# Research Methods in Mass Communication
MMC 6421-13HD
Wednesdays 1:55am to 4:55pm
1078 Weimer Hall
Spring 2019

**Instructor**
Dr. Benjamin Johnson
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(352) 273-2183
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00pm to 3:00pm in 2066B Weimer Hall

**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 statistical software used to analyze data.

**Course Learning Objectives**
Upon completion of this course, 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, and validity.
- Apply ethical principles in research involving human participants and reporting of findings.
- Design, conduct, articulate, interpret, and effectively report research.

**Reading Requirements**
The best predictor of success in this course is how much time you spend reading assigned materials. The course is designed so that assignments and quizzes draw from the concepts introduced, explained, and exemplified in the readings. Before each weekly class meeting, you are expected to read one or two book chapters and two or three exemplary journal articles.

**Grade Overview**
Class Participation: worth 10%
Leading Class Discussion: worth 20%
Quizzes (4): worth 5% each
Assignments (4): worth 5% each
Project Proposal: worth 30% of final grade

**Grading Policy**
A is ≥93.4%
A- is ≥90% to <93.4%
B+ is ≥86.7% to <90%
B is ≥83.4% to <86.7%
B- is ≥80% to <83.4%
C+ is ≥76.7% to <80%

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C is ≥73.4% to <76.7%
C- is ≥70% to <73.4%
D+ is ≥66.7% to <70%
D is ≥63.4% to <66.7%
D- is ≥60% to <63.4%
E is <60%

UF's grading policies are at: https://catalog.ufl/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

**Schedule**
Foundational chapters for each week are from:
Babbie, E. (2011). *The basics of social research* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

*Week 1:*
Introductions (Jan 9)

*Week 2:*
Social Scientific Inquiry (Jan 16)
- Babbie, chapters 1 & 2
- Neuman, W. R., Davidson, R., Joo, S.-H., Park, Y. J., & Williams, A. E. (2008). The seven deadly sins of communication research. *Journal of Communication, 58*, 220-237. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.00382.x
- Lang, A. (2013). Discipline in crisis? The shifting paradigm of mass communication research. *Communication Theory, 23,* 10-24. doi:10.1111/comt.12000

*Week 3:*
Ethics (Jan 23)
- Babbie, chapter 3
- Ess, C. (2007). Internet research ethics. In A. Joinson, K. McKenna, T. Postmes, & U.-D. Reips. (Eds.). *Oxford handbook of internet psychology* (pp. 487-502).
- Metcalf, J., & Crawford, K. (2016). Where are the human subjects in Big Data research? The emerging ethics divide. *Big Data & Society, 3*, article 11. doi:10.1177/2053951716650211 (see also https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/06/everything-we-know-about-facebooks-secret-mood-manipulation-experiment/373648/ and https://soundcloud.com/publicresponsibility/jeff-hancock-the-facebook-study-and-social-media-ethics)

IRB training due Fri, Jan 25

*Week 4:*
Research Design (Jan 30)
- Babbie, chapter 4
- Smith, R. A., Levine, T. R., Lachlan, K. A., & Fediuk, T. A. (2002). The high cost of complexity in experimental design and data analysis: Type I and Type II error rates in multiway ANOVA. *Human Communication Research, 28*, 515-530. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2002.tb00821.x

- Stanyer, J., & Mihelj, S. (2016). Taking time seriously? Theorizing and researching change in communication and media studies. *Journal of Communication, 66*, 266-279. doi:10.1111/jcom.12218

*Week 5:*
Proposal: Literature review due Mon, Feb 4

Conceptualization (Feb 6)
- Babbie, chapter 5
- Hoffman, L. H. (2012). Participation or communication? An explication of political activity in the internet age. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics, 9,* 217-233. doi:10.1080/19331681.2011.650929
- Coenen, L., & Van den Bulck, J. (2018). The problem with our attitude: A meta-theoretical analysis of attitudinal media effects research. *Annals of the International Communication Association, 42*, 38-54. doi:10.1080/23808985.2018.1425099
- Quiz 1 (in class)

