

JOUR 801

Communication Research Design

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Office Hours: *TBD and by appointment.*

Fall 2023

SJMC 316

Wednesday, 2:00pm–5:00pm

“It is not enough for communication specialists to acquire skill in surveying, content analysis, or other technical operations. A genuine profession can be said to complement skill with enlightenment.”

— Harold Lasswell, 1972, *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36(3), p. 306

Course Description

This course provides an overview of the concepts and tools by which social scientific communication research is designed, conducted, interpreted, and critically evaluated. The primary goal of this course is to help you become a knowledgeable consumer and producer of empirical communication research.

Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Understand and be able to use the concepts and vocabulary of communication research
- Be intelligent consumers of research, able to read, understand, explain and critically evaluate research reported in scholarly journals
- Develop the skills necessary for conducting communication research using quantitative methods

Required Materials

Textbooks and readings

All readings will be provided through Blackboard.

Technology requirements

Links to articles, assignments, quizzes, and rubrics are located on Blackboard. To participate in learning activities and complete assignments, you will need:

- Access to a working computer that has a current operating system with updates installed, plus speakers or headphones to hear lecture presentations
- Reliable Internet access and a UofSC email account
- A current Internet browser that is compatible with Blackboard (Google Chrome is the recommended browser for Blackboard)
- Microsoft Word as your word processing program
- Reliable data storage for your work, such as a USB drive or Office365 OneDrive cloud storage

If your computer does not have Microsoft Word, Office 365 ProPlus package is available to you free of charge and allows you to install Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote, Publisher, and Access on up to 5 PCs or Macs and Office apps on other mobile devices including tablets. Office 365 also includes unlimited cloud storage on OneDrive. To download Office 365 ProPlus, log into your student (University) email through a web browser, choose Settings (top right corner), and select software. If you have further questions or need help with the software, please contact the Service Desk (https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/servicedesk.php).

Minimal technical skills needed

Minimal technical skills are needed in this course. Most course work will be completed and submitted in Blackboard. Therefore, you must have consistent and reliable access to a computer and the Internet. The minimal technical skills you need to have include the ability to:

- Organize and save electronic files
- Use UofSC email and attached files
- Check email and Blackboard daily
- Download and upload documents
- Locate information with a browser
- Use Blackboard.

Evaluation

This class will use the standard USC grading scheme:

A	90-100%	B+	85-89.99%	B	80-84.99%
C+	75-79.99%	C	70-74.99%	D+	65-69.99%
D	60-64.99%	F	0-59.99%		

Assignments

The final grade in the class will tentatively consist of the following:

Assignment	% Total
CITI Training	5%
Assignments	25%
Literature Review	15%
Proposed Design	15%
Collaborative Research Participation	40%
Total	100%

Collaborative Research

The graduate program funds a survey of a nationally diverse sample of US adults through the vendor Qualtrics, which we as a class will use. The class will collectively decide on a research idea, do a literature review on that idea, develop one or more hypotheses about it, and then field the survey based on a questionnaire we design. Upon completion of the survey, we will then analyze the data and collaboratively write up a paper describing

the results with the goal of presentation at the AEJMC conference in Philadelphia, PA in August 2024. The ultimate goal will be journal publication, if appropriate. Further details regarding authorship and collaboration are discussed in a later section. Students who wish to do an independent research study may be allowed to do so on a case-by-case basis and may be given space on the survey to do so.

Other Assignments

Students will read and critique the methods of research in a series of assignments throughout the semester. Details for each assignment will be provided as they come due.

CITI Training

To do research on human subjects, researchers must pass a standardized training to demonstrate their knowledge of ethical responsibilities.

Literature Review and Proposed Design

In addition to the collaborative research project, students will be asked to propose a research design of their own that is justified by a (somewhat condensed) literature review. The goal of these assignments is to encourage independent thinking about research and design without requiring the full execution of a study in the space of a semester.

Grade Disputes

Any dispute about a grade must be done within one week of the grade posting. You should compose an email, making clear that you are challenging the grade, with information about the assignment and details (using the rubric and guidelines) of why you feel you should receive a different score. There is no guarantee of a grade change in response to such a challenge, but you can rest assured that you will not be penalized even if additional errors are discovered.

Authorship and Data-Sharing

For those participating in the course's collaborative research project, the following guidelines determine authorship credit for the specific projects detailed above:

- Default order of authorship credit: The course instructor will be listed as first author followed by each student (in alphabetical order unless another method is agreed upon) who participated materially in the collection of data, the analysis of data, or manuscript preparation for the particular project.
- Modifications to this default order of authorship credit can be made with the consent of the majority of persons claiming authorship in the project's publication. Reasons for modifying the order of authorship include, but are not limited to: recognizing additional effort above and beyond those of other co-authors, recognizing the contribution of special skills or additional time above and beyond those contributed by other co-authors, and recognizing additional effort given to preparing or revising the manuscript for publication after the conclusion of the course. Demotion in the author order may occur if less effort is given than expected for the course requirements. Nobody is obligated to continue participation in the project beyond the conclusion of the course and failure to do so will not result in demotion in the author order (although others may be promoted for *substantial* additional efforts). Note that even the course instructor may be moved down the author order depending on the level of their contributions and the contributions of others.
- In the case of journal publication, all efforts will be made within the constraints of the journal to explain the relative contributions of each other to avoid the appearance of greater efforts having been made by earlier-listed authors.

