

**JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION - 658  
COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS  
TUESDAY AND THURSDAY, 2:30 – 3:45  
2195 VILAS COMMUNICATION HALL, FALL 2022**

**Dhavan V. Shah, Maier-Bascom Professor**

Email: [dshah@wisc.edu](mailto:dshah@wisc.edu)

Office: 5162 Vilas Hall / Phone: 608-262-0388

Office Hours: Thursdays 12:30-2:15 and by appointment

Zoom Office: <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/my/dhavans.room>

Zoom link for virtual lecture sessions:

<https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/98444859810?pwd=TK9nTXBGMGFLekQ5K2lxREsyR2plQT09>

**One tap mobile: +13017158592,,98444859810#,,,,\*647211#**

**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 state or 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 instructor.

**Learning Goals:**

- Understand approaches to research inquiry, different research paradigms and issues of research ethics
- Acquire processes of concept explication and research design, and forms of reliability and validity
- Learn different quantitative, qualitative, and computational research methods
- Gain knowledge about hypotheses testing, univariate and bivariate analyses, and data presentation

**Required Readings:**

- Babbie, E. R. (2016). *The practice of social research*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning. 14<sup>th</sup> Edition (Available Used)
- McLeod, J. M., Pan, Z (2005). Concept explication and theory construction. In S. Dunwoody, L. B. Becker, G. Kosicki, & D. McLeod (Eds.), *The evolution of key mass communication concepts: Honoring Jack McLeod* (pp. 13-76). New York: Hampton Press.
- Monge, P. R. & Contractor, N. S.. (2003). *Theories of communication networks*. Oxford University Press, USA. Ch 1 & 2

All readings available through class website: <https://dshah.journalism.wisc.edu/teaching/#j658>

**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.

**Class Research Project**

The group research project is an integral part of the course. All students will participate in analyzing data from an existing high-quality survey (or conducting some other original research) and preparing presentations to share with the class and written reports for the professor. Teams will summarize their project and findings in a final class presentation. The top report teams each day of presentations, 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.

There are three assignments that need to be completed during the semester that will build toward your final project, each worth 20 points toward the final grade. Like the final presentation, you will be graded as a group. Additional details listed below.

Concepts and Questions Assignment	Week 6	Mini Presentation and Write-Up
Data and Methods Assignment	Week 11	Mini Presentation and Write-Up
Data Analysis Assignment	Week 13	Write-Up

**Student Presentations and Peer Evaluation.** The group project will culminate in a group presentation focusing on the results from analysis. Groups will have 15 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, including teamwork, as best you can in the time provided. Cheating, plagiarism and falsification of data are serious offenses, and it is my responsibility to make sure they do not occur. Anyone found guilty of academic misconduct should expect to fail the 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	
Group Project Assignments:		
Concepts and Questions Assignment	20	Week 6
Data and Methods Assignment	20	Week 11
Data Analysis Assignment	20	Week 13
Final Group Presentation	40	Week 14-15
Peer Evaluation:		
Average Rating	25	At Final Exam
Class Participation:		
Professor's Judgment	25	All Semester Long

\*\*\* All will be graded on the basis of 250 points / see below for graduate attribute.

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.

**Graduate Attribute:**

Masters and Doctoral student can take Communication Research Methods (JMC 658) for graduate credit. Graduate students will have to fulfil all the requirements specified above as well as one additional 50-point assignment. For that 50-point assignment, the graduate student will take the design, predictions, and findings of the group project into a 10-page data paper. This paper will contain a short rationale for the hypotheses, outline the methods, the results of the survey testing, and the conclusions drawn from these findings. The final paper will be due on December 20, 2022 by midnight. Grades will be based on the same breakdowns based on 300-points total.

