Internet Research Methods in Composition

Overview: In this course, we will explore qualitative research methods and methodologies specifically designed for internet study, as well as review general methods and methodologies as applied to internet study. We will familiarize ourselves with theoretical perspectives about qualitative internet research in order to begin construction of our own research studies. We will ask several questions relevant to these research projects, including the following: What types of research inquiry are used in composition/rhetoric? In what ways can (or cannot) we use these methods when researching internet phenomena? What types of questions are answered by different research methodologies? In what ways are these research methodologies helpful for internet research? How does one design an effective empirical study for the internet?

Course Goals:

• To provide you with a breadth of knowledge of empirical methods and methodologies employed in composition
• To understand applications of empirical methods and methodologies for internet research
• To help you become critical readers of empirical internet research reports with respect to the design, implementation, and write-up of a study
• To give you experience posing research questions and asking questions directly relevant to internet research
• To plan, organize, and institute a research design about an object of inquiry on the internet, as well as hone your academic writing skills by writing up a research report
• To conceptualize qualitative internet research within the larger corpus of qualitative inquiry (i.e., avoiding seeing internet research as distinct from prior instantiations of research while also understanding its distinctions)

Requirements, Projects, and Assignments:

• Readings as per the schedule, including weekly discussion posts online (for use in class discussion). In these posts, I expect you to draw connections between the readings for that week, as well as readings from past weeks. For class participation, I expect you to arrive with five discussion questions for the rest of the class. These questions may also be posted with your online responses.
• Research breakdown of a chosen reading (three times). During the semester, I expect you to break down the methodology of a given study. These short papers (no more than 3 pages single spaced) should examine and assess each study on the basis of the following:
  ✓ Overall study design, including research questions and guiding goals
  ✓ The study’s organization and structure
  ✓ Data collections methods
  ✓ Data analysis strategies
• Internet project proposal in which you write out a short prospectus of a qualitative research project about an internet object of inquiry (5 pages maximum, single spaced).
  ✓ What object (people, places or things) does it suggest you need to study?
What kind of study does the question suggest (e.g., ethnography, case study, descriptive study, experimental; historical [oral or archival or both]; theoretical; discourse or textual analysis, etc.)?

What kinds of literature ought you to review? (for the proposal, I expect you to have found at least five relevant articles to your proposed project and written a preliminary literature review)

What data do you need to collect?

How will you analyze the data? (qualitative? quantitative? hermeneutics? etc.)

- **Qualitative internet research** project on a topic of your chosen that is driven by a question with guiding goals. These study, which should result in a manuscript of at least 20 pages, should include the following:
  - Research questions and guiding goals relevant to an internet object of inquiry
  - Problem or objective.
  - Review of Literature.
  - Research Question.
  - Procedures: Methods Section.
  - Subjects for study.
  - Data-Collection Methods
  - Data Analysis

**Weighting for Work for Grading:**

- Internet research project: 50%
- Internet project proposal: 20%
- Research breakdowns: 15% (5% each)
- General Participation, including online posting: 10%

**Required Texts:**


There are a number of articles available on e-reserves, electronically for download from the library, and my dropbox.
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Tentative Schedule and Readings:

Week 1: Introductions
- **Qualitative Inquiry**: introduction, chapter one, and chapter two (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis)

  *Part 1: Construction and Design of an Internet Study*

Week 2: Denaturalizing the Production of Knowledge(s)
- **Qualitative Inquiry**: chapter three, four, and five (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis)

Week 3: Case Studies and Critiquing Boundaries
- *The Art of Case Study Research* (Stake)
- Orgad, Shani. “From Online to Offline and Back: Moving from Online to Offline Relationship with Research Informants.” *(Virtual Methods)*

Week 4: Case Studies and the Difficulties of Internet Boundaries
- **On the Case**: chapters one and two (Dyson and Genishi)
- Hine, Christine. “How Can Qualitative Internet Researchers Define the Boundaries of Their Projects?” *(Internet Inquiry: Conversations About Method)*
- Kendall, Lori. “A Response to Christine Hine’s ‘Defining Project Boundaries.’” *(Internet Inquiry: Conversations About Method)*

  *Part 2: Data Collection*

Week 5: Clarifying the Collection Process and Updating Studies
- **On the Case**: chapters three and four (Dyson and Genishi)
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Week 6:
• Virtual Methods, part II: “Research Sites and Strategies,” pages 109-208 (various authors)

Part 3: Data Analysis

Week 7: The Fluidity of the Research and the Researcher
• On the Case; chapters five and six (Dyson and Genishi)

Week 8:
• Selections from Basics of Qualitative Research (Strauss and Corbin)

Week 9:
• Selections from Basics of Qualitative Research (Strauss and Corbin)
• Selections from Into the Blogosphere (available online)

Week 10:
• Selections from Basics of Qualitative Research (Strauss and Corbin)

Week 11: Coding as a Community
• Selections from Basics of Qualitative Research (Strauss and Corbin)
• Bring samples from research project (texts or transcribed interviews)

Part 4: Ethics and Institutional Review Boards

Week 12: The Velocity of Data
• The Ethics of Internet Research; chapters one, two, and three (McKee and Porter)
• Shared research findings
Week 13: Consent Forms and the Construction of Choice

- *The Ethics of Internet Research*; chapters four, five, and six (McKee and Porter)
- Share research findings