Syllabus COM 416 Fall 2024
Researching Organizational Culture
EL – Experiential Learning; WI - Writing Intensive
Mon/Wed 3:00-4:15, GCC 214

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Course Description: Introduces students to the use of qualitative methods of data collection aimed at understanding the relationship between organizational culture and communication. Methods include interviewing, field observations, and analysis of organizational websites and documents. Prerequisite: COM 103, COM 292, and junior status; or consent of instructor. The course counts as an elective for Organizational Communication majors and minors. The course is being taught as a Writing Intensive and Experiential Learning course.

This course meets departmental mission of preparing students for both the world of work in organizational contexts and graduate studies. The course covers topics such as: organizational culture, organizational ethnography, ethnographic methods (field observation, interviews, textual analysis), data collection, data analysis, org'l culture as it intersects with issues of diversity, leadership, adapting to change, crisis management, and ethics. Students learn how to conduct a mini-organizational ethnography. They negotiate access to an organization, and collect cultural information through field observations, interviews and textual analysis.

Required workbook: Driskill, G. W. (2019). *Organizational culture in action. A cultural analysis workbook (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Online readings on Canvas as assigned.

Other suggested materials:

Keyton, J. (2006). *Communication and organizational culture. A key to understanding work experiences*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Kunda, G. (2006). *Engineering culture: Control and commitment in a high-tech corporation*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
Lindlof, T. & Taylor, B. (2017). *Qualitative communication research methods* (4th ed). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
McAleese, D., Hargie, O., & Tourish, D. (2009). Auditing the corporate culture of a large manufacturing company. In O. Hargie and D. Tourish (Eds.) *Auditing organizational communication: A handbook of research, theory and practice* (pp. 323-345). New York: Routledge.
Owen, W. F. (1984). Interpretive themes in relational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *70*, 274–287.
Saldana, J. (2021). *Coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Tompkins, P. (2005). *Apollo, Challenger, Columbia: The decline of the space program. A study in organizational communication*. New York: Roxbury Press.

Tracy, S. (2013). *Qualitative Research Methods. Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
Ybema, S., Yanow, D, Wels, H., & Kamsteeg F. (Eds.) (2009). *Organizational ethnography: Studying the complexitities of everyday life*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Equipment needed:

- A 3 or 5-inch three-ring binder with dividers to organize your final project components.
- A working device with which to record 1-hour long semi-structured interviews. A good quality recording leads accurate transcriptions. Digital recorders, smart phones and laptops have been used successfully in the past.

Course Objectives: At the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand **what** organizational culture is and what it is not – for this purpose we will learn major concepts and theoretical models in the study of organizational culture. We will also read exemplars of research in this area.
2. Negotiate access to an organization (for profit or non-profit);
3. Understand **how** organizational culture can be studied – for this purpose we will learn and execute qualitative research methods of data collection that are typically used to research organizational culture: field observation, qualitative interviews, and textual analysis.
4. Analyze and synthesize qualitative data.
5. Construct a final research report about the dominant themes characterizing the org'l culture.

This is a **Writing Intensive** course - it requires more than 20 cumulative pages of writing, including two 300-word forum entries on readings, short homework assignments that feed into the final project (10 pts each), drafts of three different sections of the final research report to receive early feedback for 20 pts. each**. Writing Instruction** sessions are part of class meetings during the data analysis and writing up stage. Individual conferences with the instructor are encouraged.
This is also an **Experiential Learning** course, which means you will work in the field with a real organization and will complete at least 40 hrs of qualitative research. You are also strongly encouraged to report your findings in summary form back to the organization, either in the form of a brief executive summary, a PPT presentation, or a copy of your final paper (after taking measures to protect anonymity of participants).

COVID-19 SAFETY: If you have symptoms of COVID-19, first call your doctor and get tested for the virus. If you're diagnosed with COVID-19, please notify me, isolate yourself from others, monitor symptoms, seek treatment, and follow proper safety measures. As soon as you're not contagious, return to class. Being present makes a huge difference. If I get sick, the class will move online for the duration of my sickness.
If you have to miss class because of an illness, please provide a notification from Health Services for me to motivate your absence.

Attendance: I will take attendance each class session**.**
You are granted three (3) absences without penalty. After you have reached and exceeded 3 absences you will lose 5 points of your final grade for each class you miss. Documented cases of funerals, or family emergencies may be excused.
Employment is not an acceptable excuse to miss class. By signing up for this course I assume that you are willing and able to participate in what this class requires. Entering the classroom late is disruptive. You will be marked late if you are tardy and three marks of this kind will be treated the same as an absence.

