

**Communication 6760**  
**Communication Research Methods**  
**The Ohio State University**  
**Autumn 2021**

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*Office hours:* Wednesdays, 4:00 to 5:00 or by appointment

*Office hours mode of delivery:* Online via Zoom

*Course location:* Derby Hall 3116

*Course time:* Tuesday and Thursday, 5:30 p.m. to 6:50 p.m.

**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 bulk 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.

## Requirements

(1) *Participation* (10% of final grade). Attendance is mandatory and everyone is expected to participate fully in class discussions. “Full” participation only counts if your comments reflect that you have read the materials *and* that you have thought seriously about them. In turn, this requires that students not wait until the last moment to read the materials.

(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/>

# **Accessibility accommodations for students with disabilities**

## **Requesting accommodations**

**Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614- 292-3307, [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu).**

### **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 Interim Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Molly Peirano, at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)

### **Mental Health**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](https://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614--292--5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24-hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445)

### Course technology

For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at <https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours>, and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

- **Carmen:**
  - Carmen, Ohio State's Learning Management System, will be used to host materials and activities throughout this course. To access Carmen, visit [Carmen.osu.edu](https://carmen.osu.edu). Log in to Carmen using your name.# and password. If you have not setup a name.# and password, visit [my.osu.edu](https://my.osu.edu).
  - Help guides on the use of Carmen can be found at <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmen>
  - **This online course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.**
    - [Carmen accessibility](#)

### COVID-specific policies

Please note that these policies may be updated to reflect changes in the epidemic, changes in our understanding of the disease, and changing University, local, state, and federal mandates or recommendations.

### Vaccination

The COVID-19 vaccine is the single best way to protect yourself and others from the disease. Widespread vaccination also offers us our best chance of ending the pandemic and getting back to

a pre-pandemic lifestyle. If you haven't already, please get vaccinated. It is safe, effective, and [free](#).

### **Masks and social distancing**

The university requires that everyone on campus wear masks indoors (for more information, see <https://safeandhealthy.osu.edu/>). Wearing a mask that covers your mouth and nose is important because it can help slow the spread of COVID-19. There are several reasons to do this, even if you are vaccinated. First, the "Delta variant," which is the dominant version of the virus that causes COVID in the U.S. today, is highly contagious, and has caused a huge increase in cases recently. Second, even if you are vaccinated, there have been some cases of "breakthrough" infection, where a vaccinated person becomes ill. These cases are much less severe than cases among unvaccinated individuals, but you still don't want to go through it if you don't have to. Finally, and most importantly, if you get COVID-19 you can spread it to other people, including young children and others who cannot take the vaccine. In short, masks help protect you and they help you protect other people.

Social distancing may also help slow the spread of COVID. Although classrooms are no longer configured to ensure that students can spread out, doing so may still be helpful if you have the opportunity.

### **Attendance**

Given the continued high prevalence of COVID, including breakthrough cases among vaccinated individuals, **students should not attend class if they are feeling sick**. It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the virus to others. Most students should be able to complete a successful semester despite illness-induced absence. If you are absent due to illness, including but not limited to COVID, I will give you a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. **You do not need to provide a physician's document of illness, but you should advise me via email as soon as you are safely able to do so.**

## Course Schedule (Tentative)

### **Tuesday August 24: Introduction to the course**

Magua, W. et al. (2017). Are female applicants disadvantaged in National Institutes of Health peer review? Combining algorithmic text mining and qualitative methods to detect evaluative differences in R01 reviewers' critiques. *Journal of Women's Health, 26*, 560–570.

Forscher, P. S., Cox, W. T. L., Brauer, M. & Devine, P. G. (2019). Little race or gender bias in an experiment of initial review of NIH R01 grant proposals. *Nature Human Behavior, 3*, 257–264.

### **Thursday August 26: 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*, 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*, 603–608.

### **Tuesday August 31: 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*, 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*, 7716–7720.

### **Thursday September 2: General introduction to causation; Introduction to experiments and observational studies**

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

Rubin, D. B. (2008). For objective causal inference, design trumps analysis. *Annals of Applied Statistics*, 2, 808-840.

### **Tuesday September 7: Internal and external validity; Self-selection; Heterogeneous treatment effects**

Stroud, N. J., Feldman, L., Wojcieszak, M., & Bimber, B. (2019). The consequences of forced versus selected political media exposure. *Human Communication Research*, 45, 27–51.

