

# MMC 6421

## Research Methods in Mass Communication

**Spring 2018**

**W 7-9**

**Weimer 1078**

**Section 13HD**

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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 10<sup>th</sup>; Thursdays 1:30-3:00 pm and by appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

MMC 6421 provides an overview of common mass communication research methods. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, content analysis, surveys, and experiments will be discussed. In addition, students will be introduced to SPSS, a software program used to analyze data.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Upon completion of this course the students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the application of quantitative and qualitative research methods in mass communication contexts
- Understand and effectively utilize key methodological terms, concepts and operations, such as research design, sampling procedures, measurement, reliability, validity, etc.
- Apply ethical principles in research involving human participants and reporting of findings
- Design, conduct, articulate, interpret, and effectively report research

### **REQUIRED TEXT:**

Hocking, J. E., Stacks, D. W., & McDermott, S. T. (2003). *Communication Research* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

**GRADING:** Grades are determined by performance in three major ways: (1) Midterm Exam; (2) Final Research Project Proposal; and (3) Class Participation

### **Grading Breakdown**

Exam 40%

Research Project 40%

Class Participation 20%

**Grading scale:** 100-93 A; 92-90 A-; 89-87 B+; 86-84 B; 83-80 B-; 79-77 C+; 76-74 C; 73-70 C-; 69-67 D+; 66-64 D; 63-60 D-; 59 and below E

A **midterm exam** will be administered in class April 4. A study guide will be provided

one-two weeks prior to the exam.

The **final research proposal project** requires you to design a study under the supervision of the professor. You will be divided into teams or two for this major assignment. A finished research proposal will be turned in by the due date and teams will present their proposals on the last day of class (April 25). More detailed instructions on the final project will be provided.

**Participation** will be evaluated by the quality and substance of participation on group or class discussions and class exercises.

### **ABSCENCES AND PUNCTUALITY:**

Attendance is required for each scheduled class meeting. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence for the semester. Your final grade may be lowered by one letter grade for additional unexcused absence. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work in this course are consistent with UF policies which can be found in the online catalog at:

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

You may be asked for documentation from a physician or in the case of an emergency in some other form and in all cases if you miss an exam. If you feel you have the flu or a fever of any kind of contagious disease, please do not come to class as you will be excused. You can easily obtain documentation from the UF Infirmary. You are responsible for all class work missed, and a missed class is not an excuse for missing a deadline. Please seek prior approval if you are going to arrive late or depart early from any class. You also must attempt prior notification of the instructor by phone and email if you are ill or have an emergency on the date of the midterm exam.

### **OTHER COURSE POLICIES:**

- You are expected to complete assigned readings before class and participate actively in class discussions.
- You may use computers, tablets or smart phones in class for course work only.
- All work will be judged by professional standards. All out-of-class work must be well written with no typos, spelling or grammatical errors.

**Academic Integrity:** 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 specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. For more information visit the Honor Code web page at

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/> or contact Student Judicial Affairs, P202 **Peabody Hall, 392-1261**.

**Students with Disabilities:** 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. The instructor will cooperate fully.

**Diversity:** All class activities and discussions will be conducted in mutual respect for everyone in the class and their opinions. We will embrace an appreciation for the multicultural nature of the University of Florida, and practice the spirit of inclusiveness in which students should plan to work.

**UF RESOURCES:** If necessary, you are encouraged to take advantage of UF resources.

- University counseling services and mental health services:  
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx> or 392-1575
- University Police Department: 392-1111 or 911 for emergencies.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

**Please Note:** As the semester progresses, this schedule may change to reflect the progress and needs of the class.

| Date                | Topic   | Readings  |
|---------------------|---|-----------|
| Week 1:<br>(Jan 10) | <u>Introduction to the Course &amp; Review of Syllabus</u><br><u>Overview of the Research Paper</u><br><u>Asking Good Research Questions</u>                    | Chapter 1 |
| Week 2:<br>(Jan 17) | <u>Science, Paradigms, Theory, and Research</u><br><u>The Process of Communication</u><br><u>The Process of Research</u><br><u>Introduction of Term Project</u> | Chapter 2 |
| Week 3:<br>(Jan 24) | <u>Research Ethics; Secondary Research</u><br><u>*Discussion of Final Projects</u>  | Chapter 3 |
| Week 4:<br>(Jan 31) | <u>Definitions and Conceptualization</u>  | Chapter 4 |
| Week 5:<br>(Feb 7)  | <u>Research Design</u><br><u>Measurement Scales - Exercises</u>   | Chapter 7 |
| Week 6:<br>(Feb 14) | <u>Reliability and Validity</u>   | Chapter 6 |
| Week 7:<br>(Feb 21) | <u>More on Measurement, Reliability and Validity (Exercises)</u><br><u>*Discussion of Final Projects</u>  |           |

|                        |   |                                   |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Week 8<br>(Feb 28)     | <u>Sampling and Survey Research</u><br><u>Questionnaire Design</u>  | Chapter 10, 11                    |
| Week 9<br>(March 7)    | Spring Break  |                                   |
| Week 10<br>(March 14)  | <u>More on Survey Research Methods; Begin Review</u><br><u>Exam Study Guide Handout</u>                               |                                   |
| Week 11:<br>(March 21) | <u>Qualitative Methodology</u><br><u>In-depth interviews</u><br><u>Focus groups</u><br><u>Participant-observation</u> | Chapter 9                         |
| Week 12<br>(March 28)  | <b>Individual Meetings: Project Progress Reports and Input</b>  |                                   |
| Week 13 -<br>(April 4) | <b>Midterm Examination</b>  |                                   |
| Week 14<br>(April 11)  | <u>Descriptive Statistics and Introduction to SPSS</u>  |                                   |
| Week 15<br>(April 18)  | <u>Experimental Methods</u>   | Hocking et al.: Chapter 8, 12, 13 |
|                        | <b>Deadline for Instructor Review of Final Research Project</b>   |                                   |
| Week 16<br>(April 25)  | <u>Team Research Project Presentations</u>  |                                   |

**FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE: April 25**