You are always responsible for all material distributed. Also note, any/all materials are handed out (or e-mailed) only once. If you are not in class to receive them (or delete/lose them), you should obtain the information from a fellow classmate.

PROFESSIONALISM: (1) Should you need to miss a class or an appointment, I expect the same courtesy and sense of responsibility you would extend to an employer. This means prior notice and proper documentation. (2) Professionalism includes respecting others' opinions, not interrupting in class, being respectful to those who are speaking, and working together in a spirit of cooperation. (3) Bring the course textbook to each class session unless notified otherwise. (4) I consider disruptive classroom conduct to include leaving early, being chronically late, talking during class (unrelated to classroom activities), reading the newspaper or another text during class, answering cell phones during class, perusing social media, texting, damaging property, or studying for another class.

Deadlines: Submission of all assignments on time is important. All work in the communication field depends on deadlines being met. An assignment will be penalized **ten percent** of its point value for each day that it is late.

Submissions: All writing assignments must be in correct APA 7th edition style, typed, and double-spaced. As future professional communicators, you should strive to be flawless in all written communication. Writing performance and language usage proficiency will be reflected as part of your grade. Be consistent in style. Errors in grammar, spelling, style and usage will result in a loss of points.

POLICY REGARDING E-MAIL COMMUNICATION ABOUT GRADES:
As a matter of the Department of Communication policy to protect student privacy and in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, questions and concerns regarding grades must be presente d in person or in a written letter. Instructors will not respond to questions and concerns communicated thr ough e-mail or telephone calls regarding grades.

Plagiarism: The use of ChatGPT is not allowed in this course. Academic integrity is expected from all students and is an issue of particular importance for those preparing to enter the communication field where credibility and integrity are paramount. Academic dishonesty will be dealt with according to university policy but will result in a zero for the assignment and may result in failure of the course. The University clearly states that plagiarism is no less an offense than cheating. According to the University catalog, examples of plagiarism include repeating other's sentences as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own, and presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of a thesis as though it were your own. Students should review the Student Handbook, p. 24 regarding additional university policy regarding cheating and plagiarism.

Assignments:
In qualitative field research, researchers first engage in the "writing ***down***" stage (data collection stage) when raw data (e.g., field notes, interview transcripts) are recorded on paper, voice recorders, computers, or other devices. The second stage consists of analyzing the data and reducing it to a number of themes - the "writing ***up***" phase. You will experience all three stages in this course. These stages will require different skills from you: i.e., ability to write fast, to use short-hand writing, to listen well, to reflect, to connect similar cases, to organize data in themes/categories. For the writing up stage, you'll use skills such as creating an argument, organizing evidence, introducing quotes from other scholars and from participants, and applying Org Com concepts to your findings.

Field work: Besides in-class activities and homework, there will be out-of-class assignments that will require you to do field work such as conducting a minimum of 10 hours of **field observation** and **4-5 in-depth interviews** in the organizations of your choice. The field notes and the interview transcripts are part of the "writing down" stage. Your handwritten (or typed) field notes and your interview transcripts (typed, complete transcriptions) need to be filed in the project binder to be graded independently. Field notes are worth 100 pts. Interview transcripts are also worth 100 pts.

Homework/forum entries – (10 x 10 pts possible each, for a total of 100 pts) Our textbook authors have designed the homework exercises or "rehearsals" in such a way that, by doing the homework, you add to your final project. For example, the org'l website analysis (Rehearsal 4.1) will be part of the Findings section of your paper. You will be assigned short writing assignments to do at home that will have relevance for your final project. You will also write Canvas Discussion entries about articles read for the class. All work completed at home should be typed. Use APA style to cite your sources for **all** assignments.

Final project – See separate description and rubric; Paper 22-25 pages (100 pts) **+** Presentation (50 pts). I recommend scheduling conferences with the instructor (me) to talk through your data as you "write up" your findings and construct the project folder. We will also dedicate a number of classes to reviewing binders and to talking about data and the writing process. At the end of the semester, your project binder should include:

- CITI training certificate for student researchers
- Letters/key emails with host organization
- Organizational texts: webpages, articles about the organization's history; mission statement; official values statement
- Field observation notes
- Interview transcriptions and consent forms
- Final paper
- Final presentation

Below are writing instructions for the three drafts you will have to turn in. These suggestions meet the **Writing Intensive guidelines for Process and Assessment**. See also separate handout for the Final Paper with rubric:

I. **Draft Introduction** (20 pts possible) – the goal of this section is to situate the organization and your relationship / role in it. (2-3 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pts)
   A. Organizational History – national; local; any major events/changes in the industry/org in the last 20 years (cite org'l website, local media articles)
   B. Situate yourself in relationship with that organization and its history – e.g., have you or family member been an employee? What was your role? How long have you worked there?
   C. State the goal of your study – to characterize org'l culture of organization X; define org'l culture; elements of culture (cite Ch. 1, 2 from Driskill – use Rehearsals 1.1, 2.1)
   D. Preview all sections of the paper.

