PR 599: Netnography for Digital Communications Insights

3.0 Units

Spring 2017 – Wednesdays – 6:30-9:10pm
Section: 21534
Location: ASC 328

Instructor: Robert Kozinets
Office: ASC 201A
Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesdays 4-6pm
Contact Info: rkozinets@usc.edu, Skype: rob.kozinets, Twitter: Kozinets

I. Course Description

This course provides deep understanding and hands-on experience in the application of digital anthropology to contemporary public relations and communication fields. Students will gain a toolkit of powerful frameworks and approaches through which to understand and inform decisions about social media management and other digital communications strategies.

Skills learned in this course include the analysis of multimedia data and presentation of research data. This course is suitable for all Master-level public relations, communication, and communications management students who want to be able to discover and apply research insights from all forms of social media data. Master and Ph.D. level students will benefits from the in-depth focus on an increasingly influential methodology.

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

• Understand the history and role of anthropological research in science, management and society
• Understand the origins and role of digital anthropology, online ethnography, and netnography in public relations and communication research and management
• Evaluate and compare cultural and statistical approaches to social media research
• Appreciate and evaluate netnographic research in any field
• Independently plan and conduct a netnography
• Collect, interpret and analyze qualitative and quantitative data from social media
• Present scientific findings and policy or industry implications from the cultural analysis of social media data

III. Description of Assignments

Short Individual Written Assignments (80 points)

Throughout the course, you will be required to provide short, written answers to directed questions that help reinforce and develop skills taught in class. The skills you will learn in the assignments are as follows:

1. How to conduct research introspection to align your civic engagement and career/life interests and goals with research (10 points)
2. Understanding and explaining netnography to a general audience (10 points)
3. Creating maps of social media landscapes (20 points)
4. How to analyze social media data using cultural and statistical methods (15 points)
5. Visually interpreting and presenting research insights from data (10 points)
6. Reflecting upon opportunities to leverage your netnography education in your early career (15 points)

These skills will be assigned as written work assigned in six structured written assignments. The assignments are to be completed individually and then submitted via Turnitin. Each one will be graded using a clear rubric. Each assignment counts for either 10, 15, or 20 points, as indicated above. In total, the six assignments will count for 40% of your total final grade in the course.

**Individual Netnography Project (50 points)**

The course project is complementary with the written assignments and leads you step-by-step through the creation and presentation of your own individual netnography project. These projects can have a strong civic responsibility angle (for example, how can we better communicate the need for climate change action to hostile constituents?), or a strongly applied aspect (for example, how can we better communicate the benefits of the Chipotle brand? or What will be the successful future innovations in coffee retailing?). It can also pursue a theoretical research agenda (for example, what are the different communication roles that sport fans express online?).

The three stages of the individual netnography project are as follows:

1. Formulation of the public relations, communications, or theoretical problem or question, plus netnographic research design and plan to address or answer it – 5 points
2. Midterm presentation and submission of the mapping of the social media landscape (e.g., relevant platforms and sites) and its cultural ecosystems (relevant actors, resources, and collectives)—15 points
3. Final data analysis, recommendations, in-class presentation and discussion (including participative, reflexive, and interactional data), and written report—30 points

The individual netnography project counts for 50 points in total. The first stage counts for 5 points (2.5% of your final grade), the second stage for 15 point (7.5% of your final grade), and the final stage for a total of 30 points (15% of your final grade).

**Class Leadership Assessment (20 points)**

Everyone in the class will take a turn at being the “class authority”. As class authority, you will leading us through one new readings for one class relating to the core topic. During the second week of class, you will have an opportunity to choose a date and accompanying topic for your Class Leadership assignment. Then, you will work with the professor to choose, introduce, and discuss an appropriate new reading from the business or academic press. Here is how it will work:

1. On January 18, you will choose the date for your Class Leadership presentation. You are responsible for knowing in detail all of the readings for that day.
2. In consultation with the professor (email is fine; we can also have a Skype conference or in person meeting), you will research and recommend one additional reading for the class. This additional resource is due NO LATER than one week before the scheduled class.
3. You are responsible for promoting the class topic using your own social media resources, including but not limited to the course Facebook page.
4. On the day of the class, you will prepare and deliver a 10-15 minute class presentation overviewing the CLASS TOPIC(s) for the week (not just the one reading, but the whole topic and all of the readings). You are also responsible for leading a class discussion and helping other students with their learning about the topics throughout the class (i.e., not just during your 10-15 minutes—you will be on the “hot seat” for the
entire class). The overall performance of student in this class will be graded and count for 20 points (10% of your final grade). You will receive quantitative and qualitative feedback after the class about your performance as a class leader.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Students who are absent from their own class authority presentations will receive a zero, unless other accommodations are agreed upon with the professor beforehand.

