

Mass Communication Research Methods (MMC6421: Section 13HD)

Time: W (1:55 to 4:55PM), Rm. WEIM 1078

Instructor:	Moon J. Lee, Ph.D.	Phone:	352-273-1699
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Office:	3050 WEIM		And by appointment
Handouts:	Project Calendar		

Course Description

The purpose of MMC6421 is to provide a basic overview of research methods commonly employed in mass communication research. This course provides an introduction to and experience with research methods in mass communication.

Course Objectives

This course will help you:

1. To understand the role and importance of research in mass communication.
2. To obtain a keen knowledge of research methods and to demonstrate the application of quantitative and qualitative research methods in mass communication contexts.
3. To have an opportunity to learn the relationships among theory, research, and decision-making.
4. To understand key methodological issues, such as sampling, measurement, reliability, validity, etc.
5. To experience various aspects of scientific research processes from study design, data collection, data analysis, reporting findings, and providing theoretical/practical implications of the study.

These objectives will be achieved by hands-on experience with a project. You will produce a high-quality research paper.

Course Requirements

Requirements include reading assigned materials, participating in class discussions, one research project (e.g. a content analysis, a focus group, in-depth interviews, a survey, or an experiment), a research paper and a final presentation.

- **Reading Assigned Materials:** There is one textbook (see below). Students are responsible for all assigned readings and material covered in class. You should read appropriate materials **BEFORE** the assigned class session so you can contribute to our discourse in a manner that can benefit everyone in class.

Required Textbook:

Babbie Earl. (1999), *The Basics of Social Research*, Wadsworth.

Recommended Book:

Austin, E. W. & Pinkleton, B. E. (2006), Strategic public relations management: Planning and managing effective communication programs, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.

- Class Participation: You will be expected to participate in class discussions. Your input in class will be greatly valued.
- A Research Project: You will conduct a research project. Your project work will be done in teams (except a Ph.D. student). Expect to devote considerable out-of-class time to the projects.
- Examination: The mid-term exam counts for 30 percent of your grade.
- Final Presentation: During the final week of the course, each student team (or Ph.D. student) will make a formal presentation of their research findings to the class.

Deadline and Makeup Exams: Failure to meet group project deadlines will result in a lowered grade for the entire project team per day. A post-exam will not be given, so see me if you have a conflict with the exam time and plan to take it early.

Grading:

Grading Items	Date	Points
Research Proposal (Introduction, Background Research, Hypotheses (RQs) & Research Plan)	Jan. 28 th	10
Mid-Term Exam.	March 18	30
Method and Data Collection	March 18	10
Final Research Paper	April 22	30
Final Presentation	April 22	10
Group Member Evaluation	To be weighed in the final report	
Class Participation & Attendance		10
Total Points		100

The Mid-Term Exam (30 Percent)

Three (up to six) essay questions will be given.

Research Project & Final Report (60 percent)

The guidelines for writing a final paper and the final evaluation sheet will be posted on the Project Calendar. Please review them carefully and let me know if you need any extra help. It is very crucial to seek extra help **BEFORE** the final paper is due!

Please note that there are minimum requirements for your final research paper or proposal.

1. It must be theoretical and methodologically sound. You must develop your hypotheses based on theories.
2. It must contain at least 15 references.
3. Writing should be clear and compliant with APA style. You are responsible for learning APA style.
4. Read the guidelines for submitting your paper to a conference (e.g. International Communication Association or AEJMC) and follow the formats accordingly.
5. The paper should not exceed 30 pages, including references as well as figures.

You are responsible to conduct a research project as a group project (for MA students).

- You are responsible for gathering background information for the topic you chose.
- The procedure and structure of the research project will be chosen based on your group consent.
- Writing should be clear.
- Every one in your group is equally responsible for producing the final report. This means that the project will be graded as a group project.

**If you are a Ph.D. student, you are expected to produce a conference paper quality work and work independently (not as a group). In a concise, but thorough research paper, you will need to present your own findings for your research hypotheses/questions. Also, you are encouraged to submit your paper to the AEJMC or ICA convention. The deadline for this submission is normally April 1st for AEJMC and Nov. 1st for ICA each year.

