use examples of online research to understand the ethical and legal challenges involved in researching virtual environments.

**Week 13: Working with children: ethical issues and methodological challenges**
Using examples from different methodological studies, this lecture will alert students to the challenges encountered by scholars working on projects involving children, culture and the media. It will introduce students to new and innovative methods for working with children. It will also shed light on ethical problems.

**Week 14: Symposium: oral presentations**
The symposium will give students the opportunity to discuss their research proposal in front on an audience.

**INDICATIVE READING LIST**


Brennan, B. (2012) *Qualitative research Methods for Media Studies, London: Routledge*


Other recommended reading


