

Comm. 605: Qualitative Research in Communication

Spring 2026 Ball State University

Instructor: Dr. Katherine J. Denker

Course Objectives: This course introduces the student to the use of qualitative research methods in Communication Studies. Through course readings, discussion, and application, the student will become familiar with all stages of the qualitative research process and will be familiar with the strengths and limitations of qualitative research. Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Recognize and articulate the philosophical assumptions that inform qualitative research.
2. Recognize and articulate the types of questions that can and cannot be answered using qualitative research methods.
3. Recognize and articulate the strengths and limitations of qualitative research methods.
4. Recognize and articulate the steps involved in the planning and designing of a qualitative communication research project.
5. Use the research techniques of participant observation and in-depth interviewing.
6. Be able to analyze qualitative data.
7. Demonstrate strong writing, argument construction, and critical thinking skills.

Required Readings:

Tracy, S. J. (2020). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact* (2nd ed.). Wiley Blackwell.

Other course readings are available on the course Canvas page and are listed in suggested reading order on the course schedule. All readings – assigned text chapters and additional course readings– are to be read in preparation for class on the day the topic will be discussed. Plan to Print These-[Why](#)

My Assumptions of a Graduate Course: In a graduate course, I hold the same standards for you that I do for myself. We will be at all class meetings, unless an emergency occurs, which then we will be in contact with each other right away, or if a pressing conflict arises that we spoke to each other about in advance. We will produce edited, original work that meets professional standards. We will be ready each day to engage in a productive, thoughtful, and respectful conversation about the material at hand and we will all be attentive and make productive, thoughtful, and respectful contributions. If you violate these assumptions, it should be understood that you will either drop a letter grade or fail the class depending on the seriousness of the violations. It is also understood that if I violate these assumptions this should be represented in my teaching evaluations.

Your Responsibilities

Due Dates: - If you are having a problem that is impacting your ability to be successful in this course, please set up a time to meet with me as soon as possible.

-We all are managing multiple hats, so I want us to have some choice with the schedule. This is of course balanced against my need to keep up with grading and keep the projects on track. Unless noted- All assignments are due during that week listed on the syllabus. I would highly encourage you to have your work well in progress by class on Tuesday, that way you can get any final questions answered before submitting if need be. My weeks are starting Monday at 1am and go until Sunday at 11:59pm

- Late work will be penalized **10% off** for each business day late (up to 50% off) unless there has been communication and a documentable emergency. I understand that all of us will have off days, therefore everyone will have **eight late passes** days to use as they need throughout the semester. Each late pass day will erase one 10% late penalty for an assignment, so if you need to turn in a paper two days late, you can submit it with a note to use two of your late day passes. Late pass usage must be requested with the assignment submission and cannot be applied retroactively. Absolutely no late work will be accepted

after **April 30th** EOD, unless again extreme and documented emergency.

Communication and Feedback: I will try to return e-mail from your official BSU e-mail address within 24 hours during the business week. If you haven't heard from me within that timeframe, please feel free to nicely follow up. Sometimes e-mails become buried. I will make every effort to grade assignments within 5 business days of submission. End of semester assignments may take longer. Please feel free to e-mail me before that time if you have any questions or concerns about your performance in the course.

Academic Misconduct: The university states its philosophy this way: "Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the University community. Academic dishonesty by a student will not be tolerated, for it threatens the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge." Please read the full [policy](#). We as researcher cannot tolerate academic misconduct in our classes and individuals will be accountable for their choices, up to and including course failure.

Additionally, as comm scholars are hired for the quality of their work, research knowledge and their ability to write quality materials, AI can only be used in the brainstorming steps of your assignments and no AI writing (words that were created via a large language model) should not appear in documents submitted with your name on it. Though spelling and grammar checks are good tools, you should plan to have these tools help you identify issues, and then YOU need to be authoring the changes to your text. Additionally, students should cite AI as it was used in the project. Note that most journals also have clear guidelines on this and you do not want your work to be disqualified in advance of submissions. Violations of course AI expectations are an academic ethics issue.

Attendance Policy: In order for this class to be successful, your attendance and participation are imperative. We will conduct this class as a seminar, performing the roles of teachers and learners simultaneously. Your attendance and participation are important everyone's growth and development. The expectation in graduate school remains that students should attend every class meeting. However, I understand that conflicts arise. You are allowed one absence – save it for when you are ill, have car problems, or a family emergency. Each additional absence can result in the lowering of your final grade.

Canvas: This class utilizes canvas. It is your responsibility to check it for updates, schedule changes, assignments, and handouts. You will be responsible for printing documents off of Canvas. Most assignments will be submitted through canvas._

To support a learning experience that is responsive to the needs, interests, and pace of our class community, the course schedule may shift over the semester. The most current version of the schedule will always be available on Canvas. I encourage you to check Canvas regularly for updates and contact me if you have any questions

This syllabus is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances

University Policies

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse.

Disability Statement: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's [Disability Services](#) office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Freedom of Expression: In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State

Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's [Statement on Freedom of Expression](#), the [resources](#) on Ball State's Freedom of Expression webpage, and Ball State's [Beneficence Pledge](#).

Writing Center and Learning Center: All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center (in Robert Bell 295 during weekdays, Bracken Library First Floor West in the evenings, or online during any of our regularly scheduled hours) to get additional feedback on your writing. The Writing Center offers free planning, feedback, and accountability sessions (in person and online) to all students. To schedule a free appointment, go to <http://www.bsu.edu/writingcenter>. Online and in-person appointments are available; however, plan ahead because appointments book quickly!!