**BASIC COURSE OUTLINE**

<u>Week</u>	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
1		<b>Sept. 8</b> Introduction to Course and Project <b>ONLINE</b>	
2	<b>Sept. 13</b> Research Inquiry <a href="#">Workshop: Team Assignment</a> [Reading: B ch. 1].	<b>Sept. 15</b> Research Paradigms and Theory [Reading: B. ch 2]	
3	<b>Sept. 20</b> Logic and Ethics of Research [Reading: B. ch. 3]	<b>Sept. 22</b> Concept Explication [Readings: Concept Explication]	
4	<b>Sept. 27</b> Research Design [Reading: B ch. 4]	<b>Sept. 29</b> Reliability and Validity [Readings: B ch. 5]	<b>Outside Class Team Meeting</b>
5	<b>Oct. 4</b> Measurement and Observation [Readings: B ch. 6]	<b>Oct. 6</b> <a href="#">Workshop: Project Design</a>	
6	<b>Oct. 11</b> Sampling [Readings: B ch. 7]	<b>Oct. 13</b> <a href="#">Workshop: Concepts &amp; Questions</a> <a href="#">Presentations and Midterm Review</a>	<b>Concept/Question Assign. DUE October 13</b>
7	<b>Oct. 18</b> <b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	<b>Oct. 20</b> Experimental Research [Reading: B ch. 8]	
8	<b>Oct. 25</b> Survey Research [Reading: B ch. 9]	<b>Oct. 27</b> Network Analysis [Reading: Network Analysis]	
9	<b>Nov. 1</b> <a href="#">Workshop: Research Development</a>	<b>Nov. 3.</b> Examples of Communication Research	<b>Outside Class Team Meeting</b>
10	<b>Nov. 8</b> Qualitative Field Research [Readings: B ch. 10]	<b>Nov. 10</b> Archival Research and Content Analysis [Readings: B ch. 11]	
11	<b>Nov. 15</b> Data Analysis and Testing [Reading: B ch. 14]	<b>Nov. 17</b> <a href="#">Workshop: Data &amp; Methods</a> <a href="#">Presentations and Feedback</a>	<b>Data/Method Assign. DUE November 17</b>
12	<b>Nov. 22</b> Data: Univariate Analysis & Scales [Readings: B ch. 16] <b>ONLINE</b>	<b>Nov. 24</b> <b>THANKSGIVING</b>	
13	<b>Nov. 29</b> Data: Bivariate & Multivariate Analysis	<b>Dec. 1</b> <a href="#">Workshop: Data Testing Session</a>	<b>Data Analysis Assign. DUE December 4 (Sunday)</b>
14	<b>Dec. 6</b> <a href="#">Workshop: Data Presentation</a>	<b>Dec. 8</b> <b>Student Presentations</b>	
15	<b>Dec. 13</b> <b>Student Presentations</b>	<b>Dec. 20 - FINAL EXAM</b> <b>12:25 PM - 2:25 PM in 2195 Vilas</b>	

### Optional Reserve Readings:

- Carmines, E. G., & Zeller, R. A. (1979). *Reliability and validity assessment*. Sage publications.
- Keeter, S., Kennedy, C., Dimock, M., Best, J., and Craighill, P. (2006) Gauging the Impact of Growing Nonresponse on Estimates from a National RDD Telephone Survey, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 70, 759-779.
- Kennedy, C., Blumenthal, M., Clement, S., Clinton, J. D., Durand, C., Franklin, C., ... & Wlezien, C. (2018). An evaluation of the 2016 election polls in the United States. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 82(1), 1-33.
- Tourangeau, R., Rips, L. J., & Rasinski, K. (2000). Chapter 1: Introduction and a Point of View / Chapter 2: Respondents Understanding of Survey Questions. *The psychology of survey response*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Zaller, J. (1994) Positive constructs of public opinion. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, September 11: 276-286.

### Codebooks and Data Readings:

- 2016 Rolling Cross Sectional Data concerning the Presidential Election  
  
“Geographic Polarization, Partisan Climate, and Participatory Actions: Do Congenial Contexts Lead to Mobilization, Resignation, Activation, or Complacency?” Jiyoun Suk, Douglas McLeod, and Dhavan V. Shah, *Political Behavior*, forthcoming.  
  
