

# Research Methods in Mass Communication

MMC 6421-13HD  
Wednesdays 1:55am to 4:55pm  
1078 Weimer Hall  
Spring 2020

## Instructor

[Dr. Benjamin Johnson](#)  
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## 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 discussions, 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 to four exemplary journal articles. An online version of the textbook is available via UF Libraries: <https://bit.ly/2YYqdTU>. In addition to the textbook, additional readings will be made available on Canvas throughout the course.

## Grade Overview

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

## Grading Policy

A is  $\geq 93.4\%$   
A- is  $\geq 90\%$  to  $< 93.4\%$   
B+ is  $\geq 86.7\%$  to  $< 90\%$

B is  $\geq 83.4\%$  to  $< 86.7\%$   
 B- is  $\geq 80\%$  to  $< 83.4\%$   
 C+ is  $\geq 76.7\%$  to  $< 80\%$   
 C is  $\geq 73.4\%$  to  $< 76.7\%$   
 C- is  $\geq 70\%$  to  $< 73.4\%$   
 D+ is  $\geq 66.7\%$  to  $< 70\%$   
 D is  $\geq 63.4\%$  to  $< 66.7\%$   
 D- is  $\geq 60\%$  to  $< 63.4\%$   
 E is  $< 60\%$

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

### Schedule

Foundational weekly chapters are indicated with a circled bullet point, and primarily from:

- Crano, W. D., Brewer, M. B., & Lac, A. (2015). *Principles and methods of social research* (3rd ed.). Routledge. Available online at <https://bit.ly/2YYqdTU>

#### Week 1:

Introductions (Jan. 8)

#### Week 2:

Social Scientific Inquiry (Jan. 15)

- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 1: Basic concepts.
- APA. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Introduction (pp. xvii-xxii)
- Walter, N., Cody, M. J., & Ball-Rokeach, S. (2018). The ebb and flow of communication research: Seven decades of publication trends and research priorities. *Journal of Communication*, 68, 424-440. doi:10.1093/joc/jqx015
- Lang, A. (2013). Discipline in crisis? The shifting paradigm of mass communication research. *Communication Theory*, 23, 10-24. doi:10.1111/comt.12000
- 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

#### Week 3:

Ethics (Jan. 22)

- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 20: Social responsibility and ethics in social research.
- franzke, a. s., Bechmann, A., Zimmer, M., Ess, C. M., & The Association of Internet Researchers (2020). *Internet research: ethical guidelines 3.0*. Retrieved from <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>
- 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
- Meyer, R. (2014, June 28). Everything we know about Facebook's secret mood manipulation experiment. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/06/everything-we-know-about-facebooks-secret-mood-manipulation-experiment/373648/>

+ <https://soundcloud.com/publicresponsibility/jeff-hancock-the-facebook-study-and-social-media-ethics>)

IRB training due Fri, Jan. 24

*Week 4:*

Research Design (Jan. 29)

- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 2: Internal and external validity.
- Slater, M. D., & Gleason, L. S. (2012). Contributing to theory and knowledge in quantitative communication science. *Communication Methods & Measures*, 6, 215-236. doi:10.1080/19312458.2012.732626
- 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. 3

Conceptualization (Feb. 5)

- Katz, E., & Fialkoff, Y. (2017). Six concepts in search of retirement. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 41, 86-91. doi:10.1080/23808985.2017.1291280
- 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
- Evans, S. K., Pearce, K. E., Vitak, J., & Treem, J. W. (2017). Explicating affordances: A conceptual framework for understanding affordances in communication research. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 22, 35-55. doi:10.1111/jcc4.12180
- 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. 10

Measurement (Feb. 12)

- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 3: Measurement reliability.
- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 4: Measurement validity.
- 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. 14

Week 7

Proposal: Method overview due Mon, Feb. 17

Sampling and Generalization (Feb 19)

- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 11: Survey studies: Design and sampling.
- Sarstedt, M., Bengart, P., Saltoni, A. M., & Lehmann, S. (2018). The use of sampling methods in advertising research: A gap between theory and practice. *International Journal of Advertising*, 37, 650-663. doi:10.1080/02650487.2017.1348329
- 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
- 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

Week 8

Proposal: Participants and sampling due Mon, Feb. 24

Surveys (Feb 26)

- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 15: Questionnaire design and scale construction.
- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 9: Nonexperimental research: Correlational design and analyses.
- 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 11)

- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 5: Designing experiments: Variations on the basics.
- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 6: Constructing laboratory experiments.
- 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

- Dillard, J. P., & Li, S. S. (2019). How scary are threat appeals? Evaluating the intensity of fear in experimental research. *Human Communication Research*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1093/hcr/hqz008

Qualtrics questionnaire due Fri, March 13

*Week 10:*

Proposal: Procedure due Mon, March 16

Interviews and Focus Groups (March 18)

- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 13: Interviewing.
- 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
- Yadlin-Segal, A. (2019). What's in a smile? Politicizing disability through selfies and affect. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 24, 36-50. doi:10.1093/jcmc/zmy023
- Penney, J. (2015). Social media and symbolic action: Exploring participation in the Facebook red equal sign profile picture campaign. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 20, 52-66. doi:10.1111/jcc4.12092

*Week 11:*

Proposal: Materials and measures due Mon, March 23

Content Analyses (March 25)

- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 14: Content analysis.
- 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
- Dale, K. R., Raney, A. A., Janicke, S. H., Sanders, M. S., & Oliver, M. B. (2017). YouTube for good: A content analysis and examination of elicitors of self-transcendent media. *Journal of Communication*, 67, 897-919. doi:10.1111/jcom.12333
- 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
- Freelon, D. (2014). On the interpretation of digital trace data in communication and social computing research. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 58, 59-75. doi:10.1080/08838151.2013.875018

*Week 12:*

Data Analysis (April 1)

- Hayes, A. F. (2018). Chapter 2: Fundamentals of linear regression. Available online at <https://bit.ly/38R0yRt>
- 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
- Holbert, R. L., & Park, E. (2019). Conceptualizing, organizing, and positing moderation in communication research. *Communication Theory*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1093/ct/qtz006
- Quiz 3 (in class)

*Week 13:*

Proposal: Analysis plan due Mon, April 6

## Reporting Results (April 8)

- APA. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Chapter 3: Journal article reporting standards.
- APA. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Chapter 7: Tables and figures
- McCabe, C. J., Kim, D. S., & King, K. M. (2018). Improving present practices in the visual display of interactions. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 1, 147-165. doi:10.1177/2515245917746792
- Funder, D. C., & Ozer, D. J. (2019). Evaluating effect size in psychological research: Sense and nonsense. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 2, 156-168. doi:10.1177/2515245919847202
- 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 10

*Week 14:*

## Reproducibility (April 15)

- Crano et al. (2015). Chapter 19: Synthesizing research results: Meta-analysis
- Lewis, N. A., Jr. (2019). Open communication science: A primer on why and some recommendations for how. *Communication Methods and Measures*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/19312458.2019.1685660
- 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 22)

- Quiz 4 (in class)

Final project proposal due Wed., April 29

**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).

**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](mailto: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.

**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.

**Counseling and Wellness Center**

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center is available at <https://counseling.ufl.edu/> or (352) 392-1575. Contact University Police at (352) 392-1111 or 911 for emergencies.

**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. For helpful information on original work, see:

[http://integrity.ou.edu/files/nine\\_things\\_you\\_should\\_know.pdf](http://integrity.ou.edu/files/nine_things_you_should_know.pdf)

<http://oaa.osu.edu/assets/files/documents/hownottoplagiarize.pdf>

<https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/overview.html>

<https://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm>

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 professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Please note (adapted from <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0216241>): Student evaluations of teaching play an important role in the review of faculty. Your opinions influence the review of instructors that takes place every year. Student evaluations of teaching are often influenced by students' unconscious and unintentional biases about the race and gender of the instructor. Women and instructors of color are systematically rated lower in their teaching evaluations than white men, even when there are no actual differences in the instruction or in what students have learned. As you fill out the course evaluation please keep this in mind and make an effort to resist stereotypes about professors. Focus on your opinions about the content of the course (the assignments, the textbook, the in-class material) and not unrelated matters (the instructor's appearance).

## Assignments

*IRB training (5%): Due Fri, Jan 24, 5:00pm*

You will complete the required ethics training provided by UF.

