

**Communication 6760**  
**Communication Research Methods**  
**The Ohio State University**  
**Fall 2017**

**Instructor:** Jason C. Coronel, Ph.D.

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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**

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 29: Concept and measurement; Validity and reliability**

Katz, E., & Fialkoff, Y. (2017). Six concepts in search of retirement. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 41(1), 86–91.

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 August 31: 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 5: Internal and external validity; Self-selection**

Messing, S., & Westwood, S. J. (2014). Selective exposure in the age of social media: Endorsements trump partisan source affiliation when selecting news online. *Communication Research*, 41(8), 1042–1063.

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.

### **Thursday September 7: 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 12: 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 14: Field experiments; Non-interference**

Lecheler, S., & de Vreese, C. H. (2017). News media, knowledge, and political interest: Evidence of a dual role from a field experiment. *Journal of Communication*, 67(4), 545–564.

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

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.

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

Druckman, J. N., Levendusky, M. S., & McLain, A. (forthcoming). No need to watch: How the effects of partisan media can spread via interpersonal discussions. *American Journal of Political Science*

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

Sly, D. F., Heald, G. R., & Ray, S. (2001). The Florida “truth” anti-tobacco media evaluation: design, first year results, and implications for planning future state media evaluations. *Tobacco Control*, 10(1), 9–15.

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

Rosenbaum, P. R. (1999). Choice as an alternative to control in observational studies: Rejoinder. *Statistical Science*, 14(3), 300–304.

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 28: Sampling**

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.

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.

### **Tuesday October 3: Can generalization be attained?**

Cartwright, N., & Hardie, J. (2012). *Evidence-based policy: A practical guide to doing it better*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### **Thursday October 5: 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 10: Replication/Reproducibility part 1**

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

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

### **Thursday October 12: Fall break**

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

Matthes, J., Marquart, F., Naderer, B., Arendt, F., Schmuck, D., & Adam, K. (2015). Questionable research practices in experimental communication research: A systematic analysis from 1980 to 2013. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 9(4), 193–207.

Vermeulen, I., & Hartmann, T. (2015). Questionable research and publication practices in communication science. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 9(4), 189–192.

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

### **Thursday October 19: Message selection**

Slater, M. D., Peter, J., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2015). Message variability and heterogeneity: A core challenge for communication research. In E. L. Cohen (Ed.), *Communication yearbook* (Vol. 39, pp. 3–32). New York, NY: Routledge.

### **Tuesday October 24: Take-Home Midterm**

### **Thursday October 26: Take-Home Midterm**

### **Tuesday October 31: 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 November 2: 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.

Burden, B. C., Ono, Y., & Yamada, M. (2017). Reassessing public support for a female president. *Journal of Politics*, *79*(3), 1073–1078.

### **Tuesday November 7: Content analysis**

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.

Voigt, R., Camp, N. P., Prabhakaran, V., Hamilton, W. L., Hetey, R. C., Griffiths, C. M., ... Eberhardt, J. L. (forthcoming). *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

### **Thursday November 9: 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.

### **Tuesday November 14: Psychophysiological measures**

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.

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 16: Qualitative methods (guest lecture)**

**Tuesday November 21: Qualitative methods**

Walsh, K. C. (2012). Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective. *American Political Science Review*, 106(3), 517–532.

**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**