

MMC 6421

mass comm. research methods

Summer 2014. Tuesdays 11-3:15 in 3024; Wednesday 9:30-12:15 in 2050

Instructor: Dr. Robyn Goodman

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Office hours: Mon 10-noon, Wednesday 1-2:30, No appointments on Fridays. Office hours may change.

course description

This course provides a basic overview of common methods employed in mass communication research. The focus will be on content analysis, surveys, experiments, and qualitative, although other methods will also be evaluated. It will provide students with a basic understanding of the research process with emphasis on appropriate method selection, including strengths and weaknesses of alternative methods, and planning and executing research.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To understand various mass communication research methods
- To employ SPSS to enter and analyze numeric data
- To evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of research studies.
- To introduce students to the relationships among theory, research, and decision-making.
- To understand key methodological issues, such as sampling, reliability and validity.

instructional approach

The format of this course is largely lecture, workshops, along with some active discussion/participation. Therefore, students are expected to come to class prepared to actively participate in class discussions. Part of that preparation means that you should have read all readings prior to coming to class. This will help you better follow lectures and facilitate participation.

course requirements

Readings, class attendance, participation, homework, and exams.

required books

The Practice of Social Research, by Earl Babbie

IBM SPSS for Introductory Statistics: Use and Interpretation 5th ed. by Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner and Barrett

basis of course grade

Class participation/attendance/homework/inclass	10%
Exam 1	35%
Exam 2	15%
Final Take-home Exam	40%

grading scale

95-100	A
90-94.99	A -
87-89.99	B+
83-86.99	B
80-82.99	B-
76-79.99	C+
73-75.99	C
70-72.99	C-
68-69.99	D+
63-67.99	D
60-62.99	D-
Below a 60	E

class participation and attendance

Your presence and contribution are important, and they are required for a successful class. Therefore, you will be graded for both attendance and *active* class participation. If you are ill or have another excusable type of absence (court appearance, medical emergency, religious holiday, conference presentations), you need to notify me before class in order for it to be excused. Things that aren't excused are holiday travel, meetings for other classes, sporting events, social engagements and the like. Because this is summer and we only have 10 class meetings, each unexcused absence will result in the loss of a half letter grade from your final grade (plus no rounding up). Also, if you show up to class more than 30 minutes late, I will count that as an unexcused absence.

As you know by now, graduate school requires a lot of reading. Please don't waste your valuable time and money by not coming to class prepared. This is your opportunity to critically engage with the course material. I know some people are shy and English is not everyone's first language, but this is not a reason for not participating. Each day class participation, when applicable, will be graded as: 2 = active speaking and contribution, 1 = some speaking/contribution but limited, 0 = did not speak.

homework/in-class assignments

You will have a few homework assignments and in-class discussion items throughout the semester.

in-class discussion

These will be "assignments" that you need to read and write up the assignment PRIOR to class. We will be discussing the assignment in class if we have time, and you will hand in your TYPED write up. You won't be graded in terms of right or wrong answers but in terms of the quantity and/or quality of the write up discussion. Make sure you have this printed and ready to hand in class or else it will be late. Grading will be 2 = excellent, 1 = some errors or other issues, 0 = did not due or poor quality/major errors/numerous errors.

homework

You will have multiple homework assignments throughout the semester. The goal of these assignments is to help you better understand the readings from class. You can find these assignments on SAKAI in the assignments tab. **SPSS assignments we cannot complete in class will become homework.**

elearning/SAKAI

Most of the course materials will be posted on SAKAI/elearning. www.iss.at.ufl.edu. Click on the button to enter elearning on the left-hand side of the screen.

powerpoint notes

There will be note in powerpoint ONLY on SAKAI in the resources folder. If you don't have powerpoint on your computer then you will have to use a computer lab on campus to access them and print them (or convert them to a file that you can use on your computer) or try the Gator cloud at <http://www.it.ufl.edu/gatorcloud/>.

online lectures

There will be some lectures online in the resources folder in a folder named "Lectures." You are to view these, take notes, and come to class ready to ask any questions you have from these. Please mark the slide number where you had a question. I do this so that we can have more interaction in class and I have time to work with and guide you on your research project and other in-class exercises.

exam 1

You will be given 2 hours to complete this exam. There will be 25 multiple choice questions and then several short answer or short essay questions. This exam will be open book for the 2nd hour. You may use the computer to type your answers. HOWEVER, don't let the "open book" part fool you. You should study for this exam like you would for a closed book exam. Note that you only have 2 hours so you can't spend all your time looking up answers.

