

MMC 6421: Research Methods in Digital Communication

Academic Term: Spring 2023

3 Credit Hours

Instructor

Name: Dr. Leticia Solaun

Email Address: lsolaun@ufl.edu

Office Phone Number and Times: +1 (352) 246-5246. You can text or call me at this number. If I am not available when you call, leave your name and phone number and I will return your call within a few hours if possible. Whenever possible, I will respond to emails as soon as I read them.

Virtual Office Hours: Wednesday 4-6 pm ET and by appointment

Course Description and Prerequisites

The students in this course will learn the methods and strategies to use when evaluating online communication tools. Through effective working knowledge and real-world applications, the students will analyze and apply various types of research methods and tools.

Course Prerequisites / Co-Requisites – N/A

Course Expectations

This is a fully online course, and you must log in to Canvas with your Gatorlink username and password to access the materials and assignments. The course is organized into modules with due dates. Unless otherwise specified, each module begins on Monday at 12:00 AM, ET, and ends on Sunday at 11:59 PM, ET.

Time Commitment & Student Workload Expectations

Expect to spend between 10 to 20 hours per week, per course, watching or attending lectures, reading, working on assignments and projects, and engaging in discussions.

Expectations for Writing Assignments: Writing Style

To meet the academic rigor and standards of a graduate program, all students are required to use the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th Edition style in their courses when appropriate for the assignment. The APA 7th Edition Manual has a plethora of guidelines that includes scholarly writing, publishing principles, elements, and format for your papers, writing style, and grammar, bias-free language guidelines, mechanics of style, in-text citing references, etc. For additional information on notable changes, see changes between APA 6th Edition and APA 7th Edition.

Attendance Policy

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies. [Click here to read the university attendance policies](#) for information on absences, religious holidays, illness, and the twelve-day rule. Excused absences must be consistent with university policies in the [Graduate Catalog](#) and require appropriate documentation.

Late Assignment Policy

Late assignments will not be accepted unless it is a [University excused absence](#) as stated in the attendance policies. **No late work will be accepted for final projects or work due in the final week of class due to the university grading**

deadlines. If potential issues arise concerning submitting final work, students should contact their instructors before the assignment deadline.

1. Late Assignment Grade Reductions
 - a. 0-24 Hours Late: 10% reduction in grade.
 - b. Over 24 Hours (24 hours and 1 minute) to 7 Calendar Days Late: 20% reduction in grade.
 - c. After the 7th Calendar Day: Work will not be accepted.
2. Late Discussions will not be accepted.

Student Guidelines for Course Challenges

A student with questions regarding course content such as assignments, assessments, instructional materials, lectures, meetings, course objectives, course module objectives, or other areas of the course, please adhere to the following guidelines. First, *approach the faculty member who is teaching the course* to ask for clarifications regarding the course assignments, assessments, materials, lectures, meetings, etc. Use the instructor's contact information to request an appointment where you can address any concerns and/or questions. If after meeting with *the faculty member teaching the course* you are still not clear on the course assignments, assessments, materials, lectures, meetings, etc., then the next step would be to contact online advising (onlineadvising@jou.ufl.edu) for additional guidance.

Accessibility/Students with Disabilities Information

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letters with their instructors and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

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 professionally and respectfully 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/>.

Course-Level Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Apply the research process to obtain data to advance understanding of an issue/question. (CO: 1)
2. Determine the research method and design research that addresses the issue or question that needs to be addressed. (CO: 2)
3. Analyze and critically assess qualitative and quantitative research conducted by others. (CO: 3)
4. Explain practical challenges to practitioner implemented research. (CO: 4)

(CO = Course-Level Objective)

Textbooks and Materials

Required Course Textbook(s)

Wimmer, R. & Dominick, J. (2014). *Mass media research: An introduction*. (10th Edition). Wadsworth. ISBN: 978-1-133-30733-4

E-book available through Croucher, S. & Cronn-Mills, D. (2018). *Understanding communication research methods: A theoretical and practical approach*. (2nd Edition). Routledge.

ISBN: 978-1-138-05265-9

Recommended Textbook(s)

This textbook is recommended in all CJC Online classes to support student expectations for writing style.

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association: The official guide to APA style* (7th ed.).

