Applied Research Methods

MMC6936 | Spring 2024
Tue 10:40AM-11:30AM & Thu 10:40AM-12:35PM

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course teaches the knowledge and skills necessary to plan, design, and conduct secondary and primary research that aids communication practitioners' decision-making. Students learn about a range of research methods and techniques and implement them in their own projects to obtain relevant and reliable information. They create tools for gathering original data, such as interviewer guides and online survey questionnaires, and conduct both qualitative and quantitative data analyses. The research outcomes are then interpreted in the context of the research objectives and applied to resolve practical communication issues. In addition, students will gain an understanding of research tools used to analyze the data on digital media platforms.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to:
1. Demonstrate their understanding of the role of research in resolving relevant issues in the field of communication
2. Identify and distinguish unique characteristics and different utilities of various research methods
3. Design and conduct secondary, qualitative, and quantitative research projects
4. Analyze the data and interpret the results in the context of the research objectives
5. Provide a written report on their research

Required Textbook

Boyle, Michael P. and Mike Schmierbach (2015), Applied Communication Research Methods: Getting Started as a Researcher, New York, NY: Routledge.
* The e-book is available at the UF library through ARES.
* Additional readings are provided on Canvas.

Technology Requirements

Students must have access to the following technologies/programs. More information is provided on Canvas.
- UF VPN to access UF library databases and resources off-campus
- Microsoft Office such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Zoom with audio and video capability
- jamovi (free statistical software)

Grade Overview

Quizzes	25%
Research projects	
Secondary research	10%
Qualitative research	13%
Quantitative research	15%
Final report	17%

Module-specific assignments	15%
Participation	5%

Grading Scale

A	93.4 – 100	B−	80.0 – 83.3	D+	66.7 – 69.9
A−	90.0 – 93.3	C+	76.7 – 79.9	D	63.4 – 66.6
B+	86.7 – 89.9	C	73.4 – 76.6	D−	60.0 – 63.3
B	83.4 – 86.6	C−	70.0 – 73.3	E	0.00 – 59.9

UF's grading policies are at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/

Assignments

The student's learning of the course content will be evaluated via the following assignments. Detailed descriptions of the assignments will be provided in class and on Canvas.

Quizzes: Quizzes assess students' comprehension and retention of the module's content. Each quiz has a time limit and must be taken individually. Although students may use their notes and refer to the text, they need to have a firm understanding of the module's content to be able to answer questions accurately and quickly within the given time.

Research Project: Students conduct a research project on a topic or an issue that is relevant and important in their field of communication throughout the semester. The research project is designed to provide students with a practical orientation of the activities involved in planning, organizing, executing, analyzing, and reporting research. It involves three phases, namely, secondary, qualitative, and quantitative research. In each phase, students utilize appropriate research methods and tools to collect and analyze the data and present the findings in the form of a written report. At the conclusion of the research project, students write the final paper that demonstrates a cumulative growth in their understanding of the research topic and provides innovative and pragmatic solutions to the problem that motivated their research.

Module-specific Assignments: In addition to the semester-long research project, there are small assignments related to the specific module content (e.g., IRB training, content analysis, data visualization). These assignments are meant to help students to apply their knowledge in a problem-solving situation and develop practical skills. The information about each assignment will be provided in class and on Canvas.

Participation: Students' active and continuous participation is key to their success in the course. For successful participation, students should complete the reading assignment before class and bring their own topics and questions for discussion (e.g., points in the readings that were unclear, points that were insightful, questions that arose, confirmatory and contradictory observations), while responding to their classmates' comments and engaging in the conversation actively.

Course Format & Policy

This is a hybrid course. For most of the time, the class will meet on Zoom during the designated class times. A few class meetings will be held asynchronously where students watch pre-recorded lectures at a time that is convenient for them. Students will be informed of asynchronous class meetings ahead of time.

Module progression: The course is designed such that students follow the modules in a sequential order. **All the requirements of the module must be completed to unlock the next module.**

Late Submission: Some assignments (e.g., quizzes) may be submitted after the deadline. When a late submission is allowed, students have up to **six days** after the due date to submit the assignment. **Twenty percent of the assignment's grade is deducted each day the assignment is turned in late. In addition, students cannot access the next module until all the assignments in the module are completed.**

Attendance & Class Demeanor: Students must arrive at class on time and be visible and ready to speak during the entire class period. Students will be considered absent if their camera or mic is turned off or if they arrive 10 minutes past the start of the class. It is also important that students behave in a matter that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Any disagreements the student may have with the instructor or other students must be expressed politely and respectfully. Conversations that do not contribute to the class discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

Formatting, Spelling, and Grammar: All assignments must be prepared and presented professionally and proof-read thoroughly. Students must take special care to use proper words and spelling, grammatically correct sentences, and logically flowing content. Points will be deducted from assignments where the content has formatting, spelling, and grammar errors.

Course Communication: Course materials and updates will be posted regularly to Canvas. It is important that students turn on Canvas notifications to receive all updates and announcements in a timely manner. Course-related questions should be communicated via email to Dr. Kim at hkim@ufl.edu. Please be aware that email is considered formal communications. Try to avoid treating emails like text messages.

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/.

Honor Pledge

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 a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Please review the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code at http://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/

Recording of Class Lectures

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 in 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.

Accommodations
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center at (352) 392-8565 or https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/ 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 (352) 392-1575 or http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx. Contact University Police at (352) 392-1111 or 911 for emergencies.