In addition, students taking this course and participating in the survey project also agree that once the research project (as defined above) yields its intended publication(s), all data collected for the project can be used freely by any of the project co-authors, who agree to cite the authors of the original publication as the source of the data. This means that every project participant is guaranteed authorship credit on the first publication, but not on any subsequent publications that might result from this data collection effort. The goal of this additional policy is to encourage student collaborators to produce further research as appropriate without requiring explicit permission from each individual collaborator to do so – it is advised, however, that some notice be given when working in areas of mutual interest so any interested collaborators may participate.

Students may wish to consult the following resource for information on norms and guidelines regarding coauthorship credit in general: <https://www.apa.org/science/leadership/students/authorship-paper>

Course Policies

Reasonable Accommodation Policy

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Student Disability Resource Center: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email sasds@mailbox.sc.edu, or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Student Disability Resource Center.

Late policy

Late work may be accepted with full credit under most circumstances. Communication with the instructor is essential for receiving credit on late work. The goal is to be flexible, but not fall behind in the course. This policy may be changed at short notice if students are struggling to keep up without the motivation of late penalties.

Faculty feedback and response time

Allow 10-14 days for grades on major assignments, although sometimes you will receive feedback sooner. In general, expect a response to emails within 24 hours on business days. If you haven't gotten a response after a couple of days, feel free to reach out again.

Written assignments

All written work must be typed and should conform to APA formatting, citing, and referencing guidelines (see <http://www.apastyle.org/> and <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>). Title pages and abstracts are never required, however. You will not be graded for adhering to all the details of APA formatting, but you must communicate clearly so as to avoid plagiarism and confusion.

Unless otherwise noted, assignments must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. on the assigned due date.

Academic misconduct

Honor Code

Every student has a role in maintaining the academic reputation of the university. It is imperative that you refrain from engaging in plagiarism, cheating, falsifying your work and/or assisting other students in violating the Honor Code. Two important components of the Honor Code:

- Faculty members are required to report potential violations of the Honor Code to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.
- When a student is uncertain as to whether conduct would violate the Honor Code, it is their responsibility to seek clarification from the appropriate faculty member.

Your enrollment in this class signifies your willingness to accept these responsibilities and uphold the Honor Code of the University of South Carolina. Please review the Honor Code Policies. Any deviation from this expectation can result in a referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.

Copyright

Lectures and course materials (which is inclusive of my presentations, tests, exams, outlines, and lecture notes) may be protected by copyright. You are encouraged to take notes and utilize course materials for your own educational purpose. However, you are not to reproduce or distribute this content without my expressed written permission. This includes sharing course materials to online social study sites like Course Hero and other services.

Students who publicly reproduce, distribute or modify course content maybe in violation of the university's Honor Code's Complicity policy, which states: sharing academic work with another student (either in person or electronically) without the permission of the instructor. To best understand the parameters around copyright and intellectual property review <http://www.sc.edu/policies/acaf133.pdf>.

Collaboration

A student's grades are to represent to what extent that individual student has mastered the course content. You should assume that you are to complete course work individually (without the use of another person or un-cited outside source) unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. It is your responsibility to seek clarification if you are unclear about what constitutes proper or improper collaboration. For skills assignments, you will be given a more specific definition of what constitutes collaboration because seeking outside help is one of the skills you should develop.

Reusing course materials

The use of previous semester course materials is not allowed in this course. This applies to homework, projects, quizzes and tests. Because these aids are not available to all students within the course, their use by any individual student undermines the fundamental principles of fairness and disrupts your professor's ability to accurately evaluate your work. Any potential violations will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity for review.

Diversity and inclusion

The university is committed to a campus environment that is inclusive, safe, and respectful for all persons, and one that fully embraces the Carolinian Creed. To that end, all course activities will be conducted in an atmosphere of friendly participation and interaction among colleagues, recognizing and appreciating the unique experiences, background, and point of view each student brings. You are expected at all times to apply the highest academic standards to this course and to treat others with dignity and respect.

Changing nature of this syllabus

The assignments, policies, and readings in this syllabus are subject to change at any time. If this occurs, the changes will be announced and an updated version of the syllabus will be posted to Blackboard.

Below is a summary of all changes:

- August 30: First public version

Unless otherwise specified, quizzes, discussion posts, and other assignments are due at 11:59 PM on the date they are due.

If the information on Blackboard contradicts this syllabus, assume the information on Blackboard is correct.

This schedule provides a broad overview of the materials you will read for the course. It does not include assignment due dates. More details will be available on Blackboard, where you will access any necessary materials.

September 6: Validity

September 13: Causality

September 20: Sampling and Surveys

September 27: Measurement and Questionnaire Design

October 4: Qualitative Designs

October 11: p-values and Statistical Inference

October 18: Content Analysis

October 25: Experimental Designs

November 1: Replication and best practices

November 8: Moderation and Mediation

November 15: Experimental Designs

November 22: No class, Thanksgiving holiday

November 29: Longitudinal Designs and Mixing Methods

December 6: Theoretical Contributions, Wrap-up, Catch-up