

MMC 6421 (Class #16702): Research Methods in Mass Communication
 Fall 2021 Tues. 1:55pm to 4:55pm (Periods 7-9)

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 Office Hours: Mon 1pm to 2pm or by appointment

REQUIRED READINGS

Readings will be posted on Canvas

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class intends to provide an overview of the important aspects of qualitative and quantitative research methods that are often employed in the field of communication. This class will focus primarily on three components: 1. Qualitative methods (focus groups, interviews, etc.); 2. Quantitative methods (surveys, experiments, sampling, content analysis, etc.); and 3. an introduction to SPSS and statistics (cleaning data, creating variables, running analyses, etc.). The college offers specific classes for most of the methods outlined in this class (e.g., survey class, experimental design class, etc.). This course is simply designed to provide you with an overview of the various methods and analytical techniques used in communication. After this class, you should take additional courses tied to the method you plan to utilize moving forward (qualitative methods, content analysis, experimental design, survey design, etc.). In addition, I will give you some basics regarding data analysis in this class. However, this is not nearly enough content to fully understand and master the analyses you will use moving forward. You will be taking stats in the college, but if you plan to be a quantitative scholar you will have to take several classes on various topics to become an expert regarding quantitative analysis (i.e., class on descriptive stats and basic analyses; class focused on linear regression; class focused on non-linear regression; class focused on SEM; class focused on multilevel modeling; etc.).

Learning outcomes:

1. Develop research questions and hypotheses
2. Basic knowledge of qualitative methods
 - a. Focus group
 - b. In-depth interviews
 - c. Observation
3. Basic knowledge of a variety of quantitative methods
 - a. Measuring concepts (i.e., reliability and consistency)
 - b. Sampling
 - c. Survey design
 - d. Experimental design
 - e. Content analysis
4. Introduction to SPSS & basic knowledge of descriptive and inferential stats
 - a. Cleaning data sets
 - b. Creating variables
 - c. Running and understanding various descriptive statistics (i.e., mean, mode, standard deviation)
 - d. Running and understanding various inferential stats (i.e., correlation, t-test, anova, regression)

Assignments

Discussion questions (100 points)

For ten weeks this semester, I will ask you to post two questions on the discussion board for the week's readings or the week's lecture. In essence, I want you to post two questions each week regarding content that confused you, that you want to know more about, etc. These will need to be posted by the end of the day we have class (i.e., by end of Tues.). I will work to address these at the start of the next class or answer them on Canvas. You will need to post questions 10 times. Each week you post questions, you will get 10 points (maximum 100 points).

Exams (250 points)

There will be two exams this semester: a midterm and final exam. The final exam will occur during finals week (sorry). The exams will be a mix of multiple choice, fill in the blank, matching, and short answer/essay questions.

Assignments (400 points)

During the semester, you will complete eight small assignments. Each is worth 50 points. These assignments are designed to give you experience using a variety of methods during the semester. Below I provide brief descriptions of the assignments. There are more detailed descriptions for all the assignments on the Canvas page.

Assignment 1- CITI training: For this assignment, you must complete the required CITI training to conduct social science research. If you've already completed the training, then send me a copy of your completion form. If you haven't, please go to the following [link](#) to complete the necessary training.

Assignment 2- Developing research questions and hypotheses: For this assignment, you will go through the process of developing two research questions and/or hypotheses. These should be somewhat separate from one another in that they do not contain the same variables.

Assignment 3- Non-participant observation: For this assignment, you will engage in a non-participant observation of a situation. What you decide to examine doesn't have to be tied to communication. You're basically going to observe human interaction in a situation. The situation can be anything you want: bar, coffee shop, farmers market, mall, etc. Your goal is to observe the situation, then write up a brief overview of your findings from this process.

Assignment 4- In-depth interview/Focus group: For this assignment, you will either 1) conduct an in-depth interview with one person or 2) develop a focus group protocol and analyze a focus group posted online. If you choose the interview, you will hand in the protocol you will developed for your interview and a brief summary of your insights from conducting your in-depth interview. If you choose the focus group, you will hand in a focus group protocol and an overview/analysis of a focus group you find posted online (you can conduct your own focus group if you like, but please see me if you want to move forward with this plan).

