

Course Orientation Workshop

Comm 156
Qualitative Communication Inquiry
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This Workshop

The workshop is an overview of this course. It provides insights, explanations, and tips on how to succeed in this course.

Read through the slides and when you are finished take the extra credit Orientation Quiz.

Getting Started

At the beginning of the course, I sent out an attached file with a “Quick Reference Guide” (also available on this wiki page) This guide explains class rules, things you need to do ASAP, and where to find things.

Please review the Quick Reference Guide before taking this workshop and make sure you have completed all the required steps for preparing for this course.

Hybrid Courses

This is a hybrid course.

This summer Communication Studies piloted hybrid classes – half online and half off-line. After years of examining the best practices of online and face-to-face instruction and the many uses of technology for teaching and learning the faculty have developed a format we feel takes the best of both methods while eliminating many of their drawbacks.

What does hybrid mean to you? Well, it means that students work on assigned tasks, projects, readings and quizzes on their own time wherever and whenever they want. How great is that? Course work can be done at 1 am or 1 pm, it doesn't matter. However, this does mean you will need some discipline in getting things done – I suggest you use the course schedule and set-up your own calendar for each week.

Some course work for the week needs to be completed by Tuesday or completed by the face-to face meeting on Thursday. The idea is that you come in prepared with work you have completed and then we use class time to discuss, develop, correct, and expand what you have done. Physical class time is spent in workshops where we work on skills and discuss course concepts.

This means coming to class on time, every time, and staying the full time is critical. You can't ignore either the online or face-to-face portions if you want to succeed.

You need to be self-motivated and organized. It is up to you to design a work schedule that meets all course deadlines. I have designed this course to keep you on a steady schedule with weekly assignments, quizzes, and reminders via the class listserv so planning your schedule should be easy. **Having a plan and keeping to it is critical for survival (let alone success).**

The 4th Unit

This is a 4 unit course, so this means this course is a third more work than a 3 unit course. Please avoid signing up for same number of classes regardless of the unit load!

At SJSU, students are expected to spend 2 hours outside of class for every one hour of physical in class time (seriously). Because this is a four unit hybrid class, you can expect to spend a **minimum of 11 hours per week in addition to time spent in class** as well as on scheduled tutorials or activities. Special projects or assignments may require additional work for the course. Careful time management will help you keep up with readings and assignments and enable you to be successful in all of your courses.

Bottom line – your grade will reflect the amount of time you dedicate to this course. There is enough reading, online workshops, quizzes and assignments to keep you busy for 8+ hours a week.

This course requires a lot of time and work, but most of you will feel a great sense of accomplishment and pride at the end at what you have learned and accomplished.

Course Design and Grading Policies

There are many different strategies and philosophies for assessing student work. This class is organized on a 1000 point system (although it is possible to exceed this number). These are, in turn, converted to the letter grade system we use at SJSU. Please see the point-to-letter-grade conversion chart on the syllabus for details.

Each assignment or quiz has a maximum amount of points allotted to it. A student earns points for each assessment type (details on this later), which are added up and result in a grade for the course. I also will add 5 points to everyone's point total at the end of the session just in case it will raise a grade – nothing is more frustrating than being 3 points away from a higher grade. **I do not track grades and provide grade reports** as the session progresses so it is up to students to “do the math” and figure out their letter grade mid-session if desired.

I do not round up assignment scores or curve grades. Final grades are simply

determined by the points you earn in the course.

Grades in this class are based broadly on meeting technical requirements (following directions, grammar, spelling, APA style, fulfilling assignment requirements and objectives) and comparison between peers. This means that the class is taken as a whole and independent population and sets its own performance criteria. That is, the top students set the bar and everyone is distributed down from there. Technical requirements still mean that even the best “quality” assignment may not earn the maximum points. However, this emerges in different ways for different types of assessment.

Average final grades in my courses generally float between a B- and B. I teach to the top 10% of my class and find that most students step-up to the challenge. However, some do not. Despite this high class average some students earn Ds or Fs every session. Without exception this is the result of failing to turn in work, not participating and not following directions.

