

Content Analysis Practicum: News Coverage of America's Wars

SPCM 529 SA / PS 519 SA

T Th 3:30pm–4:50pm

398 Lincoln Hall (lecture), 338 Davenport Hall (lab)

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The objectives of this methods course on content analysis are threefold:

- (1) to teach a generic and multi-purpose method of quantitative content analysis that is commonly employed by scholars of mass communication and political communication to measure trends and discourse elements in news coverage;
- (2) to give students practical experience in all stages of quantitative content analysis, from protocol design to validity testing, reliability testing, coding, data entry, and data analysis;
- (3) to produce publishable research papers on the dynamics of public communication, co-authored by me and the students in the course (the number of these papers will depend on the number of students taking the course and the scope of the projects we choose to undertake).

In order to focus on the practical aspects of content analysis and to complete a major data collection effort by the end of the semester, the course will be organized around a particular set of research questions chosen by me in advance of the semester that are of broad topical interest, both popularly and in scholarly circles, and that have never been subject to systematic quantitative content analysis. This semester we will be examining the historical development of news coverage about major American wars (from World War 1 to the present, including the Pacific and European theaters in World War 2, Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq). Content analysis projects pursued in the course will therefore be designed to provide systematic evidence addressing the following types of research questions that are open to debate in the literature on war and the media:

- How has the coverage of combat and casualties changed over time?
- How has visual imagery of war changed over time?
- Has news coverage of war become more negative over time?
- Are casualties covered more or less graphically today? Are casualties today more likely to be depicted as individuals rather than abstractions?
- What is the impact of government censorship on news coverage of war?
- What is the impact of self-censorship by news organizations on news coverage of war?

Required Reading

Students are required to obtain the following books, which are available at local bookstores:

- Daniel C. Hallin. 1986. *The Uncensored War*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (one copy is on reserve at the Communications Library in Gregory Hall)
- Kimberly A. Neuendorf. 2002. *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (one non-circulating copy is in the reserve stacks of the Education Library, call number 301.01 N393)

Students are also required to obtain a set of additional readings for class, most of which are available in electronic form (details TBA). In addition, each research project will entail a set of recommended readings.

Assignments

Your final grade for this course will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

- Weekly participation in class discussions and lab sessions (20% of final grade)
- Short content analysis research paper (due 10/17) (15% of final grade)
- In-class literature review presentations (15% of final grade)
- Meeting weekly content analysis case quotas (10% of final grade)
- Final group project paper (40% of final grade)

The *short content analysis research paper* (roughly 8-10 pages of text) can take either of two forms: an empirical paper or a review paper. The analytical paper option gives you the opportunity to play around with computer content analysis software like Diction 5.0 (we have a license for this class) or VBPro, applying this software to the same types of texts that we're analyzing for the class projects in order to assess the usefulness of this software for research that you may be interested in doing. The review paper option gives you the opportunity to review and critique the ways that scholarship in a particular subfield or area of interest has employed the methods of content analysis, giving particular attention to methodological issues of sampling frames, measurement units, reliability and validity. Whichever option you choose, the specific topic and scope of your research paper will be determined in consultation with the course instructor.

In-class literature review presentations will consist of two students commenting on each assigned piece. In addition to short in-class presentations, each of the assigned students will also produce short (normally 1-2 page single-spaced) summaries of their comments on the readings. Normally, one student will present its main arguments, theoretical contributions, and findings relevant to course projects, while the other critiques those arguments, contributions, and findings. Other arrangements are possible in consultation with the instructor.

Research Projects

This class is intended to yield three publishable journal manuscripts produced by two research groups (a visual media group and a textual media group), and depending on available time could yield a fourth publishable manuscript if volunteers choose to pursue this project in addition to the others:

1. Over-time changes in the tone of news reporting within and across major wars of the 20th and 21st century
 - Textual media group only
 - Manuscript subfield: political communication
 - Target journal(s): *Journal of Politics* or *American Journal of Political Science*; *Political Communication* or *Press/Politics* as fallback
2. Over-time changes in the reporting of casualties, combat, and war technology within and across major wars of the 20th and 21st century
 - Textual and visual media groups combined
 - Manuscript subfield: mass communication/political communication
 - Target journal(s): *Journal of Communication* or *Human Communication Research*; *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* as fallback
3. Over-time changes in the effects of formal versus self-censorship in war imagery within and across major wars of the 20th and 21st century
 - Visual media group only
 - Manuscript subfield: mass communication/political communication
 - Target journal(s): *Journal of Communication* or *Human Communication Research*; *Journal of Broadcast & Electronic Media* or *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* as fallback
4. [OPTIONAL PROJECT] The impact of government censorship on the tone and content of war coverage, case studies of (1) Korea and (2) differences between Afghanistan and Iraq wars
 - Volunteers from both the visual and textual media groups
 - Manuscript subfield: political communication
 - Target journal(s): *Journal of Conflict Resolution* or *Political Communication* or *Press/Politics*; *American Politics Quarterly* as fallback.

