

COMM6760 Communication Research Methods

Autumn 2014 – Last updated 8/22/14

- Lecture: Derby 3116/Journalism 342
Monday/Wednesday 5:30 – 6:50
- Instructor: Dr. Kelly Garrett
3131 Derby Hall
garrett.258@osu.edu
Please include “COMM6760” in the subject line
- Office Hours: Friday 4:00 – 5:00 + by appointment

Rationale and objectives:

Communication Research Methods provides an overview of the concepts and tools by which 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 quantitative communication research.

Specific Learning 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, and
- Develop the skills necessary for conducting communication research using quantitative methods.

Course Format:

Class sessions are an opportunity for us to discuss the concepts addressed in the readings. I will offer some preliminary comments to help situate the day's topic within the broader context of the course, I will provide an overview of key concepts, and I will call attention to what I consider to be the more difficult problems and questions. My lectures are not a substitute for the reading; they are intended to highlight and clarify core material, but time constraints prevent me from talking about every important aspect of the day's topic. If I fail to address something from the reading that you want to understand better, it is up to you to ask questions. I want our time in the classroom to be spent grappling with the interesting questions and critical challenges that we all face when conducting research.

Course Requirements:

1. Class attendance and participation policy:

Regular class attendance is required. I expect you to have completed the assigned reading and to be prepared to discuss them.

2. Course readings:

Reading loads vary depending on the complexity of the topic, and will include a mix of textbook chapters and articles relevant to the day's topic. All readings are available online through Carmen (<https://carmen.osu.edu/>).

Note, however, that although no book is required for the class, I expect that you will purchase at least one of the books from which readings are selected before the class is done. This course is just the beginning. If you are going to use any of the techniques we study, you will need to know more. These books can help.

3. Assessment materials:

(a) *Discussion board/class participation*

A significant part of our class time will be spent discussing the ideas presented in the readings. In order to facilitate this discussion, each of you is required to post a question that you are prepared to talk about during class. You do not need to know the answer to the question you post, but you should be able to describe both why you ask the question and the relevant concepts that you do understand. I will review these questions, and will often use them to guide class conversation. Comments are due by midnight the day before each class session.

I understand that everyone has their own style of learning. Some people are more comfortable participating to class-wide discussions than others. For this reason, I will provide you with a variety of opportunities to participate, including small-group discussion and individual exercises. My goal is for you to be an active participant in the learning process, not to make you uncomfortable.

(b) *Human subjects training*

The Ohio State University requires that all research involving human participants be conducted by individuals who understand the rights of human participants. Therefore, anyone conducting a study that involves human participants must first complete the CITI Basic Course in Social and Behavioral research. This course is completed online; a link can be found on Carmen. In order to receive credit for completing the course you must submit an electronic copy of your "Certificate of Completion" in PDF format to the Carmen dropbox by the due date specified. Note that the course will take several hours to complete, and can be spread over multiple sessions. Please make sure you leave yourself adequate time to complete the training prior to the due date.

(c) Written assignments

There are five assignments to complete outside the classroom. The purpose of the assignments is to help you check your understanding of basic course concepts, to give you an opportunity to apply these concepts to real-world research problems, and to learn to recognize the tradeoffs that research entails. Please submit these assignments using the Carmen dropbox.

(d) Exams

There will be two exams, a midterm, and a final exam. More information about these exams will be provided later in the quarter.

Grading Procedures: Grades will be based on:

Discussion board/class participation	10%
Human subjects training (CITI)	5%
Assignments	45%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to demonstrate academic integrity and to abide by the *Code of Student Conduct* (<http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/csc/> and see <http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.htm>). *Academic misconduct* includes, but is not limited to, (1) plagiarism (using others' work without citing/crediting them), (2) fabricating information or citations, (3) facilitating acts of dishonesty by others, (4) having unauthorized possession of past exam questions, (5) submitting work previously submitted to another course or work of another person, (6) tampering with the academic work of other students, and (7) cheating on quizzes/exams. Academic misconduct on any assignment will result minimally in receiving a zero on that assignment and may also lead to further disciplinary action. **Penalty for violation of the *Code of Student Conduct* can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.**

It is your responsibility to be aware of the rules of academic dishonesty—ignorance is not a defense. **When in doubt, consult your instructor before doing anything about which you are uncertain.**

Accommodations for students with disabilities

I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances. You can also contact the office for disability services at 292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to help coordinate reasonable accommodations (telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>).

Tentative Course Schedule

Note: Some readings are excerpts of longer chapters. In these cases, I have provided page numbers. You can generally start reading at the top of the relevant section beginning on that page.

