

COMM 3160
Communication Research Methods
Spring 2020, 4 credits
Wednesday/Friday 11:10 am – 12:30 pm, Journalism 360

Course Instructor:

Alex Bonus, Ph.D.
3045C Derby Hall
bonus.1@osu.edu
jamesalexbonus@gmail.com
Office hours: Wednesday 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
or by appointment

Lab Section Instructors:

Jennie McAndrew
Monday 8:00 am – 9:50 am
Monday 10:05 am – 11:55 am
mcandrew.28@osu.edu
Journalism 342
Office: 3086 Derby Hall
Office Hours: T/Th 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Jacky Anderson
Monday 12:10 pm – 2:00 pm
Monday 2:15 pm – 4:05 pm
anderson.3449@osu.edu
Journalism 342
Office: 3065 Derby Hall
Office Hours: M/W 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

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.

At the conclusion of this course, students will:

1. ...understand the common research methods used by communication researchers.
2. ...understand how research methods are used to test communication theory.
3. ...understand how the limitations of research methods shape knowledge production.
4. ...design an empirical study testing some aspect of communication theory.
5. ...appreciate how scientific research shapes public knowledge and policy.

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 100 possible points. Points are distributed as follows:

Movie Reflection	10 points
Research Proposal Part I	10 points
Research Proposal Part II	20 points
Online Practice Quizzes (x4)	10 points
Exam 1	25 points
Exam 2	25 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:

≥ 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-	≤ 59.4	F
76.5 – 79.4	C+		

Overview of Assignments

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 1-page single-spaced summary of your proposed project, including a relevant communication theory that you intend to test, a proposed method for testing that theory, and explicit hypotheses about what you expect to find. 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 5-page double-spaced 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. More details will be provided in lab.

Online Practice 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 2.5 points and will consist of 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 2.5 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 serve as periodic checks of your knowledge and 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.

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 1-page (single-spaced) response paper where you consider the implications of these issues for your own interpretation and experience of “truth.”

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 3 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>

Mental Health: Please Take Care of Yourself!

As a student you might 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 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 / National: 800-273-8255); or text (4hope to 741741); or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org

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

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.

Policy on Children in Class

The university does not have a formal policy on children in the classroom. The policy described here is just a reflection of my own beliefs and commitments to student, staff, and faculty parents. I understand that unforeseen disruptions in childcare sometimes put parents in the position of having to miss class to stay at home with a child. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in childcare is perfectly acceptable. I ask that students work with me to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status. In all cases where children come to class, I ask that parents sit close to the door so that if their child needs special attention and/or is disrupting the learning of other students, the parent can easily step outside with their child until the child's needs have been met. More generally, while I maintain the same high expectations for all students in my classes regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem-solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school-parenting balance.

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 can also 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; 614-292-3307; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

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 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.

Additional Disclaimer

This syllabus represents a contract “in the works.” Events that transpire over the semester may require modifications to the course. In the event of a change, I will announce the change in class and update the syllabus on Carmen. Ultimately it is your responsibility to keep up with any such modifications and to be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc. I reserve the right to modify course policies throughout the semester.

METHODS OF DISCOVERING TRUTH (Week 1 – Week 7)

WEEK 1 (Jan 6 - Jan 10)

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*

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> NO LAB	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Ways of Knowing	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> Theories and Hypotheses
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WEEK 2 (Jan 13 - Jan 17)

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.

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> Discuss Research Proposal I	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Concepts and Measurement	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> Sampling
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WEEK 3 (Jan 20 - Jan 24)

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](#)
- Goodboy, A. K., & Bolkan, S. (2011). Attachment and the use of negative relational maintenance behaviors in romantic relationships. *Communication Research Reports*, 28(4), 327-336.

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> NO LAB (MLK Day!)	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Survey Methods	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> Interpreting Survey Data
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WEEK 4 (Jan 27 – Jan 31)

Establishing Causation

Assignments:

- **Online Quiz 1** due Sunday 1/26 @ 11:59 pm
- 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](#)

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> Review Quiz 1 Results	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Establishing Causation Part I	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> Establishing Causation Part II
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WEEK 5 (Feb 3 - Feb 7)**Understanding Experimental Methods****Assignments:**

- Chapter 14: Randomized Experiments, *Research Methods in Practice*
- Bushman, B., & Anderson, C. A. (2009). Comfortably numb: Desensitizing effects of violent media on helping others. *Psychological Science*, 20(3), 273-277.