Authorship and Data-Sharing Agreement

By taking this course and participating in its data collection project(s), the following guidelines determine authorship credits for the specific projects detailed above (see “Research Projects”):

- Default order of authorship credit: the course instructor is first author, followed by each student (in alphabetical order) who participated materially in the collection of data, the analysis of data, or manuscript preparation for the particular project.
- Modifications to this default order of authorship credit can be made with the consent of the majority of persons claiming authorship in the project's publication. Reasons for modifying the order of authorship include, but are not limited to: recognizing additional data collection effort above and beyond those of other co-authors, recognizing the contribution of special skills or additional time above and beyond those contributed by other co-authors, and recognizing additional effort given to preparing or revising the manuscript for publication. It is common for some participants to contribute only to data collection, while others go on to also put extra work into the manuscript and publication process—these differences in material contributions normally should be factors influencing the order of authorship. Authors can also be dropped from sharing credit in the project if the data they supply turns out to be flawed or otherwise unusable due to problems in the quality of data collection.

In addition, students taking this course and participating in its data collection project(s) also agree that once each research project (as defined above) yields its intended publication, all data collected for the project can be used freely by any of the project co-authors, who agree to cite the authors of the original publication as the source of the data. This means that every project participant is guaranteed authorship credit on the first publication, but not on any subsequent publications that might result from this data collection effort. This is meant to encourage students to add further data to the cases or to use the original data for different projects without having to involve or get individual permission from all of the original co-authors.

Tentative Course Schedule

<i>Shaded boxes indicate Davenport 338; unshaded boxes indicate Lincoln Hall 398</i>	
Project Days	Classroom Days
	8/24 Overview of Course and Introduction to Content Analysis Projects
8/29 <i>Before class:</i> review all PPT presentations from undergraduate war projects and all individually-assigned written reports <i>In-class:</i> discussion on findings from particular wars, preliminary discussion of draft codebook and sampling frames, divide into project groups	8/31 [NO CLASS MEETING] <i>Readings:</i> CAG chapters 1, 2, 3, and 9 <i>Assignment for next class session:</i> begin examining content with the draft coding scheme in mind

9/5 <i>Before class:</i> review CAG chapters 1, 2, 3, and 9 for in-class discussion <i>In-class:</i> discuss assigned chapters, refine draft codebook	9/7 Validity I: Generalizability
9/12 <i>In-class:</i> Determining sampling frames for content analysis projects; draw samples for reliability testing for each project	9/14 Validity II: Operationalization
9/19 <i>In-class:</i> Refining codebook	9/21 Reliability
9/26 <i>In-class:</i> Refining codebook	9/28 Validity III: Databases and Content Proxies
10/3 <i>In-class:</i> Discuss results of first reliability test, refine coding scheme, and draw new sample	10/5 Formal and Informal Censorship
<p>A Visual History of Modern War Reporting [NO CLASSES AT REGULAR TIMES THIS WEEK]</p> <p>Wednesday 10/11 Special Class Session, 6pm-10pm at the Althaus Home Theater (directions and popcorn will be provided), special screening of Stephen Ives (2004) <i>Reporting America at War</i></p> <p>Reading: Carruthers chapters, film review by Daniel Hallin</p>	
10/17 <u>Short content analysis research paper due</u> <i>In-class:</i> Discuss results of second reliability test. If necessary, refine coding scheme, and draw new sample; otherwise begin coding	10/19 World War I
10/24 <i>In-class:</i> Discuss results of third reliability test (if needed)	10/26 World War II
10/31 <i>In-class:</i> Interesting examples session	11/2 Korean War
11/7 <i>In-class:</i> Interesting examples session	11/9 Vietnam War

11/14 <i>In-class</i> : Interesting examples session	11/16 Iraq War
11/21 NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK	11/23 NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK
11/28 <i>In-class</i> : Data cleaning and analysis session	11/30 Microsoft Access Basics
12/5 <i>In-class</i> : Data cleaning and analysis session	12/7 Visual Presentation of Data
12/13 Project Presentations, 7:00-10:00 PM, Wednesday, December 13	

Reading List

The History, Applications and Analytical Logic of Content Analysis

CAG chapters 1, 2, 3, and 9

Validity I: Generalizability

CAG chapters 4, “Message Units and Sampling”

Barnhurst, Kevin. (in preparation). Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 of *The New Long News*.
Unpublished manuscript. Available [here](#)

CAG resource 3, “Computer Content Analysis Software” and software links available
in Content Analysis Guidebook Online web page at [this location](#)

Examples:

Fico, Frederick and William Cote. 1999. “Fairness and Balance in the Structural
Characteristics of Newspaper Stories on the 1996 Presidential Election.”
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 76(1): 124-137. Available [here](#)

Niven, David. 2002. Chapters 4 and 5 in *Tilt? The Search for Media Bias*. Westport,
CT: Praeger.