Date	Topics	Readings	Due
W 8/27	Introduction	Edwards (2008), How to read a book	
M 9/1	No class (Labor Day)		
W 9/3	Communication research	Frey et al. (2000), Ch. 1, pp. 3-26	
M 9/8	Research paradigms	Creswell (2014), Ch. 1, pp. 3-23	
W 9/10	Research questions	Frey et al. (2000), Ch. 2, pp. 27-47	
M 9/15	Research ethics	Crano & Brewer, Ch. 19, pp. 344-358 Belmont Report (1979)	
W 9/17	Research ethics online	Gleibs (2014) Ess (2002), pp. 1-11	CITI program complete
M 9/22	Measurement	Crano & Brewer, Ch. 1, pp. 3-15 Hayes (2005), Ch 2, pp. 16-24	
W 9/24	Reliability and validity	Trochim & Donnelly (2008), Ch 3, pp. 56-67, 77-95 Crano & Brewer, Ch. 3, pp. 45-50, 53-56 Hayes (2005), Ch 2, pp. 24-30	
M 9/29	Scale development	Crano & Brewer, Ch. 15, pp. 277-292	Assignment #1
W 10/1	Behavioral & implicit measures	Crano & Brewer, Ch. 16, pp. 293-310 Howard et al (1980)	
M 10/6	External validity	Crano & Brewer, Ch 2, pp. 32-35 Trochim & Donnelly (2008), Ch 2, pp. 34-38 Hayes (2005), Ch. 3, pp. 31-44 Basil (1996)	
W 10/8	Internal validity	Trochim & Donnelly (2008), Ch 7, pp. 158-172	
M 10/13	Measurement challenges	Nisbett & Wilson (1977) Schwarz (1999)	Assignment #2
W 10/15	Midterm		
M 10/20	Survey research	Dillman (2014) et al., Ch 1, pp. 1-18; Ch 2, pp. 19-27	
W 10/22	Survey research	Dillman (2014) et al., Ch 2, pp. 27-55	
M 10/27	Survey research	Dillman (2014) et al., Ch 4, pp. 94-126 Dillman (2014) et al., Ch 6, pp.169-176, 225-227; Ch 7, pp. 228-241	
W 10/29	Survey research online	Couper (2013)	
M 11/3	Experimental research basics	Shadish et al. (2002), Ch 1, pp. 1-32	Assignment #3
W 11/5	Random assignment	Shadish et al. (2002), Ch 8, pp. 246-278	
M 11/10	Quasi-experiments and field experiments	Shadish et al. (2002), Ch 4, pp. 103-111, 115-117, 134 Shadish et al. (2002), Ch 5, pp.135-139, 156-161 Green (2014)	
W 11/12	Computers & experiments	Iyengar (2011) Peifer (2014)	
M 11/17	Content analysis	Neuendorf (2001), Ch. 1, pp. 1-25 Krippendorf (2013), Ch 3, pp. 49-52	Assignment #4
W 11/19	Big Data – Dr. Robert Bond	Parks (2014); Lazer (2009); Miller (2013)	
M 11/24	Content analysis	Neuendorf (2001), pp. 47-57, 71-76, 83-89	
W 11/26	No class (Thanksgiving)		
M 12/1	Content analysis	Neuendorf (2001), pp. 118-124, and 142-161	
W 12/3	Computers & content analysis	Krippendorf, Ch. 11, pp. 208-213, 235, 238-248	
M 12/8	Concluding research	Bem (2003) Vazire (2014)	Assignment #5
T 12/11	Final Exam	NOTE DATE AND TIME: 6pm-7:45pm	

Bibliography

Note: I have marked in **bold** three books that are particularly relevant if you want to continue your study of these methods.

