MMC 6421 Research Methods

Summer A 2017 / Section 01FC / Periods 2-4 Tuesdays; 2-3 Thursdays / Weimer 3024 / 3 credits

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Office:	3052 Weimer Hall
Office hours:	For an hour after class: 2 to 3 p.m. Tuesdays and 12:30 to 1:30 Thursdays
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About me:	See my website or follow me (@bikeprof) on Twitter

Office hours are first-come, first-served. If those hours don't work for your schedule, make an appointment or drop in whenever the office door is open.

ABOUT THE COURSE

Course Description

This is an overview of the primary qualitative and quantitative methods in mass communication research. It is designed to help graduate students conduct research for a peer-reviewed journal, thesis, or dissertation.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:
- Distinguish between mediocre and good research.
- Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of commonly used methods.
- Collect and evaluate qualitative data.
- Collect and evaluate quantitative data.
- Submit an IRB request to conduct research involving human subjects.
- Choose statistical or analytical evaluations appropriate for each method.
- Compose the shell (intro through methods) of a study you plan to conduct.

Required Textbooks

1. Wimmer, R.D., & Dominick, J.R. (2014). *Mass media research: An introduction* (10th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage. ISBN: 9781133307334
2. Pallant, J. (2016). *SPSS survival manual* (6th ed.). Berkshire, England: Open University Press / McGraw Hill. ISBN: 9780335262588

   Pallant offers a gentle introduction to statistics while walking you through SPSS: everything from which buttons to press to how to write the results. Only three chapters are assigned (1, 2, and 10) with the rest listed as "skim" because stats is a secondary purpose to this course. But read the entire book as you have time. It's an amazing resource aimed at those of us who are not stats whiz kids.

   Also: Assigned readings (PDFs) are on the Canvas website.

Class Schedule
We will meet in person for the first nine meetings and skip the final three so you can devote that time to your paper. We will have a 30-minute lunch break on Tuesdays.

Wk	Dates	Topic	Details	Readings	Assignments
1	May 9 May 11	Science	What makes research scientific Ontology, epistemology, axiology Naturalism vs. interpretation Data and variables Reliability and validity Samples and populations The role of theory in research How to read a research paper What distinguishes good research Choosing a research topic	Wimmer & Dominick 1, 2, 3, 4; Pallant 1-2; assigned PDF articles	May 11 class, critique research article
2	May 16 May 18	Qualitative	Case study Ethnography Focus group Historical Interview	Wimmer & Dominick 5, 8; assigned PDF articles	May 15: 1-sheeters, qualitative May 17: IRB forms May 16 & 18 classes, method presents
3	May 23 May 25	Quantitative	Content analysis Experiment Survey Current issues in the field issues	Wimmer & Dominick 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16; assigned PDF articles	May 22: 1-sheeters, quantitative May 23: Qualtrics survey May 23 & 25 classes, method presents
4	May 30 June 1	Statistics	Elements of statistical reasoning Matching statistic to data Benefits and dangers in statistics	Wimmer & Dominick 10-12; Pallant 10	
5	June 6 June 8	Paper presentation	June 6: Summarize in 10 to 15 minutes to the class your final paper and hand out an abstract of roughly 150 words June 8: No class		June 6 class, distribute discuss your paper abstract
6	June 13 June 15	No class	No classes this week so you can work on your paper due June 17		Paper due noon June 17

The final paper is due by **noon Saturday, June 17**, to the Canvas assignment.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Assignment Weighting (total: 1,000 points)
Method One-Sheeters (8 X 20 points each) .... 160 points
Method Presentations (2 X 10 points each) .... 200 points
IRB Proposal .... 100 points
Qualtrics Survey .... 100 points
Research Paper Shell .... 440 points

Grading Scale (in points)

		B+	899 to 870	C+	799 to 770	D+	699 to 670
A	1,000 to 930	B	869 to 830	C	769 to 730	D	669 to 630
A-	929 to 900	B-	829 to 800	C-	729 to 700	D-	629 to 600

Consult the UF graduate school catalog for details about the grading policy.

Method One-Sheeters (8 x 20 = 160 points)
These are eight, single-page, bullet-point listings of the key strengths and weaknesses of each method. These don't have to be comprehensive but should hit the highlights – the benefits and pitfalls – of each method.

Each method is a different sheet. By definition, some methods (such as case study) have fewer strengths and weaknesses than others (such as a survey).

State your sources at the top of the page. You are welcome to draw from other material beyond the textbooks but are not required to do so.

Here is the schedule for uploading your summaries to the Canvas assignment:
- Due 11:59 p.m. Monday, May 15: Five qualitative methods (case study, ethnography, focus group, historical, interview). Upload as a single Word doc or PDF. 100 points.
- Due 11:59 p.m. Monday, May 22: Three quantitative methods (content analysis, experiment, survey). Upload as a single Word doc or PDF. 60 points.

Method Presentations (2 X 100 = 200 points)
You will each give two teaching presentations (roughly 20 minutes each) that supplement the Wimmer and Dominick text on a particular method. We will choose those on May 9. Each is worth 100 points.

Although you are welcome to use presentation software like PowerPoint, the main takeaway will be a one-page (front and back OK) handout for your peers that summarizes your presentation. Don't get too fancy!

