

MMC 6423: Content Analysis Methods

3020 Weimer Hall

Section: 1C49; Thursdays 9:35 a.m. to 12:35 p.m.

Fall 2013

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Office hours: 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Wednesdays or by appointment.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Learning about sampling, category construction, calculation of intercoder reliability, and analysis of data.
2. Evaluation of content analysis methods and opportunity to undertake project using this methodology.
3. Focus on analysis of mass media messages, including audio/video, print, and visual.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

1. Riffe, Daniel, Lacy, Stephen, and Fico, Frederick G. (2005). *Analyzing Media Messages* (Second Edition). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
2. Additionally, some readings are on electronic reserve. Find the course on <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu> and choose the appropriate reading(s) for that week.

FORMAT:

This is a discussion-heavy course that will focus mainly on group research projects. I have assigned articles and book chapters each week and I expect them to be read before class. As graduate students, I assume that you are attending class to learn and that you want to be challenged. As a professor, I plan to engage in thoughtful discussion and enjoy differing viewpoints.

The course format will be a mix of lecture, discussion and workshops, with the focus on developing and conducting a team-led research study during the semester. The end goal will be a group-led research paper, ideally one that could be submitted to an academic conference.

In terms of class sessions, workshops will generally be informal, but all members of the group will be expected to attend class and participate in the group activities for the day. Further, each member of the group will be asked to present the status of the project at different points in the semester, so all members of the group should always be aware of the status and progress of the project.

NOTE: While not required, it is suggested that students have previously taken a methods class before enrolling in MMC 6423.

GROUP WORK AND TOPIC SELECTION:

In this class, group work is essential for success. While group issues may arise, the students are instructed to first attempt to solve the issue among the members before bringing it to the attention of the instructor. Group sizes may vary, but generally groups should be no larger than four students without instructor approval. With instructor approval, students may work alone on projects.

GRADING:

Grading for the course will consist of six components:

- Exam 20 percent
- Group Content Analysis Design 10 percent
- Group Codebook 10 percent
- Results and Intercoder Reliability 10 percent
- Group/Class Participation/Attendance 10 percent
- Online Conceptualization Exercise 5 percent
- Group Research paper 35 percent

1. **EXAM:** There will be one exam, administered through E-learning, outside of class. Portions will be objective (e.g., true/false and multiple choice), while other sections will be essay.
2. **GROUP CONTENT ANALYSIS DESIGN:** The group will develop a content analysis study design that will be conducted during the semester. The assignment will outline the study parameters and appropriate samples, include hypotheses and/or research questions and provide a clear calendar of how/when study will be conducted within the confines of the class. A theoretical framework should be suggested, although perhaps only briefly. Suggestion is 5-8 pages.
3. **GROUP CODEBOOK:** Each group will design a detailed code book/ coding guide outlining each variable and how it will be measured.
4. **RESULTS AND INTERCODER RELIABILITY:** After data collection, the group will turn in a basic results section, demonstrating how each of its Hs and RQs were tested and presenting the results in a clear, concise format. This will likely include a textual explanation of the analysis, along with additional charts and/or figures to illustrate findings. Often, the text is 3-4 pages, with 3-4 charts and figures. In addition, this needs to include calculation of intercoder reliability for all main variables. A good site for this material is <http://dfreelon.org/utis/recalfront/>
5. **ONLINE CONCEPTUALIZATION EXERCISE:** Each group member will post an article relating to their final paper and discuss how the authors developed and measured the main concept, with some application to the group study for this class. Each group member will reply with meaningful responses.

6. **GROUP/CLASS PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE:** This class is group-focused; therefore, evaluation of participation will stem from both class attendance and participation AND each student's role in the group projects. Within class meetings, all students are expected to attend, be prepared at each class meeting, and contribute to class discussions. In addition, group members will be asked to evaluate the participation of each member in developing the final work product. Each student will be expected to provide updates on group activities during class meetings.

7. **FINAL WORK PRODUCT:** Each group will turn in one final paper that, with some revision and polishing, would be of the quality acceptable for presentation at national conference proceedings (e.g., ICA or AEJMC). These papers are generally 25-30 pages in length. The product must be a complete research project, not just a literature review or research design.

