

**LIBS 310 – Methods of Discovery**  
**Texas A&M University - Commerce – Spring Semester 2013**  
Online course

**Instructor:** Dr. Brad Klypchak

Office: 221 Literature and Languages Building

Email: [Brad.Klypchak@tamuc.edu](mailto:Brad.Klypchak@tamuc.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00-12:00 or by appointment

**Course Description:** Students will explore and apply a variety of investigative methodologies. Emphasis on the application of advanced reading, thinking, and writing skills to a team-based study of complex problems

**Course Objectives:**

1. to demonstrate an understanding of the core concepts of methodology within interdisciplinary scholarship and its theoretical underpinnings
2. to encounter and engage in readings from a variety of disciplines as a means for generating synthesis, analysis and communication of critical thought
3. to demonstrate the academic skill of researching a topic from multiple disciplinary fields
4. to communicate and dialogue on issues of the ways in which knowledge is discovered, assessed, valued, and shared

**Evaluation:**

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Participation/Discussion Board: | 15% |
| Introductory Group Project:     | 5%  |
| Reading Responses:              | 20% |
| Exams:                          | 25% |
| Annotated Bibliography Project: | 20% |
| Book Review Project:            | 15% |

**Grading System:**

A (exceptional) = 100 - 90%      B (good) = 89.99 - 80%      C (average) = 79.99 - 70%  
D (minimally sufficient) = 69.99 - 60%      F (failure) = <60%

I am a firm believer in the formal significance to these letter grades and their meaning. As much as it pains us on occasions to realize, exceptional is a difficult realm to achieve. As well, average is just that, average – on a level with one’s peers. Average does not equate to poor or a “bad” grade. In nearly all grading instances, I start from a mindset that one begins at middle “C” (75%), and one proves their relative ability to shift above, shift below, or remain at that mark with their work.

In a course such as this one, the ability to work with independence in a productive manner is crucially important. As well, the ability to problem solve and to synthesize are key skills to develop and demonstrate. I will continuously be looking for evidence that these qualities are being demonstrated and will evaluate with such considerations in mind.

## **Brief Assignment Explanations:**

**Discussion Board Participation:** Being online, the discussion board acts as the site for communication, discussion, and interactive engagement. Students are expected to dialogue in a way that provokes, clarifies, challenges, and enlightens the course community. In these online communications, the concepts of a liberal studies approach to higher education will be practiced and varying interpretations, particularly in relation to the course readings, will be shared. Additional considerations of a student's relative level of engagement and academic integrity will also be made across all aspects of the course including but not limited to completion and quality of tasks and assignments, communications, following instructions and guidelines, and accessing materials. As mentioned previously, all students will start as receiving 75% and will be assessed as to their respective demonstration of proficiency/deficiency/adequacy across the term.

**Exams:** During week 8 and week 16, a timed examination will be given to assess mastery of the course's core concepts. All topics build upon one another. As a result, exams are cumulative in nature. Exams will be essay-based and will consist of questions asking students to demonstrate their mastery of the course material through the critical thinking skills of analysis, reflection, evaluation, synthesis, and application.

**Reading Responses:** As a course objective is tied to engaging research methodologies in a variety of manners, there will be a considerable amount of reading involved. Every other week, a brief response paper will be required. In this forum, one is to display critical thought as stimulated by the essays assigned. One can express opinions, challenges, insights, revelations, confusions, and criticisms stemming not only from the singular articles but also their collective relationship to other articles assigned for the week or experienced in weeks prior.

**Introductory Group Project:** As a means to introduce methodological issues, students will collaboratively develop a methodological means to systematically engage a particular question of inquiry. Simultaneously, students will also critique the proposals of other groups in a critical, yet collegial manner.

**Annotated Bibliography Project:** Students will be required to utilize online databases for locating source material from academic journals on a topic which pertains to the student's particular interests. Specific attention will be given to discovering the variety of methodologies employed to ask and answer questions about the chosen topic.

**Book Review Project:** To further explore and reinforce the ideas of methodology as applied to the student's particular academic interests, students will locate, read, and review a text specifically focusing on how research is done within a specific disciplinary field.

## **Readings**

Course readings will be available via eCollege in the document sharing area. A full bibliography of the course readings will be available there as well.

All readings are to be completed during the respective week they are assigned, and their material will be needed on exams. On occasion, students may be asked to complete additional readings beyond those listed on the syllabus. Should this be the case, sufficient time and access to such readings will be provided.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

All coursework is to be an original work by the student and created specifically for fulfilling the requirements for this course. Plagiarism, cheating, or otherwise representing another's work or ideas as one's own without proper attribution will not be tolerated. It is the student's responsibility to:

1. research and write their own papers
2. give proper credit through documentation when using words or ideas of others
3. rely on their own knowledge when taking tests
4. refuse to give another student the opportunity to be dishonest

**Any act of academic dishonesty will result in the automatic failure of the course** and may be subject to further disciplinary action by the university.

