

**COM 407: Advanced Critical Methods in Communication – Stauffer 232 – Spring 2019**

SLN 10175 MW 3:05-4:20 p.m. and SLN 10176 MW 4:35-5:50 p.m.

The Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, Arizona State U-Tempe

**Sarah J. Tracy, Ph.D.,** Herberger Professor - [Sarah.Tracy@asu.edu](mailto:Sarah.Tracy@asu.edu)

Student Drop-by Times: M 6-6:30 & W 1:50-2:50. STAUF 424A. Appts also available.

Class Apprentice: Sarah Jesseph, [sjesseph@asu.edu](mailto:sjesseph@asu.edu), available to help, meet, & answer questions

**Course Description:**

This course is a senior “capstone” that brings together communication theory, qualitative research methods, and lived experience. Through reading about qualitative methodology and immersion into one’s own in-depth project, this course provides experience in a variety of research approaches, accounting for issues of epistemology (ways of knowing), methodology (ways of examining), and representation (ways of reporting). We will examine the ways in which these skills attend to important research questions as well as prepare students for a variety of life and work experiences.

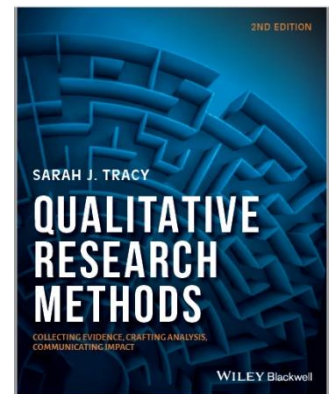


Welcome to the “field” of qualitative research. I’m thrilled to redesign and teach this creative and meaningful class, and can’t wait for our adventure!

Because this is a capstone experience, a significant amount of reading and research is involved in this course. The Tracy (In Press) *Qualitative Research Methods* book will cover the nuts-and-bolts of qualitative research/analysis while additional essays support class assignments and provide exemplars.

The main project involves planning, execution, analysis, and presentation of an original qualitative research project working individually or collaboratively. Through this project, students will enact and reflect upon research design, negotiating access, conducting fieldwork, interviewing, creating field texts, analyzing field texts, writing, and possibly engaging in creative, virtual, and arts-based approaches.

The goal is that students will emerge from the class with first-hand research experience and a high-quality project that informs their future interests and passions. The project is facilitated by a series of “stepping stone” assignments (practica) and peer feedback activities designed to help students progress through the research experience in an organized, supportive, informed, and meaningful way.



**Course Resources:**

Tracy, S. J. (Custom Version). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact, 2nd Ed.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.

- Available at Alpha Graphics Copy Shop, 815 W University Dr Suite #101; call first (480) 968-7821 to ensure availability (as they are copied per student demand). *Note: This pre-publication book is offered at cost with no royalties or profit going to the author. A portion of non-assigned pages are not part of packet to limit photocopy cost.*
- Please bring text to class for reference.

Exemplar articles as listed on the course website. These, coupled with resources students find on their own, will contribute to students’ projects and provide exemplars.

The APA Style Manual (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) is **recommended**, but online APA resources are also available.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Design a qualitative research project that exemplifies your interests and passions
2. Understand the value and distinctions of common types of qualitative inquiry
3. Explore potential qualitative research foci
4. Apply theoretical and paradigmatic assumptions to inform qualitative research practice
5. Practice fieldwork and writing fieldnotes
6. Plan an interview guide and conduct and transcribe interviews
7. Summarize and analyze exemplar qualitative research studies that will inform one’s own qualitative research
8. Examine and apply data analysis techniques such as coding and claim-making
9. Critically assess and provide recommendations on peers’ work in a constructive manner
10. Synthesize, draft, and present activities into a culminating qualitative research project



**Grading:** Letter grades are figured as to the following guidelines (out of 250 pts).

Outstanding – above expectations	Good – above average	Satisfactory – meets min. requirements	Unsatisfactory	Failing or academic dishonesty
A+ 245 – 250 pts	B+ 218 – 224 pts	C+ 193 – 199 pts		
A 233 – 244 pts	B 208 – 217 pts	C 175 – 192 pts	D 150 – 174 pts	E 149 pts and below
A- 225 – 232 pts	B- 200 – 207 pts			XE - academic dishonesty

