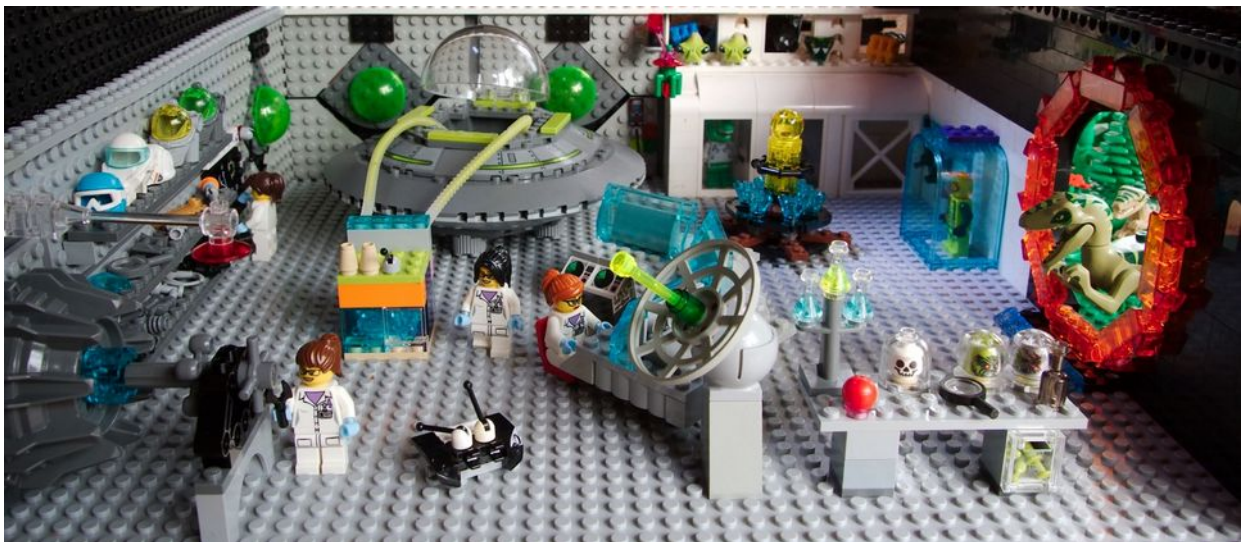![Universiteit Utrecht]

Research Lab 1

Block 1, 2021-2022
(version 1, 5 Sept)

1. Course information

Course code and title:
MCMV16041 Research Lab 1: Situating Research

Instructors:
Michiel de Lange (course coordinator), m.l.delange@uu.nl
Anne Kustritz a.m.kustritz@uu.nl
Tim de Winkel t.dewinkel@uu.nl
René Glas r.glas@uu.nl

Contact: General questions about the course are best asked via MS Teams, where other students may also read and respond. If you have a more specific issue, e-mail us.

We expect every student to attend all meetings, be well-prepared, participate in an active way, and be supportive of one another. If you somehow cannot make it to class, please inform the lecturer and course coordinator as soon as possible.

2. Content and learning objectives

This course (re)introduces students to some of the key methods used in the field of New Media Studies. Central to this course is that students practise several research methods to analyze new media phenomena, using a variety of data (textual, discursive, empirical, quantitative, born digital, etc.). For their final paper, students develop a small research project in which one research method is used. In this course we will critically reflect on the research process, ethics, and the relationship between object, theory and method.

Learning goals: at the end of this course, students will have learned which method may serve which types of research questions, and will be able to assess the practical viability and ethical implications of each method. They will also have grasped which methods (and their implied epistemological traditions and theoretical underpinnings) will be appropriate for pursuing their own individual research interest. Students will have learned how to express all these aspects of the methodology trajectory in oral and written form, by way of participating in in-class debate, of a group presentation, and of a written methodology assignment.

3. Course proceedings

The course consists of weekly class sessions in which experienced lecturers speak about doing research using specific methods. Students will train their methodological skills by working on a small weekly assignment. The prepare for

class meeting, students read the compulsory course literature and prepare for classes by contributing one question or proposition about the literature here:

In addition to the class sessions, students are expected to spend about 10 hour per week on self study (reading literature, preparing questions, writing a research proposal, doing the research project, incorporating feedback, reporting).

In week 6 at the latest, each student chooses one method to do a small research project. The course coordinator will assign students to one of the lecturers for individual feedback (ideally matching methods). Students write a short reflection paper about their research, focusing in particular on methodological considerations.

