MMC 6421
Research Methods in Mass Communication

Fall 2018 Tuesdays 7-9 Weimer 1074 Section 07EA

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Office Hours: Tue: 4:30-6 PM; Wed: 1-3 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:

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 Nov. 13. A text-book 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 (Dec. 4). 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](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.** You do not have to turn your cell phone off, but please set on silent before class.
- 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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1:</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course &amp; Review of Syllabus</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Aug 28)</td>
<td>Overview of the Research Paper</td>
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<td>Asking Good Research Questions</td>
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<td>Week 2:</td>
<td>Science, Paradigms, Theory, and Research</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
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<td>(Sept 4)</td>
<td>The Process of Communication</td>
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<td>The Process of Research</td>
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<td>Introduction of Term Project</td>
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<td>Week 3:</td>
<td>Research Ethics; Secondary Research</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Sept 11)</td>
<td>*Discussion of Final Projects</td>
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<td>Week 4:</td>
<td>Definitions and Conceptualization</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
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<td>(Sept 18)</td>
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<td>Week 5:</td>
<td>Qualtrics Training</td>
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Week 6:  Research Design  
(Oct 2)  Measurement Scales – Exercises  
**Research Project Topics Due**

Week 7:  Reliability and Validity  
(Oct 9)  

Week 8  More on Measurement, Reliability and Validity (Exercises)  
(Oct 16)  Experimental Strategies and Designs  
Chapters 12, 13

Week 9  Sampling and Survey Research  
(Oct 23)  Questionnaire Design  

Week 10  More on Survey Research Methods; Begin Review  
(Oct 30)  Exam Study Guide Handout  

Week 11:  Qualitative Methodology  
(Nov 6)  In-depth interviews  
Focus groups  
Participant-observation  

Week 12  Midterm Examination  
(Nov 13)

Week 13 -  Individual Meetings: Project Progress Reports and Input  
(Nov 20)  Exam Review  

Week 14  Descriptive Statistics and Introduction to SPSS  
(Nov 27)  **Deadline for Instructor Review of Final Research Project**

Week 15  Research Paper Presentations  
(Dec 4)

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE: Dec 4