

gmuengl502: Course Syllabus

Welcome to English 502

RESEARCH METHODS IN PROFESSIONAL WRITING AND RHETORIC

Spring 2011 | January 25, 2012 - May 2, 2011

Wednesday 7:20-10:00

Class Location: Innovation Hall 328

Instructor: Dr. Paul Michael Rogers

Office: Robinson Hall A 353D

Office Hours: Wednesdays from 5:00-7:00 or by appointment

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The best way to contact me is via email: progers2@gmu.edu

Goals of the Course

Develop knowledge in the following areas:

- The capacities and limitations of a variety of research methods: the questions they can help answer; the claims they authorize a researcher to make
- How rhetorical theory can function in a study to help focus a research question, guide analysis, and generate conclusions
- The function of existing research in a study
- The ethical issues that arise when you conduct research with human participants and when you use specific methodologies
- Disciplinary and professional debates concerning research methods in PWR
- The organizational contexts in which research in PWR is conducted

By the end of the course you should be able to

- Develop and refine researchable questions
- Select a methodology, a sample, and methods for collecting and analyzing data
- Use an array of observational and textual methods for researching writing
- Conduct ethical research
- Read research critically
- Write a research proposal
- Understand the process of research design

Textbook

What Writing Does and How It Does It: An Introduction to Analyzing Texts and Textual Practices.

by Prior, Paul A. & Bazerman, Charles.

Mawah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

ISBN-10: 0805838066;

ISBN-13: 978-0805838060

Assignments

Research proposal (25%)

The main assignment for the course will be a [research proposal](#) which you'll work on throughout the course.

[Research question draft 1](#) 5%

[Research review draft 1](#) 10%

Research matrix and narrative synthesis 10% (A research focused literature review)

Draft of research proposal 15%

Logic model 15%

Presentation of proposal 5%

Final research proposal 40%

Pilot study (25%)

To better prepare your research proposal you will be required to run a pilot study, as a means of helping you identify challenges, test research protocols and instruments, and to learn more about yourself as a researcher.

Data collection and analysis exercises (25%)

You'll do five methods exercises: three in collecting data and two in analyzing texts.

After using the assigned method, you'll then reflect on the process, noting 1) the surprises and problems you encountered, 2) how you'd adjust for these problems next time, 3) the capacities and limitations of this method, and 4) other advantages and disadvantages of using the method, as you experienced it.

Exercise 1: semi-structured interview

Exercise 2: think-aloud protocol or discourse-based interview

Exercise 3: focus group or survey

Exercise 4: textual analysis #1

Exercise 5: textual analysis #2

Online Postings (15%)

You will be required to post a 300-400 word response prior to class for one of the shared articles we will read each week.

One page article summaries (10%)

Twice during the semester you will be required to lead discussion of an article. You will prepare a one page handout for your colleagues summarizing and responding to the article. Sign ups for articles will take place during the first week of class.

During weeks in which you are leading a discussion and preparing a handout you will not be required to post a response to a shared reading.

CITI certification (pass/fail)

This web training is a corequisite for the course; it certifies you to conduct research with human subjects. To take the course, go to

<http://www.gmu.edu/research/ORSP/HumanTraining.html>

and click on the "Mandatory Training..." link, which downloads the instructions for accessing the CITI web site. The course is a series of about 7 modules, which you need not take all at once. The entire process takes about 2 - 3 hours.

Bring in a copy of your CITI certificate on the due date.

Grading

98-up A+

93-97 A

90-92 A-
88-89 B+
83-87 B
80-82 B-
78-79 C+
73-77 C

Other Information

Special Needs

The George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) <<http://ods.gmu.edu>> provides a wide array of academic support services to eligible students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability and would like to discuss accommodations, please contact them directly at 703-993-2474 or via email ods@gmu.edu, and/or talk to me as soon as possible.

Preparation, Attendance, and Pacing

This class meets weekly which means that a significant amount of the work for class will be occurring between classes. In between classes you should ...

Incomplete Grades

According to the university, the grade of "incomplete" is reserved for "exceptional cases, where an unanticipated event beyond ones control interferes with a student's completion of course requirements."

Course Grade

Grading is on a straight scale (no curve), with 90%, 80%, 70%, 60% guaranteeing A-, B-, C-, and D- respectively. Remember that attendance is required and missing class can result in a grade reduction or even a failing grade.