II. **Draft Methods section** (20 pts possible) - this section tells us **how** you studied the culture (not what you found). Do NOT report findings in this section (2 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pts).

   a. <u>Data Collection</u> – describe the goal/value of methodological triangulation; cite from Ch 8 Driskill and Brenton;

i. Interviews – number of interviews; description of sample (job role, years in org, etc), average length of interviews, shortest, longest; no. of pages of transcriptions (how many full vs partial transcriptions);
ii. Field observations – strategies of observation you used; no. of hours; no. of pages of field notes;
iii. Textual analysis – how many different types of documents; how many pages;
iv. If you engaged in **members-check** (summarizing findings to 1-2 participants and asking them to validate them), report that you've done it.

b. Data Analysis
   i. Thematic analysis – cite Owen, 1984; other sources you could cite: Lindlof & Taylor (2000); Strauss & Corbin (2002), Salvana (2008), Tracy (2013).
   ii. Critical linguistic analysis/ (or) Content analysis/ (or) Rhetorical analysis – cite Ch 5; explain your method of analyzing the texts, explain how this particular method of looking at the data served your purpose.

III. **Draft Findings** (20 pts possible) – This section reports **WHAT** you found about org'l culture. Preview/list all themes before you go into detail about each. Name the theme with your own words. Be creative; see if you can find emic words/quotes (produced by participants) to name your themes. Use parallel wording. Pull three examples/quotes from each data source (field observations, interviews, textual analysis) to provide evidence of themes. It is possible for some of these themes to have sub-themes. *Tip*: Write the Findings first, and then write/revise the Preview in your Introduction and the Summary in your Discussion & Conclusion section.

i. Theme 1
   1. Illustrative quote/field observation/textual analysis finding
   2. Illustrative quote/field observation/textual analysis finding
   3. Illustrative quote/field observation/textual analysis finding
ii. Theme 2
   1. Illustrative quote/ field observation/textual analysis finding
   2. Illustrative quote/field observation/textual analysis finding
   3. Illustrative quote/field observation/textual analysis finding
iii. Theme 3
   1. Illustrative quote/ field observation/textual analysis finding
   2. Illustrative quote/field observation/textual analysis finding
   3. Illustrative quote/field observation/textual analysis finding
iv. Theme 4
   1. Illustrative quote/ field observation/textual analysis finding
   2. Illustrative quote/field observation/textual analysis finding
   3. Illustrative quote/field observation/textual analysis finding

... (For the complete outline of the final paper, see the Final Paper assignment)

Find suggestions for the rest of the paper (Discussion; Limitations and Future Research) in the separate rubric document on Canvas.

Resources:

- Bradley University Writing Center – Library room 311; 677-3254
- Online Writing Lab at Purdue University
- APA style 7th

Grading:

Field observation notes	100
Interview transcripts	100
Organizational texts	50
Homework ("rehearsals") in Discussions	100
Draft Introduction & Org'l history	20
Draft Methods	20
Draft Findings	20
Final Paper	100
Final Presentation	50
Total	**560 pts.**

Note: This capstone research project lends itself well to be shared as an example of a capstone project in a job interview, as a paper or poster at a communication conference (NCA, ICA, OSCLG, CSCA) or our own Bradley University Student Expo in April. I highly encourage you to submit a brief *abstract* and a *poster* at the Bradley Student Research Expo and include your participation in your resume. I will happily mentor your submission and coach you through the process. Projects completed in COM 416 have won the President's Award, the Provost award, and the Dean's Award (5 times)!

Grading distribution	**Points**	
90% - 100% = A	504-560	High competence, overall excellent work
80% - 89% = B	448-503	Competence, overall good work
70% - 79% = C	392-447	Minimum competence, satisfactory work
60% - 69% = D	332-391	Limited or incomplete competence, pass
Below 60% = F	331 and below	Inadequate competence for credit

Note: The class schedule may be modified to accommodate visiting off-campus professionals or off-campus field trip activities. You may be required to attend some of these events. Ample notice will be given of any syllabus changes to allow for planning of your schedules.