Hart, Roderick. 2000. Chapters 2 and 3, and the methodological details on pp. 245-
251 and 263-268, in *Campaign Talk: Why Elections Are Good for Us*.
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Miller, M. Mark, Julie L. Andsager, and Bonnie P. Riechert. 1998. “Framing the
Candidates in Presidential Primaries: Issues and Images in Press Releases and
News Coverage.” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 75(2): 312-
324. Available [here](#)

Validity II: Operationalization

CAG chapters 5 and 6

- Krippendorff, Klaus. 2004. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology, Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. **Chapter 5, “Unitizing”**
- Krippendorff, Klaus. 2004. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology, Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. **Chapter 7, “Recording/Coding”**
- Potter, W. James, and Deborah Levine-Donnerstein. 1999. “Rethinking Validity and Reliability in Content Analysis.” *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 27: 258-284.

Examples:

- Dixon, Travis L. and Daniel Linz. 2000. “Overrepresentation and Underrepresentation of African Americans and Latinos as Lawbreakers on Television News.” *Journal of Communication* 50(2): 131-154. Available [here](#)
- Nadeau, Richard, Elisabeth Gidengil, Neil Nevitte, André Blais. 1998. “Do Trained and Untrained Coders Perceive Electoral Coverage Differently?” Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA. Available [here](#)
- Berinsky, Adam and Donald R. Kinder. 2006. “Making Sense of Issues through Media Frames: Understanding the Kosovo Crisis” *Journal of Politics* 68(3): 640-656. Available [here](#)
- Watts, Mark D., David Domke, Dhavan V. Shah, and David P. Fan. 1999. “Elite cues and media bias in presidential campaigns - Explaining public perceptions of a liberal press.” *Communication Research* 26(2):144-175. Available [here](#)

Reliability

- CAG chapter 7, “Reliability”
- Krippendorff, Klaus. 2004. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology, Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. **Chapter 11, “Reliability”**
- Bakeman, Roger and John M. Gottman. 1997. Chapter 4, “Assessing Observer Agreement” in *Observing Interaction: An Introduction to Sequential Analysis, 2nd ed.* New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lombard, Matthew, Jennifer Snyder-Duch, and Cheryl Campanella Bracken. 2002. Content analysis in mass communication: Assessment and reporting of intercoder reliability. *Human Communication Research* 28 (4):587-604. Available [here](#)
- Krippendorff, Klaus. 2004. “Reliability in Content Analysis: Some Common Misconceptions and Recommendations.” *Human Communication Research* 30(3): 411-433. Available [here](#)

Validity III: Databases and Content Proxies

Databases

CAG resource 2, "Using Nexis"

Snider, James H., and Kenneth Janda. 1998. "Newspapers in bytes and bits: Limitations of electronic databases for content analysis." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 3-6, at Boston, MA.

Stryker, Jo Ellen, Ricardo J. Wray, Robert C. Hornik, and Itzik Yanovitsky. 2006. "Validation of Database Search Terms for Content Analysis: The Case of Cancer News Coverage." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 83(2): 413-430.

News Indices

Woolley, John T. (2000). Using media-based data in studies of politics. *American Journal of Political Science* 44:156-173. Available [here](#)

Althaus, Scott, Jill Edy, and Patricia Phalen. 2001. "Using Substitutes for Full-Text News Stories in Content Analysis: Which Text is Best?" *American Journal of Political Science* 45(3): 707-723. Available [here](#)

News Abstracts

Althaus, Scott, Jill Edy, and Patricia Phalen. 2002. "Using the Vanderbilt Television Abstracts to Track Broadcast News Content: Possibilities and Pitfalls." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 46(3): 473-492. Available [here](#)

Edy, Jill, Scott Althaus, and Patricia Phalen. 2005. "Using News Abstracts to Represent News Agendas." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 82(2): 434-46. Available [here](#)

Page, Benjamin, Robert Shapiro, and Glenn Dempsey. 1987. What Moves Public Opinion? *American Political Science Review* 81 (1):23-43. Available [here](#)

Formal and Informal Censorship

Bennett, W. Lance. 1990. Toward a theory of press-state relations in the United States. *Journal of Communication* 40 (2):103-125. Available [here](#)

Althaus, Scott. 2003. "When News Norms Collide, Follow the Lead: New Evidence for Press Independence." *Political Communication* 20(4): 381-414. Available [here](#)

Robinson, Piers, and Peter Goddard. 2006. Measuring media autonomy in wartime: An analysis of U.K. TV news coverage of the 2003 Iraq War. Paper presented at the International Studies Association Convention, at San Diego, CA.