These presentations are intended to enable you to become sufficiently familiar with a method to teach it to your peers. (If you can teach it, you've learned it!) However, a presentation does not have to be a lecture. Engaging the class helps facilitate learning.

The presentations should cover:
1. An overview of the method.
2. Hypotheses or research questions suitable to be addressed by the method.
3. Best practices (and pitfalls to avoid) for conducting the method.
4. Examples of good (and bad) research that used the method.
5. Ways to analyze the data generated by the method.

These will be done in class on May 16, 18, 23 and 25.

IRB Proposal (100 points)
Complete a human subject research proposal for [IRB-02](). The system requires online submissions, but you can get a sense of what is required by completing paper forms.

Under the IRB-02 Forms menu on the left-hand side, choose Legacy Paper Study Submission Form. Also download the myIRB Protocol Submission Form. Read the website to determine if your study is exempt (quite rare), expedited (common), or requires a full board review (rare). Also examine the Informed Consent Instructions and Procedures.

For either your proposed study for this class or for one you would like to conduct, complete in a Word document:
- The legacy paper study submission form.
- Respond to each of the six areas required in the protocol document.
- An informed consent document.

Upload to the Canvas assignment by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, May 17. We will discuss what you upload in class on Thursday, May 18.

Qualtrics Survey (100 points)
Set up a Qualtrics account (our college has an [account]()) and create a (roughly) 10-question survey (your questions) by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, May 23. Post a link to the survey on a Canvas discussion group and take each other's surveys by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, May 24, so we can discuss in class on Thursday, May 25.

We will discuss survey questions in class on May 23, but you can work on this ahead of time. Do write your own questions, even if for a mythical survey. The purpose is to learn the elements of good survey writing.

Research Paper Shell (440 points)
This is the shell of a research paper – the introduction through the methods section with a reference section and any appendices required (such as a survey questionnaire or a content analysis code book). In short, it is everything except the data.

This can be on any subject you like. It will hold the most value if you focus on a topic you think might become your thesis or dissertation, or a research paper would like to conduct for an academic conference and/or a peer-reviewed journal.

About the paper:
- Length: Roughly 5,000 words, including references
- Style: APA (preferred) or Chicago
- Abstract: 100 words (so shorter than what you showed in class)
- Introduction
    - Define the problem to be solved: the "so what?"
    - Identify the academic "donut hole" the study will fill
    - Sketch the theoretical foundation for the study
- Literature Review
    - Define and explicate all concepts and variables
    - Justify each H and RQ (about 4 to 10) with literature or theory
        - Use a directional H if theory or literature justifies
        - Use an RQ if literature insufficient or contradictory
        - Situate H's and RQs at the end of justifying section
- Method
    - Defend the method(s) as suitable to address the H's and RQs
    - Detail and justify the research design
    - Operationalize all variables
    - Identify whether variables are independent or dependent
    - Identify the statistical tests or analytical techniques to be used for each

Research Paper Abstract (0%)

In class on June 6, you will distribute a roughly 150-word abstract of your paper. The abstract should:
- Finish this sentence: "The purpose of this study is to …"
- Articulate the study's importance – the "so what"
- Identify the method to be used
    - If qualitative, indicate how data will be gathered and analyzed
    - If quantitative, identify the IV(s) and DV(s) to be tested as well as the source of the data to be used

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to clearly delineate the study and obtain feedback from your peers on how to improve it

Deadline: The final paper is due by **noon Saturday, June 17**, to the Canvas assignment. The paper will automatically be uploaded to Turnitin, the plagiarism detector UF uses.

MORE IMPORTANT DETAILS

Attendance
Punctual attendance is expected of graduate students unless an absence is allowed under UF policy. If you are going to be absent, let me know ahead of time.

Academic Integrity
UF students live by an honor code that prohibits academic dishonesty such as (but not limited to) cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, engaging in unauthorized collaboration, reusing a paper from another class, writing a similar paper for two classes, drawing too heavily on another's work for your own, and having someone else write your paper.

Be aware of the UF graduate school academic honesty policy as well the one in the college's Doctoral Handbook. Students have an affirmative obligation to know what is in the handbook and to abide by it. The handbook includes a detailed description of plagiarism, copies of which are available in Chinese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, and Spanish. If you are unsure of citation rules or what requires attribution, ask me *before* turning in a paper. Ignorance is not an excuse.

My default practice for an academic integrity violation is a failing grade for the course and to recommend the student be removed from the graduate program.

Students with Disabilities
If you would benefit from disability-related accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center as early in the semester as possible. The center will provide documentation so appropriate accommodations can be made. The center is in Reid Hall, 392-8565.

Help with Coping
The UF Counseling and Wellness Center is a terrific, free resource for any student who could use help managing stress or coping with life. The center, at 3190 Radio Road on campus, is open for appointments and emergency walk-ins from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. To make an appointment or receive after-hours assistance, call 352-392-1575.

The UF Police can be reached at 392-1111 or, in an emergency, by dialing 911.

Course Evaluations
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. You will be notified by email when the evaluations are open, near the end of the semester. Summary results are available to you and the general public.