*Week 6*
Proposal: Research question and hypotheses due Mon, Feb 11

Measurement (Feb 13)
- Babbie, chapter 6
- Odağ, Ö., Hofer, M., Schneider, F., & Knop, K. (2016). Testing measurement equivalence of eudaimonic and hedonic entertainment motivations in a cross-cultural comparison. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research, 45*, 108-125. doi:10.1080/17475759.2015.1108216
- Wonneberger, A., & Irazoqui, M. (2017). Explaining response errors of self-reported frequency and duration of TV exposure through individual and contextual factors. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 94*, 259-281. doi:10.1177/1077699016629372

Peer review due Fri, Feb 15

*Week 7*
Proposal: Method overview due Mon, Feb 18

Sampling and Generalization (Feb 20)
- Babbie, chapter 7
- Kees, J., Berry, C., Burton, S., & Sheehan, K. (2017). An analysis of data quality: Professional panels, student subject pools, and Amazon's Mechanical Turk. *Journal of Advertising, 46*, 141-155. doi:10.1080/00913367.2016.1269304
- Schoemann, A. M., Boulton, A. J., & Short, S. D. (2017). Determining power and sample size for simple and complex mediation models. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 8*, 379-386. doi:10.1177/1948550617715068

*Week 8*
Proposal: Participants/Sampling due Mon, Feb 25

Surveys (Feb 27)
- Babbie, chapter 9
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014). Chapter 4: The fundamentals of writing questions. In *Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (4th ed.) (pp. 94-126). New York: Wiley.
- Carpenter, S. (2018). Ten steps in scale development and reporting: A guide for researchers. *Communication Methods & Measures, 12*, 25-44. doi:10.1080/19312458.2017.1396583
- Quiz 2 (in class)

*Week 9:*
Experiments (March 13)
- Babbie, chapter 8
- Thorson, E., Wicks, R., & Leshner, G. (2012). Experimental methodology in journalism and mass communication research. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 89,* 112-124. doi:10.1177/1077699011430066
- Tukachinsky, R. (2014). Experimental manipulation of psychological involvement with media. *Communication Methods and Measures, 8*, 1-33. doi:10.1080/19312458.2013.873777

Qualtrics questionnaire due Fri, March 15

*Week 10:*
Proposal: Procedure due Mon, March 18

Interviews and Focus Groups (March 20)
- Babbie, chapter 10
- Jensen, R. E., Christy, K., Gettings, P. E., & Lareau, L. (2013). Interview and focus group research: A content analysis of scholarship published in ranked journals. *Communication Methods and Measures, 7*, 126-133. doi:10.1080/19312458.2013.789838
- Chen, N.-T. N., Dong, F., Ball-Rokeach, S. J., Parks, M., & Huang, J. (2012). Building a new media platform for local storytelling and civic engagement in ethnically diverse neighborhoods. *New Media & Society, 14*, 931-950. doi:10.1177/1461444811435640

*Week 11:*
Proposal: Materials and measures due Mon, March 25

Content Analyses (March 27)
- Babbie, chapter 11
- Slater, M. D. (2013). Content analysis as a foundation for programmatic research in communication. *Communication Methods and Measures, 7*, 85-93. doi:10.1080/19312458.2013.789836
- Lind, F., Gruber, M., & Boomgaarden, H. G. (2017). Content analysis by the crowd: Assessing the usability of crowdsourcing for coding latent constructs. *Communication Methods and Measures, 11*, 191-209. doi:10.1080/19312458.2017.1317338

*Week 12:*

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Data Analysis (April 3)
- Babbie, chapter 14
- Levine, T. R., Weber, R., Park, H. S., & Hullett, C. R. (2008). A communication researchers' guide to null hypothesis significance testing and alternatives. *Human Communication Research, 34*, 188-209. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2008.00318.x
- Lakens, D. (2013). Calculating and reporting effect sizes to facilitate cumulative science: A practical primer for t-tests and ANOVAs. *Frontiers in Psychology, 4*, article 863. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00863
- Quiz 3 (in class)