**Assignments**

***Passionate Participation, Presence, Peer Feedback and Attendance (up to 25 points)***

Participation points are earned through punctual attendance and focused attention for the full class period, thoughtful and appropriate verbal participation (more does not always = better), listening alertly and taking notes, concentrating on course material rather than distractions, asking questions, and providing supportive interaction with other class members via peer feedback on classmates’ assignments and research activities. ***Please be fully present in the embodied conversation happening in the classroom and do not carry on parallel conversations or online inquiry during class. When others are speaking, be “with” them rather than immersed in your notes or computer.***

An absence in this class equates to missing any one class for more than 15 minutes. Every absence over two will result in a 2.5-point (2%) deduction from your final grade. Late arrivals or early departures (of 15 or fewer minutes) will result in a 1-point deduction. These deductions can significantly affect your course grade. If there is an extenuating emergency that interferes with your attendance or ability to keep up, please be in communication.

***Integrating Ideas – Reading and Course Concept Exams (up to 75 points)***

Three reading and course concept exams will assess understanding and integration of key theories, terminology, application, class discussions, activities, and readings. Exams may contain multiple choice, true/false, matching, or short answer, and will be conducted primarily online.

### **Inspiring Semester Research Project & Presentation (up to 100 points)**

Students will carry out a qualitative research project individually or collaboratively in which they will plan, execute, analyze, and present an original qualitative research project. It begins by students identifying a phenomenon that they want to create or bring into the world in the next five years that connects to communication literatures and theories. Examples might include, for instance, “civil discourse,” “forgiveness,” “flourishing at work,” “strong social bonds,” “deep listening,” “social media expertise,” “intercultural connections,” “job interviewing skills,” “healthy relationships,” or something else.

You will then qualitatively explore this project and begin with questions such as:

1. What communication-related theories or literatures relate to this issue (preferably those you have familiarity with)?
2. In what field contexts are features of this issue evident (preferably ones that you have access to)? What types of people/interviewees would be able to shed light on this issue?
3. What can I learn through qualitative research (interviews, fieldwork, or arts-based approaches) about this issue and how to create a desired future in relation to this issue?



Each student will engage in 6+ research hours including participant observation and at least two interviews. Students can collaborate with up to three other students to conduct their overall project assuming that research foci are interconnected (e.g., all students working together should focus on the same general topic and theoretical/literature areas). Students should make careful choices about collaboration, as all members of the team will receive the same grade for joint practica and final project. Please make choices about collaboration by Practica #7 – Research Proposal.

Final papers (in APA style) should be between 12-15 pages *without* references or appendices. They should open with a title, abstract, and key words (~1 page), rationale and clear purpose (~1.5 pages), a review of relevant literature (~2-3 pages), research questions (or other specific issues to be analyzed) (~½ page), and methods (~3 pages). The methods section should include a table of participants and data collected (amounts, types), overview of context, and description of analysis. The heart—and most important part—of the paper are the findings and analysis of data where you tell a story of the research (~4-6 pages), as well as the theoretical and practical implications (~1 page). Papers should include five or more scholarly references per student. The paper appendices should include an annotated bibliography of the references, a detailed log of data collected (dates, time periods, locations, data type), interview guide(s), resulting transcripts, fieldnotes, and any other field records.

**Practical Practica (up to 50 points)** - Practica will provide mini building blocks toward your final paper / project, and will include activities as noted in course schedule below. **Most of them will be viewable by your fellow classmates to enable collaboration and feedback and should not include confidential details.**

Qualitative methods come in a variety of flavors and forms, with people responding in different ways to the “art” you create. Furthermore, significant learning of interpretive arts comes in the form of sampling other peoples’ craft and thoughtfully responding to it. Indeed, giving and receiving critique is something that is learned, not “natural.” As such, a primary part of this class is engaging in small “chunks” of a qualitative project, sharing your work with the class, reflecting on the method by which peers are practicing their craft, and engaging in transparent, critical, and constructive feedback to one another.