Students hand in the following deliverables:

1) Research proposal
Each student writes a short research proposal (1000 words max.) that includes:

1. Your research object and thematic angle (**phenomenon**)
2. A **main research question**; if possible broken down into several smaller **subquestions**
3. The key concepts and notions you want to deploy (**theory**)
4. An explanation of your approach and description of a relevant corpus to analyze (**methodology**)

Make sure you justify your choices - especially concerning methodology - in a transparent way, and that you convincingly explain the connection between phenomenon, theory and methodology. For the sake of completeness, *academic relevance* is the 5th element that is usually part of a proposal/introduction, but it does not need to be included in this assignment.

Tip: Writing a proposal is not just about intentions and plans, but already part of doing the actual research. Therefore, start testing and experimenting with your research topic as soon as possible. Try to include some of these preliminary and provisional insights in the proposal. For instance, can you demonstrate that your research approach might work by including a mini example analysis?

Deadline: 22 October, 10.00 (post your proposal on MS Teams). The proposal will be given written and/or oral feedback by one of the lecturers in week 6/7.

2) Final report (100% grade)
In your final methodological paper, you will report on your findings in a research report that builds upon your proposal. The justification of and reflection on methodology is the key concern. Justify why you have selected a specific case to study and reflect on how you have proceeded, including pros (strengths) and cons (limitations) of this approach. Wordcount: 3500 max.

Suggestion for a structure (but feel free to deviate from this if needed):
1. Introduction (750 words)

2. Theoretical and methodological section (750 - 1000 words)
3. Analysis (1250 - 1500 words)
4. Conclusion and reflections (500 words)

This final report will be graded on:

- Your analytical skills. Are you adequately connecting phenomenon, theory and method? Is there a good balance between description, interpretation, and analysis/synthesis? Is there sufficient connection between the observations/results, and the academic literature/theory? Are you able to use the selected method productively?
- Your reflection skills. Are you critically reflecting on your choices and on the results, including the link between literature/theory and your own observations? Are you able to reflect on the strengths and limitations (pros and cons) of the methodology you developed and used?
- Your writing skills. Is the report logically structured? Are sections and subsections coherent and focussed? Does the report have a logical flow of argumentation with sufficient signposting for the reader? Is the report intelligible? Is the terminology from the field used adequately? How precise are your formulations?

Deadline: 5 November, 17:00 via e-mail to your instructor and the course coordinator.

In order to pass the course:
- You need a 5,5 or higher average grade.
- You are offered a second chance on a 5-or-lower final paper when your average total grade is a 4 or higher.
- You need to attend all scheduled meetings *and* have sufficiently participated in the group assignment.
- You need to have handed in both written assignments on time and are expected to actively contribute to group activities.
- Not handing in your proposal or paper will result in "NVD" ("niet voldaan", or "not completed") as the final course grade.

4. Course schedule

Week 1: Intro + Research Ethics, Michiel de Lange - 15 Sept 13:15 - 17:00, JK15A-101 (both groups)
In the opening week of the course, we will discuss what the course is about, what is expected from you, and how the course fits in the larger NMDC program. In an introductory lecture we will dive deeper into methodology and New Media Studies. During a small workshop we will take a first foray into studying a new media object.

Read in advance:
Brennen, Bonnie. 2017. *Qualitative research methods for media studies.* Second edition. ed. New York ; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. Ch. 1 & 2 (pp. 1-26).

Prepare a short statement on what methodology means, and why it matters for doing new media studies. This will inform our in-class debate during the first session.

Week 2: Textual & Affordance Analysis, René Glas - 22 Sept 9:00 - 12:45, ISRAELS room 1.01 (group2) ; 13:15 - 17:00, ISRAELS basement 1.03 (group1)
This week we will look at the question: how can we approach new media objects as 'texts' and how can we 'read' them through a cultural lense? We will see that new media phenomena require different approaches than more traditional media texts, going beyond the more traditional forms of textual analysis towards affordance analysis to critically investigate software technologies.