- Basil, M. D. (1996). The Use of Student Samples in Communication Research. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 40, 431.
- Bem, D. J. (2003). Writing the Empirical Journal Article. In J. M. Darley, M. P. Zanna & H. L. Roediger III (Eds.), *The Compleat Academic: A Practical Guide for the Beginning Social Scientist* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Couper, M. P. (2013). Is the sky falling? New technology, changing media, and the future of surveys. *Survey Research Methods*, 7(3), 145-156.
- Crano, W. D., & Brewer, M. B. (2002). *Principles and Methods of Social Research* (Second ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: the Tailored Design Method* (4th ed.). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.**
- Edwards, P. N. (2013). How to Read a Book. Retrieved August 1, 2014, from <http://www.si.umich.edu/~pne/PDF/howtoread.pdf>
- Ess, C., & the AoIR ethics working group. (2002, November 27). Ethical decision-making and Internet research: Recommendations from the AoIR ethics working committee. Retrieved March 7, 2007, from <http://www.aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf>
- Frey, L. R., Botan, C. H., & Kreps, G. L. (2000). *Investigating communication: an introduction to research methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Gleibs, I. H. (2014). Turning Virtual Public Spaces into Laboratories: Thoughts on Conducting Online Field Studies Using Social Network Sites. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, n/a-n/a. doi: 10.1111/asap.12036
- Green, D. P., Calfano, B. R., & Aronow, P. M. (2014). Field Experimental Designs for the Study of Media Effects. *Political Communication*, 31(1), 168-180. doi: 10.1080/10584609.2013.828142
- Hayes, A. F. (2005). *Statistical methods for communication science*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Howard, G. S., Maxwell, S. E., Wiener, R. L., Boynton, K. S., & Rooney, W. M. (1980). Is a Behavioral Measure the Best Estimate of Behavioral Parameters? Perhaps Not. *Applied Psychological Measurement, 4*(3), 293-311.
- Iyengar, S. (2011). Experimental designs for political communication research: using new technology and online participant pools to overcome the problem of generalizability. In E. P. Bucy & R. L. Holbert (Eds.), *Sourcebook for political communication research: Methods, measures, and analytical techniques* (pp. 129-148). New York: Routledge.
- Krippendorff, K. (2013). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Third ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Lazer, D., Pentland, A., Adamic, L., Aral, S., Barabasi, A.-L., Brewer, D., . . . Van Alstyne, M. (2009). Computational Social Science. *Science, 323*(5915), 721-723. doi: 10.1126/science.1167742
- Meltzoff, J. (1998). *Critical thinking about research: psychology and related fields*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Miller, G. (2011). Social Scientists Wade Into the Tweet Stream. *Science, 333*(6051), 1814-1815. doi: 10.1126/science.333.6051.1814
- National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (1979). The Belmont report: ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research. Washington, DC: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. * Note: A new edition is coming in spring 2015.**
- Nisbett, R. E., & Wilson, T. D. (1977). Telling more than we can know: verbal reports on mental process. *Psychological Review, 84*(3), 231-259.
- Parks, M. R. (2014). Big Data in Communication Research: Its Contents and Discontents. *Journal of Communication, 64*(2), 355-360. doi: 10.1111/jcom.12090
- Peifer, J. (2014). Best Practices for Working with Opt-In Online Panels, from http://www.comm.ohio-state.edu/Opt-in_panel_best_practices.pdf
- Schwarz, N. (1999). Self-Reports: How the Questions Shape the Answers. *American Psychologist, 54*(2), 93-105.
- Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2002). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.**

Trochim, W. M. K., & Donnelly, J. P. (2008). *Research methods knowledge base* (3rd ed.). Mason, OH: Atomic Dog/Cengage Learning. (Additional resources online at <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/>)

Vazire, S. (2014). Life after Bem. Retrieved from <http://sometimesimwrong.typepad.com/wrong/2014/03/life-after-bem.html>

Other recommended readings

Note: Some of these readings build on our discussion of research methods, while others are more generally relevant to graduate studies. All are worth reading.

Becker, H. S. (1986). *Writing for social scientists: how to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Becker, H. S. (1998). *Trick of the trade: how to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Berinsky, A. J., Huber, G. A., & Lenz, G. S. (2012). Evaluating Online Labor Markets for Experimental Research: Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk. *Political Analysis*. doi: 10.1093/pan/mpr057

Berinsky, A. J., Margolis, M. F., & Sances, M. W. (2014). Separating the Shirkers from the Workers? Making Sure Respondents Pay Attention on Self-Administered Surveys. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(3), 739-753. doi: 10.1111/ajps.12081

Chandler, J., Mueller, P., & Paolacci, G. (2014). Nonnaïveté among Amazon Mechanical Turk workers: Consequences and solutions for behavioral researchers. *Behavior Research Methods*, 46(1), 112-130. doi: 10.3758/s13428-013-0365-7

Couper, M. P. (2000). Web Surveys: A Review of Issues and Approaches. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 64(4), 464-494.

Davis, M. S. (1971). That's interesting! Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology. *Philosophy of Social Science*, 1, 309-344.

Edwards, P. N. (2013). How to Give an Academic Talk. Retrieved August 1, 2014, from <http://www.si.umich.edu/~pne/PDF/howtotalk.pdf>

Gosling, S. D., Vazire, S., Srivastava, S., & John, O. P. (2004). Should We Trust Web-Based Studies? *American Psychologist*, 59(2), 93-104.

Holtzman, N. S., Kwong, S., & Baird, K. L. (2014). Exploring Political Ideologies of Senators with Semantic Analysis Tools: Further Validation of CASS. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*. doi: 10.1177/0261927x14546568

Preacher, K. J. (2003). Publishing in graduate school: Tips for new graduate students.
APS Observer, 16(4), 33-34.