A strict focus on “doing it right” can hamper the creativity and energy that marks imaginative arts like qualitative methods. As such, practica are low-risk assignments with some graded pass/fail (+/-) and others marked down only when they are incomplete to the prompt or turned in late. All assigned practica must be completed within one week of their due date to earn a B- or higher in the course. Practica provide building blocks toward your final project. By completing them along the way, students can feel assured they are on the trajectory toward a valuable final project.

## **Practical Practica, continued**

**1. Experience with Peer Feedback (+-):** Read Berkun, S. (2009). #35 – How to give and receive criticism. Retrieved from <http://scottberkun.com/essays/35-how-to-give-and-receive-criticism/>. What are 3 main take-aways from this essay? What has been your experience with peer feedback? What are your hopes or concerns about sharing your in-process work with others? With transparent critique in this class?

**2. Topic, Context, & Questions (+-):** In about 3-4 pages, and referencing material provided in Tracy Chapters 1, 2, and 3, describe the topic, context, and questions you plan to explore over the semester. In doing so, note several sensitizing concepts from experience or research that will help you focus this research. Close this discussion with one or more research questions that could guide this study.

Next, as a bricoleur, what types of data could you piece together to answer your research questions?

Name two potential field sites and/or group of participants for your study, and for each, discuss:

- a) How these data of interest are complementary with your theoretical, practical, or professional interests;
- b) How your background and experience affect the ability to gain access and meaningfully interact with these contexts or people; and
- c) Your plan of having access to these data by the close of week three.

**3. Model Qualitative Article Sharing (+/-):** – Each student will sign up for one exemplar qualitative article to read (from those on course website). They will create an outline that discusses:

- a. Purpose of article
- b. Main theories or literatures that the article draws upon
- c. The primary methods of data collection and analysis
- d. Three key findings
- e. What “struck you” about the article?
- f. What makes this article credible, rigorous, or interesting?
- g. What are some questions that the article left you with, or how could the author(s) better fulfilled on the purpose or goal of the article?

Students will share these outlines with the rest of the class via the course website and should be prepared to do a short presentation in class.

**4. Research Design, Map, and Narrative Tour (5):** Read Tracy, Chapter 5 on research design and exploratory methods. This can be turned in collaboratively with group members.

- a. Discuss your plans for research design in about 1.5 pages. What kinds of data collection will you engage in over the semester? With whom will you be participating (e.g., what is your sampling plan)? Craft a case of how these choices are appropriate (Chapter 5 can help with this), and how they make sense given your research questions and purposes?
- b. Complete a detailed map of a field site connected to your study. Note key people (or types of people), artifacts, and objects and their relation to each other. Accompany the map with a ~1.5 page narrative tour—a mini interpretation of the scene—that explains what the map says about research participants’ values, rules, priorities, ways of being, status, power, etc. Ask and answer the question: What does this tell me, conceptually about this place? (Try to see things as “evidence” of certain arguments.) Include as many “senses” (sight, sound, smell, taste, feel, mood) as possible.
- c. *Provide an updated version of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.*

**5. Interview Guide (5):** Read Tracy, Chapter 7. 1 - In about 1.5 pages, identify: a) your ideal interviewees; b) the type (or types) of interviews you will engage in; and c) the stance(s) that you will take. 2 - Then write the actual queries and probes (in numbered order) for your interviews, annotating the guide by **identifying the types of questions asked** (aim for a mix and ensure you use demographic questions). 3 - Pilot the interview with the technology planned and note in a paragraph what you learned through piloting it. *Provide an updated rendition of research question(s) at top of practicum.*

**6. Annotated Bib and Article Format Models (+-):** Each student should review five scholarly sources that will support their final paper and annotate these articles by providing the reference in APA style, and writing three to five sentences about how the article informs the project at hand. Make sure that two of your chosen articles are “empirical qualitative models” that exemplify (at least in part) what you hope to accomplish in your own qualitative project (see the exemplar articles on course website). In addition to the annotated bib, create ~1-page article format models for your two empirical qualitative models (See Exercise 13.2 in Edition 2) and refer to the following steps.

