Communication 6760
Communication Research Methods
The Ohio State University
Fall 2017

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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 4:00 to 5:00 or by appointment
Office: 3127 Derby Hall / 207 Journalism Building (Office hours will be held in the Journalism building office)

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** (20% of final grade). There will be several take-home assignments over the course of the semester. The primary goal of these assignments is to introduce you to writing formal reviews of papers. You will take on the role of a “peer reviewer” – one who will assess both the quality of a study and its suitability for publication in a scholarly journal.

(3) **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”).

(4) **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. Finally, you are required to meet with me at some point during the semester in order to discuss your proposed study.

(5) **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 22: Introduction to the course

Thursday August 24: Theory and hypotheses


Tuesday August 29: Concept and measurement; Validity and reliability


Thursday August 31: General introduction to causation; Introduction to experiments and observational studies


Tuesday September 5: Internal and external validity; Self-selection


Thursday September 7: Lab experiments: Bringing the real world into the lab


Tuesday September 12: Lab experiments: Simulating possible worlds


Thursday September 14: Field experiments; Non-interference


Tuesday September 19: Natural experiments; Designs that combine lab and field experiments; Spillover effects


Thursday September 21: Observational studies part 1: Matching; Before-After Studies; Interrupted Time Series


Tuesday September 26: Observational studies part 2: Cross-sectional comparisons; Differences-in-Differences Strategies


Thursday September 28: Sampling


Tuesday October 3: Can generalization be attained?


Thursday October 5: Immutable characteristics


Tuesday October 10: Replication/Reproducibility part 1


Thursday October 12: Fall break

Tuesday October 17: Replication/Reproducibility part 2; Considering the role of moderators and context


Feldman Barrett, L. Psychology is not in crisis, *The New York Times*

Thursday October 19: Message selection


Tuesday October 24: Take-Home Midterm

Thursday October 26: Take-Home Midterm
Tuesday October 31: Surveys part 1


Thursday November 2: Surveys part 2


Tuesday November 7: Content analysis


Thursday November 9: Behavioral measures


Tuesday November 14: Psychophysiological measures


Thursday November 16: Qualitative methods (guest lecture)

Tuesday November 21: Qualitative methods


Thursday November 23: Thanksgiving

Tuesday November 28: Research design presentations

Thursday November 30: Research design presentations

Tuesday December 5: Research design presentations

Thursday December 7: Research design presentations

Tuesday December 12: Final papers due