- ISBN-13: 978-1433832161
- ISBN-10: 143383216X

University and Course Grading Policies

University Honor Code

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 Conduct Code specifies the number of behaviors that violate this code and the possible sanctions. Click here to read the Conduct Code. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unacceptable; especially, in academic communities. All academic work must be an original work of your own thought, research, or self-expression. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, prohibited collaboration, consultation, submission of academic work that has been purchased or obtained (see the [UF Policy: Student Conduct Violation](#)). In addition, self-plagiarism is also unacceptable. Self-plagiarism is defined as recycling or reusing one’s own specific words from previously submitted assignments or published texts. Remember that plagiarism is not acceptable in any of your work including all discussion board posts, journal entries, wikis, and other written and oral presentation assignments. It’s important to always cite your sources in your assignments.

Grading Criterion

Your grade will be calculated based on the following:

Assignments/Assessments	Weight (%)
Course Orientation: These assignments are required; however, they do not count towards the final grade. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student Introduction• Course Evaluation	0%
6 Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worth up to 100 points each.	37.5%
4 Written Assignments (Research Topic, Situation Analysis [Secondary Research]; Qualitative Research Plan, and Quantitative Research Plan) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worth up to 100 points each.	25%
4 Research Analysis and Reflection Papers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worth up to 100 points.	25%
2 Short Answer Assignments <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worth up to 100 points.	12.5%

TOTAL	100%
--------------	-------------

Grade	Percentage
A	92.5-100%
A-	89.5-92.4%
B+	86.5-89.4%
B	82.5-86.4%
B-	79.5-82.4%
C+	76.5-79.4%
C	72.5-76.4%
C-	69.5-72.4%
D+	66.5-69.4%
D	62.5-66.4%
D-	59.5-62.4%
E	0 – 59.4%

The only passing grades for graduate students are A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, and C. Letter grades of C-, D+, D, D- or E are not considered passing at the graduate level, although the grade points associated with these letter grades are included in grade point average calculations. See the [Graduate Catalog](#) and [UF graduate school grading policy](#) for more information.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see the [Notification to Students of FERPA Rights](#).

Technology Requirements

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students at the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Software

- [Microsoft Office 365](#).
- [UF Apps](#) – access UF software applications from any device from any location, at any time.
- [Adobe Reader](#)
- [Zoom](#)

Technical Support

If you have technical difficulties with your course, please contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) either by filling out an [online request form](#) or calling 352-392-4357 (HELP).

If your technical difficulties cause you to miss a due date, you must report the problem to the Help Desk and then email your instructor. Include the ticket number that you are given from the Help Desk in an email to the instructor to explain the late assignment/quiz/test.

IT Support

For all Technical assistance questions please contact the UF Computing Help Desk.

Phone: 352-392-HELP (4357)

Email: helpdesk@ufl.edu

Communication Policies

Announcements

You are responsible for reading all announcements posted in the course each time you log in.

Email

You are responsible for reading all your course emails and responding promptly (within 24 hours).

Instructor Communications

Email Policy

Except for weekends, holidays, and University breaks, the instructor will typically respond to emails within 48 hours. For course-related questions please post in the Canvas FAQ discussion board. If you have questions of a personal nature, please email me directly.

Assignment Feedback Policy

I will provide feedback/grades on submitted assignments in within two weeks of the due date. Some assignments may require a longer review period, which I will communicate to you, if necessary.

Course Policies

Video Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under [UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code](#).

Privacy

If your course includes live synchronous meetings, the class sessions will all be audio-visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to

consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. Please see UF's Information Technology [policies](#) for additional information.

Challenging Topics

In this course, we may cover subjects that may be sensitive and/or challenging. As in all our courses, we do this not to indoctrinate but to instruct, to prepare you to be the most effective and successful media professional or scholar that you can be. We encourage you to understand all concepts presented in class, but we know that what you personally believe is your choice. If you would like to discuss anything in regards to this, please feel free to contact me directly.

Commitment to Diversity

The College of Journalism and Communications embraces diversity as a shared responsibility among faculty, staff and students and strives for tangible expressions of this responsibility. We are committed to fostering a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for individuals of all races, genders, nationalities, religions, sexual orientations, identities and abilities to express their culture and perspectives through the art and science of journalism and communication.

Academic and Student Resources

Academic Resources

- E-learning Technical Support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 (HELP) or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- [Career Connection Center](#): Career assistance and counseling. Reitz Union, Phone: 352-392-1601.
- [Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance concerning using the libraries or finding resources. [UF Library Services for Distance Students](#)
[Ask a Librarian](#) – chat with librarians online.
CJC Librarian - April Hines, Phone: 352-273-2728, Email: aprhone@uflib.ufl.edu.
- [Writing Studio](#): Provides one-on-one consultations and workshops tailored to specific classes (graduate and undergraduate). 302 Tigert Hall, Phone: 352-846-1138.

