

Spring 2020 MMC 9206: Digital Qualitative Research Methods

CRN: 44199

3 Credit Hours (i.e. expect 6 hours out of class work each week)

Friday 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm*

Online in GatherTown: <https://gather.town/app/YfYPLqKGauXiC1eq/Dr.%20Shaw's%20Space>

*You will spend the first hour completing and reviewing the weekly writing activity

Professor: Adrienne Shaw

Email: adrienne.shaw@temple.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 12-2pm or by appointment

Office hours will be held in GatherTown

Email/Slack hours: 10am-12pm M-F

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to the specific theoretical, methodological, ethical, and technical aspects of conducting qualitative research both on and in digital realms. It will draw on humanistic and social science approaches to studying the internet broadly, virtual worlds, social media, digital media and cultures, digital distribution technologies, etc. We will consider the challenges posed by digital technologies to traditional forms of textual analysis, ethnography, interviewing, and historical analysis. The course will cover studies of digital texts/objects, audiences, and producers, as well as consider how new technologies blur these traditional media and communication boundaries. In addition, we will look at how digital tools can aid analysis of qualitative data and offer new forms of research dissemination and publication.

The learning objectives of this course include:

1. Become familiar with the challenges posed by digital technologies to traditional qualitative research methods
2. Understand specific and complex ethical concerns in digital qualitative research
3. Be able to summarize and situate existing research in a specific domain of digital qualitative research
4. Plan a small-scale research project, including collecting and analyzing pilot data either on a digital communication process or via digital data collection tools/methods
5. Identify, become familiar with, and use digital analysis tools
6. Become familiar with digital publication, presentation, and archiving tools

Pre-requisites: MMC 9102 or equivalent with instructor permission.

Syllabus changes: This syllabus, its assignments, and related course calendars are subject to reasonable change and adaptation with the understanding that the changes shall not be punitive in nature and do not significantly interfere with the successful completion of course objectives. Any update to the course syllabus will be announced in class and posted on Canvas and Slack.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course technologies: As one of the goals of this course is to introduce you to disseminating and commenting on scholarship posted online, you will be required to **create and manage your own blog** (I recommend but do not require sites.temple.edu for a free WordPress site). In addition, as a class we will be using **Slack** to communicate. You are required to join our Slack team, where I will make announcements about the course, post relevant links, and answer any of your **non-personal** questions about course materials, assignments, etc. Slack is private to this course so please use the name you wish to be called you as your username. In addition, we will have our weekly meetings in **GatherTown**, which we spend some time learning how to use during our first session.

A note on grading: As this is an advanced graduate level course taught during an on-going global pandemic, I am adopting a version of a no-grades policy this semester. What this means: All assignments will be assessed as Complete, Partial, or Incomplete. Complete means you did what was asked of you. Partial is you missed a substantial portion of the assignment (and will only earn half the points allotted to it). Incomplete is you did not submit it on time or by an agreed upon extension. Regardless, on major assignments you will get written feedback from me. I will only “grade” in class participation following the rubric on Canvas (I’ll give you an assessment of your points there every ¼ of the semester).

At the end of the semester, I will have you review your overall point total and number of complete/partial/incomplete assignments and to comment on the quality of your work throughout the semester. You will then write a self-assessment of whether you felt you met the learning goals of the course. You will finish this assessment with a written justification of what you think your final grade should be, given [Temple’s grade scale](#): A (Excellent), B (Good), C (Fair), etc. I reserve the right to adjust this grade higher or lower if needed, but will offer a written explanation of why I felt the need to change the grade you gave yourself. For instance, if you only got partial and incompletes on every assignment but awarded yourself an "A," I would question whether that was in fact the level of grade you earned. Alternatively, if you completed every assignment and were active in the class, but gave yourself a "C", I would question the accuracy of your self-assessment.

Assignment Types:

All together these assignments are worth a total of **1000 points**. There is a GANTT chart at the end of this syllabus that shows what roughly, on weekly basis, you should plan to work on.

