ENGL 69723 Research Practices in Composition and Rhetoric
Fall 2011
T 2-4:50 Reed 123

Instructor: Carrie Leverenz
Office: Reed 126
Office Hours: M 2-3, T 11-12, Th 12:30-1:30
and by appointment
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Course Description
This course will provide an introduction to common research methods in composition (with some attention to research in rhetoric). Students will learn key terms and processes involved in doing research in composition/rhetoric and will gain hands-on experiences with several research methods, culminating in a preliminary research plan for an original research project.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students should be able to:
• identify and describe common research methods in composition and rhetoric
• articulate clear research questions and choose appropriate research methods for answering those questions
• plan a research project
• read research in composition and rhetoric and critically assess the methods employed and the arguments made based on that research

Professionalization Outcomes
• Students should be able to conduct research independently
• Students should be familiar with appropriate journals, professional organizations, conferences, and other outlets for scholarly work

Required Texts
McKee, Heidi A. and Danielle DeVoss, eds. Digital Writing Research: Technologies, Methodologies, and Ethical Issues, Hampton 2007
Additional reading posted to the course website

Course Requirements
Regular attendance and participation. In a small class, I count on everyone to participate during every class meeting, so please let me know if you will be unable to attend class. Assignments (see below) are due in class on the days specified. Extensions are granted only with 24 hours
prior permission. Incompletes are reserved for students in good standing who have unanticipated personal emergencies.

Journal Analysis  Choose one journal from the list of Rhet/Comp journals posted to the course website, read a year’s worth of issues and write a 1-2 page analysis explaining what you see as the approach to research reflected in that journal. What are the topics of research? What scholarly or research methods are authors using? How much of it is empirical? How would you describe the writing style? (5%)

Four Mini-Data Analyses/Reflections. For each unit of the course (working with people, working with texts, working with history, working with numbers), you’ll be asked to analyze a small set of data. Although each analysis will be tailored to the kind of data you’re working with, in general, you’ll be asked to 1) summarize course readings that help you think about how to approach this data 2) describe your initial impression 3) articulate potential research question(s) 4) identify related scholarship you’d consult 5) code a portion of the data or identify specific features that deserve further investigation and 6) hypothesize about possible conclusions that could be drawn from the data. The purpose of these analyses is to give you hands-on practice with a variety of research methods (about 5 pages double-spaced each). (15% each)

Report on research methods book or articles. Because this class has to cover a wide range of research methods, we can’t cover any one method in detail. To give you a chance to explore further a research method that you’re particularly interested in, you’ll be asked to 1) choose a research methods book or a collection of 5 articles, 2) write a 2-page critical response and 3) give a 15-minute presentation to the class. (10%)

Preliminary-Prospectus/Research Plan. For the final project in the class, you’ll compose a mini-prospectus for an original research project you’d like to conduct. The preliminary prospectus will include all the parts of a fuller prospectus but will be more exploratory. It will represent an informed description of a project you’d like to pursue, not one you are immediately ready to pursue (as with a formal prospectus). Drafts of the preliminary prospectus will be shared with the class and subsequently revised. About 10 pages. (25%)

Grading Policy  It is typical in graduate classes for students to be at various points in their program and thus have different knowledge bases and skills. Grading, therefore, is more individualized than based on rigid criteria applied objectively. Nevertheless, I do make distinctions like the following:

“A” range:
Students come to class regularly, are prepared, and engage thoughtfully in class discussion. Students provide thoughtful and detailed responses to peers’ work, when required. Oral presentations and class hand-outs are planned and executed with the benefit of the class in mind.

Student work shows evidence of pushing beyond the boundaries of prior knowledge. Projects completed are at the high end of page and sources ranges, indicating an effort to go beyond the minimum. Early drafts of projects demonstrate that students have pushed themselves to go as far as they can; revised work shows student taking into consideration recommendations for
revision and making substantive changes, where necessary. Typically, “A” range work demonstrates that students have used class resources and projects to do independent learning.

Writing is rhetorically appropriate, well researched, cogently argued, fully developed, effectively documented, and stylistically polished. Writing may also demonstrate risk-taking in genre, organization, or style.

“B” range:
Students do the work assigned and are prepared but may not always contribute fully to class discussions. Responses to peer work are completed but may not be as thoughtful or detailed as “A” range effort. Missing more than 1 class also affects one’s ability to contribute to the class.

Student work is completed thoughtfully but may not take students much beyond their initial knowledge base or skill level. Students have satisfactorily learned course material but may not demonstrate as much ability to apply what has been learned in the course or may not demonstrate as much independent learning as “A” range work.

Writing is rhetorically appropriate, has a clear argument, is adequately developed, and stylistically competent. Genre conventions are attended to.

Academic Misconduct
From the Graduate Student Handbook:

“Students may be dismissed from individual courses with a grade of "F" for lack of academic progress or for conduct deemed to be contrary to the professional or ethical standards of a field upon the recommendation of the responsible faculty member and the approval of the appropriate academic dean.

At such times as the student fails to meet acceptable standards of academic performance or has engaged in professional misconduct, at the discretion of the dean of the school/college in which the student is enrolled, the student may be (1) dismissed or suspended from a program of study and/or (2) expelled from the University.”

Professional ethics requires the careful crediting of others’ contributions to your work—both their words and ideas—and including other students’ contributions. We credit our sources, not only to honor other scholars’ contributions to our thinking, but also to establish for future scholars a chain of references that can be followed. It is considered academic misconduct to submit work as your own that includes the unattributed work of others, whether that work appears in print or online. Please consult with me if you are not sure how to give appropriate credit. It is also considered academic misconduct to resubmit work that you have done for credit in other courses.

Students with Disabilities
Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 016. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which
they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-6567.

Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator. Guidelines for documentation may be found at http://www.acs.tcu.edu/disability_documentation.asp.

Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible.

Additional Resources
We all get by with a little help from our friends. Here are some of your friends:

Instructor Conferences Please consider me a resource for help with your writing, reading, and general grad school matters. In addition to my regular office hours, I am available by appointment and check email regularly. Plan to meet with me at least once during the semester so we can talk your work individually.

The William L. Adams Center for Writing (http://www.wrt.tcu.edu/) offers professional one-to-one consultations for graduate student writers as well as undergraduates. Writing Centers are not just for writers who are struggling. They offer the chance to share your writing with supportive, experienced responders. Visit the website to schedule an appointment.

Study Groups I strongly recommend participation in study and/or writing groups as you move through graduate school and beyond. Find a few friends or classmates and agree to share your work on a regular basis. Bring food. Gossip. Then get down to work.

Tentative Calendar

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<td>T Sept 6</td>
<td>Denzin and Lincoln, “Introduction”; Blakeslee and Fleischer, Becoming a Writing Researcher. Formulating research questions. Planning a research project. IRB</td>
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Assign Working with People project.


Working with Texts


T Oct 11  Fall Break

T Oct 18  Digital Writing Research. Guest Speaker: Joddy Murray

Working with History

T Oct 25  Working with texts project due. Assign Working with History. Working in the Archives:

T Nov 1  Octologs 1 and 2 “The Politics of Historiography”: Enos,. "Recovering the Lost Art of Researching the History of Rhetoric." Guest speaker: Rich Enos,


Working with Numbers

T Nov 15  Working with history project due. Begin Working with Numbers. Excerpts from Reading Empirical Research Studies

T Nov 29  Working with numbers project due. TBA

T Dec 6  Last day of class. Share drafts of Preliminary Prospectus

T Dec 13  Final Preliminary Prospectus due (Finals Week)