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

Bryan, C.J., Tipton, E. & Yeager, D.S. (2021). Behavioural science is unlikely to change the world without a heterogeneity revolution. *Nature Human Behavior*, 5, 980–989.

### **Thursday September 9: 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, 1–15.

Arceneaux, K., & Johnson, M. (working paper). Channel surfing: Does choice reduce videomalaise?

### **Tuesday September 14: Lab experiments: Simulating possible worlds**

Mook, D. G. (1983). In defense of external invalidity. *American Psychologist*, 38, 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, 935-961.

DeAndrea, D. C., Tong, S. T., Liang, Y., Levine, T. R., & Walther, J. B. (2012). When do people misrepresent themselves to others? The effects of social desirability, accountability, and ground truth on deceptive self-presentations. *Journal of Communication*, 62, 400-417.

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

Bostyn, D. H., Sevenhant, S., Roets, A. (2018). Of mice, men, and trolleys: Hypothetical judgment versus real-life behavior in trolley-style moral dilemmas. *Psychological Science*, 29, 1084–1093.

Comparing hypothetical and real-life trolley problems: Commentary on Bostyn, Sevenhant, and Roets (2018). *Psychological Science*, 30, 1-3.

### **Thursday September 16: Field experiments; Non-interference**

King, G., Schneer, B., & White, A. 2017. How the news media activate public expression and influence national agendas. *Science*, 358, 776–780.

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, 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, 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, 463–477.

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

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

### **Tuesday September 21: 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, 694–699.

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

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

Druckman, J. N., & Nelson, K. R. (2003). Framing and deliberation: How citizens' conversations limit elite influence. *American Journal of Political Science*, 47, 729–745.

### **Thursday September 23: Observational studies**

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, 9–15.



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, 897–905.

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

Campbell, D., & Ross, H. “The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding,” in E. Tufte, ed., *The Quantitative Analysis of Social Problems*

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

### **Tuesday September 28: 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, 499–522.

### **Thursday Sept 30: Mechanisms**

Ludwig, J., Kling, J., & Mullainathan, S. (2011). Mechanism experiments and policy evaluations. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 25, 17–38.

Dafoe, A., Zhang, B., & Caughey, D. (2018). Information equivalence in survey experiments. *Political Analysis*, 26, 399-416.

Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2004). Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination. *American Economic Review*, 94 (4), 991-1013.

### **Tuesday October 5: 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.

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, 61–83.

### **Thursday October 7: Generalizability part 1**

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

### **Tuesday October 12: Generalizability part 2**

Read *Constraints on Generality (COG): A Proposed Addition to All Empirical Papers*

Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association, 131 Supreme Court. 2729 (2011).

### **Thursday October 14: No Class**

### **Tuesday October 19: Midterm**

### **Thursday October 21: Midterm**

### **Tuesday October 26: Surveys**

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.

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

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

### **Thursday October 28: Psychophysiological Measures**

Crosby, J., Monin, B., & Richardson, D. (2008). Where do we look during potentially offensive behavior? *Psychological Science*, 19, 226–228.

Banjo, O. O., Appiah, O., Wang, Z., Brown, C., & Walther, W. O. (2015). Co-Viewing Effects of Ethnic-Oriented Programming: An Examination of In-Group Bias and Racial Comedy Exposure. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 92, 662–680.

### **Tuesday November 2: Replication/Reproducibility**

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

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

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, 193–207.

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

Franco, A., Malhotra, N., & Simonovits, G. (2014). Publication bias in the social sciences: Unlocking the file drawer. *Science*, 345, 1502–1505.

**Thursday November 4: Research design discussions**

**Tuesday November 9: Research design discussions**

**Thursday November 11: No Class**

**Tuesday November 16: Research design discussions**

**Thursday November 18: Research design discussions**

**Tuesday November 23: TBA**

**Thursday November 25: No Class**

**Tuesday November 30: Research design presentation**

**Thursday December 2: Research design presentation**

**Tuesday December 7: Research design presentation**

**Tentative nature of this syllabus.** This syllabus is an agreement between the instructor and the student. Events that transpire over the semester may require me to modify the syllabus. In the event I need to modify the syllabus, I will announce the modification via an email to the class and Carmen. However, it is your responsibility to keep up with any such modifications and be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc.

**By staying enrolled in this class, the student agrees to abide by the policies described in the syllabus.**