MCMA 592: MASTER'S SEMINAR

Class meets: Tuesday, 3:15-5:45 p.m., Comm 1214
Professor: Dr. E. R. Meehan
Office: Comm 1056C
Office hours: 11-12 and 1-3 on Tuesday and Thursday
Office telephone: 618-453-2207 (Email is the best way to contact me.)
Email address: meehan@siu.edu
Mailbox: Comm 1048

Course description
This course orients students to graduate level research in mass communication and media arts. Topics covered include general research skills, literature reviews, and writing proposals for a thesis or capstone project.

Required Textbook

Course Policies:

Basics
Please refrain from: being late for class, leaving class early, eating in class, chewing gum, texting, telephoning, or any other activity that might interrupt our work. Bring your book and notes to class. Take notes in class: research shows that if you take notes by hand your grasp of the material is better than if you use a laptop. Research also shows that both modes of note-taking are superior to not taking notes if you want to understand and remember the material.

CF: http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/

Attendance
You are expected to attend every class unless you have a bona fide reason for missing class. If you miss class, email me and tell me why. To the next class, bring documentation that explains why you missed class. Bona fide reasons include such events as an illness, automobile accident, death in your family, court appearance, or participation in a SIU-sanctioned event as a representative of RTD, MCMA, or SIU. Documentation includes a form from your physician, copy of an accident report or summons, copy of the obituary, a letter from a relevant professor or administrator verifying your official status, etc.

Participation
Everyone is required to participate in our discussions. Participation is a repetitive, yet creative, process of give-and-take: a person asks a question or makes a
statement; another person responds; someone else chimes in with a comment or question; everyone gets involved. Discussions should be conversational. When you disagree with a colleague, explore that in a polite manner so that everyone can discuss the disagreement in intellectual terms. I realize that different cultures have different expectations about behavior based on social categories like age, gender, etc. In the tradition of European-North American-Latin American academics, the social category “smart scholar” includes being articulate and discussing ideas. Ergo, you need to be an equal participant in all of your graduate classes.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. In your written work, every word on the page should be a word that you selected. Don’t use a few of an author’s words. The structure of every sentence should be your structure. Don’t borrow an author’s sentence structure. Please consult me by email or during office hours if this is unclear. Plagiarized work earns no points.

**Accommodations**

Colleagues who require accommodations due to disability should inform me of this by e-mail before 5 p.m. on 12 September. Similarly, colleagues who require accommodations due to participation in a scholarly conference or similar event should send me an email with that information and presenting a justification for the absence before 5 p.m. on 12 September.

**Grades: Points Available by Category of Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points Available</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>15 points (15 class meetings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>60 points (6 in class discussions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentations</td>
<td>55 points (1st = 4 points; 2nd = 6; 3rd = 15; 4th = 30)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic biography</td>
<td>10 points (rewritten biography)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading reports</td>
<td>50 points (5 reading reports, each 10 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research designs</td>
<td>80 points (8 designs, each 10 points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initial proposal</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final proposal</td>
<td>100 points</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total =</strong></td>
<td>380 points</td>
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</tbody>
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A = 100-90%
B = 89-80%
C = 79-70%
D = 69-60%
F = 59 or lower

**Class Schedule**

Nota bene: this schedule is subject to change depending on events, students’ interests, developments in research, and breaking news.

**Week 1: August 23**

**Due today:** academic biography
**Oral presentation (first):** your biographies, research interests, and goals

**Reading Reports:** After class, check your email for the reading report form

**Week 2:** August 30

Today we meet in **Morris Library room 261 from 3:30-5:45** for a presentation by the humanities and fine arts librarian Sarah Prindle about doing research in mass communications and media arts. Consult the Morris Library website’s list of research guides prepared by Ms. Prindle for specific MCMA classes (including ours) as well as information on media archives and media industry statistics. This presentation is one key to success in MCMA 592.

**Week 3:** September 6

**Discussed today:** chapter 1 “Approaching Research” and chapter 15 “Beyond Methodology: the What, How, and Why of Researching Communications; positivism, interpretation, and critical realism as guidelines for research

**Exercise:** observation, data collection, and making tables

**Due today:** rewritten academic biography

**Second oral presentation next week:** a brief statement identifying the general topic that of your research proposal and offering one reason why the topic is important to the field of mass communication and media arts. (That’s your larger concern.)

**Research and reading report for next week:** search Morris Library for 1 scholarly article in mass communication and media arts that seems relevant to your larger concern. To determine relevance, read the article’s abstract. If the abstract makes the article seem pertinent, download, save, and read it. Write a reading report using the handout with the 10 questions. Use this article’s bibliography in all of the reading report assignments.

**Read for next week:** chapter 2 “Dealing with Documentation” and generate a research based on that chapter

**Week 4:** September 13

**Discussed today:** chapter 2 “Dealing with Documentation”

**Due today:** 1st reading report, 1st research design

**Second oral presentation:** brief statement identifying your proposal’s larger concern

**Exercises:** Security Exchange Commission 10-k reports; reading reports

**For next week:** 2nd reading report; read chapter 3 “Selecting and Sampling” and chapter 4 “Asking Questions,” generate a research 2nd and 3rd design

**Week 5:** September 20

**Discussed today:** chapter 3 and 4

**Due today:** 2nd reading report; 2nd and 3rd research designs

**Exercise:** survey research

**For next week:** prepare the 3rd reading report; read chapter 5 “Handling Numbers” and chapter 6 “Counting Contents,” generate 4th and 5th designs
Week 6:  September 27
**Discussed today:** chapters 5 and 6
**Due today:** 3rd reading report; 4th and 5th designs
**Exercise:** quantitative content analysis
**For next week:** 4th reading report; read chapter 7, “Analysing Texts,” chapter 8 “Unpacking the News,” and pages 315-329 “Talking Heads: Political Speech and Television.” Generate research designs for chapter 7 and for chapter 8 and pages 315-329 (6th design for chapter 7 and 7th design for chapter 8 and pages 315-329).
**For fun:** Practice the relevant techniques as you consume media.

Week 7:  October 4
**Discussed today:** chapters 7 and 8, pages 315-329
**Due today:** 4th reading report and 6th and 7th designs.
**Readings for next week:** despite the fact that we’re going into fall break, please read chapter 9 “Viewing the Image,” chapter 10 “Interpreting Images,” and make notes for yourself about what you want to remember and what you learned regarding analyzing visual media. Bring your notes and textbook to our class on October 18. We’ll do exercises in visual analysis.
**Research or written work for week:** your notes from the readings, which you will use in an exercise on October 18. Begin work on outlining your proposal.

Week 8:  October 8-11 FALL BREAK!

Week 9  October 18
**Discussed today:** chapters 9 and 10 “Interpreting Images”
**Exercise:** applying the readings to media texts
**Continue work on your proposal.**

**Research Proposal Workshop**
**Week 10:** October 25: brief oral presentation of initial proposal (3rd presentation)
**Week 11:** November 1  Workshop
**Week 12:** November 8  Workshop
**Week 13:** November 15 Workshop
**Week 14:** November 22 Workshop
**Thanksgiving break:** November 23-27
**Week 15:** November 29  Workshop

Week 16:  December 6
**Due today:** word-processed proposals at the beginning of class.
**Fourth oral presentation:** formal presentation of your proposal
Each person presents a 10-12 minute oral version of that proposal. Come to class early so we can start exactly on time. You may use notes or an outline but may neither read your proposal or a script nor use power-point.

Nota bene: MCMA 592 has no final exam.