- 1. In class participation (100 points):** Active participation is crucial to your learning in this course. You earn your “regular participation” grade by coming to class regularly, taking notes, respectfully contributing to class discussions (demonstrating that you completed the readings), asking questions, engaging in classroom activities, and offering responses to the course materials. See attendance policy for how to make up engagement if you need to be absent.

2. **Admin task (50 points):** Setting up your Slack account and blog (50% of points).
Completing or submitting renewed IRB CITI certification (50% of points).
3. ***Weekly writing activities (220):** Most weeks, I will give you reflection writing activities for the following week's readings (11, each worth 20 points). The prompts will be posted to Slack after our Friday class. You will be given the first 30 minutes of our normal class time the following week to finalize these, but you should start earlier (these shouldn't take more than an hour). Post these to your blog, with a link posted to Slack by 1pm each Friday as a "reply" to the posted prompt. We will all take 30 minutes or so to skim everyone's posts before our regular class discussion (which will begin at 1:30pm).
4. **Annotated Bibliography (150 points):** This should be submitted as a literature review prep table following the format of the excel file template created by librarian Liz Johns (available on Canvas). You should use this template to create a Google Spreadsheet, which you will share with me by **January 29th**. The completed table is not due until **March 12**, but you should plan to work on it a little each week. The "study summary" and "source evaluation" tabs should be completed for at least 20-30 sources related to your primary research topic/area of interest. The "synthesis matrix" tab need not include every source you summarized and evaluated, only those that connect on identifiable themes.
5. **Pilot data collection (50 points) and analysis (50 points):** In short, you are to come up with an plan to collect some data for a digital qualitative project, collect it, and then we will workshop how to go about analyzing that data. By **February 12th** you should submit a paragraph to me summarizing your plan to collect this data, and I must approve the plan before you can move forward with it. **Important note:** The data and analysis you use on this assignment can only be included in future publications if it does not entail human subjects research (and thus if it would need IRB approval). If you wish to do a project that entails human subjects research that you wish to later publish, you must tell me when you submit your summary so I can apply for IRB approval for classroom projects. No data collected before IRB approval is granted can be used in publications.
6. **Final project:** You have **three options** based the conceptual stage of your research project, progression towards your degree, and own circumstances/resources. Each option has been designed to allow for the possibility of publication, or a jumping off point for future work. You are deciding which project best suits your goals and should know that they are comparable in efforts in relation to the other work you are doing this semester. For instance, although book reviews are shorter in length it will require more "new" work from you than Options 1 or 3 which build directly from previous assignments (also writing a short, considered review, is much harder than it sounds). Regardless of which option you choose, you will also submit a **draft (80 points)** before class on March 26 and prepare a short **video presentation (100 points)** for viewing in class on April 23 (we will go over recording tools later in the semester). **All Final Projects (200 points)** will be due April 30th on Canvas.

- a. **Option 1. Oxford Bibliography in Communication.** You can read more about these guides [here](#) and examples are available on Canvas. These are comprehensive annotated bibliographies that offer an overview of a field or area of study. They are particularly useful as you prepare for comprehensive exams, dissertation proposals, syllabi, etc. Usually they cover 50-150 sources, including key texts, journals, etc. and range from 5000-10,000 words. These have very specific guidelines that must be followed (details on Canvas). Should you identify a topic/area not already covered by an existing bibliography and do a particularly good job, the editor of the Oxford Bibliography in Communication has agreed to consider your bibliographies for review (this does not mean guaranteed publication!).
- b. **Option 2. Book review:** If you choose this option you must complete a publishable review on a manuscript released by a scholarly press in the last two years. **Clear your selection with me before you begin!** The book should be related to your primary research interests but clearly connect to the course content. Your review should also contextualize the books within topics discussed in the course and/or from your annotated bibliography. You are not required to submit the final review to an academic journal, but you will have to research what academic journals you *could* submit it to (minimum of 3) and what the process for that submission is (submit a description of these processes with the final review). If you think might submit the review to a specific journal, you should consider reaching out to them early on in the semester to request a review copy (if that is something they offer) or the press. Let me know if you have trouble finding a copy of a book.
- c. **Option 3. Draft original research paper:** This should be a digital qualitative research project, and you should discuss your plans for this project with me early on if this is the assignment you choose. You should plan on using your annotated bibliography, course materials, and pilot data/analysis, to draft a research paper. These should include an introduction, literature review, methods section, analysis/themes section, and conclusion. They should have a developing but identifiable argument. **If you are doing human subjects research, see the note above in the description of the “pilot data and analysis” assignment.**