Assignment 5- Qualtrics survey: For this assignment, you will create a short survey in Qualtrics. This survey should measure at least 8 concepts with at least 3 items per concept. You will adhere to online survey design good practices outlined in lecture.

Assignment 6- Experimental design: For this assignment, you will outline four experimental designs that could be implemented for a study. You should use four different experimental designs discussed in class lecture. You will outline research questions and/or hypotheses, briefly describe your independent and dependent variables, and describe the experimental design you plan to employ.

Assignment 7- Coding sheet: For this assignment, you will create a truncated coding sheet that could be used for a project examining the content of any media or other form of communication. You should create coding schemes for 5 variables. For example, you could create coding schemes for source of political content, sources used in a news story, whether the story is liberal or conservative, the topic of the story, and whether the story uses aggressive communication tactics.

Assignment 8- Coding and cleaning data: For this assignment, I will give you a data set that needs to be cleaned. Your job will be to create variables, remove missing responses, and recode variables. I will ask that you hand in the syntax used to create your file, descriptive statistics for the variables, and a brief overview describing what you did and why.

Final Proposal (250 points)

At the end of the semester, you will write up a short methods section for a project you would like to collect data on at the start of spring semester. This should be tied to the paper you’re writing in your theory class (for PhD students- perspectives). In essence, you should write up the methods section for the proposal you’re doing in the theory class. The goal is that you can collect data in the spring, and analyze it as part of your data analysis class. In the end, the hope is that you’ll have a full paper that you’ve worked on from start to finish by the end of your first year in the program.

Your performance in this course is evaluated on a 1000-point scale. I encourage you to keep track of your performance based on the above requirements. Final letter grades will be assigned as following breakdowns:

| | | | |
|------------|----|------------|----|
| 93 - 100% | A | 77 - 79.9% | C+ |
| 90 - 92.9% | A- | 73 - 76.9% | C |
| 87 - 89.9% | B+ | 70 - 72.9% | C- |
| 83 - 86.9% | B | 67 - 69.9% | D+ |
| 80 - 82.9% | B- | 60 - 66.9% | D |
| | | < 60% | F |

SELECT COURSE POLICIES

Instructor Interaction

Please feel free to stop by my office during office hours or make an appointment to see me. The best way to reach me is by e-mail. I check my e-mail account regularly, but please do not expect a response by e-mail after normal business hours. If I have not written back within 48 hours, please send your email again. I do not discuss grades or any student records issues via e-mail. Please schedule a meeting with me to discuss these issues. The classroom is typically not an appropriate place for these discussions.

Late or Missed Work

You will hand in assignments to the course drop box. It is your responsibility to hand in the assignments before the due date. You must submit assignments before midnight of the due date. Therefore, if a paper is due Tuesday, it must be in the drop box by 11:59 p.m.. **Be sure to verify that your assignment has been downloaded to the drop box. The only way I do not consider an assignment late is if it’s in the drop box before the deadline.** In

addition, I will consider any assignments that can't be opened as late. That is, if you upload a file type I can't open or your assignment is in limbo because you didn't let it finish uploading I will still consider the assignment late. I would strongly advise you to upload a .doc or .rtf file as these are the ones that can be opened on most computers. Fifteen percent will be deducted from your grade **each day** your paper is late or for each day the correct file type is not uploaded to the drop box (this means a total of 30% if it is handed in two-days late). I will NOT accept assignments after the second day (48-hours past the due date). Late assignments will not be given grading priority. They will be handed back by the end of the semester. Late assignments will also receive few, if any, comments.

Attendance: This course focuses on class participation and group discussion. Your attendance is an important aspect of this course. I will send around an attendance sheet each day at the beginning of class. You will be responsible for making sure you sign the attendance sheet each day. Excessive absences will harm your grade. I will deduct 10 percent from your final grade for excessive absences (i.e., missing more than 2 classes).

