



SOC 1401 Social Research: A Narrative Approach Fall 2026 Course Syllabus

Course & Instructor Information

Instructor	Li Yumei, Ph.D.	Credit Hours	3
Email	yumei.li@scupi.cn	Classroom	N208, SCUPI Building
Office Hours		Office	N424
Th 8:00 AM-11:00 AM			
Fri 12:00 PM- 5:00 PM		Prerequisites	ENGCOMP 200
(And other times by appointment)			

To be a convincing “I-witness,” one must, so it seems, first become a convincing “I.”
--Clifford Geertz

Some of my impulse to be a writer comes from that feeling that I want to write myself into existence. I want to write the worlds that I've lived in, and the people I've been in the world with, into existence ...
— Danzy Senna

I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say.
— Flannery O'Connor

Suggested Texts

All readings will be made available in Blackboard (<https://pibb.scu.edu.cn>) under the “Contents” tab.

Communication With Yumei

Open communication is key to your success, so I encourage you to connect with me both in and out of class. If you have questions or wish to schedule an appointment, email me at yumei.li@scupi.cn. Be sure to **include your purpose in the subject line** (e.g., “Appointment Request”) and always **include your full name** in the email. I typically respond within **one business day**, but feel free to stop by my office (**N424**) to talk in person.

Course Description

We as humans have always wondered why and how our social world operates in particular ways. You might have asked yourself: What factors influence college students’ decisions to enroll at a transnational institute in China? How do students perceive their experiences at such institutions? What factors motivate college students to study abroad? Why do some students disengage from their academic pursuits during college? In the end, you might sit down and ask yourself: Why am I (not) interested in these questions? What do I gain from thinking about these questions? And what do I learn from dealing with my surroundings the way I am doing?

This class will adopt a narrative approach to exploring such questions about the social world. In an interactive classroom learning environment, students will be introduced to the historical development of narrative inquiry and evaluate a variety of case studies in social sciences.



Students will design and implement a narrative research project addressing a challenge currently encountered in the world of practice. Broadly, this course will:

1. introduce students to foundational concepts of social research and the use of narrative inquiry in studying the social world;
2. guide students to evaluate specific case studies in social sciences and understand the overarching purpose of social research;
3. support students in applying a narrative approach to examining real-world social problems; and
4. help students develop critical thinking, public presentation, and team-work skills.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. collaborate effectively to examine the social world;
2. evaluate and critique social research with reasoned judgment;
3. formulate a research question and develop a feasible plan for investigation;
4. identify and compare various methods for collecting and analyzing data;
5. deliver a public presentation on a social issue or question; and
6. produce narrative research projects that adhere to appropriate style and formatting guidelines.

Assignments and Evaluation

Below is a breakdown of the course's assignments and grading scale. A detailed prompt will be provided for each assignment, outlining instructions about content, format, and submission procedures. Unless discussed with the instructor previously, **late assignments will not be accepted**, and the failure to complete your work will result in a failing grade.

ASSIGNMENT 1 Works-in-progress	Research proposal with a focused research question	20%
ASSIGNMENT 2 Project Presentation	A paper presentation on students' final research projects.	10%
ASSIGNMENT 3 Final Project	A full-fledged narrative research paper	50%
ASSIGNMENT 4 Class Participation and Routine Writing	Attendance, homework, in-class activities, and any other assignments both inside and outside of class	20%
Total*		100%
*Student participation is key to success in this class. Each unexcused absence will lead to a deduction of 3 points or half a letter grade from your final grade. Please note that three or more absences (counted from Week 1) will result in failure of the course.		

Tentative Schedule

(subject to change based on the needs of the class at the instructor's discretion)

PART I: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Week 1 (9/3)

Introduction to the Course; What Is Social Research?

Discussion of syllabus, reading materials, course requirements, and grading policy.