Extra credit: There will be no extra credit offered in this course.

Schedule:

Weekly writing prompts will be posted to Slack the week before they are due.

All readings will be available on Canvas under files, a shared Dropbox, and/or via a free e-book copy through the Temple Library under "Course Reserves" on Canvas

Not required but recommended: [NVIVO podcast](#)

January 22: Introduction

DUE: CITI certification and blog/Slack account set up

DUE: Weekly Writing Assignment #1

- Markham, A. N. (2020). Qualitative inquiry in the digital age. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- kacrhisten. (2010, September 13). "How to gut a book," digital cultures/digital divides. Retrieved from: <https://amst522.wordpress.com/2010/09/13/how-to-gut-a-book-or-the-best-advice-my-grad-school-advisor-ever-gave-me/>
- Skim:
 - Chapter 7 on Writing Book Reviews from Stevens, D.S, and Brookfield, S.D. (2018) Write more, publish more, stress less! Sterling VA: Stylus Publishing.
 - Chapter 7 on Analyzing Qualitative Research Literature from Galvan, J.L. and Galvan, M.C. Writing Literature Reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences, 7th edition. New York: Routledge.
 - Book reviews for 1/29 book options

January 29: Classic Internet Research

Due: Weekly Writing Assignment #2

Due: Link to Google Spreadsheet for Annotated Bibliography

- Skim the book reviews provided for last week, and pick ONE of the books to SKIM using tips from "how to gut a book" (all are available as eBooks via Canvas Course Reserves or Dropbox*):
 - Nancy Baym's *Tune In, Log On: Soaps, fandom, and online community* (1999)
 - *John Edward Campbell's *Getting it On Online: Cyberspace, gay male sexuality, and embodied identity* (2004)
 - Jessie Daniel's *Cyber Racism: White supremacy online and the new attack on civil rights* (2009)
 - Lori Kendall's *Hanging Out in the Virtual Pub: Masculinities and relationships online* (2002)
 - *Theresa M. Senft's *Camgirls: Celebrity and community in the age of social networks* (2009)
 - T.L. Taylor's *Play between Worlds: Exploring Online Game Culture* (2006)

February 5: Ethics in Digital Contexts

Due: Weekly Writing Assignment #3

- Skim: [Association for Internet Researchers Ethical Guidelines \(all documents\)](#)
- Gajjala, R. (2002). An interrupted postcolonial/feminist cyberethnography: Complicity

and resistance in the “cyberfield”. *Feminist Media Studies*, 2(2), 177-193.

- Antunes D, Dhoest A. We are people and so are they: Shared intimacies and the ethics of digital ethnography in autism communities. *Research Ethics*. 2019;15(2):1-17. doi:10.1177/1747016118820498
- Massanari AL. Rethinking Research Ethics, Power, and the Risk of Visibility in the Era of the “Alt-Right” Gaze. *Social Media + Society*. April 2018. doi:10.1177/2056305118768302
- Suomela, T., Chee, F., Berendt, B., & Rockwell, G. (2019). Applying an Ethics of Care to Internet Research: Gamergate and Digital Humanities. *Digital Studies/le Champ Numérique*, 9(1), 4. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/dscn.302>
- Black, M.L. (2016). The World Wide Web as complex data set: Expanding the digital humanities into the twentieth century and beyond through internet research. *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 10(1): 95-109.

