

**COMM 3160**  
**Communication Research Methods**  
Fall 2018, 4 credits  
Tuesday/Thursday 2:20 – 3:40 pm, Scott Lab E001

**Course Instructor:**

Alex Bonus, Ph.D.  
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Office hours: Thursday 11:30 am – 1:30 pm  
or by appointment

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**Lab Section Instructors:**

**Sarah Thomas**

Monday 8:00 am – 9:50  
Monday 10:05 am – 11:55 am  
Journalism 342  
Office: 3049 Derby Hall  
Office Hours: Monday 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm or  
by appointment

**Guanjin Zhang**

Monday 12:10 pm – 2:00 pm  
Monday 2:15 pm – 4:05 pm  
Journalism 342  
Office: 3001  
Office Hours: Monday 9:00 am -11:00 am or  
by appointment

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**Course Overview**

In describing the current sociopolitical climate in the United States, a journalist recently wrote:

We're not living through a crisis about what is true, we're living through a crisis about how we know whether something is true. We're not disagreeing about facts, we're disagreeing about epistemology.

The “establishment” version of epistemology is: “We use evidence to arrive at the truth, vetted by independent verification (but trust us when we tell you that it's all been independently verified by people who were properly skeptical and not the bosom buddies of the people they were supposed to be fact-checking).

The “alternative facts” epistemological method goes like this: “The ‘independent’ experts who were supposed to be verifying the ‘evidence-based’ truth were actually in bed with the people they were supposed to be fact-checking.

In the end, it's all a matter of faith, then: you either have faith that ‘their’ experts are being truthful, or you have faith that we are. Ask your gut, what version feels more truthful?

The first half of this course examines the methods used by social scientists to derive truth. The second half examines how these methods sometimes go awry, thus sowing the seeds for “alternative” truths. This course pushes students to become more critical consumers of social scientific research by imparting the skills needed to navigate what some have called a “post-truth” society.

## Course Materials

Textbook: Remler, D. K. & Van Ryzin, G. G. (2013). *Research Methods in Practice* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

Film: *Post-Truth Times: We the Media* (2017), directed by Héctor Carré. Available to watch at <https://osu.kanopy.com/video/post-truth-times-we-media>

Additional required readings are posted on Carmen (<https://carmen.osu.edu>).

## Grade Distribution

This class has 200 possible points. Points are distributed as follows:

Attendance & Participation	20 points
Movie Reflection	20 points
Research Proposal Part I	20 points
Research Proposal Part II	40 points
Online Quizzes (x4)	20 points
Exam 1	40 points
Exam 2	40 points

## Letter Grade Distribution

You must attempt each assignment and quiz/exam in order to receive a grade. Your final grade will be determined based on the combined score of quizzes and assignments. The grading distribution (by percentage) is as follows:

$\geq 92.5$	A	$72.5 - 76.4$	C
$89.5 - 92.4$	A-	$69.5 - 72.4$	C-
$86.5 - 89.4$	B+	$66.5 - 69.4$	D+
$82.5 - 86.4$	B	$59.5 - 66.4$	D
$79.5 - 82.4$	B-	$\leq 59.4$	F
$76.5 - 79.4$	C+		

## Overview of Assignments

Attendance/Participation: Points are assigned for regular attendance to (and participation in) lecture and lab. You can miss a total of three lectures/labs with no penalty to your grade. After three absences, each missed lecture/lab will result in a 2-point deduction from your attendance grade. Attendance will be taken using Tophat ([tophat.com](https://tophat.com)), so you should create an account and sign in to our course using the following join code: 682941. For assistance using Tophat, visit the following link: <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/top-hat/using-top-hat-students>

Movie Reflection: After we have reviewed issues with social science research methods, you are required to watch a documentary about the obstacles contemporary journalists face in seeking and reporting “truth.” You will consider how these obstacles echo those faced by social scientists. You will then write a short response paper where you consider the implications of these issues for your own interpretation and experience of “truth.”

