



MMC 500

Fall 2006

RESEARCHING COMMUNICATION I

Professor Renee Hobbs

Synopsis

This course provides an introduction to the philosophy of social science, the processes of communication research, some research methodologies commonly used in communication scholarship, and basic methods of univariate and multivariate data analysis.

Faculty

Renee Hobbs, Ed.D.

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2 – 4 and other times by appointment

Course Meeting Time and Location

Tuesdays, 5:10 – 8:30 p.m.

222 Annenberg Hall

Goals and Objectives

1. Understand the strengths and limitations of social science research as it contributes to the creation of knowledge and the processes of social change;
2. Strengthen skills in reading, understanding and evaluating communication research;
3. Understand and apply the stages of social research, including formulating a research problem, research design, measurement, sampling, data collection, data processing, data analysis and interpretation, and report writing;
4. Gain knowledge about research methods, including experimentation, survey research, field research, and evaluation research;
5. Appreciate statistical analysis processes including univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analysis;
6. Gain skills in data analysis procedures including the use of the SPSS statistical package;
7. Appreciate concepts in research ethics involving the use of human subjects, including the role of institutional review boards;
8. Strengthen skills in oral, written and online communication;

9. Strengthen teamwork, problem-solving, and collaboration skills by working with others;
10. Deepen an appreciation of one's own interests, skills, knowledge and competencies as a communication scholar.

Required Reading

Singleton, R. & Straits, B. (1999). *Approaches to social research*. 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Salkind, Neil J. (2000). *Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Recommended Reading

Cronk, B. (2004). *How to use SPSS*. Third edition. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.

Additional readings (from the list below) will be made available by the instructor.

Course Activities

Each of the assignments listed below will be introduced in class by the instructor. Specific instructions, deadlines, and criteria for evaluation will be posted under "Assignments" on the class Blackboard site.

Review Questions and Problems (20%)

Each week, students will prepare written responses to selected review questions, complete problems from the course textbook, or engage in other hands-on projects as assigned by the instructor.

Research Proposal (40%)

Working individually or with a partner, students will design and plan a research project. Students will create a complete research proposal. They will formulate a research hypothesis, develop a research design, find, modify or create measurement instruments, develop a sampling strategy and design a process for data collection and data processing. Intermediate deadlines during the semester will help students create a comprehensive research proposal. Students will prepare a research poster describing their work and make an informal presentation about their proposal.

Reviews of Communication Research (20%)

Students will select an example of communication research and prepare a brief oral presentation (with print support materials). Students describe and analyze the quality of the research design, methodology, data analysis, and interpretation.

Final Examination (20%)

A final examination will test your ability to apply what you have learned in this class to research problems in the field of communication.

Grading

Grades represent the instructor's assessment of your work as compared to clearly identified criteria for evaluation and in relation to the performance of others in the class. A grade of A represents outstanding or exceptional work; an A- indicates high quality but not outstanding work; a B+ represents high quality work but with some limitations or evident weaknesses; a B indicates competent, satisfactory work. A B- in a graduate level course suggests that the student's work is lacking in some important way. A grade of C+ or C represents seriously flawed work. In most classes that would mean doing the assignments but misunderstanding fundamental concepts or presenting them in an unacceptable form. A grade of D represents failure and will be given only if assignments were extremely poorly executed or other failure to adhere to norms of appropriate student conduct. Work not submitted by the deadline will be awarded an F. Because media businesses rely on strict adherence to deadlines, this instructor employs a similar deadline standard. Please do not ask for an exception.

Policy on Attendance and Class Participation

Attendance at all class sessions is expected as a sign of your intellectual curiosity and commitment to the learning process. The instructor will use class attendance as a major element to assess class participation. More than one missed class in the semester will lower your course grade. Students are expected to fully participate in all interactive learning experiences and to demonstrate critical thinking and synthesis skills in class discussions.

Policy on Disabilities and Special Needs

Any students who have a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss the specific situation. Contact Disability Resources at (215) 204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Policy on Plagiarism

Students are expected to produce substantial amounts of writing for this course, and it is expected that you will be the author of all the work you submit. Students should use the American Psychological Association (APA, 5th edition) citation format for identifying all materials used for reference and information gathering. Please consult the instructor if you have questions on how to identify the information sources that you use in preparing your work.