- The UF VPN is needed to access some training: <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/login/vpn.html>
- CJC falls under the university's second review board, IRB-02. The instructions for IRB-02 training are provided at: <http://irb.ufl.edu/index/requiredtraining.html>
- You can also create an IRB account at <http://irb.ufl.edu/myirb/myirb.html>

To complete the assignment, submit the certificate for "IRB 803."

*Peer review (5%): Due Fri, Feb 14, 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 750 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 13, 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 questionnaire.

*SPSS analysis (5%): Due Fri, April 10, 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 results in the worksheet.

*Quiz 1 (5%): In-class Feb 5.* Ten MC and short answer Qs over readings for weeks 2, 3, 4.

*Quiz 2 (5%): In-class Feb 26.* Ten MC and short answer Qs over readings for weeks 5, 6, 7.

*Quiz 3 (5%): In-class April 1.* Ten MC and short answer Qs over readings for weeks 8, 9, 10, 11.

*Quiz 4 (5%): In-class April 22.* Ten MC and short answer Qs over readings for weeks 12, 13, 14.

*Project proposal (30%): Due April 29.* 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 3, 11:59pm)
- Research Question and Hypotheses (~half page, due Monday, Feb 10, 11:59pm)
- Method Overview (~half page, due Monday, Feb 17, 11:59pm)
- Participants/Sampling (~one page, due Monday, Feb 24, 11:59pm)
- Procedure (~one page, due Monday, March 16, 11:59pm)
- Materials and Measures (~two pages, due Monday, March 23, 11:59pm)
- Analysis Plan (~one page, due Monday, April 6, 11:59pm)

The final revised version is due Wednesday, April 29, 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

*Participation (20%): Each session.* This course is designed to be an interactive, dynamic seminar. Your continuous participation is key to your success, and the success of your classmates, in this course. Students are expected to have engaged with the readings before class, and to engage in conversations during class time. These conversations will be prompted by the instructor and the assigned discussion leaders, but you are also strongly encouraged to bring your own topics for discussion: points in the readings that were unclear, points that were insightful, questions that arose, confirmatory and contradictory observations, and so on. You are also encouraged to see this course as a workshop for acquiring and refining perspectives and skills that directly benefit your own research program.

*Discussion leadership (10%): Twice during semester.* Each student will lead discussion for two 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.

Walter et al. (2018): \_\_\_\_\_

Lang (2013): \_\_\_\_\_

Neuman et al. (2008): \_\_\_\_\_

franzke et al. (2020): \_\_\_\_\_

Metcalf et al. (2016): \_\_\_\_\_

Slater & Gleason (2012): \_\_\_\_\_

Smith et al. (2002): \_\_\_\_\_

Stanyer & Mihelj (2016): \_\_\_\_\_

Hoffman (2012): \_\_\_\_\_

Evans et al. (2017): \_\_\_\_\_

Coenen & Van den Bulck (2018): \_\_\_\_\_

Odađ et al. (2016): \_\_\_\_\_

Wonneberger & Irazoqui (2017): \_\_\_\_\_

Sarstedt et al. (2017): \_\_\_\_\_

Schoemann et al. (2017): \_\_\_\_\_

Kees et al. (2017): \_\_\_\_\_

Dillman et al. (2014): \_\_\_\_\_

Carpenter (2018): \_\_\_\_\_

Thorson et al. (2012): \_\_\_\_\_

Tukachinsky (2014): \_\_\_\_\_

Dillard & Li (2019): \_\_\_\_\_

Jensen et al. (2013): \_\_\_\_\_

Yadlin-Segal (2019): \_\_\_\_\_

Penney (2015): \_\_\_\_\_

Slater (2013): \_\_\_\_\_

Dale et al. (2017): \_\_\_\_\_

Lind et al. (2017): \_\_\_\_\_

Freelon (2014): \_\_\_\_\_

Levine et al. (2008): \_\_\_\_\_

Lakens (2013): \_\_\_\_\_

Holbert & Park (2019): \_\_\_\_\_

McCabe et al. (2018): \_\_\_\_\_

Funder & Ozer (2019): \_\_\_\_\_

O'Keefe (2017): \_\_\_\_\_

Lewis (2019): \_\_\_\_\_

Vermeulen et al. (2015): \_\_\_\_\_

McEwan et al. (2018): \_\_\_\_\_