Course Design and Grading Policies

In general, points are broken up into different activities and assignments and distributed across the term. Some assignments/activities are just a matter of doing the work and “showing-up” (allowing you to “bank” points), others are more complex. Since some students are better at some tasks than others, this provides plenty of chances to do well as well as to blunt the impact of poor performance on some assignments.

Quizzes (more details later) are simple quantitative multiple choice (right or wrong – points or no points) and are used to assess familiarity with the readings. In order for us to have informed assignments and quality discussions we need to all have the same basic knowledge of the subject. This is accomplished through the course readings. Bottom line – quizzes are there to form a base line for knowledge and to make sure you actually DO the reading (because if you are not assessed on reading most of you will not do it - that is just the way it is).

Assignments (more details later) are graded on meeting technical requirements (following directions, grammar, spelling, APA style, fulfilling assignment requirements and objectives) and comparison of quality between peers. Is an assignment coherent? Does it illustrate an understanding of the material? How sophisticated is the use of the course material? In my experience, most students fail to earn points based on needless mistakes, such as leaving out required materials or not following directions. To help alleviate this, many assignments in this class are on standard forms with slots for all required elements and have grading rubrics (criteria) included so students know what I am looking for when I grade. Unlike a curve, points are awarded on competency and the average may be quite high (or low) depending on the overall quality of work.

Let's Make a Deal (not)

In order to maintain a fair and equitable learning environment all students must take the same course. This means is that **any opportunities to earn points, or retake or make-up or take late quizzes and assignments must be available to all students in the class.** Criteria for grading students need to be consistent and applied evenly for all students. Therefore, I request you please follow these guidelines:

Please do not ask for special accommodation for assignments. Since any opportunities must be made available to all students this would create a lot of extra work for both students and myself. The only exception is for students with DRC authorization.

Please do not ask for extra credit assignments to earn points. Since any opportunities must be made available to all students this would create a lot of extra work for both students and myself. I build many chances to earn extra points into the class. I will say no (no matter how much I like may like/dislike you personally).

Please do not invoke "special" cases or circumstances. It is unethical for me to take into account factors outside the purview of the course. I do not and cannot care if the grade you are earning will prevent you from graduating, maintaining eligibility for sports or other activities, getting financial aide, becoming disqualified, etc. Also, the "copping a plea" or brutal honesty approach may impress me with your candor but will not provide the desired results. Your job is to get the grade you need from the course the way it is designed just like everyone else. If you cannot manage that then it is on you. DRC accommodations are handled as per University policy,

Bottom line is your actions and decisions have consequences. We constantly make choices on our priorities or how we allocate our time and while we are more than willing to take the benefits of these choices we are often not so willing to accept the consequences. So man/woman-up and accept the lost points if you feel that going to the beach is something you would rather do.

Our Contract

By signing up for this course you are agreeing to abide by the course syllabus, be evaluated according to course criteria, and follow all course rules and protocols.

This means you are agreeing to complete all required readings, assignments, quizzes, or tasks that I assign you as directed within the timeframe they are assigned. Failure to do so will mean loss of point earning opportunities. Do what I tell you, how I tell you, and when I tell you and you will be fine. For my part, it is my responsibility to clearly articulate course requirements and my expectations.

Your Attitude

As an undergrad I was admittedly resentful to have to take certain courses that were not directly related (as I saw it) to my core interests. This attitude was a tremendous waste of my time and taxpayer money because it results in a spiral of task avoidance and poor grades that is hard to escape. **Embrace this class or drop it.** My attitude is I want to try and have as much fun as possible and get as much as I can doing whatever I do. I try and make my courses as interesting, entertaining, and engaging as possible. **There is no busy work in this course.** For your own (and your classmates) mental health make it the best experience you can.

Your Life (and this course)

As a first generation college student, native Californian, and a CSU alum (BA Fresno State, MS San José State) I am fully aware of the challenges you face as you work toward your degree. You are not stereotypical college students whose primary demands are school and partying (okay, school, work, and partying...). I know many of you are older, work full time, have families and familial obligations, and some of you may even have a life! You sacrifice to be at San José State and a college degree is a major step in making a better life. I respect and honor that.