Research Project Management Components

Group memos: Your team will need to meet at least once each week, usually twice and sometimes more, depending on deadlines. At each meeting, the group needs to designate a coordinator who will note attendance and keep track of decisions made, tasks assigned, deadlines set and major problems or questions facing the group. I should receive at least one memo from each group each week, **preferably via an email message copied to all group members.** I'll save these (and you should, too) for assessing your individual and group performances.

Research plan: This is the outline of your research topic, research needs, background research, research questions (hypotheses), research methods and explanation of how you would use the data you gather. The plan should also include a timeline for accomplishing these tasks.

Research Method and Data: After the group follows through with its research plan, you will submit a report summarizing what you did and raw data (as well as consent forms). You should describe the research method used in detail.

Research Paper: The final research paper is the summary of your semester's worth of work - this is the document you will present to me. Included will be summaries of components of the previous papers but the bulk of the report will be the results of your data-gathering, discussed in terms of the hypotheses or research questions you began with and briefly interpreted. Then you will revise your original assumptions based on the findings' implications and make some recommendations for future studies.

Final Presentation (10 Percent)

During the final week of the course, each group will make a formal presentation of their research findings and recommendations to the class.

- Appropriate visual aids such as tables and graphics are required for presenting your final report.
- The explanation and justification of the research procedure should be comprehensive.
- The explanation of main findings should be clear and precise.
- The limitations of the study and the suggestion for further studies should be included in the final paper and the presentation.
- You must include some suggestions for future studies based on your current findings.

Group Members/self Evaluation

The forms for your peer and self evaluation will be distributed to you at the end of your final presentation and will otherwise be available on the Internet. Be aware that members in your group may not get the same grade. Rather, your grades on the group projects (including your final report) will be weighed by group/self evaluations. For example, if your group scores a 92% on the campaign project, but your average score from the self/group evaluations is 80%, then the grade you receive for the group campaign project would be 74% ($80\% * 92\%$). If your average score is a 91%, you would get the group project grade of 92%. The purpose of this complicated procedure is to **reduce the likelihood that someone in the group will slack off and still receive the full benefit of the others' work.**

** You, based on a group decision, **may fire** one of the group members who does not carry a fair share of the work. The decision should be made carefully and you should consult with me before the final decision. Final approval of a firing will be up to me. The person, who is subject to it, will not receive any points for group projects. Group projects account for 65% of the final grade, meaning automatic failure.

Class Participation (10 percent)

Attendance and class participation counts for 10% of your grade. Unexcused absences will be considered in class participation scores. **Four unexcused absences will be considered 0 out of 10 possible class participation points.**

Academic Honesty

Students should maintain academic honesty in fulfilling all course requirements. **Plagiarism is not tolerated. If you use information from a publication, you must attribute a source to it.**

If you're not sure 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>

Class Etiquette

- Reading a newspaper or other unrelated materials during class is not permitted.

- Sleeping during class is considered as an unexcused absence.
- Do not use cell phones or audible pagers.
- Food, drinks and tobacco products are not allowed in the classroom.

Seeking Help

If you need individual assistance beyond the help you receive in class, you can see me during office hours or set up an appointment for another time. If you have any special concerns for your instructor to know in order to ensure your academic success in class, please inform me as soon as possible, so I can assist you accordingly. Please, see me if you have any problems! I consider my student's failure to learn as my own failure to teach effectively. We are going to work together to provide a high quality academic environment for your learning.

Special Assistance: Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify me during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. All accommodations must be approved through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) in Peabody Hall 202 (Tel.352-392-1261).

This is a tentative schedule and is subject to change.