- a. For the two models, find articles that, format-wise or topic-wise “do” the same thing that you want to do in your own project. For example, if you are conducting a photovoice study in which you are studying the division of domestic labor, find other articles that do one or the other. Or, at the very least, find articles that you like the writing and format of, and that are good examples.
- b. For each model, create an outline of what is done in the article and the amount of space (number of pages, words, or paragraphs) allotted. For example:
  - Rationalizes the use of theory ABC as a new way of making sense of XYZ behavior (1.5 pps)
  - Bridges two different theories through a logical transition (2 sentences, middle of p. 4).
  - Methodology – 3 pages (pp. 11–13).
- c. Use the model essay’s headers as a guide for the outline level of detail, but you are welcome to use more detail (e.g. you may want to note the way the author used a certain sampling or analysis strategy).

*Write your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum*

**7. Research Proposal (10):** Review Tracy, Chapter 4. Together with your collaborators, write an 8-10-page research proposal in APA style including: 1) title, abstract, and key words; 2) introduction, purpose, and rationale; 3) literature review/conceptual framework (what do we already know about related issues from past literature and what theories helps explain the chosen phenomenon); 4) research questions; 5) proposed methodology, including research hours (or other details for virtual or arts-based research), types / numbers of interviewees, protocol, and logistics; 6) interview guide; 7) timeline for data collection.

**8. Fieldnotes (5):** Review Tracy, Chapter 6 and especially the tips on p. 173. Turn in 5-6 single-spaced typed pages of fieldnotes representing at least 2 hours of fieldwork. Use pseudonyms for confidential names or places. These should evidence incorporation of best practices for good field records (e.g., headings, time markings, thick description, dialogue and more as described in our course readings). *Provide an updated rendition of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.*

**9. Analysis Codebook Based on Interview Transcripts (10):** Review Tracy, Chapter 9. After conducting and transcribing two interviews, open code your data, first using first-level codes, and then second-level codes. Then develop a codebook that focuses in on 8-15 primary codes that relate directly to your research focus. Include the name of the code, its explanation, and a real or hypothetical example from the data. Identify different levels or types of codes. Note: all members of the collaborative research team must conduct/transcribe two interviews each, but the analysis codebook should be based on all together. *Provide an updated rendition of your guiding research question(s) at the top of the practicum.*

**10. Moving Toward a First Draft: Focusing, Outlining, Drafting (5)** – The following are a conglomeration of analysis, focusing, theorizing, and writing activities from Tracy Chapters 9 and 10. Reviewing these chapters first will help with this practicum. The activities below are overlapping and designed to generate writing as a form of inquiry. Collaborators should work together on this.

**Drafting your methods section**

- 1 Review Tips and Tools 4.3 and Researcher’s Notepad 12.3 and affiliated material about methods section. Also review your article format models from Practica 9.
- 2 Write a rough draft of your paper’s methods section, including a table or visual that shows details on data collection. *(continued below)*



## 10. Moving Toward a First Draft: Focusing, Outlining, Drafting, continued from previous page

### Focusing

- 1 Which literatures, topics, or theories am I already acquainted with?
- 2 In what ways does anything interesting in my data meaningfully intersect with, build upon, or problematize any of these literatures?
- 3 Who are the potential audiences of my study (your conceptual cocktail party)?
  - a Who would benefit, appreciate, and learn from this study and why?
  - b Who do I want to notice and read this work?
- 4 Given this discussion, what are the two to three primary areas of literature or theory that situate and contextualize my study?
  - a What are the puzzles, controversies, or unanswered questions in these literatures that my study makes connections with?
- 5 How could my research questions/foci and/or purpose statement be modified to provide an intuitive and logical link between the framing literatures/theories and the data? Rework/modify so that the research questions or purpose statement hook into *both* the framing literatures/theories and the emergent data analysis.