For these reasons I have designed this course to be as flexible as possible and laid out so assessment is distributed across the entire session as opposed to bunched up in the middle or at the end. So, no high value exams. Readings and assignments are designed to be experienced in increments that add to a whole. Assignments are designed to get you out and working with material you have learned. This way, you have to process the material in a variety of ways, which is one of the best ways to grasp it. You can read about it or talk about it all session, but you really won't understand it until you try and do it. This is how most projects develop in the non-academic world.

Learn it, know it, use it

Beyond the topic, the underlying structure of the class is designed to build critical information processing skills that are highly valued in modern society. You not only need to have working understanding of a particular topic or area but also be able to retrieve specific information on it in a timely manner. This requires understanding key concepts, being organized enough that you can retrieve the information, and using the information to complete a task.

Quizzes: D2L

Online quizzes are administered via Desire2 Learn. This system shows the instructor when the quiz was taken and how long a student spends on each question and the quiz as a whole. Students can view their corrected quiz and score directly after taking it.

The Desire2Learn website is new and we all have to get used to using it. If you have trouble using or accessing Desire2Learn it is **CRITICAL** you do not wait to address it. Go the [Student Resources](http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/students/D2L_students/) page <http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/students/D2L_students/> for guides and tutorials. **Failure to deal with access issues will NOT be considered a valid excuse to make-up missed quizzes if a student does not have documentation that they are actively working to resolve the problem!** Instructors cannot fix access issues therefore students need to contact eCampus directly. Ironically, the best way to get a hold of someone fast is by phone at 924-2377. Students can also visit the Computer Center in Clark Hall for help. I suggest the following to lessen the chances that something untoward might happen.

1. Do not open multiple windows.
2. Make sure cookies and pop-ups are enabled.
3. You may either save each question as you go or save all at the end.

Online quizzes are open book and note and are timed. Students are allowed to exceed the time limit for the quiz by about 1 minute. However, exceeding the allotted time for the quiz beyond that will result in penalties. All quizzes may be taken twice. Exceptions will be made for students who have proper documentation from the DRC for special accommodations.

Quiz questions are randomly drawn from a pool of questions, so every quiz is different. All quizzes are open the first week of the term and close as we finish covering the material. Failure to take the quiz in the allotted time due to waiting to the last day of the quiz and having technical difficulties or lack of a computer or internet connection at home are not valid excuses. Students without his/her own or limited access to computer or internet connections need to make arrangements to use the many campus facilities to take the quizzes. **I highly recommend setting specific times and places to take your quizzes so you are less likely to space it out.** Make sure to build in a margin for error so if your plans are thwarted you still have a chance to take the quiz.

Quizzes: Issues

In the event that a long term planned or an unexpected event makes taking a quiz impossible the student is responsible to contact the instructor in a timely manner. In the event of a planned and unavoidable lack of access (eg. military training exercise) the student must make arrangements **PRIOR** to the event to be accommodated. The instructor will develop an alternate quizzing schedule on a case-by-case basis. For unexpected events (accidents, emergencies, etc.) that result in multiple days of incapacitation the student must make arrangements as soon as possible after the fact to be accommodated. **Excessively tardy requests for accommodation will not be granted.** For example, a family emergency requires a student to leave town for a week. The student returns to class and a week later asks to make-up a missed quiz. This is too late and will not be allowed.

If students have technical problems with D2L or their internet connection they should follow these steps for each particular issue.

You are “timed out” or otherwise kicked out of the quiz. If you do not sign off the quiz will keep running and remain open. Quit your browser, then restart it and log back into D2L and finish the quiz. When you are done, email me and explain what happened. **DO NOT wait to try and finish the quiz at another time.**

You lose your internet connection or cannot maintain your connection (keep getting logged out). Log off the quiz immediately and email me. I will reset the quiz and you will be able to take the quiz when you are somewhere where you can get a reliable internet connection. Again, I will be unsympathetic if I get an email a few hours before (or after) the quiz closes.

