

**SMA Research Methodology Workshop**  
**“Qualitative Techniques for Social Media Research”**

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Modern life is deeply intertwined with social media—people share life stories on YouTube, offer political opinions on Twitter, post hashtagged selfies on Instagram, and ‘go viral’ in an instant on TikTok. As online and offline spaces increasingly converge, social media platforms offer opportunities to better understand society. In the midst of the global coronavirus pandemic, potential for digital fieldwork and qualitative social media methods have become even more important.

While quantitative tools and metrics for analyzing social media are important, they do not account for lived experiences or symbolic meaning within the data. Studying social media through interpretive methods is critical to understanding culture, beyond automated analytics. For instance, on image-based sites like Instagram, what users say in their captions complement what they show in their photos. Therefore, text analyses alone may not fully capture the meaning embedded within social media images.

The aim of this workshop is to equip attendees with skills to collect, analyze, and interpret qualitative data from mainstream social media platforms including Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook – and non-traditional social media platforms (e.g., Venmo, Cameo). Drawing on interpretive methods, we will address the following:

- Benefits and opportunities for engaging in qualitative social media analyses for sociocultural inquiry
- Methods for capturing and managing qualitative social media data (e.g., automated and manual tools for data downloading, digital fieldwork, ethical data management, troubleshooting API roadblocks)
- Approaches for examining qualitative social media data (e.g., narrative analysis, autodiving, visual analysis)
- Critical questions around ethics and privacy in collecting, managing, and reporting qualitative social media research

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Dr. Jenna Drenten (PhD, University of Georgia) is Associate Professor of Marketing in the Quinlan School of Business at Loyola University Chicago. Jenna's research aims to understand identity development in consumer culture, with an emphasis on how digital technologies and social media platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube) present new opportunities for consumers to express their identities and navigate life transitions. Her research examines multiple facets of digital culture and identity, from individual consumer behavior to systemic macro-level structures. Jenna's research has appeared in the *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, *Journal of Macromarketing*, *Journal of Business Research*, and *Consumption Markets and Culture*, among others. You can find Jenna on Twitter at @jennadrenten or via email at jdrenten@luc.edu.