exam 2

You will be given 1 hour to complete this exam. It will be all multiple choice questions over content analysis through qualitative analysis. This exam will only be open book for 20 minutes (just enough time to look up a couple of questions).

final take-home exam

You will have all semester to complete a take-home exam that is due by the end of the semester. This exam will test your ability to apply what you've learned throughout the semester to real-world research problems. This exam will take a substantial amount of time to complete so plan according. Any outside sources you use on the exam will need to be cited.

late paper/homework policy: You will lose one letter grade for each day it is late. If the assignment is between 1 minute and less than 24 hours late, you will lose half a letter grade.

missed exam policy: You will be allowed to make up exams at the instructor's convenience IF you had an excused absence and you notified the instructor in advance.

other grading factors: Disruptive or argumentative behavior, texting or on social media during class, etc., may result in a lower grade.

plagiarism and academic dishonesty

It is YOUR responsibility to make certain you understand what constitutes plagiarism and to ensure that you give proper credit anytime you draw on someone else's writing. I urge you NOT to rely on what you think you learned about plagiarism in high school or the standards allowed/required in your undergraduate classes or non-UF graduate programs. If you're not certain you understand what's acceptable and what isn't, check out these websites:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html>,

<http://www.sja.ucdavis.edu/sja/plagiarism.html>

If you read these materials and still aren't certain what's acceptable, ASK ME! Do not assume that any other student or professor can tell you what will be acceptable in my class. There is no penalty for asking questions, but there ARE penalties for failing to credit someone else's work properly because you didn't ask questions.

Be especially careful about the use of information you find on the Internet. It is all too easy to copy and paste background information into your papers, but unless you enclose such information in quotation marks and clearly cite the website from

which it came, this constitutes plagiarism. Even if you paraphrase, you must include a clear reference to any written materials on which you've drawn.

I have had issues with plagiarism in previous classes. I will not tolerate it. Other professors may choose to "work with you" by having you re-write the paper. I do not do this, so don't expect it if you're caught.

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.

Each graduate student signed an Academic Integrity Statement when they entered the college of Journalism and Communications. For a reminder, here is a link to the statement: <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/grad/forms/Plagiarism-Guideline.pdf>

students with special challenges

Students affected by such challenges and 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 professor when requesting accommodation. Accommodations aren't made "after the fact," meaning if you do poorly on an exam and then bring in a letter from the Dean of Students the contents of that letter go in effect the day I receive it. This is university policy.

the syllabus may change during the semester. you will be given notice of any changes.

I hope you all have fun and learn a lot.

Date	Topic	Readings for that class day Need to be read before class	Assignments
May 13	Course introduction Research process	Babbie: Chp 1; Chp 2 pp. 43-59 only	
May 14	Research design	Babbie Chp. 4 SPSS Chp. 1	
May 20	Finish research design Conceptualization & Measurement SPSS exercises view Ethics lecture online view SPSS introduction lecture	Babbie Chp. 3, Chp. 5 SPSS Chps. 2-4	In class research design
May 21	Finish Conceptualization & Measurement Comparative and non-comparative scales view p value and statistical significance lecture online	Babbie Chp.6 pp. 175-180 only	
May 27	Sampling SPSS exercises	Babbie Chp. 7 SPSS Chp. 5-7	In class sampling exercises
May 28	Sampling finished Content analysis	Babbie pp. 330-341	HW: Airline safety (conceptualization and measurement)
June 3	Content analysis finished Survey SPSS exercises	Babbie Chp. 9 SPSS Chp. 8-9	
June 4	EXAM 1 maybe survey		Exam covers research process to sampling
June 10	Survey finished Experiment	Babbie Chp. 8 SPSS Chp. 10-11	
June 11	Experiment finished Qualitative research	Babbie Chp. 10	Survey homework due
June 17	Qualitative research finished view Qualitative analysis online	Babbie: Chp. 13;	In class qualitative analysis
June 18	EXAM 2: 1 hr multiple choice		

FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAMS ARE DUE Thursday, June 19th AT 9 am. THERE WILL BE NO EXTENSIONS. You will be submitting it electronically to elearning. Late policy will be applied.

Note on take home exam. I cannot help you on this. It is an exam. I can clarify questions but not provide feedback or answer the question for you.