**Team In-class Research Design Project (20 points)**

In the final class of the semester, you will work on a time constrained in class research design project. You will work in groups of 2 people. As a nod to the realism of the work world, the professor will assign those teams. The in-class project is designed to synthesize your learning from the entire course. You will have approximately ninety minutes to discuss and work on this project with your partner. You will then be required to present your project to class in a 15-minute class presentation, with PowerPoint slides. You will take questions and receive feedback. The slide will be submitted, and the presentation will be graded and count for 20 points (10% of your final grade).

**Class Participation (30 points)**

Students should expect to spend 3-5 hours per week outside of class in preparation and working on assignments. Class participation counts for 15% of your final grade and is assessed after each class by the professor. Participation also includes participation in the course Facebook page.

### VIII. Breakdown of Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Individual Written Assignments</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Netnography Project</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Leadership Assessment (individual)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team In-class Research Design Project (group)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### b. Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Assessment</th>
<th>Numerical Percentage grade</th>
<th>Alphabetical grade</th>
<th>GPA equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent work</td>
<td>96-100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very strong performance</td>
<td>92-95.9</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong performance</td>
<td>88-91.9</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good work</td>
<td>84-87.9</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory performance</td>
<td>80-83.9</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c. Grading Standards

Across all assignments, grading in this class will emphasize: (1) clear thinking and writing, (2) critical thinking and writing, (3) a grasp of complex material, (4) an ability to understand scientific methodology and follow its directions, (5) an ability to synthesize empirical data and abstract useful and relevant concepts from it, and (6) the ability to recognize and generate relevant insights. Excellence in this class is marked by consistent outstanding performance in some or all of these aspects. Excellence on these characteristics is usually accompanied by a high degree of intellectual curiosity, motivation, ambition, empathy, and cultural competence.

Instructor: In addition to the grading breakdown / grading scale above, please describe the type and quality of work that is needed from the student in order to earn each letter grade.

Sample grading standards for public relations syllabi are provided below. Not all standards may apply to your course, but similar explanations of grading standards should be provided.

“A” deliverables, assignments, and projects show: very strong and clear writing (including supporting facts and figures, including relevant quotes from data and interviews); very strong critical thinking skills; a deep understanding of relevant material (with correct interpretations and reasonable assumptions stated); extraordinary interest in the topic leading to extra effort in additional research work; nearly flawless following of stated project or assignment directions; strong abstract thinking; genuinely creative thinking; and the presence of directly relevant insights.

“B” deliverables, assignments, and projects show: strong and clear writing (including supporting facts and figures, including relevant quotes from data and interviews); strong critical thinking skills; a good understanding of relevant material (with correct interpretations and reasonable assumptions stated); reasonable interest in the topic; highly competent flawless following of stated project or assignment directions; good abstract thinking; some creative thinking; and the presence of some relevant insights.

“C” deliverables, assignments, and projects show: weak writing (more than 4 errors in spelling and grammar; missing supporting facts and figures, not including relevant quotes from data and interviews); poor critical thinking skills; many misunderstandings of relevant material (unsupported interpretations or unstated assumptions); perfunctory style; failure to follow stated project or assignment directions; lack of abstract thinking; and very little insight.

“D” deliverables, assignments, and projects show: weak writing (more than 7 errors in spelling and grammar; missing supporting facts and figures, not including relevant quotes from data and interviews); little to no critical thinking skills; many misunderstandings of relevant material (unsupported interpretations or unstated...
assumptions); poor organization; perfunctory style; failure to follow stated project or assignment directions; lack of abstract thinking; and almost no insight.

“F” projects are weak in every dimension mentioned for “d” deliverables, late or not turned in.

Class Participation

Your Class Participation grade will be assigned based upon (1) your attendance, (2) contributions to in-class discussions (quality as well as quantity), (3) contributions to the online Facebook page and other relevant social media regarding the class, and, in terms of quality (4) fluency with and insights on the readings and central course topics, (5) ability to start and maintain interesting classroom and online conversations, and (6) your performance when called upon for the class exercises. Poor attendance (more than two classes missed without reason/permission) will affect your grade. Participation in the course Facebook page is assessed at regular intervals throughout the semester. One sure way to signal your interest in gaining an A grade in Class Participation in this class is to consistently read not only the required and the “skim” readings, but also to find and share additional relevant readings, and come to class prepared to explain their significance to the other students in the class. I am happy to discuss your current class participation grade with you at any point in the semester.

