

Communication 6760
Communication Research Methods
The Ohio State University
Fall 2016

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Office hours: Friday 10:15 to 11:15 or by appointment

Office: 3127 Derby Hall

Course location: Derby Hall 3116

Course time: Tuesday and Thursday, 5:30-6:50

Course Description

The main goal of the course is to familiarize students with the traditional and some of the emerging research methods used in communication research. The first 4/5ths of the course will be spent concentrating on the process of defining important research questions and the logic of research design along with a survey of the main research techniques employed in empirical studies in communication. The rest of the course will focus on emerging approaches and perspectives.

An entire course can be spent on many of the topics discussed here. Unfortunately, there is always a trade-off between breadth and depth of coverage. The course focuses on breadth and exposure to the basics. However, if successful, this course will provide you with a strong foundation on which you can build as you pursue a research career in communication science.

Finally, good research requires more than an important question and a rigorous design; it also requires good writing. This course will place a high premium on writing and it will be a constant topic of discussion.

The course objectives are as follows:

To become familiar with classic and emerging methods in the field

To encourage students to begin to formulate important research questions

To help students create rigorous research designs in order to answer those questions

To encourage clear, precise, and succinct writing

Course Format

Each session will be a combination of lecture and a class discussion. *During lecture, I will discuss a large amount of information that go beyond the assigned readings.* Thus, it is important that you attend each session and take good notes.

Course Requirements

(1) *Participation* (10% of final grade). You are expected to attend class and to participate fully in class discussions. This requires that you have read the materials and you have thought seriously about them. Class participation is mandatory and *everyone* will be expected to contribute to class discussions.

(2) *Assignments* (10% of final grade). There will be several take-home assignments over the course of the semester.

(3) *Weekly questions* (10% of final grade). For every class session, you are required to generate three discussion questions from any of the readings. You will begin submitting these questions in week two.

(4) *Midterm* (25% of final grade). Your midterm exam will mirror the format of a qualifying exam. It will be a take-home exam and you will have several days to complete it. It will test and improve your skills in (1) making clear and compelling arguments (2) integrating ideas across different course readings and (3) thinking deeply about the “big picture” and study-specific issues in research methods/design (i.e., seeing both the “forest” and the “trees”).

(5) *Research design proposal* (40% of final grade). You will write a research design proposal (15 to 20 pages without references) that employs at least one of the methods covered in the course. It should answer an important question in the field and you are encouraged to be creative and come up with your own topic. Your grade will be based on scientific merit, creativity, feasibility, quality of the writing, and the extent to which you were able to incorporate material that was covered in the course. I will provide more details and guidelines about the research design proposal at various points during the semester.

(6) *Presentation of research design proposal* (5% of final grade). You will give a 15 minute presentation of your research design proposal in front of class. It will be followed by a 15 minute question and answer section. Everyone will be required to provide *both* constructive and critical feedback. The Q&A is meant to improve your skills in responding to criticisms of your study.

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

Tentative Course Schedule

Tuesday August 23: Introduction to the course

Thursday August 25: Theory and hypotheses

Sutton, R. I., & Staw, B. M. (1995). What theory is not. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40(3), 371–384.

Berger, J. (2011). Arousal increases social transmission of information. *Psychological Science*, 22(7), 891–3.

Talhelm, T., Zhang, X., Oishi, S., Shimin, C., Duan, D., Lan, X., & Kitayama, S. (2014). Large-scale psychological differences within China explained by rice versus wheat agriculture. *Science*, 344(6184), 603–608.

Tuesday August 30: Concept and measurement; Validity and reliability

Legg, S., & Hutter, M. (2007). A collection of definitions of intelligence. In *Proceedings of the 2007 Conference on Advances in Artificial General Intelligence: Concepts, Architectures and Algorithms: Proceedings of the AGI Workshop 2006* (pp. 17–24). Amsterdam, The Netherlands, The Netherlands: IOS Press.

Sternberg, R. J., & Grigorenko, E. L. (2004). Intelligence and culture: how culture shapes what intelligence means, and the implications for a science of well-being. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 359(1449), 1427–1434.