February 12: Digital Archives and Historical Internet Research

Due: Weekly Writing Assignment #4

Due: Plan for Pilot Data Collection (one paragraph via email)

Guest: Temple’s Special Collection Research Center Archivists

- Ankerson, M.S. (2015). Read/write the digital archive: strategies for historical web research. In Hargittai, E. and Sandvig, C. (eds.) *Digital Research Confidential: The secrets of studying behavior online* (p. 29-54). MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.
- Black, M.L. (2016). The World Wide Web as complex data set: Expanding the digital humanities into the twentieth century and beyond through internet research. *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 10(1): 95-109.
- Jarlbrink, J. and Snickars, P. (2017). Cultural heritage as digital noise: Nineteenth century newspapers in the digital archive. *Journal of Documentation* 73(6): 1228-1243. DOI 10.1108/JD-09-2016-0106
- Kaltman, E. (2020) Attending to the process and data: A research alignment for historical videogame production artifacts and their archives. *Romchip: a journal of game histories* 2(2). Retrieved from: <https://romchip.org/index.php/romchip-journal/article/view/117>

February 19: Looking at Digital Texts

Due: Weekly Writing Assignment #5

- Selections from Nakamura, L. (2008). *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis.
- Light, B., Burgess, J., and Duguay, S. (2018). The walkthrough method: An approach to the study of apps. *New Media and Society*, 20(3): 881-900.
- Brock, A. (2018). Critical technocultural discourse analysis. *New Media and Society*, 20(3): 1012-1030
- Bivens, R. (2017). The gender binary will not be deprogrammed: Ten years of coding gender on Facebook. *New Media and Society*, 19(6): 880-898.

February 26: Ethnography: Observing People in Digital Contexts

Due: Weekly Writing Assignment #6

- Chapters 2, 4, and 5 from Boellstorff, T., Nardi, B., Pearce, C. and Taylor, T.L. (2012). *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton: Oxford University Press.
- boyd, d. (2015). Making sense of teen life: strategies for capturing ethnographic data in a networked era. In Hargittai, E. and Sandvig, C. (eds.) *Digital Research Confidential: The secrets of studying behavior online* (p. 79-102). MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.
- Møller, K., & Robards, B. (2019). Walking through, going along and scrolling back: Ephemeral mobilities in digital ethnography. *Nordicom Review*, 40(s1), 95-109.

March 5: Talking to people—Interviews and Focus Groups Online

Due: Weekly Writing Assignment #7

- Chapter 6 from Boellstorff, T., Nardi, B., Pearce, C. and Taylor, T.L. (2012). *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton: Oxford University Press.
- Lobe B, Morgan D, Hoffman KA. Qualitative Data Collection in an Era of Social Distancing. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. January 2020. doi:10.1177/1609406920937875
- Seitz, S. (2016). Pixilated partnerships, overcoming obstacles in qualitative interviews via Skype: a research note. *Qualitative Research* 16(2): 229-235.
- Lobe B. (2017). Best Practices for Synchronous Online Focus Groups. In: Barbour R., Morgan D. (eds) *A New Era in Focus Group Research*. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58614-8_11

March 12: Using digital tools in qualitative research

Due: Weekly Writing Assignment #8

Due: Annotated Bibliography

Guest: Dr. Alex Wermer-Colan from Temple's Loretta C. Duckworth Scholar's Studio

- Mancosu, M., & Vegetti, F. (2020). What You Can Scrape and What Is Right to Scrape: A Proposal for a Tool to Collect Public Facebook Data. *Social Media + Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120940703>
- Brown, N.M., Mengershall, R., Black, M.L., Van Moer, M., Zerai, A., and Flynn, K. (2016). Mechanized Margin to Digitized Center: Black Feminism's Contributions to Combatting Erasure Within the Digital Humanities. *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 10(1): 110-125.
- Foucault Welles, B. (2015). Big data, big problems, big opportunities: using internet log data to conduct social network analysis research. In Hargittai, E. and Sandvig, C. (eds.) *Digital Research Confidential: The secrets of studying behavior online* (p. 223-242). MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.
- Review these sites:
 - <https://melaniewalsh.org/intro-ca-jupyter-book/>
 - <https://melaniewalsh.github.io/Intro-Cultural-Analytics/welcome.html>