The Learning Center offers free Tutoring and Academic Coaching for many courses at Ball State. Students can make appointments for online (Zoom) or in-person (NQ 350) appointments. To make an appointment, visit my.bsu.edu and click on "Navigate" in the Additional Tools section, or just go directly to <https://bsu.navigate.eab.com>. Testing accommodations for students with disabilities are available for students who have received the appropriate documentation from Disability Services. Tests may be administered in the Learning Center. For more information about Learning Center programming, visit bsu.edu/learningcenter or call 765-285-1006. Follow us on Instagram: [BallStateLC](#).

The Speaking Center: The [Speaking Center](#) is a free resource available to all members of the BSU community wanting to improve their public speaking abilities. We offer personalized coaching designed to help you become a more confident and effective speaker. Our trained coaches provide constructive feedback and support throughout the entire speech preparation process, whether you are in the early stages of brainstorming ideas and organizing your thoughts, or you need to practice your delivery and refine your message. The Center is in the David Letterman Communication and Media Building, room 302. To schedule an appointment, please access us through your Navigate app or **use this [direct link to sign up for a time](#)**. Appointments are available both in person, on Zoom, and in virtual reality (VR) for those interested in practicing in an immersive speaking environment.

Title IX Ball State University is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment—including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone. The University offers support services and resources. For more information or to report an incident, please visit bsu.edu/titleix or contact the Title IX Coordinator at 765-285-1545 or at titleix@bsu.edu.

As your instructor, I am a mandatory reporter under the Title IX policy and required to report any information I receive about possible sexual harassment. This includes information shared in class discussions, assignments, or private conversations.

What happens after I report? The Title IX Coordinator will email the person who experienced sexual harassment (complainant) and invite them to schedule a meeting. If the complainant chooses to meet with the Title IX Coordinator,

Title IX Coordinator will offer supportive measures (e.g., counseling, extensions on deadlines, course-related adjustments, changes to work or class schedules, and/or referrals to campus offices), review the policy, and discuss options to move forward.

If a complaint is filed by the complainant or the University, an investigation will begin following University policy.

The Basic Needs Hub If you are having difficulty affording enough food, do not have a safe and reliable place to sleep, and/or experiencing an emergency or crisis, help is available through the [Basic Needs Hub](#). The Basic Needs Hub has information, resources, and provides individualized support to students. To talk

with a supportive staff member about your experience, receive one on one assistance, or learn more about resources, you can submit a [Basic Needs Assistance Form](#).

The Counseling Center The Ball State University Counseling Center offers free and confidential services to all students. The Counseling Center is located in Lucina Hall, Room 320. To schedule an appointment, you can contact us at 765-285-1736. Ball State also offers a 24/7 Crisis Line, which can be reached at 765-285-HOPE (4673). The Crisis Line is a mental health resource for those who are struggling with any mental health concerns, including thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide.

At the Ball State Counseling Center, we see students for a variety of reasons, some of which include homesickness, relationship concerns, anxiety, and depression. We assist students with getting connected to therapy at our Center as well as connecting students to self-help resources, other on-campus resources, and community-based resources. All Ball State students also have access to several on-demand, self-help resources through a variety of different platforms. All of these resources, including a direct link to our website, can be found [here](#).

Course & Instructor Evaluation: Students will have an opportunity to participate in formal assessment of this course and the instructor's teaching performance at the end of the semester through the university's online evaluation process.

General Policies:

1. The syllabus may be adjusted because of scheduling difficulties or instructional need. The student is responsible for all materials and instructions given in class or on/via Canvas.
2. All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Failure to complete an assignment can result in an "F" in the course.
3. I reserve the right to request technology be removed the course to enhance the classroom community. No electronic recording or broadcast of any portion of this class is permitted without written permission. Posting audio or video recordings of any portion of this class online is not permitted without permission.

Assignments and Grading

<i>Assignment (see below for descriptions)</i>	<i>Possible Points</i>
Practicing Qualitative Methods	280
Final Paper Project (total of 370 pts)	
Opt: Topic Idea List	15
Process Assignment 1	40
Process Assignment 2	40
Opt: Process Assignment 3	50
Opt: Peer Review	25
Final Paper	150
Opt: Revision Response Letter	25
Final Paper Presentation	25
Quizzes	100
Participation/Weekly Activities	75
Total Points	825

This class uses the typical scale: A 100% - 93%, A- 92% - 90%,
 B+ 89% - 87%, B 86% - 83%, B- 82% - 80%,
 C+ 79% - 77%, C 76% - 73%, C- 72% - 70%

Note about assignments: Most qualitative communication scholars primarily utilize APA style, so will we. Paper should be well organized and easy to read. It is important that you do not allow a negative first

impression of your papers to overshadow your ideas. Make sure that your paper is free of typographical, grammatical, and spelling errors (“Invention is only half of the writing process”- McCauliff, 2010?).

You must keep a copy of all papers you turn in so that if I were ever to need a second copy one would be available. Students who require assistance with their writing are strongly encouraged to seek help through the BSU’s Writing Center. Students who require assistance with other matters related to academic performance are encouraged to consult with staff at the university’s Learning Center.

For the purposes of course assessment and development, I may keep copies of your work for assessment purposes or for use as exemplars for future semesters. Please notify me if you would prefer that your work not be used as an exemplar in the future.

All Assignment details are available on canvas