Research Proposal Part I (Project Outline): After we have reviewed basic social science research methods, you are required to design a study that aims to answer a question in communication science using one of the research methods described in class. Part I of this assignment requires you to write a short summary of your proposed project. More details will be provided in lab.

Research Proposal Part II (Final Paper): In Part II of this assignment, you will revise your initial proposal based on instructor feedback and expand it into a longer paper. You will also critically reflect on issues discussed in the second half of the course in an effort to make your research design more ethical, more applicable to a broader population, and more replicable.

Online Quizzes: Periodically throughout the semester, you are required to complete online quizzes. These quizzes are available on Carmen, and they serve to review key material up to that point in the semester. Each quiz will be worth 5 points and will consist of 5 to 10 multiple choice questions. You have two opportunities to complete each quiz, and you should complete the first attempt without referencing your notes. After submitting the quiz, you will be able to see which questions you answered incorrectly. You should then use your notes to figure out why you got those questions wrong. You can then correct your answers and resubmit. Only your highest score (out of 5 points) will be counted. Research shows that this process of testing yourself, re-learning the material, and correcting your responses is a more effective study technique than simply reviewing your notes because it forces you to recognize gaps in your knowledge and work to address those gaps. As such, these quizzes intend to serve as periodic checks of your knowledge as well as reviews for exams.

Exam 1: Halfway through the course, your knowledge of basic research methods will be assessed using a combination of multiple choice and true/false questions. A study guide will be provided indicating what information you can expect to see on the exam.

Exam 2: During the final week of the course, your knowledge of issues that plague social science research methods (and the implications of these issues for your understanding of “truth”) will be assessed using a combination of multiple choice and true/false questions. This second exam is *NOT* cumulative. It will only cover material discussed during the second half of the course. A study guide will be provided indicating what information you can expect to see on the exam.

### **Extra Credit**

Participate in a research study! Conducting scientific research is crucial to the mission and purpose of the School of Communication at The Ohio State University. You can earn 1 point of extra credit for each 0.5 hours of research participation (up to 3 hours, or 6 points total) that you complete in School of Communication research studies. Be sure to read the detailed instructions on the SONA site. Importantly, missing your research appointment or quickly clicking through surveys and giving researchers fake data will not earn participation credit. You must sign up for studies at: <https://osucomm.sona-systems.com>

### **Academic Integrity**

All work must be the original work of the student and not turned in to any other course prior to this one. Cheating on quizzes/exams is unacceptable and will result in a formal report to the School of Communication and the Committee on 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/>

### **Student Academic Services**

Arts and Sciences Advising and Academic Services' website provides support for student academic success. Information on advising issues such as tutoring, transfer credits, academic standing, and contact information for Arts and Sciences advisors can be obtained through this website. The site is: <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

### **Student Services**

The Student Service Center assists with financial aid matters, tuition and fee payments. Please see their site at: <http://ssc.osu.edu>

### **Copyright Disclaimer**

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

### **Diversity**

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

### **Title IX**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)

### **Requesting Accommodations**

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, you should make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

## METHODS OF DISCOVERING TRUTH (Week 1 – Week 8)

### WEEK 1 (Aug 20 – Aug 23)

#### Epistemology and the Social Sciences

##### Assignments:

- Boyd, D. (2018). You think you want media literacy ... Do you? Retrieved from: <https://points.datasociety.net/you-think-you-want-media-literacy-do-you-7cad6af18ec2>
- Chapter 1: Research in the Real World, *Research Methods in Practice*
- Chapter 2: Theories, Models, and Research Questions, *Research Methods in Practice*

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> NO LAB (classes not in session)	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> Ways of Knowing	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Theories and Hypotheses
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### WEEK 2 (Aug 27 – Aug 30)