March 19: GRF—no class, attendance at Klein Graduate Research Forum required during class time

March 26: Data analysis workshop—No readings

Due: Pilot data

Due: Draft final projects

April 2: Building Platforms to test theory

Due: Weekly Writing Assignment #9

Due: Pilot data analysis

Guest: Dr. Aymar Jean Christian, Northwestern University

- Explore OpenTV: <http://www.weareo.tv/>
- Christian, A. J., Day, F., Díaz, M., & Peterson-Salahuddin, C. (2020). Platforming Intersectionality: Networked Solidarity and the Limits of Corporate Social Media. *Social Media + Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120933301>
- Christian, A. J. (2019). Expanding production value: The culture and scale of television and new media. *Critical Studies in Television*, 14(2), 255–267. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749602019838882>
- Christian, A. J. (2018). Open TV: The Development Process. In Johnson, D. (Ed.). (2018). *From Networks to Netflix: A Guide to Changing Channels* (1st ed.) (pp. 309-318). Routledge. <https://doi-org.libproxy.temple.edu/10.4324/9781315658643>
- Lightly Skim: Christian, A.J. (2017) *Open TV: Innovation beyond Hollywood and the rise of web television*. NYU Press: New York.

April 9: Digital culture and memory

Due: Weekly Writing Assignment #10

Guest: Dr. Gail De Kosnik

- De Kosnik, A. (2016). *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom*. MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.
- Review website for Berkeley Center for New Media <http://bcnm.berkeley.edu/about>

April 16: Documentary filmmaking as research practice

Due: Weekly Writing Assignment #11

Guest: Dr. Katherine Sender, Cornell University

- Watch: Sender, K. [director] (2014). *Brand new you: Makeover television and the American dream* [digital copy]. Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation.
- Sender, K. (2012) *The Makeover: Reality Television and Reflexive Audiences*. New York: NYU Press.

April 23: Video Presentation of Final Projects and Final Discussion

Due: Video presentations

April 30: Final projects due 1pm

May 3: Self grading assessment due 11pm

Course Policies

There are more detailed descriptions of the late assignments, attendance, disabilities and accommodations, and inclusivity policy available on Canvas.

Attendance/Engagement: You are graded on engagement, not attendance. It is helpful but unnecessary to let me know if you will not make a given class. If you do attend, engage as best as you can via video, audio, or text-based chat (reminder there is an engagement rubric on Canvas). If you cannot make it to class on a given day, please be sure you still post your weekly writing response before the deadline and respond to at least four of your classmates' writing responses on Slack within 72-hours.

Inclusivity Policy: There is an inclusivity policy on Canvas. You will be asked to sign this at the start of the semester, committing yourself to promoting a safe and inclusive classroom for all students, guests, and instructors.

Recording policy: I will not be recording live discussions (unless required by DRS accommodations) except if the class decides it is necessary on a given day and everyone agrees to the recording. No one should be recorded without their expressed consent (including instructors), and no recordings should be shared beyond members of this class. As this is a discussion-based seminar there are no slides and no lectures.

Late Assignments: Due dates are in place to structure the course and to help all of us organize our time. Assignments are due when they are so that I can manage my various responsibilities and give you feedback in a reasonable amount of time. They are also spaced so that you can take lessons learned from one assignment and apply them to future assignments as well as the pedagogical goal of ensuring you are adequately understanding course material as we go along.

In this course, there are some assignments for which deadlines are more important than others as there is also a time after which an assignment can no longer meet its pedagogical goals. For that reason, the following assignments cannot be accepted late (submit what you have at the deadline): weekly writing responses; pilot data; draft final projects; and final video presentations. Also, if you add the course late you cannot go back and redo earlier assignments (there are few due before the add/drop deadline).

