

ENGL 7806/8806: Research Method in Writing

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Course Description:

"Your research method is never neutral. From archives to algorithms, from ceremony to corpus, learn to choose methods that reveal, question, and change how we understand writing."

How do we study writing, how do different research methods affect our understanding of it, and how is AI revitalizing our research methods? This course introduces students to the broad field of research methodologies (methodological pluralism) essential for scholarly inquiry in writing studies, rhetoric, and composition. Designed to enhance both theoretical and practical knowledge, it offers an opportunity to examine various research traditions, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. It also covers newer approaches like digital/synthetic ethnography, iconographic tracking, grounded theory, corpus analysis, internet research ethics, feminist methodologies, indigenous methodologies (research as ceremony), data visualization, data epistemologies, and community-based research. By examining both established and new research paradigms, students will develop a sophisticated understanding of how knowledge is constructed, contested, and advanced in our field.

We will pay special attention to how research methods intersect with issues of power, identity, and access. Students are urged to consider how their research might advocate for social justice, inclusivity, positionality, and equity in writing. Whether you plan to pursue academic, pedagogical, or professional research, this course offers a dynamic, holistic introduction to the methods that will inform your work as a scholar of writing. It stresses the interrelated nature of theory, method, and practice, motivating students to position themselves within ongoing scholarly conversations. Participants will explore a range of approaches, including:

- Ethnographic and autoethnographic research methods
- Historical Research
- Qualitative and quantitative research methods
- Critical discourse analysis
- Data visualization and Coding
- Digital humanities approach to textual analysis
- Archival research methods
- Feminist and decolonial methodologies

Through hands-on projects, students will gain experience in research design, data collection, analysis, and the ethical considerations shaping methodological choices. The course helps students develop their own researcher identity and voice, culminating in a pilot study aligned with their scholarly interests.