If you wait until the last minute to take the quiz during the quiz period (week) the system will not bump you off in mid-quiz. You may continue until you are done.

It may appear that your questions are not saved or are somehow deleted at the end of a quiz. ALWAYS check at the end to see what your score is and the answers that were recorded (or not).

MISSED QUIZZES – FOR WHATEVER REASON - MUST BE MADE UP WITH 1 WEEK OF THE QUIZ BEING MISSED. AFTER THAT POINT MAKE-UPS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED. MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE INSTRUCTOR ASAP.

Quizzes: Issues

Problem Questions or other Quiz Issues

If you feel that a particular quiz question is faulty (confusing, an incorrect answer is listed as the correct answer etc.) you should contact the instructor immediately. Remember, in multiple choice quizzes several answers may be partially or broadly correct, but only one answer is the **BEST** one available. Please note each quiz question has a page number where the question's answer is located in the text that is visible after the quiz is taken and recorded. In order to address any issues, students should follow the following steps.

1. Copy and Paste the entire question and answer choices into an email or take a screen shot.
2. Locate the answer you think is correct (or also correct) in the text and clearly state it as well as giving the location where the instructor can find it in the text.
3. Clearly and concisely give that rationale for why the assigned answer choice is incorrect and your selected answer choice is a better or equally good answer.
4. Email this information to the instructor. A confirmation email will be returned and a ruling will be forthcoming.

Non-conforming Quizzes

Occasionally there will be a data entry error on a quiz. All quizzes will be the same length (#of questions), worth the same points per question and as a total, and be open the same amount of time. If a quiz does not conform to all these criteria **DO NOT TAKE IT** and contact the instructor immediately.

Quizzes: Guidelines

These quizzes are designed to (1) elicit memories of the readings, (2) allow a consistent framework for finding the materials if needed, (3) train students to identify key concepts, and (4) develop skills in retaining information and organizing your strategies for highlighting and note-taking to facilitate information retrieval. These are critical skills that students can take into non-academic settings. Questions are generally taken verbatim from the text. For example, the primary word in sentence is missing or a definition is given and the correct term must be selected. Quiz questions range from easy to difficult, although in many cases a hard question for one student is easy for another. Here are some guidelines:

1. There will be four possible answers, only one answer is the BEST answer for the question.
2. It is possible that two answers may be possibly/partially correct, but only one is the BEST answer.
3. Out of the four potential answers one will usually be a “throw away” or obviously wrong.
4. Out of the four potential answers one will usually be obviously incorrect if the student is somewhat familiar with the material.
5. Out of the four potential answers one will usually be possibly correct, but is incorrect because it has some sort of flaw that fails to fully and accurately answer the question.
6. Do not over-think or over-complicate the questions. There are no “trick” questions and they are all pretty straight forward.
7. Open book and open note does NOT mean easy! There is physically NO WAY to look up every answer for every question in the allotted time. If you are not familiar with the material you will fail.
8. Pick and choose. Again, you can’t look everything up – so only look up questions (1) you definitely do not know (2) if you have time at the end of the quiz.
9. Take 100% of your allotted time!

Quizzes: Tips

Here are some basic tips on taking any multiple-choice quiz.

1. Your first guess is almost always correct (see #6 above). Research shows that not only is your first inclination usually correct, but changing an answer choice without sufficient reason usually results in an incorrect answer. Do not change your answers lightly!
2. If you are stuck on a question, use the process of elimination. Start by eliminating the answers you know are incorrect and try and reduce the pool of potential correct answers. The more answers you can eliminate the greater chance of you guessing the correct answer.
3. Never leave a question blank. If it is blank you have a ZERO percent chance of earning the points. Even if you blindly guess, you still have a one-in-four chance of being correct (see #2 above).
4. Watch your time. Do not spend too much time on one tough question. Do the easy questions first and go back for the hard ones.
5. Organize a strategy that will allow to prioritize which questions to spend time on. I suggest making a table on a sheet of paper with 3 columns and # rows for each question.