#### Quantitative Measurement in the Social Sciences

##### Assignments:

- Chapter 4: Measurement, *Research Methods in Practice*
- Chapter 5: Sampling, *Research Methods in Practice*
- Jordan, C. H. & Zanna, M. P. (1999). How to read a journal article in social psychology. *The Self in Social Psychology*. Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> Introduce Research Proposal	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> Concepts and Measurement	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Sampling
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### WEEK 3 (Sept 3 – Sept 6)

#### Understanding Survey Methods

##### Assignments:

- Chapter 7: Surveys and Other Primary Data, *Research Methods in Practice*
- *Scientific Methods in Media Effects Research*, p. 25-35 only
- Ferguson, C. J., & Colwell, J. (2017) Understanding why scholars hold different views on the influence of video games on public health. *Journal of Communication*, 67, 305-327.

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> NO LAB (Happy Labor Day!)	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> Survey Methods	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Interpreting Survey Data
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### WEEK 4 (Sept 10 – Sept 13)

#### Establishing Causation

##### Assignments:

- Online Quiz 1 due Monday @ 8 am
- Chapter 11: Causation, *Research Methods in Practice*
- Chapter 12: Observational Studies, *Research Methods in Practice*
- *Scientific Methods in Media Effects Research*, p. 35-39 only

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> Review Quiz 1 Results	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> Establishing Causation Part I	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Establishing Causation Part II
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**WEEK 5 (Sept 17 – Sept 20)****Understanding Experimental Methods****Assignments:**

- Chapter 14: Randomized Experiments, *Research Methods in Practice*
- Jensen, J. D. (2008). Scientific uncertainty in news coverage of cancer research: Effects of hedging on scientists' and journalists' credibility. *Human Communication Research*, 34, 347-369.

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> Research Proposal Workshop	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> Experimental Methods	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Interpreting Experimental Data
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**WEEK 6 (Sept 24 – Sept 27)****Additional Quantitative Methods in Communication Science****Assignments:**

- Chapter 15: Natural & Quasi-Experiments, *Research Methods in Practice*
- *Scientific Methods in Media Effects Research*, p. 20-25 only
- Brechman, J. M., Lee, C., & Cappella, J. N. (2011). Distorting genetic research about cancer: From bench science to press release to published news. *Journal of Communication*, 61, 496-513.

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> Research Proposal Workshop	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> Natural & Quasi-Experiments	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Content Analyses
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**WEEK 7 (Oct 1 – Oct 4)****Qualitative Methods****Assignments:**

- Research Proposal Part I due Monday @ 5 pm
- Chapter 3: Qualitative Research, *Research Methods in Practice*
- De Vries, R., Anderson, M. S., & Martinson, B. C. (2006). Normal misbehavior: Scientists talk about the ethics of research. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*, p. 43-50.
- Martinson, B. C., Anderson, M. S., & de Vries, R. (2005). Scientists behaving badly. *Nature*, 435(9), 737-738.

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> Finalize Research Proposal Part I & Review Qualitative Methods	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> Mixed-Method Approaches to Research	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Exam 1 Review
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**WEEK 8 (Oct 8 – Oct 11)****Exam 1 and Fall Break****Assignments:**

- Online Quiz 2 due Monday @ 8 am

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> Exam 1 Review	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> <b>EXAM 1</b>	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> <b>NO LECTURE (Fall Break)</b>
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## CONSTRUCTING ALTERNATIVE TRUTHS (Week 9 – Week 16)

### WEEK 9 (Oct 15 – Oct 18)

#### Issues with Statistical Analyses (i.e., It's Probably True ... So, it Might Be False)

##### Assignments:

- Chapter 9: Making Sense of Inferential Statistics, *Research Methods in Practice*
- Haller, H. & Krauss, S. (2002). Misinterpretation of significance: A problem students share with their teachers. *Methods of Psychological Research Online*, 7(1), 1-20.

