

**English 552: Research Methods and Academic Writing in Rhetoric & Composition**  
**Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville**

Fall 2003

Monday 6:00-8:45

Peck Hall 2408

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**Course Description and Objectives**

English 552 should be one of the first courses students take in the Teaching of Writing MA specialization; therefore, this course plays an important role in your foundation in the TOW specialization. The objectives of this course are (1) to provide you with a breadth of knowledge of empirical methods and methodologies employed in rhetoric and composition; (2) to help you become critical readers of empirical research reports; (3) to give you experience posing research questions and planning a research design; (4) to hone your academic writing skills; and (5) to give you a sense of the disciplinary parameters of rhetoric and composition.

In terms of empirical research, the course will focus on these questions:

- What types of research inquiry are used in composition/rhetoric?
- What types of questions are answered by different research methodologies?
- How does one design an effective empirical study?
- Can one design and implement the “perfect” empirical study?

An overarching question for the semester is how do theory, pedagogy, and research mutually inform one another?

During the semester, we will begin by examining the types of research undertaken in the field beginning with traditional “library research,” historical research, and moving into empirical methodologies common in rhetoric and composition. We will then turn our attention to methodological issues such as subjects/participants, coding, validity/reliability, and ethics. We will also examine emerging empirical research methods including teacher research and feminist research. In addition to reading texts about research methods and methodologies, we will also read research reports as a way to understand how research is actually conducted using various methodological frames, to examine and problematize the decisions that researchers make, and to gain an understanding the genre of research reports.

Even if you think you will never conduct an empirical research study, this course is valuable because you will often be asked to justify curricular or programmatic decisions on empirical research studies; therefore, will need to be able to read these reports critically and argue about them knowledgeably.

Furthermore, to enhance your academic writing, you will be writing a great deal in the course. You will be receiving feedback about your writing from your peers as well as from me. I expect you to meet with me outside of class from time to time to talk about your writing.

As you can probably tell from the ambitious objectives of this course, we have a great deal to accomplish this semester. Let me lay it on the line: This course is demanding. The reading and writing requirements for this course are heavy, so you will need to keep up-to-date on each week’s assignment. Don’t fall behind. However, don’t be intimidated by the workload because students leave this course feeling very prepared for the other courses in the specialization. And even though many students enter the course in fear of spending fifteen weeks focusing on research methods, by the end of the semester, most expressed that they enjoyed the course more than they thought possible. I am always available to help you if you have questions about the material, your work in the course, or your writing. Don’t hesitate to contact me.

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## Texts & Learning Tools

### Required

- Lauer, Janice M. and J. William Asher. *Composition Research: Empirical Designs*. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. ISBN 0-19-504172-0
- Kirsch, Gesa and Patricia A. Sullivan, eds. *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1992. ISBN 0-8093-1727-3
- Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: MLA, 1998. ISBN 0-87352-699-6 **NOTE: This is the hardbound version for academic writing. The *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* is NOT an acceptable substitution.**

### Recommended

*All of these texts will be on reserve in the library. I may refer you to them as you work on your empirical design project.*

- Farris, Christine and Chris M. Anson, eds. *Under Construction: Working at the Intersections of Composition Theory, Research, and Practice*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 1998. As for other student matters: If you are new to SIUE, you will need to obtain (*NOTE: Although we will only read a few selections from this text, you will also use it in English 556, so I suggest you go ahead and get a copy now.*)
- Addison, Joanne and Sharon James McGee, eds. *Feminism and Empirical Research: Emerging Perspectives on Qualitative and Teacher Research*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999.

### Web Site

The Teaching of Writing web site has lots of useful information for you as a student, teacher, AND as a burgeoning scholar. Of particular use in the class would be the “Resources” page, which includes links to databases, bibliographies, and other on-line material. Bookmark the site and use it often. <[www.siue.edu/ENGLISH/TOW](http://www.siue.edu/ENGLISH/TOW)>

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## Assignments

**Daily Readings**—Come to class prepared to discuss each day’s assigned readings.

**Homework**—Occasionally, you will have homework assignments to prepare for class.

**Presentation of Readings**—Students will sign-up for days to lead discussion on particular research reports. When leading discussion, you need to provide a *brief written and oral* summary of the study, offer your thoughts about the research design’s strengths and weaknesses, and give your overall impression of the study. (Note: We’re not so much interested in learning about the results of the study per se—if you happen learn something useful along the way, all the better—but we want to focus our attention to the design, implementation, and write-up of the study.) Discussion leaders should strive to limit their presentation to five-seven minutes because all class members should have read the material. *Unnecessarily lengthy diatribes do not impress me.* **You will need to provide a written summary (handout) for each student**, and I will provide you with a sample.

**Journal Analysis**—You will conduct a brief review (3-4 pages) of one relevant journal in the field of composition/rhetoric. I will provide you with specific guidelines.

**Definition Discussions**—You will be assigned to a two or three person group that will work together to develop definitions of the terms that we are uncovering this semester. Your group will work via WebCT. Each group member should participate in your group’s discussion as you work toward a mutually agreed upon definition of terms. At some points during the semester, we will be working with several new terms so each group may be defining different terms. Each group will share their definitions with the rest of the class.

**Empirical Research Design Project Document**—Each student will design an empirical research project that answers specific research questions. (You will not be conducting the study this semester, only designing the project.) Use the design most appropriate to the questions you are asking. Your study can focus on any issue in

rhetoric, composition studies, or professional communication. You will need to provide a brief literature review, research questions, rationale, design, and justification. I will provide you with specific guidelines.

**Presentation on Empirical Research Design Project**—Each student will present orally his/her empirical research design project to the class. The presentation will be approximately 15 minutes in length and should include appropriate visuals (such as Power Point slides, overhead transparencies, handouts, etc.). I will provide you with specific guidelines.

