

## **SYLLABUS: RESEARCH METHODS IN MASS COMMUNICATION (MMC 6421)**

**Instructor information and virtual office hours:** Judith Donohue 352-603-3941 (cell)

You can call me any day, 7 days a week, between 8 a.m. and **8 p.m.** PLEASE do not call after 8 p.m. 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.

[Email via Sakai](#)

**Description:** This 12-module course provides an overview of common mass communication research methods. We will discuss quantitative and qualitative research, content analysis, experiments, surveys and focus groups. In addition, students will be introduced to SPSS, a software program used to analyze data.

### **Course Textbooks:**

**Required:** Wimmer, Roger D., and Dominick, Joseph R. (2006). *Mass Media Research: An Introduction* (10<sup>th</sup> Edition), Wadsworth, Cengage Learning: Boston MA.

**Helpful, but not required:** Cronk, Brian C. (2012). *How to Use SPSS* (7<sup>th</sup> Edition), Pryczak Publishing : Glendale CA. Also, You might also find a second book, **Learning to use SPSS with Exercises** by Earl Babbie, helpful when we get to the module about data analysis.

You will also be exploring Mass Communication journals and other trade and academic publications which are available online through the UF Library. <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/>

**Technology requirements:** A reliable computer and internet access

**Course Goals:** Upon completion of this course students will:

- Understand the various types of research methods and tools, including their benefits and shortcomings
- Become aware of the ethical issues surrounding communication research
- Understand the practical applications of research methods in the field of mass communication
- Be able to design and execute a research project using the methods learned in the class.

### **Course Activities:**

**In addition to the assigned reading,** there will be online **discussions**, five **quizzes** based on the reading to ensure that students are comprehending the material. There will also be **10**

activities and assignments, **including two short papers (3-5 pages)** and a **final research project (15-20 pages)**.

**Assignment will be weighted as follows:**

- Participation in online discussions, with “substantive” posts (not just “I agree.”) - 15 percent
- Assignments – 35 percent, which includes 2 short papers (3-5 pages) . The papers will count for **10 percent each** and the remaining assignments account for **15 percent, total**.
- 5 quizzes - Total 10 percent (2 percent each)
- Final research project (15-20 pages) -40 percent

**Grading is based on 100 points. Here is the grading scale:**

Grade Percentage A 93% and above A- 90-92% B+ 87-89% B 83-86% B- 80-82% C+ 77-79% C 73-76% C- 70-72% D+ 67-69% D 63-66% D- 60-62% F Below 60

**Honesty and Integrity:** The highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity are expected in this class. Students are expected to comply with the letter and the spirit of the UF Honor Code which reads as follows:

**Student Honor Code Preamble:** In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

**The Honor Code** We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. 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."

**Academic Honesty Guidelines** All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines which have been accepted by the University. The academic community of students and faculty at the University of Florida strives to develop, sustain and protect an environment of honesty, trust and respect.

Students are expected to pursue knowledge with integrity. Exhibiting honesty in academic pursuits and reporting violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines will encourage others to act with integrity. Violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and a student being subject to the sanctions in paragraph XIV of the Student Conduct Code. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines (University of Florida Rule 6C1-4.017).

For more information about academic honesty, contact the Dean of Students Office. You can review UF's academic honesty guidelines in detail at: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php> (University of Florida Honor Code, 2008)

You are assumed to be the sole author of all work presented. Submitting work written by another or stolen from another (i.e. plagiarized) is not only unethical, it is foolish, embarrassing and may result in course failure. When quoting the work of others, be sure to credit the author properly. I will be using software to detect plagiarism.

### Inclusiveness

Every attempt is made to make all courses non-sexist, diverse and multicultural in content. Please visit with me should you feel this goal is not being met.

### Students with Special Needs

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

### Mental Health or Emergency Resources

You can reach the University Counseling Service at 352-392-1575 or go to this link. <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>

(For emergencies, call 9-1-1)

### **When you need technical HELP!**

Please note that there are several good places to go for help. There are tutorials posted on the e-learning Support Services site, [https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help/Student\\_Faq](https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help/Student_Faq) . You can also call the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or visit <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu> . Often you can get help from your classmates on the course discussion board. **I will not be your source for technical help.**

All email should go through the Sakai mail tool. No private emails will be exchanged. I will respond to your email within 48 hours, and probably within 24 hours.

In the unlikely event of a UF system-wide technology failure, any quizzes or other deadlines will be postponed until the system is up and running again. Otherwise, internet problems and computer problems on your end will not be considered as an excuse for missing deadlines.

Other policies: Online tests will be timed and once a test is posted, you may not go back and make changes. You will get test scores immediately.

Unless otherwise indicated, **deadlines for papers and discussion postings will be Saturdays at 11 p.m.**

**Free advice:** Log into the course often and stay on top of the assignments and discussions.

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