

MMC 6421: Research Methods
Fall 2019
Tuesdays 1:55-4:55 p.m., WEIM 1074

Dr. Wayne Wanta

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Office hours: Mondays Noon-1:45 p.m., Tuesdays 8:30-10:30 a.m., and by appointment.

Catalog 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.

Course objectives include (1) the ability to evaluate and conduct empirical research, (2) an understanding of basic concepts from the social sciences, and (3) the ability to formulate testable hypotheses and research questions.

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

Recommended Readings:

Don W. Stacks, Michael B. Salwen & Kristen C. Eichhorn (2019). *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*, 3rd Edition, New York: Routledge.

Several readings will be provided each week.

Course Requirements:

All assignments in this class will be turned in via canvas. If you experience technical difficulties, contact the UF HelpDesk at 392-HELP. If they cannot resolve your issue, please contact me regarding these issues.

Grading:

Grades will be based on five factors:

Class participation	10%
Discussion leader	20%
Discussion posts	10%
Midterm exam	20%
Final papers	40%

Grading Scale:

- A = 93-100
- A- = 90-92
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 83-86
- B- = 80-82
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 73-76
- C- = 70-72
- D+ = 67-69
- D = 63-66
- D- = 60-62
- Below 60 = E

CLASS PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE: Students are expected to attend every class and to participate in class discussions. Excuses for absences must be legitimate. DO NOT tell me that you have to go to Wrestlemania (unless you have an extra ticket for me). More than one absence will affect your final grade. Students will receive a failing grade for missing 3 or more classes.

DISCUSSION LEADER: Each week, a student will lead the class in a discussion of the readings for that week. I will have a signup sheet during week 2. In preparation, students will need to do additional readings. Students should turn in a three-page paper explaining their main points.

DISCUSSION POSTS: Each student is required to post a 200-300 word paper discussing the reading and lecture content. These posts should have a clear thesis and correct grammar to receive credit. Discussion posts are not required for the class when students are discussion leaders. Dates for the posts are in the tentative schedule

MIDTERM: A **midterm exam** will be administered during classtime on Oct. 29. Details will be provided later in the semester.

FINAL PAPER: The **final research paper** requires students to design a study that could potentially turn into a publishable research project. The paper will be between 8 and 12 pages and will include an introduction, literature review and methods sections. Students will present their papers on the last day of class (Dec. 3). The final paper will also be due on this date. More detailed instructions on the final project will be provided.

Makeup: Make-up assignments and exams are not permitted. However, under an extreme circumstance, if you have an excused absence AND the professor was notified in advance, an exception may be made. Information about university's policies on this issue can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Plagiarism; Cheating or other Academic Misconduct: The Academic Integrity Statement for the College of Journalism and Communications can be found here:

<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.

If you find yourself wondering whether you have crossed the line of plagiarism, you almost assuredly have. When in doubt, ask the professor.

It is true that students sometimes plagiarize unintentionally or by accident. That is neither a defense nor an excuse. To avoid accidental plagiarism, it is extremely important to keep careful notes about what came from where, especially when doing online research. If you are cutting and pasting paragraphs from Web sites to your notes, you are in very risky territory; save the citations along with the material.

Your work will be checked for plagiarism, so just don't do it. Failure to uphold the standards of academic honesty will result in a failing grade for the course and, potentially, other serious disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Turnitin.com: Your media analysis project will be submitted to the Turnitin.com web site, which tests for plagiarism. Your instructor may also test other work through the same site, if he suspects that plagiarism has occurred.

Remember, when you completed the registration form at the University of Florida, you signed the following statement:

"I understand that the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University."

Furthermore, on work submitted for credit, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

If you are aware of a climate that promotes academic dishonesty, please notify the instructor or contact the Student Honor Court (392-1631) or Cheating Hotline (392-6999).

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.

Syllabus Changes: The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus or course schedule as the need arises. This includes the possibility of guest speakers and special presentations, some of which may be scheduled outside of classtime. Note: Some of the content for this syllabus was taken from syllabi from previous classes.

Tips for getting good grades: Come to class on time. Turn off your cellphone, or better yet, don't bring it to class. Complete all of the readings before class. Laugh at my jokes.

Tentative schedule

Week 1 – Aug. 20

Introduction to course

Week 2 – Aug. 27

Fundamentals of the scientific method

Week 3 – Sept. 3

More on the scientific method and structure of research papers
Discussion post 1

Week 4 – Sept. 10

Experimental design
Discussion leader 1

Week 5 – Sept. 17

More on experimental design
Discussion post 2

Week 6 – Sept. 24

Survey research
Discussion leader 2

Week 7 – Oct. 1

More on survey research
Discussion post 3

Week 8 – Oct. 8

Content analysis
Discussion leader 3

Week 9 – Oct. 15

More on Content Analysis
Discussion post 4

Week 10 – Oct. 22

Qualitative Research
Discussion leader 4

Week 11 – Oct. 29

Midterm Exam

Week 11 – Nov. 5

Qualitative research 2
Discussion post 5

Week 12 – Nov. 12

Stats I: Descriptive statistics

Week 13 – Nov. 19

Stats II: Inferential statistics
Assignment due

Week 14 – Nov. 26

Ethics in mass comm research

Week 15 – Dec. 3

Final paper presentations