V. Assignment Submission Policy

A. All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be given a grade of F.

B. Assignments must be submitted via Turnitin on Blackboard, as explained in class.

VI. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

The required text for this course is:


Book chapters from the book will be distributed through the course Blackboard page.

Required readings that are published in journal articles are available online through the USC library system.

Required readings that are single chapters of published books will be shared on the course Blackboard page

VII. Laptop and Technology Policy

This is a class about technology use. We study it, close-up. We use search technologies as our research technique. However, we have a complete on/off code of ethics. When we are doing exercises, laptop use (not mobile phones, however) is permitted in class and indeed necessary for you to participate in the class. YOU WILL NEED YOUR LAPTOP EVERY CLASS. Not for email or Facebook checking, or even LinkedIn or Twitter, but ONLY AS AUTHORIZED, for netnographic research and training. Otherwise, laptop and Internet usage is forbidden. Unauthorized laptop use is not permitted during academic or professional sessions unless explicitly approved by Prof. Kozinets only.

MOBILE NOT ALLOWED:

• Use of other personal communication devices, such as tablet devices or cell phones, is considered unprofessional and is not permitted during academic or professional sessions

• ANY e-devices (cell phones, tablets, iPhones/iPads, Galaxies, Blackberries, Androids, and other communications devices must be either in airplane mode or completely turned off, unable to ring or vibrate, and stowed away during class time

• Upon request, you must comply and put your device in off mode and stow it away. Face down is too tempting.
You might also be asked to deposit your devices in a designated area in the classroom.

VIDEO TAPEING: Videotaping faculty lectures is not permitted due to copyright infringement regulations. Audiotaping may be permitted if approved by the professor. Use of any recorded or distributed material is reserved exclusively for the USC students registered in this class.

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the Annenberg Virtual Commons for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, please visit USC’s Information Technology Services website.

VIII. Course Schedule A Weekly Breakdown

**Important notes to students:** Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change – and probably will change – based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

Please follow these guidelines for prioritizing readings:

- **READ** = first priority (read completely, make some notes, understand, come prepared to discuss); this is considered assigned reading and you will be assumed to have read it fully before coming to class.
- **Skim** = second priority (read abstract and some of the text; be familiar with it)
- **Lightly skim** = third priority (try to look at this once you have finished the other two priority readings; have some familiarity with it, but not necessarily a very in-depth understanding—unless you find it of interest, of course)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Topics/Activities</th>
<th>Readings and Homework</th>
<th>Deliverable/Due Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dates: 1/11/17 | Data—Big, Small, and Deep | • Course Syllabus (READ)  
• Kozinets (2017), Ch 1 (READ) | Exercise 1 |
| Week 2 | Communication Insights and Intelligence | • Deep Data (2017), Ch 2 and 3 (READ)  
• Aiden and Michel (2013), Un-charted, Ch2  
• Hamilton (2016), Consumer-based Strategy, JAMS (skim)  
• Sharp (2009), Competitive Intelligence Advantage, Ch2 (skim) | Choose class leadership date (in class)  
Deliverable 1: Introspection Exercise |
| Dates: 1/18/17 | | | |
| Week 3 | Applied Cultural Research and Understanding | • Deep Data (2017), Ch 4 (READ)  
• Stock (2106), Beyond Spam, available online at https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2016-hormel-spam/ (READ)Mariampolski (2006),  
• Ethnography for Marketers, Ch. 1 (skim)  
• Cayla and Arnould (2013), Ethnographic Stories for Marketing Learning, JM (skim) | Leadership1 |
| Dates: 1/25/17 | | | |
| Week 4 | Netnography Defined and Explained | • Netnography Redefined (2015), N:D, Ch4  
• Deep Data (2017), Ch. 6  
• Bartl et al. (2015), Review and Analysis of Research on Netnography, IJTM | Leadership2  
Deliverable 2: Wikipedia edit |
| Dates: 2/1/17 | | | |
| Week 5 | Doing Netnography Workshop | • Deep Data (2017), Ch 7 and 8 (READ)  
• Association of Internet Researchers (2012), Ethical decision-making and Internet research 2.0 (READ) | Project Deliverable, Phase 1: Question & Research Plan |
<p>| Dates: 2/8/17 | | | |
| Week 6 | Participation, | • Deep Data (2017), Ch 9 (READ) | Leadership3 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates: 2/15/17</th>
<th>Curation, and Visualization</th>
<th>• Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Ch 1: (READ)</th>
<th>Exercise 2: Personal Branding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 7 Dates: 2/22/17</td>
<td>Cultural Communications Management</td>
<td>• Deep Data (2017), Chapter5 (READ) • Holt (2004), How Brands Become Icons, Ch2 (skim) • Tybout and Sternthal (1999), Kellogg on Marketing, Ch4: (skim) • Rapaille (2006), The Culture Code, Ch2 (READ)</td>
<td>Deliverable 3: Initial Landscape mapping deliverable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates: 2/22/17</td>
<td>Netnography, Brands, and Communication Frameworks</td>
<td>• Shirky (2008), Here comes Everybody, Ch8 (READ) • McQuarrie and Phillips (2014), The Megaphone Effect in Social Media(READ) • Kozinet, de Valck and Wojnicki (2014), Lost in Translation (READ) • Holt and Cameron (2010), Cultural Branding, Ch8: Marlboro—The Power of Cultural Codes (READ) • Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006), Emotional Branding and the Strategic Value of the Doppleganger Brand Image (*-skim)</td>
<td>Leadership4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates: 3/1/17</td>
<td>Midterm Project Discussion</td>
<td>• Weissman (2009), The Power Presenter, Chapter 12 (READ)</td>
<td>Individual Project Deliverable, Phase 2: Landscapes &amp; Ecosystems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| SPRING BREAK! | No Class :(
| Dates: 3/22/17 | Coding and Content Analysis Workshop | • Deep Data, Ch 10 (coding pages) • Miles and Huberman (2014), Qualitative Data Analysis, Chapter 4: Fundamentals of Qualitative Data Analysis (READ) • Elo and Kyngash (2007), The Qualitative Content Analysis Process (READ) • Stemler (2001), An Overview of Content Analysis (*-skim) | Leadership5 |
| Dates: 4/5/17 | Engagement and Experience | • Deep Data, Ch 11 and 12 • Belz and Baumbaugh (2010), Netnography as a Method of Lead Use Innovation, C&IM • Bartl et al. (2011), Getting Closer to the Consumer, MRSt.G | Leadership7 |
IX. Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

