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@subcontrary
Class hashtag: #RM3342

Office hours: TR 4:00 – 5:30
and by appointment
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General Course Information

Pre-/Co-requisites

COMM 3342 carries no pre- or co-requisites, and I do not assume that you bring any formal knowledge of research methods or statistics as you begin the class. However, I do expect you to demonstrate advanced college level writing skills on all assignments.

Course Description

Communication Research Methods introduces you to the structured, deliberate approach to raising and investigating questions about communication. These research inquiries take quantitative forms when we try to describe what exists (such as measuring current sentiment toward a product in the marketplace as a foundation for a persuasive appeal) or analyze the relationships between different variables (such as whether introducing certain stories in the news media changes public perceptions of what is important). They take qualitative forms when they interpret or evaluate communication in particular contexts, such as how viewers responded to a negative political ad or how communicators represent race or gender. This course will help you become a knowledgeable consumer and a limited producer of communication research as you develop skills in gathering, organizing, interpreting and presenting research information.

Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete Communication Research Methods will demonstrate that they understand systematic ways to approach problems in the theory and practice of communications research as they

- Articulate the challenges and opportunities provided by quantitative and qualitative research methods;
- Propose research projects;
- Apply research skills through a data-based research study;
- Communicate the results of original communication research; and
- Critically evaluate communication research.

Required Text

This course requires one textbook:

Gerianne Merrigan & Carole L. Huston, *Communication Research Methods, 2e.* Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-19-531482-3

You should complete the assigned reading *before* coming to class to benefit from class activities. We will not use class time to reiterate what you can learn from the text – to do so would waste your time and money. Instead, we will use class time to engage the material, which requires you to come prepared.

¹ Calling me is the *worst* possible way to contact me. You will get a better response if you use email or Twitter.

ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

- Submit all assignments to eLearning
- Submit all assignments in pdf or docx format
- Single space all documents
- Use the naming convention Yourlastname Assignment (for example, *Bell Ethnography.pdf*)

The following table lists course assignments and their due dates. You can find a more detailed course schedule, including reading assignments and daily class topics, on the course website.

<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>VALUE</u>	<u>DUE DATE</u>
Homework	150	See course schedule
Research Article Critique	150	March 6
Content Analysis	300	April 3
Ethnography	300	April 29
Communication Competency	100	Ongoing
TOTAL POINTS	1000	

- **Homework:** Six homework assignments worth 25 points each to practice research design concepts.
- **Research Article Critique:** A 2-3 page paper evaluate the research design underlying a peer-reviewed academic paper investing some aspect of communication theory.
- **Content Analysis:** A 4-5 page paper that presents a content analysis that you designed and implemented.
- **Ethnography:** A 4-5 page paper or video that develops an ethnographic study.

You may consult with the writing center on any assignment (call 972.883.6707 to schedule an appointment), but don't expect them to copyedit your documents. Similarly, you should not expect (or ask) them to predict what grade your work might receive. They help, but they cannot guarantee results. You bear the responsibility for the work that you submit.

I will assign final grades according to the 2012-14 UTD Undergraduate Catalog scale:

	B+	870-899	C+	770-799	D+	670-699		
A	930-1000	B	830-869	C	730-769	D	630-669	F 0-599
A-	900-929	B-	800-829	C-	700-729	D-	600-629	

The following course-specific policies supplement the standard UT Dallas policies that you must know and follow (available at <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>).

Course Policies

I use a criteria-based rather than norm-based (curved) grading system. Each assignment includes specific criteria, but I generally assess your work according to the resourcefulness with which it:

- fulfills the criteria established in the assignment specifications,
- demonstrates an insightful understanding of the practical and theoretical implications of research methods, and
- develops logical arguments, strong claims, and compelling evidence.

All work should conform to professional and ethical standards, so proofread and edit all written work that you submit in this class for clarity, mechanics, and style issues.

Professionalism also means that you use appropriate source citation wherever and whenever necessary to enhance credibility and avoid violations of copyright – even if you make those violations inadvertently. In the interest of clarity, you should cite your source not just when you quote directly or paraphrase but also when you replicate the sequence of ideas from a source. You should also cite any source from which you borrow images, tables, charts, screen shots, or other visual information. You should use a standard citation format – preferably [APA](#) or [Chicago](#) – for all reference citations.