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> Research Proposal Workshop	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Establishing Causation Part II	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> Experimental Methods
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WEEK 6 (Feb 10 - Feb 14)**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
- Signorielli, N., & Bienvenour, A. (2015). Sex in adolescent programming: A content analysis. *Communication Research Reports*, 32(4), 304-313.

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> Research Proposal Workshop	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Natural & Quasi-Experiments	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> Content Analyses
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WEEK 7 (Feb 17 - Feb 21)**Exam 1****Assignments:**

- **Online Quiz 2** due Sunday 2/16 @ 11:59 pm

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> Review Online Quiz 2 & Prepare for Exam 1	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Exam 1 Review	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> EXAM 1
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WEEK 8 (Feb 24 - Feb 28)**Circumventing Self-Report: Psychophysiological Measurement & Neuroimaging Methods****Assignments:**

- **Research Proposal Part I** due Monday 2/24 @ 11:59 pm
- Alhabash, S., Almutairi, N., Lou, C., & Kim, W. (2018). Pathways to virality: Psychophysiological responses preceding likes, shares, comments, and status updates on Facebook. *Media Psychology*, advance online publication.
- Turner, B. O., Huskey, R., & Weber, R. (2018). Charting a future for fMRI in Communication Science. *Communication Methods and Measures*, advance online publication.

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> NO LAB (Work on Proposal)	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Psychophysiological Measures	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> Neuroimaging Methods
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CONSTRUCTING ALTERNATIVE TRUTHS (Week 9 – Week 15)

WEEK 9 (March 2 - March 6)

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.

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> Review Exam 1 Results & Discuss Research Proposal II	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Issues with Null Hypothesis Significance Testing	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> Statistical vs. Practical Significance
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WEEK 10 (March 9 – March 13)

SPRING BREAK

Online Assignments:

- None. Have a safe and relaxing break!

Read for Lecture:

- None. Have a safe and relaxing break!

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> NO LAB	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> NO LECTURE	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> NO LECTURE
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WEEK 11 (March 16 - March 20)

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

Assignments:

- Fielder, K. & Schwarz, N. (2016). Questionable research practices revisited. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 7(1), 45-52.
- 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>

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> Research Proposal Workshop	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Questionable Research Practices	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> Data Falsification & Retraction
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WEEK 12 (March 23 - March 27)

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

Assignments:

- **Online Quiz 3 due Sunday 3/22 @ 11:59 pm**
- 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>

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> Review Online Quiz 3 & Research Proposal Workshop	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Issues with Peer Review	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> The Replication Crisis
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WEEK 13 (March 30 - April 3)

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

Assignments:

- **Submit Movie Reflection** to Carmen by Friday (4/3) @ 11:59 pm
- Cheek, D. K. (1987). Social science: A vehicle of white supremacy? *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling*, 10, 59-69.
- 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/>

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> NO LAB (Work on Movie Reflection)	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Race and Gender Representation in Science	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> Research Ethics
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WEEK 14 (April 6 - April 10)

Issues with Comprehending Research (i.e., The Rise of Science Denialism)

Assignments:

- **Research Proposal Part II** due Monday 4/6 @ 11:59 pm
- Ashwanden (2015). Science isn't broken: It's just a hell of a lot harder than we give it credit for. Retrieved from <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/science-isnt-broken/>
- 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.

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> Research Proposal Workshop & Movie Reflection Discussion	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Correcting Misinformation	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> Science Denialism
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WEEK 15 (April 13 - April 17)

Exam 2

Assignments:

- **Online Quiz 4** due Sunday 4/12 @ 11:59 pm

<u>Monday (Lab)</u> Review Online Quiz 2 & Prepare for Exam 2	<u>Wednesday (Lecture)</u> Exam 2 Review	<u>Friday (Lecture)</u> EXAM 2
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