Q#	OK	Maybe	?
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Write the first answer you think is correct, if you are really sure put it in the "ok" column, if kind of sure, the "maybe" column, if you really do not know, then use the "?" column. Resist loading up one column category. Do this as fast as you can read (but read each question twice) and select the first answer you think is right or makes sense. Then, start with the "?" column and start looking up the answers. Once you finish that column, go to "maybe," and so forth until you are at about 1 minute. Then save them.

Quiz Questions Hints

Each quiz question will start with a code (Eg, C3.4) that gives a hint as to the location of the answer in the text. C3.4 = chapter 3, likely in the first few pages as C3.24 is likely toward the end.

Quiz Performance Issues

There is an introductory quiz on this material for extra credit to get you used to the format. If you do poorly on the earlier quizzes it is sign you need to modify your study or quiz taking strategies. Simply trying the same failed methods over and over will not work and will result in frustration and poor grades. If you are having problems, contact me as soon as possible for advice on how to improve your performance.

Quizzes: Tips

General Quiz Taking Strategies

You will increase your opportunities for success if you prepare carefully for actually physically taking the quiz. The great thing about having a week to take a quiz is the chance to pick the time and place of your choosing. Sadly, many students reflexively wait until the last moment. You want to put yourself in a mindset that will enhance your ability to think.

1. Take quizzes during YOUR peak mental time. Mid-morning is a good time for some people, while others perform well at 2 am.

2. Ensure you will be uninterrupted. Hang a sign on your door or go someplace where you will not be bothered. If you are in a public place make a small table tent that says; "test in progress – please do not disturb" ("I have Bird Flu" or "I'm radioactive" are also particularly effective) Put your cell on "silent" mode and mute your computer (that text, IM, or call can wait).

3. Prepare your body and mind. Make sure you are well-rested and avoid complicating chemicals. Studies show that SMALL amounts of caffeine combined with carbohydrates (tea and crumpets, anyone?)

sharpen mental acuity. Large amounts of caffeine inhibit acuity, so you may want to dial back on the Red Bull.

4. Set the stage. Reboot your computer. Have water nearby, go to the bathroom first, and set all your materials out for easy access. If there are electronic materials make sure the programs you need to read and to search them are open as are the documents themselves.

5. Be consistent. One disadvantage of having a week to take a quiz is that you may forget. Pick a time and stick to it.

6. Don't wait. You are going to prepare the same amount of time no matter when you take it. Waiting increases stress and the chance that something unexpected will come up at the last minute that will prevent you from taking the quiz in time. You can also avoid technical problems such as losing internet access or computer issues (which I will not excuse).

Assignments

Course assignments are designed to reinforce each other. The Discussion and Workshops will help prepare you to complete the research projects.

Discussion

Readings are discussed on the Discussion Board on the D2L website. See the [Course Schedule](#) for specific discussion topics and weeks where we are having online discussion. The purpose of this exercise is (1) to encourage completing the week's readings in a timely fashion (2) to help prepare for the quiz (3) and to provide a forum to discuss the reading materials and "check-in" with other students on the major concepts covered in the material. Discussion is **not** free form and there are specific requirements and deadlines for discussion. See the [assignments](#) wiki page for details.

Workshops

There are 9 workshops (APA, Annotated Bibliography, & Scholarly Sources; Getting Started; Ethics and Source Credibility; Observation; Data Coding 1 & 2; Survey; Interviewing; and Semiotics) to concentrate on different research skills. Workshops have both an online (like this one) and in-class component and involve a task. See the [assignments](#) wiki page for details.

Research Projects

There are 2 research assignments - For each research project you will create a proposal, collect literature, design and execute a study, and write a summary of your findings. The first research project is based on participant observation of courses and the second on Semiotics. Each research project requires the use of two methods. Assignments are broken down into several sections. See the [assignments](#) wiki page for details.

Now go to D2L and
take the Orientation
Workshop quiz