Course Description

This course provides students with the methodological competencies required to carry out advanced research in the fields of Cultural Studies and Media Studies. Combining theory with case studies, students are introduced to some of the investigative approaches commonly adopted by Cultural Studies and Media Studies scholars, including ethnography, discourse analysis and archival research. Further attention is paid to research ethics and research controversies, as well as the challenges representing one’s research findings in writing. In addition to reading articles on the question of method by key theorists in the field, throughout the course students will be asked to complete short research assignments designed to advance their own research skills. The final assignment will take the form of a proposal for a senior year project.

Required Materials

All readings will be posted on the class website at: http://lcst3789.wordpress.com

Description of Assignments and Evaluation

Attendance/Participation (15%): The participation grade will be based on class attendance and demonstrated preparation for each class meeting, as well as the completion of in-class assignments. Students who miss more than eight classes with or without legitimate cause will be given an F or where appropriate, a retroactive medical withdrawal. Please be advised that if you fail to keep up with the pace of the course (e.g., you have not proposed a viable research question/topic by early October, you will be asked to withdraw from the course).

Assignment 1 (5%): Topic & question

Assignment 2 (20%): Interview and transcript

Assignment 3 (20%): Research dossier

Assignment 4 (40%): Research proposal (n.b., the final grade will be based on process and final product; students who fail to complete each step on time and/or fail to participate in the class presentations and critiques will only receive a partial grade for the final proposal)
Policy on Late Assignments: Unless you make arrangements with the instructor prior to the deadline, late assignments will be penalized at 1%/day (e.g., a student who submits an assignment one week past the deadline will lose 7% of their final grade in the course).

Other Course Policies

- Arrive in a timely manner
- Acquire all the required materials for the course, including the online materials, and bring these materials to class
- When required, read your colleagues’ work-in-progress prior to class and be prepared to offer them constructive feedback (this is a workshop based course and its success depends on your collaboration)
- Come to class prepared to participate in discussions and writing exercises related to the assigned readings
- Listen to and respect each other and avoid ad hominem attacks
- Only use electronic devices to participate in the class rather than zone out!
- Submit all assignments on or before the due date
- Properly document sources to avoid plagiarism

Schedule

August 27: Introduction
Objective: *To introduce and discuss the goals of the course and to develop a research question.*

**Assignment 1** (5%): Identify at least one potential research subject you would like to investigate for your senior project. For each potential topic, respond to the following questions: 1. What led you to this research subject (e.g., a personal connection, expertise etc.)? 2. If x is your topic, what is your question? 3. Have other researchers explored this topic and/or question? If so, who? 4. What methodology do you expect to use to explore this investigation? Why?

August 29: Introduction (continued)
Objective: *To explore the role of methodology in cultural studies versus allied disciplines (e.g., Sociology, Anthropology, History and Literary Studies); to explore Cultural Studies’ discomfort with defining itself in relation to a single methodology; to explore how Cultural Studies theorizing and research has impacted other disciplines with methodological traditions.*

Module 1—Researching the Everyday and the Spectacular

September 3: The Everyday
Objective: To explore the study of everyday life in Cultural Studies.
2. Michel de Certeau, General Introduction to The Practice of Everyday Life, The Everyday Life Reader (see previous link).
3. Luce Giard, “Doing Cooking,” The Everyday Life Reader (see previous link).
Film: Excerpt from

September 5: Rosh Hashanah

September 10: The Spectacular
Objective: To explore critiques and interruptions of everyday life.
1. McKenzie Wark, The Spectacle of Disintegration (pp. 1 to 60).

Module 2—Researching People and Communities

September 12: Ethnographic Research
Objective: To explore the role of ethnographic research in Cultural Studies and allied disciplines.
1. Paula Saukko, Doing Research in Cultural Studies (pp. 37-73)

September 17: Observations and Cognitive Mapping
Objective: To analyze the role of participant observation and cognitive mapping in Cultural Studies research.

September 19: Independent Study
Objective: Use this time to further develop your research question; if you have not yet submitted your question or revised question, you should meet with the instructor to discuss the current state of your project proposal.

September 24: The Qualitative Interview
Objective: To explore the practice and ethics of interviewing human subjects.
3. TBA

Assignment 2 (20%): Conduct an interview (approximately 20-minutes) with the aim of exploring the following research question: To what extent do toys play a role in how we remember and make sense of our childhoods? In other words, your objective is to explore the role toys play in the construction of narratives about childhood. Notably, this is your research question/topic but NOT the question you’ll ask your research participant!
Before sitting down with your participant, you’ll need to develop a set of questions and/or prompts for your participants that will enable you to explore the research question/topic. Once you have completed your interview, transcribe the entire interview (n.b., it will take at least 2 hours to transcribe 20 to 25 minutes). Bring four copies of your transcript to class on October 1.

September 26: From “Fieldwork” to “Deskwork”—On Ethnographic Writing
Objective: To explore strategies for “writing up” fieldwork observations and various genres of ethnographic writing; to further explore the “fictions” of ethnography.