*Week 13:*
Proposal: Analysis plan due Mon, April 8

Reporting Results (April 10)
- Babbie, chapter 15
- Appelbaum, M., Cooper, H., Kline, R. B., Mayo-Wilson, E., Nezu, A. M., &. Rao, S. M. (2018). Journal article reporting standards for quantitative research in psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board task force report. *American Psychologist, 73*, 3-25. doi:10.1037/amp0000191
- O'Keefe, D. J. (2017). Misunderstandings of effect sizes in message effects research. *Communication Methods and Measures, 11,* 210-219. doi:10.1080/19312458.2017.1343812

SPSS analysis due Fri, April 12

*Week 14:*
Reproducibility (April 17)
- Hales, A. H., Wesselmann, E. D., & Hilgard, J. (in press). Improving psychological science through transparency and openness: An overview. *Perspectives on Behavior Science.* doi:10.1007/s40614-018-00186-8
- Vermeulen, I., Beukeboom, C. J., Batenburg, A., Avramiea, A., Stoyanov, D., van de Velde, B., & Oegema, D. (2015). Blinded by the light: How a focus on statistical "significance" may cause p-value misreporting and an excess of p-values just below .05 in communication science. *Communication Methods and Measures, 9,* 253-279. doi:10.1080/19312458.2015.1096333
- McEwan, B., Carpenter, C. J., & Westerman, D. (2018). On replication in communication science. *Communication Studies, 69*, 235-241. doi:10.1080/10510974.2018.1464938

*Week 15:*
Wrap-Up Meeting (April 24)
- Quiz 4 (in class)

Final project proposal due Fri, April 26

**Attendance**
Regular, consistent attendance is necessary for success in this course. Attendance records will be taken and will factor into final participation grades. Absences for reasons recognized by the university can be excused if notice is given in advance (or as soon as possible in the event of a genuine emergency).

**Accommodations**
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center at (352) 392-8565 by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodations. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**Course Communication**
Course materials and updates will be posted regularly to Canvas. Course-related questions should be communicated via email to Dr. Johnson (benjaminkjohnson@ufl.edu). I have a policy of responding within 24 hours (usually much sooner). I also encourage you to make good use of office hours and in-class discussion.

**Class Demeanor**
Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of mobile phones and restrict eating to outside of the classroom. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

**Honor Code**
You are required to abide by the University of Florida Student Honor Code. Any violation of the academic integrity expected of you will result in a minimum academic sanction of a zero on the assignment. I take originality in writing and creative work very seriously, and expect you to fully understand what is considered plagiarism. I am always available to proactively discuss any uncertainties or ambiguities before you submit an assignment. Any alleged violations of the Student Honor Code will automatically result in a referral to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. Please review the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code at
http://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/

**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. 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

**Counseling and Wellness Center**
Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center is available at
http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx or (352) 392-1575.
Contact University Police at (352) 392-1111 or 911 for emergencies.

**Assignments**

*IRB Training (5%): Due Fri, Jan 25, 5:00pm*
You will complete the required ethics training provided by UF.
- The UF VPN is needed to access some training:
  https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/361486/modules/items/7148578
- CJC falls under the university's second review board, IRB-02. The instructions for IRB-02 training are provided at: https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/361486/modules/items/7148578
- You can also create an IRB account at http://irb.ufl.edu/myirb/myirb.html

To complete the assignment, submit the certificates for "IRB Mandatory Local Training" and "Group 1. IRB-01 Mandatory Training: 1 – Basic Course" to Canvas.