Presentation 1

Entman, R. M. (2003). *Projections of power: Framing news, public opinion and U.S. foreign policy*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Presentation 2

Mermin, J. (1999). *Debating war and peace: Media coverage of U.S. intervention in the post-Vietnam era*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.

A Visual History of Modern War Reporting

Carruthers, Susan L. 2000. Chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 54-162) in *The media at war: Communication and conflict in the twentieth century*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

World War I

Presentation 3

Ponder, Stephen. 1998. Chapter 7, "Presidential Propaganda in World War I," in Stephen Ponder, *Managing the Press: Origins of the Media Presidency, 1897-1933*. New York: Palgrave.

Presentation 4

Mott, Frank Luther. 1962. "The Modern Newspaper 1914-1940" (pp. 615-740) in *American Journalism, A History: 1690-1960*. New York: Macmillan.

Presentation 5

Phillip Knightley. 2004. Chapters 5 and 6 (pp. 83-146) in *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq*. (3rd Edition). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Presentation 6

Moeller, Susan D. 1989. Part Two (pp. 87-154) in *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat*. New York: Basic Books.

Presentation 7

Lasswell, Harold. 1927. *Propaganda technique in World War I*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

World War II

Presentation 8

Roeder, George H. 1993. *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two*. New Haven, CT: Oxford University Press.

Presentation 9

Phillip Knightley. 2004. Chapters 10 and 11 (pp. 237-292) in *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq*. (3rd Edition). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Presentation 10

Phillip Knightley. 2004. Chapters 12 and 13 (pp. 293-364) in *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq*. (3rd Edition). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Presentation 11

Mott, Frank Luther. 1962. "Journalism in the 1940's" (pp. 741-802) in *American Journalism, A History: 1690-1960*. New York: Macmillan.

Presentation 12

Dower, John W. 1986. Chapters 1-7 (pp. 3-202) *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Presentation 13

Moeller, Susan D. 1989. Part Three (pp. 155-250) in *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat*. New York: Basic Books.

Korean War

Presentation 14

Voorhees, Melvin B. 1952. *Korean Tales*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Presentation 15

Phillip Knightley. 2004. Chapter 14 (pp. 365-390) in *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq*. (3rd Edition). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Presentation 16

Mott, Frank Luther. 1962. "The Era of the Mass Audience" (pp. 803-866) in *American Journalism, A History: 1690-1960*. New York: Macmillan.

Presentation 17

Moeller, Susan D. 1989. Part Four (pp. 251-324) in *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat*. New York: Basic Books.

Vietnam War

(everyone reading) Hallin, *Uncensored War*

Presentation 18

Phillip Knightley. 2004. Chapters 16 and 17 (pp. 409-468) in *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq*. (3rd Edition). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Presentation 19

Patterson, Oscar. 1982. *The Vietnam Veteran and the Media: A Comparative Content Analysis of Media Coverage of the War and the Veteran, 1968-1973*. PhD thesis, University of Tennessee.

Presentation 20

Moeller, Susan D. 1989. Part Five (pp. 325-413) in *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat*. New York: Basic Books.

Iraq War

Presentation 21

Aday, Sean. 2005. The real war will never get on television: An analysis of casualty imagery in American television coverage of the Iraq War. In *Media and conflict in the twenty-first century*, edited by P. Seib. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Presentation 22

King, Cynthia, and Paul Martin Lester. 2005. Photographic coverage during the Persian Gulf and Iraq wars in three U.S. newspapers. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 82 (3):623-637. Available [here](#)

Presentation 23

Aday, Sean, S. Livingston, and M. Hebert. 2005. Embedding the truth a cross-cultural analysis of objectivity and television coverage of the Iraq war. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 10 (1):3-21. Available [here](#)

Presentation 24

Pfau, M., M. Haigh, M. Gettle, M. Donnelly, G. Scott, D. Warr, and E. Wittenberg. 2004. Embedding journalists in military combat units: Impact on newspaper story frames and tone. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 81 (1):74-88. Available [here](#)

Presentation 25

Haigh, M., Pfau, M., et al. 2006. "A Comparison of Embedded and Nonembedded Print Coverage of the US Invasion and Occupation of Iraq." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 11 (2):139-153. Available [here](#)

Basics of MS Access

Readings TBA

Basics of Excel and Stata Graphics

CAG chapter 8

Mitchell, Michael N. 2004. Chapter 1, "Introduction," in *A Visual Guide to Stata Graphics*. College Station, TX: Stata Press. Available [here](#)

Recommended:

Tufte, Edward. 1983. *The visual display of quantitative information*. Cheshire, CN: Graphics Press.

Tufte, Edward. 1983. *Envisioning information*. Cheshire, CN: Graphics Press.