Duckworth, A. L., Quinn, P. D., Lynam, D. R., Loeber, R., & Stouthamer-Loeber, M. (2011). Role of test motivation in intelligence testing. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(19), 7716–7720.

Jackman, S. (2008) Measurement. In J. Box-Steffensmeier, H. Brady, and D. Collier, (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Thursday September 1: General introduction to causation; Introduction to experiments and observational studies

Kaplan, D. (n.d.). *Causal inference in educational policy research*. Working paper, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, WI.

Brady, H. (2008). Causation and explanation in social Science. In J. Box-Steffensmeier, H. Brady, and D. Collier, (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Tuesday September 6: Internal and external validity; Self-selection

Smith, H. "Research Design: Toward a Realistic Role for Causal Analysis. In Morgan, S.J. (Ed.), *Handbook of Causal Analysis for Social Research*

Gaines, B. J., & Kuklinski, J. H. (2011). Experimental estimation of heterogeneous treatment effects related to self-selection. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(3), 724–736.

Druckman, J. N., Fein, J., & Leeper, T. J. (2012). A source of bias in public opinion stability. *American Political Science Review*, 106(2), 430–454.

Thursday September 8: Lab experiments: Bringing the real world into the lab

Mutz, D. C., & Reeves, B. (2005). The new videomalaise: Effects of televised incivility on political trust. *American Political Science Review*, 99(01), 1–15.

Sinclair, R. C., Mark, M. M., Moore, S. E., Lavis, C. A., & Soldat, A. S. (2000). Psychology: An electoral butterfly effect. *Nature*, 408(6813), 665–666.

Tuesday September 13: Lab experiments: Simulating possible worlds

Mook, D. G. (1983). In defense of external invalidity. *American Psychologist*, 38(4), 379–387.

Bailenson, J. N., Iyengar, S., Yee, N., & Collins, N.A. (2008). Facial similarity between voters and candidates cause influence. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 72(5) 935-961.

Berger, J. (2011). Arousal increases social transmission of information. *Psychological Science*, 22(7), 891–3.

Thursday September 15: Field experiments

Kramer, A. D. I., Guillory, J. E., & Hancock, J. T. (2014). Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *111*(24), 8788–8790.

Butler, D. M., & Broockman, D. E. (2011). Do politicians racially discriminate against constituents? A field Experiment on state legislators. *American Journal of Political Science*, *55*(3), 463–477.

King, G., Pan, J., & Roberts, M. E. (2014). Reverse-engineering censorship in China: Randomized experimentation and participant observation. *Science*, *345*(6199), 1251722.

Gerber, A. S., Green, D. P., & Larimer, C. W. (2008). Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment. *American Political Science Review*, *102*(1), 33–48.

Imbens, G. W., & Rubin, D. B. (2015). Causality: The Basic Framework. In *Causal inference for statistics, social, and biomedical sciences*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Basken, P. 2015. Embrace of Deception in Experiments Puts Social Scientists in an Ethical Bind. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

Tuesday September 20: Natural experiments; Designs that combine lab and field experiments

Evans, W. N., Sullivan, J. X., & Wallskog, M. (2016). The impact of homelessness prevention programs on homelessness. *Science*, *353*(6300), 694–699.

Bronzaft, A. L., & McCarthy, D. P. (1975). The effect of elevated train noise on reading ability. *Environment and Behavior*, *7*(4), 517–528.

Dunning, T. (2008). Improving causal inference: Strengths and limitations of natural experiments. *Political Research Quarterly*, *61*(2), 282–293.

Jerit, J., Barabas, J., & Clifford, S. (2013). Comparing contemporaneous laboratory and field experiments on media effects. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *77*(1), 256–282.

Thursday September 22: Observational studies part 1: Matching; Before-After Studies; Interrupted Time Series

Mondak, J. J. (1995). Newspapers and political awareness. *American Journal of Political Science*, 39(2), 513–527.