Health and Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, call 352-294-2273, or visit the website to refer or report a concern, and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: Visit the [Counseling and Wellness Center](#) website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need or visit the [Student Health Care Center website](#).
- University Police Department: Visit the [UF Police Department](#) website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

Course Schedule

Week Number	Topic and Assignments
1	<p>The Role, Purpose, and Types of Research in Digital Communication</p> <p>Assignment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Post a short (2 minutes or less) video introduction of yourself on Canvas; include your name, work experience or interest, what interests or scares you about research, and what you would like to learn more about 2. Based on the reading and Module 1, write and post a response to the Week 1 Discussion page on E-Learning, which describes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how you expect research will inform or influence your work, - why it is important for digital communications as it relates to your work, experience, or interest, and - name and describe the two primary types of research addressed this week
2	<p>Introduction to Research Methods</p> <p>Assignment:</p> <p>Complete and submit Assignment 1: Select a research topic and provide a summary of situation and the issue to be addressed, and the research question(s).</p>
3	<p>Equity and Ethics</p> <p>Assignment:</p> <p>Based on the readings for Module 3, write and post a response to the Week 3 Discussion page on e-Learning which describes two actions that you can take in designing or implementing mass communication research (particularly using social media content) that can provide for equitable and ethical research.</p>
4	<p>Conducting Secondary Research</p> <p>Assignment:</p> <p>Based on the readings for Module 5, write and post a Complete and submit Assignment 2: Secondary Research on the topic you selected</p>
5	<p>Introduction to Qualitative Research</p> <p>Assignment:</p> <p>Based on the readings for Module 5, write and post a response to the Week 5 Discussion page on e-Learning in which you 1) briefly describe the topic that you have selected for research and 2) describe why a qualitative research method would/would not be used to address it.</p>
6	<p>Qualitative Research Method – Interviews</p> <p>Assignment:</p> <p>Write and submit Research Analysis and Reflection Paper 1: Search mass communication journals or practitioner associations/communication platforms and identify a study that used interview research method. Analyze and explain how the methodology aligns with the slide deck/video for this week and provide recommendations that could have improved the study.</p>
7	<p>Qualitative Research Method – Focus Groups</p> <p>Assignment:</p> <p>Write and submit Research Analysis and Reflection Paper 2: Search mass communication journals or practitioner associations/communication platforms and identify a study that used focus group research method. Analyze and explain how the methodology aligns with the slide deck/video for this week and provide recommendations that could have improved the study.</p>
8	<p>Qualitative Research Methods – Case Studies</p> <p>Assignment:</p> <p>Write and submit Assignment 3: Qualitative Research Plan</p>
9	Spring Break
10	<p>Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods</p> <p>Assignment:</p>

Week Number	Topic and Assignments
	Based on the readings for Module 9, write and post a response to the Week 9 Discussion page on e-Learning in which you 1) briefly describe the topic that you have selected for research and 2) describe why a quantitative research method would/would not be used to address it.
11	Introduction to Statistics Assignment: Respond to Qualtrics statistics questionnaire posted to e-Learning
12	Quantitative Research Method – Surveys – Part 1 Assignment: Based on the reading Nguyen, M.H., et al and for Module 11, write and post a response to the Week 1 Discussion page on e-Learning in which you 1) briefly describe the topic that you have selected for research and 2) describe why a quantitative research method would/would not be used to address it.
13	Quantitative Research Method – Surveys – Part 2 Assignment: Write and submit Research Analysis and Reflection Paper 3: Search mass communication journals or practitioner associations/communication platforms and identify a study that used survey research method. Analyze and explain how the survey questions align or fail to align with our learnings about how to develop questionnaires and how samples from a population were sampled. Consider and address how the study could have been modified or improved.
14	Quantitative Research Method – Content Analysis Assignment: 1. Write and submit Assignment 4: Quantitative Research Plan 2. Based on the reading and Module 13, write and post a response to the Week 13 Discussion page on e-Learning, which identifies one type of content that as a communication practitioner you could select to code and name at least five coding categories and units of analyses for each category.
15	Social Media Research Assignment: Write and submit Research Analysis and Reflection Paper 4: Analyze the Facebook study at the beginning of Chapter 11 (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2019) and state whether you would have followed the same procedure as the researcher and why/why not. If not, what would you have done differently?
16	Data Visualization Assignment: Review the Visualization examples file on e-Learning and answer the questions related to with each graphic. Submit the completed questions.

The instructor reserves the right to adjust this syllabus, as necessary.