Instructor: Add any additional policies specific to your class that students should be aware of: missed classes, attendance expectations, checking USC email, use of technology in the classroom, dress code, etc.

Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must by unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words - is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards https://scampus.usc.edu/b/11-00-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.
**USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity**

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

**b. Support Systems**

*Equity and Diversity*

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity [http://equity.usc.edu/](http://equity.usc.edu/) or to the Department of Public Safety [http://dps.usc.edu/contact/report/](http://dps.usc.edu/contact/report/). This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community - such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member - can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/) provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [https://sarc.usc.edu/](https://sarc.usc.edu/) describes reporting options and other resources.

*Support with Scholarly Writing*

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute [http://ali.usc.edu/](http://ali.usc.edu/) which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

[http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.

Students requesting test-related accommodations will need to share and discuss their DSP recommended accommodation letter/s with their faculty and/or appropriate departmental contact person at least three weeks before the date the accommodations will be needed. Additional time may be needed for final exams. Reasonable exceptions will be considered during the first three weeks of the semester as well as for temporary injuries and for students recently diagnosed. Please note that a reasonable period of time is still required for DSP to review documentation and to make a determination whether a requested accommodation will be appropriate.

*Stress Management*

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

*Emergency Information*

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* [http://emergency.usc.edu/](http://emergency.usc.edu/) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**X. About Your Instructor**
Robert Kozinets (BBA, MBA, Ph.D.) is an academic innovator who has developed important methods and theories that are widely used around the world. In 1995, he invented netnography, an application of cultural anthropology to digital networks. Since that time, he has applied, developed, written about, and taught digital research methods and branding theories to academics as well as to companies like AMEX, TD Bank, Zurich Insurance, Campbell Soup, L’Oreal, Merck, and many others. His work on netnography has spawned thousands of academic research articles and papers, and hundreds of market research studies. His publications include over 100 articles, chapters, case studies, and videographies, as well as a textbook and four books. Currently, Kozinets is Associate Editor of the Journal of Consumer Research and the Journal of Retailing, an Academic Trustee of the Marketing Science Institute, and is the Industry seat on the Board of Directors of the Association for Consumer Research. He is the Jayne and Hans Hufschmid Chair of Strategic Public Relations and Business Communication at University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, a position he shares with the USC Marshall School of Business.