Course Calendar	
INTRODUCTION -- COURSE OVERVIEW	Project Calendar
<p>Week 1: Jan. 5 -9</p> <p>1. Course Objectives and Requirements</p>	<p>Get to know each other (Team formation and Topic selection)</p> <p>1) Review Syllabus</p> <p>2) Should be meeting to get organized!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Guidelines for Working in Groups (Memo 1)</p>
Literature Review and Planning Phase	
<p>Week 2: Jan. 12 – 16</p> <p>Science, Paradigms, Theory, and Research</p> <p>** Required Reading: Chapter 1 & 2</p>	<p>First Assignment</p> <p>3) Internet and library research</p> <p>Groups should be talking about a research topic and conducting background research. (Additional Guidelines: Part1).</p>

<p>Week 3: Jan. 19 - 23</p> <p>Research Design (Causation vs. Correlation) & Ethics</p> <p>** Required Reading: Chapter 4 ** Recommended Reading: Austin & Pinkleton Chapter 5 & 7 Handout1</p>	<p>4) Develop a research plan!</p>
<p>Week 4: Jan. 26 – Jan. 30</p> <p>Conceptualization</p> <p>** Required Reading: Chapter 5</p>	<p>Groups should be developing instruments.</p> <p>Jan 28th - Background research with a research plan due (in class)</p>
<p>Research Design</p>	
<p>Week 5: Feb. 2 - 6</p> <p>Operationalization</p> <p>** Required Reading: Chapter 6</p>	<p>5) Prepare for IRB approval! (if required)</p>
<p>Week 6: Feb. 9 - 13</p> <p>Measurement</p> <p>** Required Reading: Chapter 7</p>	<p>** Remember: Do not start your research project without obtaining approvals from instructor and IRB approval.</p>
<p>Week 7: Feb. 16 -20</p> <p>Sampling</p> <p>** Required Reading: Chapter 8 & Austin & Pinkleton, Chapter 6</p>	
<p>Week 8: Feb. 23 – Be. 27</p> <p>Field Research vs. Unobtrusive Research</p>	<p>6) Data Collection</p>

<p>(e.g. Content Analysis)</p> <p>** Required Reading: Chapter 11 & 12</p>	
<p>Week 9: March 2 – 6 (Spring Break): No Classes</p>	
<p>Week 10: March 9 - 13</p> <p>Survey, Focus Group, and In-depth Interviews</p> <p>** Required Reading: Chapter 10& Austin & Pinkleton, Chapter 7</p>	<p>7) Data Collection</p> <p>**Groups should prepare for writing a detailed method section . Project Guidelines: Part 1</p> <p>**Evaluation Sheets for this section will be available on E-learning.</p>
<p>Week 11: March 16 - 20</p> <p>Experiment Design & Evaluation Research</p> <p>** Reading: Chapter 9 and 13</p> <p>The Middle-Term Exam March 18</p>	<p>Project Guidelines: Part 2</p> <p>8) March 18th: Method and Data</p> <p>9) March 18th: The Middle-Term Exam</p>
<p>Data Analysis Phase</p>	
<p>Week 12: March 23 - 27</p> <p>Analysis of Data (SPSS analysis)</p> <p>Handout2</p>	<p>10) Data Analysis</p>
<p>Week 13: March 20 – April 3</p>	<p>11) Writing Research Findings</p>

<p>Analysis of Data (SPSS analysis)</p> <p>Handout3</p>	
<p>Week 14: Apr. 6 - 10</p> <p>Preparing for Research Papers</p>	<p>12) April 8th: Research Findings (for getting feedback)</p> <p>13) Prepare for presentation Evaluation Sheet for the Presentation</p> <p>Project Guidelines: Part3 (For the Presentation)</p>
<p>Final Presentation</p>	
<p>Week 15: Apr. 13 - 17</p> <p>1. Discussion of Research Method Issues (e.g. Internal Validity vs. External Validity) and Writing the Final Paper Continues</p>	
<p>Reflection Phase</p>	
<p>Week 16: Apr. 20 - 24</p> <p>Final Presentation and Reflection</p>	<p>14) April 22: Final Presentations: 20 Minutes Formal Presentation Per Group.</p> <p>15) Class Evaluations on April 22th (Please bring a laptop or electronic device for class evaluations)</p> <p>16) April 22: Submit Final Research Paper in Class (no</p>

exceptions!)

17) Final Self/Peer Evaluation
(Due on April 22 in class)

Have a wonderful break!