

JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION 658
COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS
MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY, 4:00 – 5:15
2195 VILAS COMMUNICATION HALL, FALL 2010

Maier-Bascom Professor
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Office Hrs: M 12:00-2:00

Course Description:

This is a basic research methods course for those with little or no previous experience or course work in communication research. The goal of this course is to provide students with a framework for evaluating communication research and some hands-on experience in the process of conducting empirical investigations. The centerpiece of the course is a class research project, for which students will analyze data from an existing national survey. The course is intended for students interested in research related to professional responsibilities in all aspects of mediated communication, as well as those interested in scholarly inquiries of media institutions, content, and influence. The course is open to undergraduate students admitted to the School and to graduate students in any major or field. Juniors and seniors in other majors and special students may be admitted with the permission of the instructors.

Readings:

There is required book for this class (supplemental readings assignments for each week are listed below):

[B] Babbie, E. (2007). *The Practice of Social Research*. 11th edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Exams:

There will be three examinations for this class: a midterm (worth 40 points toward the final grade), a take-home (worth 20 points, due at the final exam), and a final exam (worth 40 points toward the final grade). The exams will include both multiple choice and short answer questions that will be based on the readings and/or material presented in class. The final exam is **not** explicitly cumulative, but material covered in the first half of the class may be useful during the final.

Assignments:

There are three assignments associated with the group project that is at the center of this class, each worth 20 points toward the final grade. You will be graded as a group. Details on these assignments will be discussed in class.

The Class Research Project:

The research project is an integral part of the course. All students will participate in analyzing data from an existing survey and preparing a report to share with the class. The top presentation team, as determined by a class vote and the professor's judgment, will not have to take the in-class final exam, and will receive the full 40 points toward their final grade. These students WILL have to take the take home portion of the final.

Student Presentations and Peer Evaluation. The group project will culminate in a group presentation focusing on the results from analysis. Groups will have 20 minutes to make a presentation. The presentation is worth 40 points toward the final grade. Failure to attend the presentations of fellow students will result in the loss of 5 points per missed presentation. Students will also engage in a peer evaluation of their fellow group members, which will be worth an additional 25 points.

Academic Misconduct:

It is your responsibility to complete your own work as best you can in the time provided. Cheating, plagiarism and falsification of any assignment is a serious offense. Anyone found guilty of academic misconduct should expect to fail the entire course and have a record of the matter forwarded to the Dean of Students.

Grading:

<u>Activities for all students</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Due date</u>
Exams:		
Midterm Exam	40	Week 7
Take Home Final	20	At Final Exam
Final Exam	40	Check Timetable
Group Project Assignments:		
Concept Explication Assignment	20	Week 6
Research Question/Hypotheses Assignment	20	Week 12
Statistical Analysis Assignment	20	Week 14
Group Presentation	40	Week 14-15
Peer Evaluation:		
Average Rating	25	Week 16
Class Participation:		
Professor's Judgment	25	All Semester Long
***	All will be graded on the basis of 250 points	

The following breakdowns provide a guideline for the assignment of final grades.

<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Grade</u>
93-100%	A
88-93%	AB
83-88%	B
78-83%	BC
73-78%	C
68-73%	D
below 68%	F

Additional opportunities for earning extra-credit may become available during the semester. Extra-credit will be added to your final class score after the final grade breaks have been established. This way, participation in extra credit activities can only help your final grade; a decision not to participate cannot hurt your grade.

BASIC COURSE OUTLINE

Week	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Assignments & Workbook</u>
1		Sept. 8 Introduction to Research Inquiry [Reading: B ch. 1]	
2	Sept. 13 Workshop: Project Overview	Sept. 15 Research Paradigms [Reading: B. ch 2]	
3	Sept. 20 Logic and Ethics of Research [Reading: B. ch. 3 & 4 – pp. 84-94]	Sept. 22 Concept Explication [Readings: RES Concept Explication]	
4	Sept. 27 Research Design [Reading: B ch. 4 – pp. 94 - 107]	Sept. 29 Reliability and Validity [Readings: B ch. 5 pp. 143-151]	
5	Oct. 4 Measurement and Observation [Readings: B ch. 5 – pp.120 – 142]	Oct. 6 Project workday (no class)	
6	Oct. 11 Workshop: Project Design [Reading: B ch. 4 – pp. 107-119]	Oct. 13 Sampling [Readings: B ch. 7]	Concept Assignment DUE
7	Oct. 18 MIDTERM EXAM	Oct. 20 Experimental Research [Reading: B ch. 8]	
8	Oct. 25 Survey Research [Reading: B ch. 9]	Oct. 27 Network Analysis [Reading: RES Network Analysis]	
9	Nov. 1 Workshop: Research Development	Nov 3. Examples of Research	
10	Nov. 8 Qualitative Field Research [Readings: B ch. 10]	Nov. 10 Content Analysis [Readings: B ch. 11]	
11	Nov. 15 Workshop: Data Analysis [Reading: B ch. 14]	Nov. 17 Hypothesis Testing	
12	Nov. 22 Data Analysis: Univariate Analysis [Readings: B ch. 16]	Nov. 24 Project workday (no class)	Hypotheses Assignment DUE
13	Nov. 29 Data Analysis: Scales and Indices	Dec. 1 Data Analysis: Bivariate Analysis	
14	Dec. 6 Data Analysis: Multivariate Analysis [Readings: B ch. 17]	Dec. 8 Workshop: Finalize Analysis	Analysis Assignment DUE
15	Dec. 13 Student Presentations	Dec. 15 Student Presentations	