October 1: Assignment 2—Workshop
Objective: To analyze and critique each other’s interviews and transcripts.

Group Work: Working in groups of three to four, read and compare your interview transcripts. Did you ask similar questions? Which questions or discussion prompts were most helpful? How might you improve your questions? What decisions did you make while transcribing your interview (e.g., did you mark the interjections and pauses)? Could these interviews be used to respond to the research question? Read together, what insights do your interviews yield?

October 3: Ethics
Objective: To explore the importance of research ethics (specifically, when working with traditionally marginalized populations) and to examine ways to decolonize methodologies in our fields(s).

Module 3—Researching the Documents and Artifacts

October 8: Archaeology and Genealogy
Objective: To examine archaeological and genealogical approaches to research and their place in contemporary cultural studies research and theorizing.

October 10: Media Archaeology
Objective: To examine approaches to media archaeology and its relevance to cultural studies, media studies and screen studies scholarship.
1. Jussi Parikka, “Introduction,” What is Media Archaeology?
2. Wolfgang Ernst, “Media Archaeology: Method and Machine versus the History and Narrative of Media,” Digital Memory and the Archive.
October 15: Archival Research
Objective: To explore approaches to archival research (e.g., how to gain access to archives, how to prepare for a visit, how to decide if archival research is appropriate to one’s research project).
   Visit: Kellen Archives (The New School).

October 17: Researching Archives
Objective: To investigate the archive itself as an object of study (e.g., to examine how archives not only preserve but produce knowledge).

October 22: Research in Special Collections
Objective: To explore special collections related to the avant-garde art movements and subcultures.
   Visit: Fales Archives & Special Collections (meet in the lobby of the Bobst Library Building at NYU).

October 24: Research Day
Objective: Use this class time to carry out research for your upcoming research dossier assignment.

October 29: Writing about Documents and Objects
Objective: To explore approaches to writing about documents and objects.
* By October 29, you must identify the faculty member who will supervise your senior project.

October 31: Assignment 3—Research Dossier Presentations
Objective: To share our research dossiers and gain feedback on our research in progress.

**Assignment 3 (20%)**: Compile a research dossier of secondary and primary sources related to your proposed research topic or question. The more material you compile, the better! Depending on your topic or question, your research dossier may include secondary articles, including relevant theoretical texts; primary documents (archival documents, newspaper articles etc.); or other media (e.g., films, photographs etc.).

Module 4—Examples of Faculty and Student Research

November 5: Faculty Research
Objective: To familiarize ourselves with research by Lang faculty members.

* Find one article or book chapter written by the faculty member you have asked to serve as the supervisor of your senior project; make a pdf of their article or book.
chapter and send it to the instructor at least one week prior to the beginning of Module 4. Readings will be posted on the class website in the final week of October.

**November 7: Student Research**  
Objective: *To read and discuss proposals and final thesis papers by former Lang students.*  
1. Emily Sher, Proposal for Senior Work  
2. Emily Sher, “Commodifying Girlhood Friendship: Affective Ties and Friendship Bracelets.”

**November 12: Student Panel**  
Objective: *To learn about current student senior projects and to explore how proposed projects shift from the proposal to writing stage.*  
Guest panelists: TBA

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**Module 5—Proposal Writing**

Objective (for module): *Over the course of the next month, you will put theory into practice and use the knowledge and research experience you have gained throughout the course to produce a proposal for a senior work in Cultural Studies, Media Studies or Screen Studies. Even if you do not attend to carry out a senior work, you must complete this assignment. Proposals will be thoroughly critiqued during the seminar. By the end of the class, every student should have completed a viable, original, ethically thoughtful and methodological coherent proposal.*

Required reading: Guidelines for senior works (see the updated program handbook).

**Assignment 4 (40%):** Following the guidelines below (detailed in the program handbook) write a proposal for your senior work. Please note that students who fail to complete the steps in sequence and/or to workshop their work in progress will be severely penalized. Even if you submit a complete proposal on December 12, you will not receive more than 50% on the final assignment.

**Nov. 14: Step 1**  
* Propose a working title and write a 2-page description of the key idea being explored. Bring 7 copies of your proposal and working title to class.

**Nov. 19: Step 2**  
* Write a 2-page description of the methods of investigation to be employed. Bring 7 copies of your description of methods to class.

**Nov. 21: Step 3**  
* Write a 1-page description of the relevance of the project to the field of Cultural Studies, Media Studies or Screen Studies; 1-page description of work already accomplished; and 1-page on likely results or conclusions that are desired from this work. Bring 7 copies of these sections of the proposal to class.

**Nov. 26: Step 4**
* Write a and compile a 1-page bibliography of relevant sources.
  Independent study—send this to instructor by 5:00 pm.

**Nov. 28: Thanksgiving Break**

**Dec. 3: Presentations and Critiques**

**Dec. 5: Presentations and Critiques**

**Dec. 8: Presentations and Critiques**

**Dec. 12: Submit Final Proposal**
Send an digital copy of your final proposal to the instructor and the department chair by 5:00 pm.