For the other assignments, I am willing to grant you a negotiable, no penalty extension if you contact me by the due date/time and let me know what date/time to plan on submitting the assignment (I will respond by my next email hours). When you email me simply explain that you are unable to meet the deadline (I do not need to know why) and propose an alternative due date and time you can submit it. I reserve the right to tell you if your requested extension is unreasonably long, but we will discuss this on a case by case basis. Unless I tell you otherwise, assume the new deadline you've proposed is acceptable, and remember I only respond to emails during my posted email hours. Note, however, that if you do not submit the assignment by the

scheduled deadline, I cannot guarantee you will get as detailed comments on your assignment. Given the flexibility I am offering you here, if you do not contact me and miss a deadline, I will not chase you down. I will just record the zero in Canvas. It is your responsibility to keep track of your deadlines and if you are confused by the structure of course due dates get in touch early on.

Accommodations: The need for accommodations should never get in the way of your access to education. I will do my best to work with any student who requires accommodations and to minimize the access barriers posed by course structures and materials. If you have any physical, cognitive, personal, or economic need for accommodations, email me at the start of the semester.

Different types of technology are differently accessible to people due to bodily, economic, and regional differences. Temple and Klein do have resources available for students who do not have access to computers at home, and you can start by contacting Temple's IT help folks to explore your options. I also recommend reaching out to your program's Graduate Office, if there are resources you need to complete your course work successfully that you are unsure of how to access. If a technology we are using is not accessible to you due to disability or access reasons, please let me know. I will work with you to remedy the situation and ensure that all students—with an array of embodiments and life circumstances—can participate fully in the course. Also, if you have a disability and will require accommodations—or if you aren't sure and think you might—you should also contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex.

In addition, however, there are many non-disability related reasons you may need accommodations. Maybe you have a chronic illness that means you will not always be able to join our live discussions. Perhaps you have children and the last-minute changes in childcare mean you would have to decide between engaging with class and watching your child. In these instances, I would prefer that you sign on to live meetings (but stay muted and/or with your camera off) so that even if you are not able to fully participate you can hear the discussion. If you do not have a stable internet connection, just sign back in as your signal improves (logging in and out is fine). If for some reason you really cannot make a live discussion but want to hear what is covered, I will consider recording the session ONLY if everyone else in the class agrees to it. There are many ways to contribute to class even if you cannot join the live discussions, and I have provided asynchronous participation options for those days that might be necessary for you.

Last but not least, any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the CARE Team in the Dean of Students Office for support. The CARE Team web address is careteam.temple.edu. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide additional resources.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's ideas, quotations, or research as your own. It is a form of theft. Examples of plagiarism: buying a paper written by someone else, quoting or summarizing an author's argument without correctly citing them, using ideas found on websites for your assignments without correctly citing them, "borrowing" a classmate's ideas for your own, writing without attribution, and using your own papers for more than one class without explicit consent of all instructors. **PLAGIARISM IS NOT TOLERATED AND WILL CONSTITUTE AN IMMEDIATE FAILURE OF THE ASSIGNMENT AND POSSIBLY THE COURSE.** Instances of plagiarism and/or cheating will be reported to the University Disciplinary Committee at my discretion. **The penalty structure is listed on the policies section of the Canvas site.**

Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities Policy: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are 2 inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty and Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02

Conduct Code: Individuals enrolled in this course are expected to conduct themselves in a civil and respectful manner, both toward their instructor and fellow students. In accordance with Temple's Student Conduct Code (Policy Number: 03.70.12), acts of misconduct for which students are subject to discipline include, but are not limited to, intentional interference with or disruption of class as well as behavior or conduct which poses a threat to the mental, emotional, or physical well-being of self or others. Non-compliance, interference or resistance to this code is considered actionable when a student fails to comply with a reasonable verbal or written instruction or direction given by a University employee (e.g. instructor, teaching assistant or staff member). In such cases of violation, it is the University employee's right and responsibility to seek out the appropriate sanctions (e.g. suspension, separation, probation, enrollment restrictions, or expulsion from the University) pursuant to the conduct code policies.