You should not submit any work for this course that you developed for another course without first coordinating this approach with me. While you may explore topics across courses, the work you submit for COMM 3342 should be substantially different from the work that you submit in any other course.

Grading Criteria

Grades reflect the quality of the work product you submit as reflected in the following descriptions.

- A Exceptional** work that demonstrates superior aptitude and initiative in coursework, evidenced by a polished, professional style, insightful analysis, and strong argument development. In other words, you developed an interesting argument that frontloaded strong claims and supported them with compelling evidence that helps the reader gain a new perspective or understanding.
- B High quality** work misses one of the criteria for excellent work while still demonstrating consistently strong qualities in the other two. B-level work may also contain minor problems in understanding or applying concepts that would not appear in an exceptional work product.
- C Acceptable** work meets all assignment requirements but demonstrates weaker use of theoretical concepts or serious flaws that prevents it from satisfying one or more categories. This satisfactory work product meets minimal assignment requirements but does not provide sufficient evidence or fails to implement concepts effectively.
- D Unsatisfactory** work product that does not meet particular assignment requirements and contains significant problems in content, organization, style, or mechanics that distract the audience or interfere with the reception of the message.
- F Unacceptable** work.

**Late Work
and Make-up
Exams**

*Late, incomplete, or improperly submitted work is not acceptable in this course. I reserve make-up privileges for university-specified circumstances. If you must miss class or deadlines for such reasons, you should make arrangements with me in advance. If you anticipate technology problems, court appearances (whether as plaintiff or defendant), hurricanes or other cataclysmic acts of God, Facebook crises, red carpet step and repeats, zombie attacks, twenty-first birthdays, Twitter wars, Assassin Creed III's drop date, Woot! Offs, unreasonable bosses, Carly Ray Jepsen calling you (maybe), general loss of mojo, or other calamities whether foreseen or not, **start your work early and save it often – ideally in several places.***

No homework submissions will be accepted after the deadline has passed.

Major assignments – the research article critique, content analysis and ethnography – lose 25% of the possible points for each 24-hour period following the deadline.

**Special
Consideration**

Even if you become my new best friend and you move next door to me so that we may grow old together, I do not curve individual items, nor do I offer “special consideration” to allow students a chance to raise their grade. If a personal situation arises during the semester that may affect your classroom performance, please talk to me sooner rather than later. If you wait until the end of the semester, I won't be able to help you. I can work with you more easily if you speak to me when the situation arises. I can't help you if I don't know you need help.

**Communication
Competency**

Woody Allen might argue that 80% of success is showing up, but simply showing up won't generate 80% of the possible communication competency points. Your communication competency grade reflects how you attend class, share your ideas, engage your classmates, and behave with respect toward them. Your comments and insights contribute to the class's success, so you must attend class prepared to discuss material as a public, interactive process. (I plan classes based on the assumption that everyone has carefully and critically read the assigned materials and that you will arrive at class prepared to ask questions to clarify it, discuss it, apply it, and interrogate it.) Everyone benefits when you engage alternative perspectives, challenge interpretations, and invite constructive arguments – so long as you do so with an appreciation for both differences and points of agreement.

This grade explicitly includes civility and professionalism in all course communication and behavior. This civility includes contributing to conversations, respecting others' opinions, working together in a spirit of cooperation, and actively listening to those who are speaking. Some of the ways you can demonstrate your skills in this area include (but certainly are not limited to):

- Keeping the class in the foreground of your attention.
 - Showing respect to your peers and to the instructor in your listening and communicating behaviors.
 - Participating actively in class rather than simply waiting to be called on.
 - Adding value with your contributions to discussion, such as connecting disparate ideas, bringing topical information to the table, and asking insightful questions.
 - Focusing on analyzing persuasive strategies rather than “winning” an argument.
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- Taking responsibility for the consequences of your choices and actions.
 - Demonstrating a strong work ethic by engaging all ungraded work with a mindfulness and timeliness to reflect a professional approach to the class.