- What is social research?
In-class writing and discussions
- Week 2 (9/10) Why Narrative**
Historical development of narrative approaches to understanding society
In-class writing and discussions
- Week 3 (9/17) Research Ethics and Politics**
How do we behave ethically as researchers?
What are the rules that we must observe as ethical researchers? What are the possible ethical dilemmas in social scientific research?
In-class writing and discussions
- Week 4 (9/24) Narrating the Self**
Positionality in narrative research
Voice as attitude and as character
In-class writing and discussions
- Week 5 (10/1) No Class**
Self-directed work: refine research questions and design

PART II: METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

- Week 6 (10/8) Participatory Observation**
How to do field observations
Assignment 1 Due
- Week 7 (10/15) Interviewing and Focus Group**
In-class writing and discussions
- Week 8 (10/22) Documents as Sources of Data**
In-class writing and discussions

PART III: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

- Week 9 (10/29) Narrative Analysis 1**
Coding and thematic analysis
In-class writing and discussions
- Week 10 (11/5) Narrative Analysis 2**
Structural analysis
In-class writing and discussions
- Week 11 (11/12) Narrative Analysis 3**
Interactional and performative analysis
In-class writing and discussions
- Week 12 (11/19) Analysis Synthesis and Peer Workshop**
In-class writing and discussions



PART IV PRESENTING YOUR RESEARCH

Week 13 (11/26) **Research Paper Presentation**

Presenting your research

Week 14 (12/3) **Research Paper Presentation**

Presenting your research

Week 15 (12/10) **Research Paper Workshop**

Week 16 (12/17) **Wrap-Up**

Final Research Paper Due

Participation

Active participation is crucial for language learning. Participating in class makes you an engaged learner of English. In this class, participation means:

- arriving at class on time
- staying on task (including appropriate use of technology)
- actively listening to your classmates and teacher when they speak in class
- asking questions
- bringing all class materials
- attending class regularly
- completing all homework on time
- actively and constructively participating in class activities
- being prepared to answer questions
- using only English in class

Note: Attendance is a necessary but not sufficient condition for participation.

You have to come to class to participate, but just being there is far from enough.

SCUPI Honor Code

Students on this course must follow the SCUPI Honor Code. This includes:

- must not get help from anyone to do his/her work without the teacher's permission.
- must not get help from any outside sources to do his/her work without the teacher's permission.
- must not copy the words of another and present those words as his/her own work.

A Note Concerning Plagiarism The class adopts a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism. You must never copy another person's words or ideas and present them as your own. All sources must be properly cited and accurately represented; you may not distort a source's original meaning to fit your claims. Assistance from outside sources is not permitted without the instructor's prior approval. Any plagiarism will result in failing the course. **Using AI tools to generate an essay or large sections of text will result in an F.**



Student Use of Electronic Technology Policy

Students must use electronic technology (including cell phones, laptops, tablets, and iPads) in appropriate ways during classes. Out of respect, cell phones should generally be turned off or on silent and stored out of sight. They should not be used during classroom activities unless the instructor has given permission.

Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may NOT record classroom lectures, discussions, and/or activities without the advance permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly recorded in advance can be used solely for the student's own private study.

Make-Up Policy for Missed Assignments

Students are responsible for the assignments in their classes. Assignments include in-class activities, tests, homework, and any other work related to classes.

- If you are absent from class, you should try to contact one of the students in your class to find out what work was missed.
- If you cannot find out from another student about what work you have missed, when you return to class you must talk to your instructors about the missed work and if/when you can make up the work. You are responsible for talking to your teacher; your teacher is not responsible for reminding you about missed work.
- If you are absent from class on the due date of an assignment, you must hand in the assignment on a date decided with your teacher.
- If you know you will be absent, talk to your teacher before you leave or email your teacher to find out about the work that you will miss while you are away.
- If you have not been absent from class and you want to hand in an assignment late, you must first discuss the reason with your teacher before or on the due date. Do not assume that your teacher will accept late assignments.
- If you and your teacher arrange to meet so that you can make up an assignment and you miss that meeting, you may receive a "0" for that assignment.

Note: If your final grade is below 60, you will need to retake the course when it is offered again. No make-up exams or assignments of any kind will be available at the start of the following semester.

Student Responsibility

This syllabus is a contract between you and the instructor. It is the first place you should look for answers to your questions about course requirements, expectations, and policies. By enrolling in this course, you agree to adhere to the requirements, expectations and policies outlined in this syllabus, including sections on the SCUPI Honor Code. Students who fail to submit their work on time or miss 3 or more classes could receive a failing grade and may not graduate.