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> Review Exam 1	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> The Logic of NHST	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Issues with NHST
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### WEEK 10 (Oct 22 – Oct 25)

#### Issues with Producing Research (i.e., “False-Positive” Psychology)

##### Assignments:

- John, L. K., Loewenstein, G., & Prelec, D. (2012). Measuring the prevalence of questionable research practices with incentives for truth telling. *Psychological Science*, 23(5), 524-532.
- Bhattacharjee, Y. (2013). The mind of a con man. Retrieved from: <http://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/magazine/diederik-stapels-audacious-academic-fraud.html>

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> Research Proposal Workshop	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> Questionable Research Practices	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Data Falsification
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### WEEK 11 (Oct 29 – Nov 1)

#### Issues with Comprehending Research (i.e., You Can't Handle the Truth)

##### Assignments:

- Swire, B., Berinsky, A. J., Lewandowsky, S., & Ecker, U. K. H. (2017). Processing political misinformation: Comprehending the Trump phenomenon. *Royal Society Open Science*, 4, 1-21.
- Knobloch-Westerwick, S. & Lavis, S. M. (2012). Selecting serious or satirical, supporting or stirring news? Selective exposure to partisan versus mockery news online videos. *Journal of Communication*, 67, 54-81.

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> Research Proposal Workshop	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> Correcting Misinformation	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Selective Exposure
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### WEEK 12 (Nov 5 – Nov 8)

#### Issues with Disseminating Research (i.e., It's True Now ... But Will it Always Be?)

##### Assignments:

- **Online Quiz 3 due Monday @ 8 am**
- Smith, R. (2006). Peer review: A flawed process at the heart of science and journals. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 99, 178-182.
- Dominus, S. (2017). When the revolution came for Amy Cuddy. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/magazine/when-the-revolution-came-for-amy-cuddy.html>

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> Review Online Quiz 3 & Research Proposal Workshop	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> The Replication Crisis (Election Day!!)	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> When Research is Retracted
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### WEEK 13 (Nov 12 – Nov 15)

#### Issues with Inclusion in Science (i.e., It Might Be True ... But for Whom?)

##### Assignments:

- Cheek, D. K. (1987). Social science: A vehicle of white supremacy? *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling*, 10, 59-69.
- Jones, D. (2010). A WEIRD view of human nature skews psychologists' studies. *Science*, 328, 1627.
- Newkirk (2016). A generation of bad blood: New research suggests strong link between the public revelation of the Tuskegee study and poor health outcomes for black men. Retrieved from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/06/tuskegee-study-medical-distrust-research/487439/>

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> NO LAB (Happy Veteran's Day!)	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> WEIRDO Samples	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Race and Gender Representation in Science
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### WEEK 14 (Nov 19 – Nov 22)

#### Are We in a "Post-Truth" World?

##### Assignments:

- Research Proposal Part II due Monday @ 5 pm
- Watch documentary *Post-Truth Times: We the Media*
- Submit Movie Reflection to Carmen by Sunday (11/25) @ 11:59 pm

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> NO LAB (Happy Thanksgiving!)	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> NO LECTURE (Happy Thanksgiving!)	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> NO LECTURE (Happy Thanksgiving!)
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### WEEK 15 (Nov 26 – Nov 29)

#### Science Denialism & "Post-Truth" Malaise

##### Assignments:

- Sarewitz, D. (2017). Stop treating science denial like a disease. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/science/political-science/2017/aug/21/stop-treating-science-denial-like-a-disease>
- Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K. H., & Cook, J. (2017). Beyond misinformation: Understanding and coping with the "post-truth" era. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 6, 353-369.

<b><u>Monday (Lab)</u></b> Movie Reflection Discussion	<b><u>Tuesday (Lecture)</u></b> Science Denialism & "Post-Normal" Science	<b><u>Thursday (Lecture)</u></b> Exam 2 Review
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**WEEK 16 (12/3 – 12/5)**

**Exam 2**

**Assignments:**

- Online Quiz 4 due Monday @ 8 am

**Monday (Lab)**  
Exam 2 Review

**Tuesday (Lecture)**  
**EXAM 2**

**Thursday (Lecture)**  
Happy Winter Break!!