### Loosely outlining (See Researcher's Notepad 9.4 Edition Two for an example)

- 1 What are the issues motivating the study [already demonstrated from past research or practice]?
- 2 What are my guiding research questions / purposes?
- 3 What are the 5-10 potential themes, claims, or codes in the data I have collected and analyzed that answer these research questions?
- 4 Returning to your article format models from Practicum 9 (or in creating new ones), outline out how you see your final paper or representation unfolding

### Class Policies and Procedures

#### Use of Personal Electronic Devices in Class:

Please bring computers to class to facilitate workshops and peer feedback. However, research suggests that focus, comprehension, recall of ideas, and information processing increase when people hand-write their notes, read from physical paper, and read from documents *without* hyperlinks. For more information on this:

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/03/science/whats-lost-as-handwriting-fades.html>
- <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/elements/2014/06/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom.html>
- <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reading-paper-screens/>

Please take class notes by hand and make handwritten notes on printed readings (and disable hyperlinks if reading scholarly articles online). Many of us are irresistibly drawn to our electronic devices. In the classroom, you are asked to turn off notifications and disconnect from e-mail, social media, and other Internet activities. ***When computer use will enhance our collective work, Dr. Tracy will alert the class. Otherwise, please close your computers, and avoid being consumed by any printed readings.*** If there is a situation in which you would like to request a special exception, contact Dr. Tracy.

**Canvas and Technology Help:** Students can navigate directly to the course Canvas website via myASU or <http://canvas.asu.edu>. If you need technical assistance, it is available via the Canvas “Help” icon located on the left-hand navigation menu and phone and live chat support are available 24/7 at <http://contact.asu.edu>. ASU Tech Studios provide a variety of walk-in support services on all ASU campuses: <https://uto.asu.edu/services/campus-it-resources/techstudio>. To learn the basics, refer to the Student Guide: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701> and the Canvas Glossary: <http://links.asu.edu/student-canvas-glossary>.



**Absences, Due Dates, Late or Incomplete Work:** Assignments will be marked down as much as 10% each day and will not be accepted more than two weeks past their due date (none will be accepted after the last day of class-April 26). In-class work (e.g., quizzes, presentations, and class activities) will receive credit only on the day they are due. Incompletes are discouraged and only available if you: 1) experience serious documented illness or emergency; 2) finish more than half the coursework, 3) negotiate incomplete before class end.

If you miss class or a due date because of an unavoidable emergency, notify Dr. Tracy within 24 hours, following up with documentation / explanation. Students who miss a class due to a university-excused absence should alert Dr. Tracy at least two weeks before the absence (and make up the points within a week via meeting with the class apprentice and sending an email to Dr. Tracy with notes from what was learned from the missed material). The following websites explain ASU's policies: <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd304-04.html>; <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd304-02.html>.

**Norms of Civility:** Students are expected to arrive on time and stay for the entire class period, keep an alert and enthusiastic presence, pay attention to course material rather than other distractions (electronic devices), listen supportively and attentively, speak one at a time, avoid eating odiferous or noisy food, and help others stay focused. If we speak about sensitive or personal issues, please provide a safe and supportive classroom environment by respecting each others' confidences. Violations of any of these requests may result in up to a 15 point grade deduction per incident.

Please become familiar with ASU's policy on "Handling Disruptive, Threatening, or Violent Individuals on Campus" at <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/ssm/ssm104-02.html>, which explains how interfering with the peaceful conduct of university-related activities may be considered a crime. An instructor may also withdraw a student from a course with a mark of "W" or "E" when the student's behavior disrupts the educational process.

**Unique Academic Needs:** Students with unique academic needs who would like to coordinate special accommodations should contact Dr. Tracy in the first couple sessions to discuss options and document their needs with ASU's disability resource center (<https://eoss.asu.edu/drc>).

**Academic Integrity:** Students should understand ASU's policies for academic integrity, available here: <https://provost.asu.edu/index.php?q=academicintegrity>. Students are warned against cheating or plagiarizing on any assignment or exam, large or small. Such activity includes excessive "help" or "editing" on assignments from others (if in doubt, ask), copying, misrepresenting research hours / activity, not following virtual exam instructions, and using past coursework, the Internet, the text, or other sources without proper citation. Students are responsible for knowing APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition style for citing outside sources.