Read in advance:
Barthes, Roland. 1977. "Rhetoric of the Image". From his selected essays from *Image, Music, Text*.
http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=664&site=ehost-live&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_190
Curinga, Matthew X. 2014. "Critical Analysis of interactive media with software affordances". *First Monday.* 19 (9).
https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/download/4757/4116

Week 3: Critical Discourse Analysis, Michiel de Lange - 29 Sept 9:00 - 12:45, ISRAELS room 1.01 (group2) ; 13:15 - 17:00, ISRAELS basement 1.03 (group1)
This week you will learn more about discourse analysis, which treats utterances as *language-in-use*, a *praxis* effectuating reality. According to James Paul Gee, language shapes the connections between saying (informing), doing (action), and being (identity). Despite affinities with textual analysis, discourse analysis is particularly sensitive to how "in using language, social goods are always at stake"

(Gee 2014b: 7). Gee distinguishes between descriptive and critical discourse analysis, highlighting how especially the latter focuses on the underlying politics, power relations, and socio-economic stakes of those involves in the utterances.

Read in advance:
Jørgensen, M.W., & Phillips, L.J. 2008. The field of discourse analysis. In: *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. London: Sage, 1-23, 60-95. https://utrechtuniversity.on.worldcat.org/v2/oclc/974095631
Gee, James Paul. 2014. How to do discourse analysis: a toolkit. Second Edition. ed. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. http://proxy.library.uu.nl/login?url=http://uunl.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=1600495.

How to read Gee:
1) Read the introduction of the book (pages 1-5)
2) Look at all the 28 "tools" that are offered in the book, easily recognizable by being printed in a colored text frame.

Week 4: Digital Humanities, Tim de Winkel - 6 Oct 13:15 - 17:00, JK15A-101 (both groups)
This week you will learn about the Digital Humanities, what they are, see examples of them, and you'll learn to reflect critically on both the concept as well as the field of the Digital Humanities. The lecturer will give examples of DH research and DH methods, and we will end the class by doing a tutorial with code.

Read in advance:
Moretti, F., 2005 Graphs, maps trees part 1 abstract models for literary history https://www.mat.ucsb.edu/~g.legrady/academic/courses/09w259/Moretti_graphs.pdf
Berry, D,. 'Digital Humanities: First, Second and Third Wave' blogpost January, 2011 on http://stunlaw.blogspot.com/2011/01/digital-humanities-first-second-and.html

Inspiration: https://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/ToolDatabase
An install guide to prepare your device for the tutorial will be sent in advance.

Week 5: Critical Data Studies, Tim de Winkel - 13 Oct   13:15 - 17:00, JK15A-101 (both groups)
In this week, students will learn to critically reflect on data and digital methods, both the bias as epistemology.

Read in advance:
van Es, Karin, Mirko Tobias Schäfer and Maranke Wieringa. 2021. "Tool Criticism and the Computational Turn: A 'Methodological Moment' in Media and Communication Studies." *M&K Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft* 69 (1): 46-64. https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/10.5771/1615-634X-2021-1-46/tool-criticism-and-the-computational-turn-a-methodological-moment-in-media-and-communication-studies-volume-69-2021-issue-1?page=1
Iliadis A, Russo F. Critical data studies: An introduction. *Big Data & Society*.

December 2016. doi:10.1177/2053951716674238 https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/doi/full/10.1177/2053951716674238

Week 6: Ethnography, Anne Kustritz - 18 Oct [<u>note: lecture on Monday!</u>], <u>JK15A-101</u> + 20 Oct. 13.15-17.00 <u>JK15A-101</u> (both groups)
This week will occur jointly with New Media Theories. New Media Theories will cover theoretical issues of ethnology, and in Research Lab 1 we will cover the methodological aspects of ethnography and participant-observation, including ethnographic interviewing.

Michrina, Barry and Cherylanne Richards. 1996. "3. Design and Sampling," "4. Oral Discourse," and "5. Fieldnotes and Journals." *Person to Person*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 39-82. https://utrechtuniversity.on.worldcat.org/v2/oclc/42330786

Ortner, Sherry. 1973. "On Key Symbols." *American Anthropologist* New Series, Vol. 75, No. 5, 1338-1346. https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/674036

Week 7: Research proposal and Individual consults for final paper - week of 25 Oct.
Deadline proposal: 22 Oct. 10:00. Feedback will be given in the week of 25 Oct.

Week 8: Final paper - deadline Friday 5 Nov.
Deadline: 5 Nov. 17:00. E-mail your paper to your lecturer and the course coordinator.

5. Course evaluation
We are very keen to receive your insights and feedback on what went well or you found meaningful, what perhaps went not so well, and how to potentially improve. You are kindly requested to fill out the online Caracal evaluation e-mailed to you by the end of the course.

6. Fraud and plagiarism
https://students.uu.nl/en/practical-information/policies-and-procedures/fraud-and-plagiarism.