8. **FINAL GRADING:** The university's grading information can be found at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>. Final grades will be tallied using the following scale for the class:

| | |
|------------|----|
| • 92-100 | A |
| • 90-91.99 | A- |
| • 88-89.99 | B+ |
| • 82-87.99 | B |
| • 80-81.99 | B- |
| • 78-79.99 | C+ |
| • 72-77.99 | C |
| • 70-71.99 | C- |
| • 68-69.99 | D+ |
| • 62-67.99 | D |
| • 60-61.99 | D- |
| • Below 60 | E |

MISCELLANEOUS

Assignments and Readings: All assignments must be turned in at the **BEGINNING** of class or earlier. No exceptions. All readings are to be completed before the start of lecture on the day assigned. Given the fluid nature of the research project, deadlines for assignments may be delayed depending upon circumstances. If a situation arises (personal or course-related) in which a student/group may need extra time for an assignment, the instructor must be informed **IN ADVANCE** and will determine the appropriate remedy. Extensions should not be assumed, nor are they guaranteed.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Class Attendance/Participation: Attendance is expected and students with two or more unexcused absences from class meetings will receive grade reductions. Class meetings

begin the first day of class and run through the last day of the semester. Students who miss class for excused absences (as defined by university policies at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationattendance.html>) must make arrangements with the professor IN ADVANCE of the absence. In addition to attendance, I expect students to participate in discussions and add to the intellectual content of the course. Both of these criteria must be met to receive the full points of credit in this portion of the class.

SAKAI Discussion boards: During weeks 2-7, each student is expected to post to SAKAI discussion boards by 6 p.m. Wednesdays regarding the SAKAI readings for the week. Those posts should address either questions or comments about the article will be graded as part of your overall participation grade. The instructor will use those comments for the basis of discussion in class.

Plagiarism; Cheating or other Academic Misconduct: Each graduate student signed an Academic Integrity Statement when they entered the college of Journalism and Communications. For a reminder, here is a link to the statement:

<http://www.jou.ufl.edu/grad/forms/Plagiarism-Guideline.pdf>

In addition, all students are bound by the university's Honor Code Policy at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php>. **Anyone who violates these policies in this course will receive a failing grade in this course and face further sanctions from the college and university.**

Special needs: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. *This course conforms to all requirements of the ADA and handles with sensitivity all matters related to gender, race, sexual orientation, age, religion or disability. Please alert the instructor if any issues arise.*

Syllabus Changes: Given the fluid nature of a research project, the instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus or course schedule as the need arises.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Getting started: Content Analysis as a Research Tool

August 22

Course overview and Expectations

Beginnings: What is Content Analysis?

Class introductions questionnaires

Week 2: Developing Research Design

August 29

Picking topics

Study designs

Forming groups

Readings: Riffe et al, Ch. 1, 2 & 3; *SAKAI:* Yoo, J.H .and Kim, J. (2012). Obesity in the New Media: A Content Analysis of Obesity Videos on YouTube, *Health Communication*, 27: 86–97.

Week 3: Sampling

September 5

Choosing sample to fit study

Types of samples

Readings: Riffe et al., Ch. 5; *SAKAI:* Thomas Hove, T., Paek, H., Isaacson, T., Cole, R. (2012). Newspaper Portrayals of Child Abuse: Frequency of Coverage and Frames of the Issue, *Mass Communication & Society*, 10(1): 119-138.

Week 4: Measurement

September 12: Group Research Design Due

Types of variables

Coding

Developing clear definitions

Readings: Riffe et al., Ch. 4; *SAKAI:* Cummings, G. and Chambers, T. (2011). How production value impacts perceived technical quality, credibility and economic value of video news. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 88(4): 737-752.

Week 5: Developing Codebooks and Coding Guides

September 19: No class—online discussion.

More on measurement

Readings: *SAKAI:* Neuendorf, K. (2001). Ch. 6, Measurement Techniques, pp. 111-140, Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage.

Discussion Board Assignment: Find a journal article that you feel effectively measures a concept in your final study. Posts due by 11:45 a.m. Sept. 19; Replies due by 11:59 p.m. Sept. 20.

Week 6: Intercoder Reliability and Validity

September 26:

Calculating intercoder reliability

Tentative codebooks due

Readings: Riffe et al., Ch.6 & 7; Kennedy H. (2012). Perspectives on Sentiment Analysis, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 56(4):435–450.

Week 7: Finishing up Reliability and Validity

October 3: Codebook Due

Readings: Riffe, Ch. 9; SAKAI: Lewis, S.C., Zamith, R., and Hermida A. (2013). Content Analysis in an Era of Big Data: A Hybrid Approach to Computational and Manual Methods, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 57(1): 34–52.

Week 8: Data Analysis

October 10

Where to start?

Basics of SPSS for analysis

What if I've got nothing?

Computerized content analysis

Readings: Riffe et al. Ch. 8

Week 9: Data Collection Workday

October 17: Exam Due by 4 p.m.

Week 10: Writing up results and conclusions

October 24

How do we write up results?

Does this make sense?

What does it mean?

Linking back to theory

Readings: Bem, D. J. (2003). Writing the empirical journal article. In J.M. Darley, M. P. Zanna, & H. L. Roediger III (Eds), *The Compleat Academic*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Found at <http://dbem.ws/WritingArticle.pdf>

Week 11: Group meetings

October 31: Results and Intercoder Reliability Due

Week 12: Group meetings

November 7: Workday

Week 13: Class Presentations

November 14: In-class group presentations

Week 16: Class Presentations

November 21: In-class group presentations

Final papers due by noon December 2 in 3045 Weimer.