Email Policy: As a state employee, my email is considered a public record. Therefore, it can be requested via an open-records request. Because emails are considered public records, federal privacy laws prevent me from discussing grades or other personal matters via email. As a result, you will need to visit me in my office to discuss grades. In general, face-to-face meetings tend to take less time, and result in less confusion than emailed conversations. While you are welcome to email me, I may indicate that you need an in-person meeting depending on the complexity of the issue. In addition, please be aware that email is considered formal communication, which means you should practice professionalism. In other words, try to avoid treating emails like text messages (i.e., don't use text abbreviations). Moreover, only send things via email that you would say to another person in a face-to-face setting.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

UF Grading Policy

<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#grades> (Links to an external site.)

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> (Links to an external site.)

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals> (Links to an external site.). Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/> (Links to an external site.).

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge

is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please

see: <http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html> (Links to an external site.)

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Policy on Course Syllabi 3 UF, Academic Affairs, July 28th, 2021 Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care:

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc> (Links to an external site.), and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)

Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/> (Links to an external site.).

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml> (Links to an external site.).

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/> (Links to an external site.).

Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask> (Links to an external site.). Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/> (Links to an external site.).

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> (Links to an external site.).

Student Complaints Campus: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf (Links to an external site.).

On-Line Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process> (Links to an external site.).

Schedule

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic/Reading Assignment (Reading will be posted on Canvas)</u> |
|--------------|---|
| Week 1 8/24 | Philosophy of Science & Communication Research Process Creswell (2014) Ch 1, 6 & 7 |
| Week 2 8/31 | Comm Research Process, Research Ethics & Qualitative Designs (CITI Training Due) Treadwell (2017) Ch 3 Belmont Report Glesne Ch 1 & 2 |
| Week 3 9/7 | Qualitative Design & Observation (RQ/Hypothesis Assignment) Glesne Ch3, 4 |
| Week 4 9/14 | Interviews Glense 7, 8, & 10 |
| Week 5 9/21 | Focus Groups (Observation Assignment) Hayes Ch 2; Trochim & Donnelly Ch 3 |
| Week 6 9/28 | Qualitative wrap-up; Measurement- Scale Development, Behavioral and Implicit Measures Trochim & Donnelly Ch 5 |
| Week 7 10/5 | Measurement- Scale Development, Behavioral and Implicit Measures Sampling/Generalizability (Interview Assignment) Trochim & Donnelly Ch 2 Casler et al. (2013) Separate but equal? A comparison of participants and data gathering via Amazon's MTurk, social media, and face-to-face Ansolabehere, S., & Schaffner, B.F. (2014). Does survey mode still matter? Findings from a 2010 multi-mode comparison. <i>Political Analysis</i> 22, 285-303. |
| Week 8 10/12 | Exam 1 |

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| Week 8 10/19 | Sampling & Survey Research Design |
| Week 9 10/26 | Survey Research Design (Qualtrics) Frey ch 8; Wimmer & Dominick Ch 7 |
| Week 10 11/2 | Survey Research Design & Experimental Design (Qualtrics assignment) Frey et al Ch 7; Crano & Brewer Ch 7 |
| Week 11 11/9 | Experimental Design Trochim & Donnelly Ch 9 |
| Week 12 11/16 | Experimental Design & Content Analysis (Experimental Design Assignment) Frey Ch 9 Wimmer & Dominic Ch 6 |
| Week 13 11/23 | Intro to SPSS & Recoding Variables Descriptive statistics Field Ch 3, 4 & 5 |
| Week 14 11/30 | Descriptive statistics & Inferential statistics (t-test & anova) (Coding sheet) Field Ch 9 & 10 |
| Week 15 12/7 | Inferential statistics (correlation & regression) (Coding and Cleaning Data) Field Ch 6 & 7 |
| Week 16 | Final Exam – Fri. Dec. 17th 12:30pm to 2:30pm Final Proposal (Tues Dec. 14th) |