## **"Attendance" policy, instructor's rights and expectations:**

All courses demand active participation and regular attendance. Online courses offer no exception. Rather, it is imperative that the student do all assigned work in a timely fashion. In particular, the benefits from discussion specifically depend on each student's respective preparation and distinctive contribution. Failure to do so hurts not only the individual student, but the collective community as a whole.

*Please be aware:* Full term online courses are typically already quite time-involved as the amount of outside library work, reading, and writing is greater than a traditional classroom course. One must stay active and disciplined with researching, writing, discussion board posting, and assignment management throughout the term.

All assignments are devised for the explicit purpose of offering educational benefit, be that academic growth, hands-on experience, development and display of critical thought, or expression of our academic selves. Coursework is to be completed as assigned and is to be turned in via the eCollege dropbox no later than the formal due date. Any work turned in after due dates will incur a penalty respective of its relative degree of tardiness (to a point of no credit whatsoever). Failing to complete assignments not only inhibits the immediate learning process but, again, ultimately hurts the overall learning community as discussion of the process and its results can prove insightful as well. Repeated failures to meet deadlines (be it missed assignments, periods of minimal progress, failure to engage with the course community, etc.) will constitute the equivalence of "absences" in a traditional classroom setting. Students with more than **three** "absences" may be dropped from the course. For additional information, see the *Student's Guide Handbook*, p. 37. Additionally, I reserve the right to assign a final course grade no higher than a "C" for students accumulating more than **three** "absences."

Course participation includes aspects of respectful, thoughtful, class interaction and engagement in group discussions. This course's expectations work in conjuncture with what the *Student's Guide Handbook* describes as Civility in the Classroom (see p. 36). Additionally, all students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Student's Guide Handbook*, Policies and Procedures, Conduct, pg. 42).

### **STATEMENT ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

As stated in the student handbook: "All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." (See Student Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct, for more information.)

## **Disability Accommodation Statement**

### **Students with Disabilities:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**

**Texas A&M University-Commerce**

**Gee Library, Room 132**

**Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835**

**Fax (903) 468-8148**

**[StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu)**

For additional information, please see the *Student Guidebook*, p. 50 or visit the Disability Services website: <http://web.tamu-commerce.edu/studentLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/facultyResources/default.aspx>.

## **Course Outline:**

Note: The course outline is only a guideline. It is subject to change based on discussion, current events, or other such influences.

### **“Week” 1 (1/14-1/21)**

- general course information and general introduction to interdisciplinary studies
- introductory group project I – brainstorming operational definitions and methodologies
- readings:
  - Neuman Ch 4 (68-107)
  - Mellenbergh et al (211-218)
  - Kamil (100-107)

### **Week 2 (1/22-1/28)** – no Tuesday office hours this week

- **Reading Response #1 due 1/28**
- methodologies and their general practices
- introductory group project II – evaluation of ideas and critique of proposals
- readings:
  - Drew et al Ch9 (209-240)

### **Week 3 (1/29-2/4)**

- aspects of the academic study of television
- readings:
  - Storey (8-28)
  - Attallah (325-349)
  - Carroll (15-29)

### **Week 4 (2/5-2/11)**

- **Reading Response #2 due 2/11**
- methodological explorations: content analysis
- readings:
  - Taylor (300-311)
  - Markle (45-57)
  - Masto & Ortiz (101-118)

### **Week 5 (2/12-2/18)** – no Tuesday office hours this week

- methodological explorations: discourse and rhetorical analysis; construction of narrative
- readings:
  - John et al (195-220)
  - Gans-Boriskin & Wardle (26-46)
  - Malloy (197-205)
  - Cossar (52-59)
  - Matheson (37-47)

### **Week 6 (2/19-2/25)**

- **Information on choice for Book Review Project due 2/25 – email to Doc Brad**
- **Reading Response #3 due 2/25**
- methodological explorations: textual deconstructions and theoretical applications
- readings:
  - Sarantakes (74-103)
  - Blakeborough (57-67)
  - Burgess (401-414)

### **Week 7 (2/26-3/4)**

- methodological explorations: textual deconstructions and theoretical applications II
- readings:
  - Hoad (56-81)
  - Brancato (49-56)
  - Mittell (3-24)
  - Nochminson (2-13)

“Week” 8 (3/5-3/18) (this week carries over spring break)

- **Exam One**
- methodological explorations: experimental and quasi experimental designs
- readings:
  - Berg & Latin Ch15 (185-195)
  - Forgette & Morris (447-456)
  - Burch et al (248-253)
  - Angelini (16-32)