Friedman, M. S., Powell, K. E., Hutwagner, L., Graham, L. M., & Teague, W. G. (2001). Impact of changes in transportation and commuting behaviors during the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta on air quality and childhood asthma. *JAMA*, 285(7), 897–905.

Muller, A. (2004). Florida's motorcycle helmet law repeal and fatality rates. *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(4), 556–558.

Tuesday September 27: Observational studies part 2: Cross-sectional comparisons; Differences-in-Differences Strategies

Joyce, T., Kaestner, R., & Colman, S. (2006). Changes in abortions and births and the Texas Parental Notification Law. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 354(10), 1031–1038.

Thursday September 29: Immutable characteristics

Sen, M., & Wasow, O. (2016). Race as a bundle of sticks: Designs that estimate effects of seemingly immutable characteristics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19(1), 499–522.

Tuesday October 4: Take home midterm exam

Thursday October 6: Sampling part 1

Chapter 3 in 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.

Tuesday October 11: Sampling part 2

Berinsky, A. J., Huber, G. A., & Lenz, G. S. (2012). Evaluating online labor markets for experimental research: Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk. *Political Analysis*, 20(3), 351–368.

Zhou, H., & Fishbach, A. (2016). The Pitfall of experimenting on the web: How unattended selective attrition leads to surprising (yet false) research conclusions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Advance online publication.

Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33(2–3), 61–83.

Thursday October 13: Fall break

Tuesday October 18: Surveys part 1

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 in 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.

Thursday October 20: Surveys part 2

Kuklinski, J. H., Cobb, M. D., & Gilens, M. (1997). Racial attitudes and the “New South.” *The Journal of Politics*, 59(2), 323–349.

Tuesday October 25: Content analysis part 1

Dixon, T. L., Schell, T. L., Giles, H., & Drogos, K. L. (2008). The Influence of race in police–civilian interactions: A content analysis of videotaped interactions taken during Cincinnati police traffic stops. *Journal of Communication*, 58(3), 530–549.

Dixon, T., & Linz, D. (2000). Overrepresentation and underrepresentation of African Americans and Latinos as lawbreakers on television news. *Journal of Communication*, 50(2), 131–154.

Thursday October 27: Content analysis part 2; Content analysis exercise

Tuesday November 1: Replication/Reproducibility part 1

Collaboration, O. S. (2015). Estimating the reproducibility of psychological science. *Science*, 349(6251).

Thursday November 3: Replication/Reproducibility part 2

Gilbert, D. T., King, G., Pettigrew, S., & Wilson, T. D. (2016). Comment on “Estimating the reproducibility of psychological science.” *Science*, *351*(6277), 1037–1037.

Tuesday November 8: Behavioral measures

Galdi, S., Arcuri, L., & Gawronski, B. (2008). Automatic mental associations predict future choices of undecided decision-makers. *Science*, *321*(5892), 1100–1102.

Nosek, B. A., Hawkins, C. B., & Frazier, R. S. (2011). Implicit social cognition: from measures to mechanisms. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *15*(4), 152–159.

Thursday November 10: Psychophysiological measures part 1

Olsson, A., Ebert, J. P., Banaji, M. R., & Phelps, E. A. (2005). The role of social groups in the persistence of learned fear. *Science*, *309*(5735), 785–787.

Oxley, D. R., Smith, K. B., Alford, J. R., Hibbing, M. V., Miller, J. L., Scalora, M., Hibbing, J. R. (2008). Political attitudes vary with physiological traits. *Science*, *321*(5896), 1667–1670.

Tuesday November 15: Psychophysiological measures part 2

Chekroud, A. M., Everett, J. A. C., Bridge, H., & Hewstone, M. (2014). A review of neuroimaging studies of race-related prejudice: does amygdala response reflect threat? *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, *8*.

Thursday November 17: Qualitative methods (guest lecture)

Tuesday November 22: Discussion of research papers

Thursday November 24: Thanksgiving

Tuesday November 29: Research design presentations

Thursday December 1: Research design presentations

Tuesday December 6: Research design presentations

Thursday December 8: Research design presentations

Tuesday December 13: Final papers due