**Annotated Bibliography**—As part of your empirical research design, you will create an annotated bibliography that focuses on both the theoretical and empirical readings employed in your project. You will provide a copy to each member of the class.

**Final Exam**—There will be a take-home final exam.

### Grading Proportions

Presentation of Readings & Homework	5%
Definitions	15%
Journal Analysis	15%
Empirical Research Design Project Document	25%
Presentation on Empirical Research Design Project	10%
Annotated Bibliography	20%
Final Exam	<u>10%</u>
	100%

### General Policies

- Because you are graduate students, I see little need to provide a lengthy discussion of my expectations: Be in class, be prepared, be responsible, and be on time—both in turning in assignments and in coming to class.
- Missing an evening class is the equivalent of missing an entire week, so every absence will have an impact on what you gain from the course. Obviously, try not to miss. If you must miss one class, I will give you an additional assignment to compensate for the absence. **Two or more absences will significantly impact your final grade in the course.**
- Do not submit any work that is not your own: doing so will necessitate my failing the work, failing you in the course, and perhaps reporting you to campus administrators.
- Be sure to paraphrase and quote material accurately as well as properly acknowledge and cite the work of others. If you have any questions about accurately paraphrasing, quoting, and acknowledging sources, do not hesitate to schedule an appointment with me. Improper citation practices will hurt your grade and could result in failing the assignment and/or course.
- You must complete all of the out-of-class written assignments as well as the oral presentation and final exam in order to pass this course.
- Written assignments are due at the beginning of class, unless otherwise specified.
- Demonstrating competent academic writing is a requirement of this course. Therefore, approach *every* writing task (emails, handouts, papers) as a representation of your academic (and professional) ability.
- Incompletes are my prerogative—not automatically assumed—and are reserved for unusual or extenuating circumstances. My experience is that incompletes do not help graduate students in the long run.

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## Course Schedule

**LA** = Lauer & Asher      **RR** = Readings on Reserve in Lovejoy Library      **UC**=Farris & Anson  
**KS** = Kirsch & Sullivan      **AM** = Addison & McGee (on reserve in Lovejoy Library)

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### Week 1—8/25

*Topic:* Introduction, Overview & R/C Disciplinarity

*Reading:* Lauer (“Dappled Discipline”) and Bridwell-Bowles (Distributed to students via mail two weeks before the first class meeting)

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### Week 2—9/1

Labor Day—University Closed

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### Week 3—9/8

*Topic:* Historical Methodology

*Reading:* **KS** Connors (Chap. 1); **RR** Berlin; Sutherland; Kates, R. Connors

*Assignment:* **Project topic idea due**

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### Week 4—9/15

*Topic:* Library Research Methods

*Readings:* **UC** Vanderberg (Chap. 2); **KS** Introduction (pp. 1-11)

*Activity:* Introduction to the SIUE library & on-line resources (Julia Hansen, Humanities Librarian) **Meet in Lovejoy Library—first floor**

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### Week 5—9/22

*Topic:* Case Studies & Reading Empirical Reports

*Reading:* **LA** Chapters 1 & 2; **KS** Kirsch (Chap. 11); **RR** Gage; Geertz

*Assignment:* **Journal analysis due**

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### Week 6—9/29

*Topic:* Case Studies

*Reading:* **KS** Newkirk (Chap. 6); **RR** Flower & Hayes; Haas; Arthanases & Heath (introduces ethnography)

*Homework due:* Interview questions

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### Week 7—10/6

*Topic:* Ethnography

*Reading:* **LA** Chap. 3; **KS** Moss (Chap. 7); **RR** Conway; Cushman; Bishop

*Assignment:* **Definition 1 due**

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**Week 8—10/13**

*Topic:* Coding, Data Analysis, Reliability, Validity, & Ethics

*Reading:* **KS** Grant-Davies (Chap. 12); **RR** Anderson; Lauer & Sullivan; **UC** MacDonald

*Activity:* Practice coding interview transcripts; SIUE IRB protocol activity

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**Week 9—10/20**

*Topic:* Surveys and Sampling

*Reading:* **LA** Chap. 4; **RR** Fowler; Kroll; Kreth; Brown

*Activity:* Designing survey questions

*Assignment:* **Draft of annotated bibliography due tonight for peer review**

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**Week 10—10/27**

*Topic:* Correlation and Quantitative Descriptive Studies

*Reading:* **LA** Chap. 5; **KS** Beach (Chap. 10) **RR** Ferris; Newell

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**Week 11—11/3**

*Topic:* Prediction and Classification Studies & Measurement & Validity and Reliability

*Reading:* **LA** Chaps. 6 & 7; **RR** Breland and Jones; Rubin and Raforth; U. Connor

*Assignment:* **Annotated Bibliography due**

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**Week 12—11/10**

*Topic:* Feminist Empirical Research

*Reading:* **KS** Sullivan (Chap. 2); **AM** Addison & McGee “Introduction;” Latta; **UC** Rose & Lauer; Chiang

*Assignment:* **Definition 2 due**

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**Week 13—11/17**

*Topic:* Teacher Research

*Reading:* **KS** Ray (Chap. 8) **RR** Ray; Fecho; **AM** Parvin

*Assignment:* *Draft of methods section of research proposal due for peer review*

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**Week of Nov. 24**

Thanksgiving Break—No Classes

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**Week 14—12/1**

*Topic:* Empirical Design Projects

*Assignment:* Student Presentations

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**Week 15—12/8**

*Topic:* Empirical Design Projects

*Assignment:* Student Presentations

*Assignment:* **Research proposal due**

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**Week 16—12/17**

**Take-home final exam due**