*Peer review (5%): Due Fri, Feb 15, 5:00pm*
You will choose a research paper (from an instructor-provided list) and write an evaluation of the manuscript. The review should be between 500 and 1,000 words, and should focus on the design of the study, and the conceptualization and operationalization of variables. You may pay some attention to the literature review and hypotheses, as well as the analyses and interpretation, but the focus should be on critiquing the study design. We will discuss peer review in-class, and can also consult how-to-guides and commentary available at:
- https://authorservices.wiley.com/Reviewers/journal-reviewers/how-to-perform-a-peer-review/step-by-step-guide-to-reviewing-a-manuscript.html
- https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-file-manager/file/5a1eb62e67f405260662a0df/Refreshed-Guide-Peer-Review-Journal.pdf
- https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-06991-0
- http://reviewers.plos.org/resources/how-to-write-a-peer-review/
- https://www.nature.com/news/let-s-make-peer-review-scientific-1.20194
- https://www.elsevier.com/reviewers-update/story/career-tips-and-advice/ten-tips-from-an-editor-on-undertaking-academic-peer-review-for-journals

*Qualtrics questionnaire (5%): Due Fri, March 15, 5:00pm*
You will prepare a Qualtrics questionnaire for your research proposal. We will hold a Qualtrics workshop in class, and you will receive individual consultations as you build your questionnaires.

*SPSS analysis (5%): Due Fri, April 12, 5:00pm*
You will perform statistical operations on an instructor-provided dataset in SPSS. A worksheet will be provided to walk you through the various steps. You will report your results in the worksheet.

*Quiz 1 (5%): In-class Feb 6.* Ten MC and short answer Qs over readings for weeks 2, 3, 4.
*Quiz 2 (5%): In-class Feb 27.* Ten MC and short answer Qs over readings for weeks 5, 6, 7.
*Quiz 3 (5%): In-class April 3.* Ten MC and short answer Qs over readings for weeks 8, 9, 10, 11.
*Quiz 4 (5%): In-class April 24.* Ten MC and short answer Qs over readings for weeks 12, 13, 14.

*Discussion leadership (20%)*: *Every two weeks.* Each student will lead discussion for six journal articles over the course of the semester. Each discussion leader will complete a worksheet to prepare them for the points and questions they plan to cover during class. Articles will be chosen or assigned based on interest and distribution.

Neuman et al. (2008): Dr. Johnson
Lang (2013): Dr. Johnson

Ess (2007): _____
Metcalf et al. (2016): _____

Smith et al. (2002): _____
Stanyer & Mihelj (2016): _____

Hoffman (2012): _____
Coenen & Van den Bulck (2018): _____

Odağ et al. (2016): _____
Wonneberger & Irazoqui (2017): _____

Kees et al. (2017): _____
Schoemann et al. (2017): _____

Dillman et al. (2014): _____
Carpenter (2018): _____

Thorson et al. (2012): _____
Tukachinsky (2014): _____

Jensen et al. (2013): _____
Chen et al. (2012): _____

Slater (2013): _____
Lind et al. (2017): _____

Levine et al. (2008): _____
Lakens (2013): _____

Appelbaum et al. (2018): _____
O'Keefe (2017): _____

Vermeulen et al. (2015): _____
McEwan et al. (2018): _____

*Project proposal (30%)*: *Due April 26.* Each student will produce a paper which details the rationale and methods for a research project they plan to undertake. The proposal should be written to form the basis of a future empirical research paper (and corresponding IRB proposal). The topic, and whether it is focused on testing an applied question or theoretical question, will be chosen by the student. The instructor will guide each student through the preparation of the paper via written and verbal feedback at each of the following milestones:

- Literature Review (between 4 and 10 pages, due Monday, Feb 4, 11:59pm)
- Research Question and Hypotheses (~half page, due Monday, Feb 11, 11:59pm)
- Method Overview (~half page, due Monday, Feb 18, 11:59pm)
- Participants/Sampling (~one page, due Monday, Feb 25, 11:59pm)
- Procedure (~one page, due Monday, March 18, 11:59pm)
- Materials and Measures (~two pages, due Monday, March 25, 11:59pm)
- Analysis Plan (~one page, due Monday, April 8, 11:59pm)

The final revised version is due Friday, April 26, 11:59pm. The paper should follow APA style and should be between 10 and 18 pages, excluding references. Each milestone is uploaded to Canvas, as is the final paper. Final papers will be evaluated on:

- Completeness
- Clarity of writing
- Strong connections between sections
- Validity of the operationalizations
- Feasibility of the project
- Value of the research's contribution to the topic