“Political Events in a Partisan Media Ecology: Asymmetric Influence on Candidate Appraisals During the 2016 U.S. Election,” Jiyoun Suk, Dhavan V. Shah, Chris Wells, Kjerstin Thorson, Stephanie Edgerly, Emily Vraga, Leticia Bode, and Jon Pevehouse, *Mass Communication and Society*, Online 2022 DOI: 10.1080/15205436.2022.2035766.
- 2018-2019 Swing State Panel Study  
  
*Battleground: Asymmetric Communication Ecologies and the Erosion of Civil Society in Wisconsin*, Lewis A. Friedland, Dhavan V. Shah, Michael W. Wagner, Chris Wells, Katherine J. Cramer, and Jon C. W. Pevehouse, Cambridge University Press, Elements in Politics and Communication, 2022.
- 2020-2021 Wisconsin-Pennsylvania Panel Study  
  
“Ideology and COVID-19 Vaccination Intention: Perceptual Mediators and Communication Moderators,” Xiaoya Jiang, Juwon Hwang, Min-Hsin Su, Michael Wagner, and Dhavan Shah, *Journal of Health Communication*, forthcoming.



Journalism and Mass Communication 658 – Fall 2022  
COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS

Concepts & Questions Assignment:

Deliverables: (1) 4-page, double-spaced, paper per group (October 13)  
(2) 5-minute presentation to the class of your concepts & questions assignment (Oct 13)

For this assignment, you need to define a general topic that you are interested in conducting research about and:

- Conduct a literature review about the problem (What do we already know about this issue). Google scholar is a good starting point to search for relevant literature, as well as more specialized databases available through the library system (e.g. Communication & Mass Media Complete). Summarize previous research on the question you are interested in answering. Cite the work reviewed.
- Pose the research question that will be answered by your study.
- Develop a conceptual definition of the different elements in your research question.
- If possible, pose hypothesis (expectations) about the relation between the concepts.
- Develop an operational definition of the concepts used, including the possible indicators that would be employed to measure the concept. Identify the data you plan to use to examine these concepts.
- Specify the unit of analysis that will be employed in your research.



Journalism and Mass Communication 658 – Fall 2022  
COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS

Data and Methods Assignment:

Deliverables: (1) 4-page, double-spaced, paper per group (November 17)  
(2) 5-minute presentation to the class of your data and methods assignment (Nov 17)

You have already identified the question you want to study and have made a review of relevant literature. Now for this assignment you need to:

- Select an existing survey dataset or propose a method of data collection to answer the research question/s and or hypotheses posed. Justify your choice.
- Operationalize your design. This entails:
  - Finalize your study design (include units of analysis, observation, time, sampling)
  - Finalize the measures to be employed or developed (questionnaire for surveys or experiments, coding schemes for content analysis, types of links in social network analysis, interview protocols for in-depth interviewing). Have them in the format in which they are available or will be administered (e.g. online or paper and pencil survey).
  - Finalize any additional material that your mode of observation requires, for example the manipulation material in an experiment; or access to databases for content analysis.
- As you operationalize your design you might find that your research question is slightly modified. This is normal and you don't need to panic but do keep it in mind the changes for your final write up.
- If your group wants to run this by me before the deadline we can set an appointment to do this.

Another way to think about this assignment is that on November 17 you should be ready to start analyzing your data. Ideally, your team should have a plan for analyzing one of the available survey datasets or the experimental, content, interview, or network data your team collected; this means that all the pieces to answer your research questions/hypotheses need to be in place.



Journalism and Mass Communication 658 – Fall 2022  
COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS

Data Analysis assignment:

Deliverables: (1) 4-page, double-spaced, paper per group (December 4 – Sunday Night)  
(2) 15-minute presentation to the class of your full project (December 8 or 13)

You have already identified the question you want to study, reviewed the relevant literature, selected your data and methods. Now for this assignment you need to:

- Select an appropriate data analysis strategy based on your mode of observation and the relationships you will be exploring. Justify your choice (keep in mind that the type of variable being considered in making this choice).
- Present your analyses. This entails:
  - Selecting and constructing (if multiple items) the variables to be analyzed.
  - Performing the test/s.
  - Interpreting the test/s and concluding whether you accept or reject the null hypothesis for each test.
  - I will work with teams to conduct the analysis and perform statistical tests
- If your group wants to run this by me before the deadline we can set an appointment to do this.