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(This schedule may change; you will receive ample notifications of any changes)

Date	Monday	Wednesday	Chapter(s) / Assignments Due/ Research/writing steps
<u>Week 1</u> **Aug 21**		Course Introductions Ch 1 Introduction Assign Rehearsal 1.4 Assign CITI training – Register as Student researcher; complete **Human Research - Social and Behavioral Research – Basic Course** (due Aug 31)	Syllabus Read Ch 1 Get binder; CITI training **Draft access letter and start negotiating access with organization**
<u>Week 2</u> **Aug 26, 28**	**Part I: Cultural analysis planning** Ch 2 The value of a cultural analysis In-class activity – Rehearsal 2.1 Due: Rehearsal 1.4	**Part II Basic concepts** Ch 3 The concept of culture Assign Rehearsal 3.3 (the proposal) **CITI training certificate due**	Ch 2, 3 Negotiate access. **CITI training certificate due (Wed)**
<u>Week 3</u> **Sept 2, 4**	Ch 4 Cultural elements Assign Rehearsal 4.1 (tailor the activity to your org) **Read: S. Tracy - Correctional officers (2004)**	Ch 4 Cultural elements Activity Class Discussion of S. Tracy – Correctional officers (2004) **300 words reflection on Tracy (2004) due on Canvas**	Ch 4 **Study org'l history; sample org' texts (webpages, blogs, newspapers, official website); begin textual analysis**
<u>Week 4</u> **Sept 9, 11**	**Part III: Data collection and interpretation** Ch 5 Textual analysis **Due: Rehearsals 3.3 (send proposal to orgs after review)** Assign rehearsal 5.3	Ch 5 Textual analysis Writing instruction	**Ch 5** **Continue textual analysis;** **Start field observations**
<u>Week 5</u> **Sept 16, 18**	Ch 6 Observation **Discussion** **Org'l history draft due**	**Bring sample of organizational texts to class for collective discussion** **Go on a brief field observation** Due: Rehearsals 4.1 & 5.3	**- Continue textual analysis** **- Continue field observations** **- Schedule interviews** **- Org'l history draft**

			due (Mon)
<u>Week 6</u> **Sept 23, 25**	Ch 7 Interviews and Surveys Assign Hargie & Tourish (Canvas)	Discuss interview protocol Writing instruction	Ch 7 **Finish textual analysis** **Continue field obs** **Continue interviews (start transcribing)**
<u>Week 7</u> **Sept 30** **Oct 2**	Ch 7 Interviews and Surveys Practice conducting/recording an interview **300 words reflection on Hargie & Tourish due on Canvas**	Ch 7 Interviews as a Method Coding Activity Writing instruction	Ch 8 Continue all 3 methods Continue transcribing (it's time consuming, I know:)
<u>Week 8</u> **Oct 7, 9**	**FALL BREAK**	Ch 8 Data Interpretation Bring an interview transcript to class **Draft Methods due (1.5 p)**	**Methods section is due (1.5 p) Wed**
<u>Week 9</u> **Oct 14, 16**	Ch 8 Data Interpretation Discussion of findings Bring an interview transcript to class Writing instruction	Ch 8 Data Interpretation Bring all data to class (org'l texts, field notes, interview transcripts) Writing Instruction Mid-term evals	☺ Just breathe
<u>Week 10</u> **Oct 21, 23**	**Part IV Application** Ch 9 Diversity In-class: Rehearsal 9.2	Ch 9 Org. Culture and Diversity **Guest Speaker – Building culture in a new CAT plant in China**	Ch 9 **Write Findings**.
<u>Week 11</u> **Oct 28, 30**	Ch 10 Managing Change Final projects conversations Assign rehearsal 10.4	Ch 10 Managing Change **Rehearsal 10.4 due** **Draft Findings section due**	Ch 10 **Draft Findings section is due (Wed)** **Write findings.**
<u>Week 12</u> **Nov 4, 6**	Ch 11 Ethics Draw speaking order In class: Rehearsal 11.3	Ch 11 Ethics	Ch 11 ☺ Just keep writing…
<u>Week 13</u> **Nov 11, 13**	Ch 12 Symbolic Leadership Final papers conversations In-class: Rehearsal 12.3 **Drafts Final papers due for teacher and peer-review (print multiple copies)**	Ch 13 Organizational effectiveness Final touches – reviewing folders and papers; Peer & teacher feedback	**Drafts of final projects due Mon** Ch 12, 13

<u>Week 14</u> **Nov 18, 20**	3 presentations 20-25 min each	**Elena is at NCA** / Work day	Final papers are due Fri, December 6
<u>Week 15</u> **Nov 25, 27**	3 presentations 20-25 min each	**THANKSGIVING**	Final papers are due Fri, December 6
<u>Week 16</u> **Dec 2**	3 presentations 20-25 min each Course evaluations		Final papers are due Fri, December 6