The preceding points frame communication competency in a positive light, but I also note violations of the implied classroom contract even though I may not call you on them.

You should attend class regularly, prepare the assigned readings, and actively participate in class, which is the only way to gain the full impact of the course. Work assigned for this class carries no less priority than work you may have to complete for any other class or job. Classroom lectures, discussions, and activities do not generally lend themselves to summary after the fact. Moreover, class participation is a vital part of your learning process. Indeed, studies show that regular class attendance is the single best predictor of academic performance – more so than study habits, study skills, or standardized tests.²

Class

Attendance

You may miss up to two classes for any reason without penalty, but each subsequent absence will adversely affect your grade in the course, with excessive absences potentially resulting in failure of the course. Notice that no adjectives modify “absence.” I make no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences, so you neither need to ask my permission nor provide documentation. I am not interested in excuses – only solutions. Unless you have a disability or other university-specified accommodation, the excellence of your excuse is not a factor; you either attend class or not. If you know this policy conflicts with other commitments you have, please discuss this with me during the first week of classes.

Digital Devices

You may use laptops, tablets, cell phones, and other digital devices so long as you use them responsibly and respectfully. If your digital device disturbs other students or interferes with your ability to participate meaningfully in class activities, you may be asked to remove the distraction and/or leave class, thus losing credit for any of the day’s activities.

Niggling Details

- Monitor eLearning regularly for updates and assignments.
 - Silence electronic device notification settings before class begins and refrain from accepting calls in class.
 - Use your UT Dallas email address when you email me.
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² Crede, Marcus; Roch, Sylvia G.; and Kieszczynka, Urszula M. 2010. Class Attendance in College: A meta-analytic review of the relationship of class attendance with grades and student characteristics. *Review of Educational Research* 80: 272-295.

SPRING 2013 COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS COURSE SCHEDULE

Complete assigned readings before coming to class.

DATE	TOPIC	READ BEFORE CLASS	DEADLINES
RESEARCH AS ARGUMENT			
Jan 14	Course Introduction		
Jan 16	Research as Argument	Preface, Chapters 1 and 2	
Jan 21	<i>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</i>		
Jan 23	Research Paradigms	Chapter 3	
Jan 28	Research Claims	Chapter 4	
Jan 30	Research Warrants	Chapter 6	
RESEARCH FROM THE DISCOVERY PARADIGM			
Feb 4	Data Collection	Chapter 5	
Feb 6	Data Collection	Reading and Writing Social Research	HW1 Due 2/10
Feb 11	Design: Survey Research	Chapter 7	
Feb 13	Design: Survey Research		HW2 Due 2/17
Feb 18	Design: Experimental Research	Chapter 8	
Feb 20	Design: Experimental Research		HW3 Due 2/24
Feb 25	Design: Content Analysis	Chapter 9	
Feb 27	Design: Content Analysis		HW4 Due 2/26
Mar 4	Research Meetings		
Mar 6	Research Meetings		Research Critique Due 2/6
Mar 11	<i>Spring Break</i>		
Mar 13	<i>Spring Break</i>		
Mar 18	Analysis: Descriptive Statistics	Chapter 10	
Mar 20	Analysis: Inferential Statistics		
Mar 25	Analysis: Testing Differences	Chapter 11	
Mar 27	Analysis: Testing Relationships		HW5 Due 3/31
RESEARCH FROM THE INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM			
Apr 1	Interpretive design: Ethnography	Chapter 13	
Apr 3	Interpretive design: Ethnography		Content Analysis Due 4/5
Apr 8	Interpretive design: Ethnography		
Apr 10	Interpretive design: Interviews	Question Design Reading	
Apr 15	Interpretive design: Interviews		HW6 Due 4/14
Apr 17	Interpretive design: Interviews		
Apr 22	Research Meetings		
Apr 24	Research Meetings		
Apr 29	Ethnography Presentations		
May 1	Ethnography Presentations		Ethnography Due 5/1

These descriptions and timelines may change at the professor's discretion.