Course content, including lectures and power-points, are copyrighted material and students may not sell notes taken during the conduct of the course (see ASU's "Commercial Note Taking Services" policy: <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd304-06.html>). Students in violation of any of these expectations will face disciplinary action which may include being suspended or expelled from the Course, College or University; given an XE; referred to Student Judicial Affairs; and/or having his/her name kept on file.

**Instructor's Mandated Reporting of Sexual Violence and Discrimination:** Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person shall be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at <http://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs/students>.

As a mandated reporter, I am obligated to report any information I become aware of regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence. ASU Counseling Services, <https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling>, is available if you wish discuss any concerns confidentially and privately.

**Course Schedule (Subject to modification via an in-class or virtual course announcement)**  
**Please bring your course text and computers to class for workshops, activities, and peer feedback**

Reading b4 class	Wk & dates M & W	Topic	Assignment due by Thursday 11:59 p.m. unless otherwise announced
Preface; Ch 1 Berkun, Syllabus	#1 Jan 7, 9	Intro to Qual Research & Berkun - <a href="http://scottberkun.com/essays/35-how-to-give-and-receive-criticism/">http://scottberkun.com/essays/35-how-to-give-and-receive-criticism/</a>	[Brainstorm research projects and find collaborators] <b>P1: Experience w/ Peer Feedback</b>
Ch 2, 3	#2 Jan 14, 16	Entering the Conversation of Qualitative Research	<b>P2: Topic, Context, &amp; Questions</b> [contact key participants and contexts]
Ch 4 Exemp Article	#3 Jan 23	<b>No class 1/21 – MLK Day</b> Design and Negotiating Access Exemplar Qualitative Research <i>Peer feedback on topics</i>	<b>Exam 1 (ch 1-4; Syllabus)</b> <b>P3: Model Qualitative Article Sharing</b>
Ch 5	#4 Jan 28, 30	Exploring the Scene <b>First entry log complete by class 1/28</b>	<b>P4: Research Design, Map, and Narrative Tour</b>
Ch 6	#5 Feb 4, 6	Finalizing your Research Design and Intro to fieldnotes	<b>Peer Feedback on P4</b> [begin fieldwork]
Ch 7	#6 Feb 11, 13	Interview Planning and Design	<b>P5: Interview Guide</b> [conduct fieldwork]
Ch 4 - 116-124  Ch 8	#7 Feb 18, 20	<i>Peer Feedback on Interview Guide</i> Interview Practice: Embodied and virtual approaches & Proposal Writing	<b>P6: Annotated Bib and Article Format Models</b> [conduct fieldwork]
Ch 6 & App. A	#8 Feb 25 (opt) 27	Feb. 25 – Research help w/ assistants  Fieldnotes Take Two	<b>P7: Research Proposal</b> [begin interviews, finish fieldwork]
		No classes, Spring Break!	
Review Wk #7 reading	#9 Mar 11, 13	Proposal Writing And interview practice Take Two	<b>P8: Fieldnotes</b> [finish interviews]
Ch 9	#10 Mar 18, 20	Data Analysis Basics <i>Peer Feedback on Fieldnotes</i>	<b>Exam 2 (Ch 5-8)</b> [transcribe interviews]; <b>Bring completed research activity log to class 3/20</b>
Ch 11	#11 Mar 25, 27	Qualitative Quality and Data Analysis Workshopping	<b>P9: Analysis on Interview Transcripts</b>
Ch 12	#12 Apr 1, 3	Theorizing & Writing	<b>Peer Feedback on P9</b>
Ch 13	#13 Apr 8, 10	Drafting, Polishing, and Writing <i>Determine presentation dates</i>	<b>P10: Moving Toward a First Draft</b>
Ch 14	#14 Apr 15, 17	Exiting the Field <i>Peer Feedback on Writing / Drafting</i>	<b>Exam 3 (Ch 9, 11-14)</b>
	#15 Apr 22, 24	Buffer and/or Begin Final Project Presentations	<b>Final paper</b>
Final	TBA	Finish Final Project Presentations	
My presentation date is:			