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PART 1	PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL RESEARCH
8/29 Week 1	Introduction to the Course
9/5 Week 2	What is Truth? Disciplinary Cultures and Tribal Warfare READ: Herrnstein Smith, Chapter 5 (pp. 108 – 129) READ: Lynch, Chapters 1 – 4 (pp. 1 – 58) READ: Pavitt DUE: Review Questions (see Blackboard)
9/12 Week 3	Ferment in the Field: Where Research Questions Come From READ: Donohew & Palmgreen READ: Strand & Weiss (pp. 161 – 180) READ: Bryant & Miron READ: Deetz (pp. 139 – 159) READ: Gerbner (pp. 355 -362) READ: Melody & Mansell (pp. 103 – 116)
9/19 Week 4	Paradigms of Social Science, How to Read a Research Article READ: Singleton & Straits, Chapters 1 - 4 (pps. 1 – 98) DUE: Review Questions (see Blackboard) DUE: Research Project, Part 1: Research Question, Rationale, Lit Review
9/26 Week 5	Introduction to Measurement and Sampling READ: Singleton & Straits, Chapter 5 - 6 (pps. 99 – 176) READ: Christensen (125 – 180) DUE: Review Questions (see Blackboard)
10/3 Week 6	Research Ethics READ: Singleton & Straits, Chapter 17 (pps. 513 – 537) READ: Christensen (pp. 125 – 180) DUE: Review Questions (see Blackboard)
PART II	RESEARCH DESIGNS AND METHODS
10/10 Week 7	Experimental Designs READ: Singleton & Straits, Chapters 7 & 8 (pps. 177 – 238) READ: Salkind, Chapters 1 – 4, 10 - 12 DUE: Review Questions (see Blackboard) DUE: Reviews of Communication Research

10/17 Week 8	Survey Research READ: Singleton & Straits, Chapters 9 & 10 (pps. 239 – 319) READ: Salkind, Chapters 5, 6, 13 DUE: Review Questions (see Blackboard) DUE: Reviews of Communication Research
10/24 Week 9	Evaluation Research READ: Singleton & Straits, Chapter 14 (pps. 421 – 452) READ: Salkind, Chapters 7 - 9 DUE: Review Questions (see Blackboard) DUE: Reviews of Communication Research
10/31 Week 10	Other Research Methods READ: Singleton & Straits, Chapter 11, 12, 13 (pps. 320 – 420) READ: Salkind, Chapters 14 - 15 DUE: Review Questions (see Blackboard) DUE: Reviews of Communication Research DUE: Research Project, Part 2: Measures and Methods
11/14 Week 11	Practical Perspectives on the Research Process READ: Singleton & Straits, Chapter 15 (pps. 455 – 489) DUE: Review Questions (see Blackboard)
11/21	NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break
11/28 Week 12	Focus on SPSS READ: Cronk as needed
12/5 Week 13	Synthesis and Review DUE: Research Project, Complete Proposal
12/12	Student Poster Presentations To be scheduled
12/12	Final Exam, to be scheduled

Additional Readings

Bryant, J. & Miron, D. (2004). Theory and research in mass communication. *Journal of Communication* 54(4): 662 -704.

Christensen, L. (2007). "Ethics." In *Experimental methodology*. 3rd edition. Boston: Pearson (pp. 125 – 1800).

Deetz, S. (1973). An understanding of science and a hermeneutic science of understanding. *Journal of Communication* 23: 139 – 159.

Donohew, L. & Palmgreen, P. "Constructing theory." In G. Stempel, D. Weaver & G. Wilhoit (Eds.), *Mass communication research and theory*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Gerbner, G. (1983). The importance of being critical—in one's own fashion. *Journal of Communication* 33(3): 355- 362.

Herrnstein Smith, B. (2005). *Scandalous knowledge: Science, truth and the human*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Lynch, M. (2005). *True to life: why truth matters*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Melody, W. & Mansell, R. (1983). The debate over critical vs administrative research: circularity or challenge. *Journal of Communication* 33(3): 103-116.

Pavitt, C. (2004). The third way: Scientific realism and communication theory. *Communication Theory* 9(2):162 – 188.

Smith, M (1998). *Social science in question*. London: Sage.

Strand, K. & Weiss, G. (2005). "Nonreactive research: Content analysis, accretion measures, and using existing statistics." *Experiencing social research: A reader*. (pp. 161 – 180).