Week 9 (3/19-3/25)

- **Topic for Annotated Bibliography project due 3/25 – email topic to Doc Brad**
- methodological explorations: interviews and surveys
- readings:
  - Desimone & LeFloch (1-22)
  - Berinsky (643-659)
  - Hughes & Magers (259-276)
  - Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (84-89)

Week 10 (3/26-4/1)

- **Book Review Project and Reading Response #4 due 4/1**
- methodological explorations: historiography, archival studies, and oral histories
- readings:
  - Salkind (207-213)
  - Feldstein (1-22)
  - Hunt (843-858)
  - Kennedy (57-84)
  - Kropf & Knack (187-197)

Week 11 (4/2-4/8)

- methodological explorations: ethnographic studies
- readings:
  - Katz (280-308)
  - Kleif & Faulkner (296-325)
  - Mayer (97-116)

Week 12 (4/9-4/15)

- **Reading Response #5 due 4/15**
- methodological explorations: longitudinal and case studies
- readings:
  - Gerring (341-354)
  - O’Reilly et al (392-409)
  - Mackey (389-410)
  - Bourdon (5-35)

Week 13 (4/16-4/22)

- **Annotated Bibliography Project due 4/22**
- methodological explorations: miscellaneous and mixed methodologies
- readings:
  - Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (14-26)
  - Tenorio & Cason (170-195)
  - Haigh (219-226)

“Week” 14 (4/23-5/3)

- shared discoveries of methods and their practices
- introductory group project III – revisiting past discussions
- readings:
  - none

“Week” 15 (5/4-5/10)

- **Final Exam to be completed no later than 5/7 – Final grade available via MyLeo May 14**

## Course Bibliography

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- Attallah, P. (2007). A usable history for the study of television. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 37(3), 325-49.
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- Berinsky, A. (2004). Can we talk? Self-presentation and the survey response. *Political Psychology*, 25(4), 643-59.
- Blakeborough, D. (2008). "Old people are useless": Representations of aging on *The Simpsons*. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 27(1), 57-67.
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- Brancato, J. (2007). Domesticating politics: the representation of wives and mothers in American reality television. *Film & History*, 37(2), 49-56.
- Burch, J., Clark, M., Yost, M., Fitzpatrick, C., Bachand, A., Ramaprasad, J. & Reif, J. (2006). Radio frequency nonionizing radiation in a community exposed to radio and television broadcasting. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 114(2), 248-53.
- Burgess, S. (2006). Queer (theory) eye for the straight (legal) guy: Lawrence vs. Texas' makeover of Bowers vs. Hardwick. *Political Research Quarterly*, 59(3), 401-14.
- Carroll, N. (2001). TV and film: A philosophical perspective. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 35(1), 15-29.
- Cossar, H. (2005). Televised golf and the creation of narrative. *Film & History*, 35(1), 52-9.
- Desimone, L. & LeFloch, K. (2004). Are we asking the right questions? Using cognitive interviews to improve surveys in education research. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 26(1), 1-22.
- Feldstein, M. (2004). Kissing cousins: Journalism and oral history. *The Oral History Review*, 31(1), 1-22.
- Forgette, R. & Morris, J. (2006). High-conflict television news and public opinion. *Political Research Quarterly*, 59(3), 447-56.
- Gans-Boriskin, R. & Wardle, C. (2005). Mad or bad? Negotiating the boundaries of mental illness on *Law & Order*. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 12(1), 26-46.
- Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *The American Political Science Review*, 98(2), 341-54.
- Haigh, J. (2003). The weakest link. *The Statistician*, 52(2), 219-26.
- Hoad, N. (2004). World piece: What the *Miss World* pageant can teach us about globalization. *Cultural Critique*, 58(Summer), 56-81.
- Hughes, T. & Magers, M. (2007). The perceived impact of crime scene investigation shows on the administration of justice. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 14(3), 260-76.
- Hunt, T. (2006). Reality, identity, and empathy: The changing face of social history television. *Journal of Social History*, 39(3), 843-58.
- John, S., Domke, D., Coe, K., & Graham, E. (2007). Going public, crisis after crisis: The Bush administration and the press from September 11 to Saddam. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 10(2), 195-210.
- Johnson, R.B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. (2004). Mixed method research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 14-26.
- Kamil, M. (2004). The current state of quantitative research. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 39(1), 100-7.
- Katz, J. (2004). On the rhetoric and politics of ethnographic methodology. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 595, 280-308.
- Kennedy, R. (2002). Strategy fads and competitive convergence: An empirical test for herd behavior in prime-time television programming. *The Journal of Industrial Economics*, 50(1), 57-84.
- Kleif, T. & Faulkner, W. (2003). "I'm no athlete (but) I can make this thing dance!" Men's pleasures in technology. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 28(2), 296-325.
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- Mackey, M. (2003). Television and the teenage literate: Discourses of *Felicity*. *College English*, 65(4), 389-410.
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- Mayer, V. (2008). Guys gone wild? Soft-core video professionalism and new realities in television production. *Cinema Journal*, 47(2), 97-116.
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- Salkind, N. (2006). *Exploring Research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 207-13.
- Sarantakes, N. (2005). Cold war pop culture and the image of U.S. foreign policy. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 7(4), 74-103.
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- Tenorio, R. & Cason, T. (2002). To spin or not to spin? Natural and laboratory experiments from *The Price is Right*. *The Economic Journal*, 112(476), 170-95.



## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

This course will be conducted via the eCollege system. Internet access is required. High speed internet connections are strongly recommended.

All course documents will be distributed via the document sharing area and will most likely be delivered in pdf format. The Adobe Reader program is available for free download at <http://get.adobe.com/reader/> and is used to access pdf files.

Assignments are to be turned in electronically as attached documents via the eCollege dropboxes. Word processing programs such as Microsoft Word are recommended. Any additional technological requirement will be dependent on the student's specific project, its design, and its execution.

Additionally, the following hardware and software are necessary to use eCollege:

Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. This means our courses work best if you are using a Windows operating system (XP or newer) and a recent version of Microsoft Internet Explorer (6.0, 7.0, 8.0, or 9.0).

Your courses will also work with Macintosh OS X along with a recent version of Safari 2.0 or better. Along with Internet Explorer and Safari, eCollege also supports the Firefox browser (3.0) on both Windows and Mac operating systems.

It is strongly recommended that you perform a "Browser Test" prior to the start of your course. To launch a browser test, login in to eCollege, click on the 'myCourses' tab, and then select the "Browser Test" link under Support Services.

## ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

### **eCollege Access and Log in Information**

This course will be facilitated using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to:  
<https://casx.tamuc.edu/cas/login?service=https%3A%2F%2Fmyleo.tamuc.edu%2Fpaf%2Fauthorize>.

You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 903.468.6000 or [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).]

Before beginning the course, it is strongly recommended that the student complete the eCollege tutorial in its entirety. This can be found upon entry into eCollege. Find the entry link in the "My Courses" area under the "Special Courses" heading.

Upon entering the course for the first time, read all course announcements and follow all instructions presented in those announcements.

In general, each week will have an introductory page specifically addressing the tasks and considerations intended for that period. Downloading materials from document sharing, contributing to interactive discussion with classmates (via the discussion boards located within

the week's respective eCollege subsection), completing assigned tasks, and submitting those materials as attached documents (via the specific dropbox for each respective assignment) are representative of course tasks.

## COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

I can be most easily contacted via Email ([Brad.Klypchak@tamuc.edu](mailto:Brad.Klypchak@tamuc.edu)). This will be the primary means of communicating with me throughout the term.

I do hold in-person office hours every Tuesday from 10:00-12:00 and welcome any additional in-person meetings. With advanced notice, I can most likely accommodate meeting at alternate times – simply email me with any such request.

The eCollege Virtual Office can also be used for contacting me. All communications via the Virtual Office are public. If you have private issues that need to be dealt with, contact me via email or arrange for an in-person meeting. I check email far more regularly than the Virtual Office so if timeliness is of concern, I recommend emailing me. Virtual Office inquiries will typically be responded to within 48 hours.

I will typically respond to email within 24 hours of receipt if not sooner. On weekends, I'm less likely to respond quite as quickly - a day of rest every once in a while seems a reasonable consideration. Similarly, if I am travelling/attending a conference, I may be slightly delayed in responding. Should travelling/conferences take place during the course of the term, an announcement will inform students of any such potential inconvenience.

The eCollege system works in association with the myLeo email system. If/when I send any email to all course members, it will be sent to whatever account is designated to the TAMU-C system. Please be mindful of checking your myLeo email on a regular basis.

All communications throughout this course should be respectful, thoughtful, and mindful of collegiality. The principles of "netiquette" are representative of the spirit of communal and collegial support this course embodies: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>.

### **eCollege Student Technical Support**

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support in the use of eCollege. The student help desk may be reached by the following means 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Chat Support: Click on '*Live Support*' on the tool bar within your course to chat with an eCollege Representative.

Phone: 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with eCollege Technical Support Representative.

Email: [helpdesk@online.tamuc.org](mailto:helpdesk@online.tamuc.org) to initiate a support request with eCollege Technical Support Representative.

Help: Click on the '*Help*' button on the toolbar for information regarding working with eCollege (i.e. How to submit to dropbox, How to post to discussions etc...)