

COMM 201: INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - STEVENS POINT, SPRING '16

(Lecture: M 8:00 – 9:50AM; 333 CAC

Discussion for section 1: W 8:00-8:50AM, 202 CAC

Discussion for section 2: W 9:00-9:50AM, 202 CAC

Discussion for section 3: W 10:00-10:50AM, 202 CAC)

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Course Description and Purpose

Scientific research is considered to be the most powerful means to advance knowledge, yet researchers often disagree and scientists often present contradictory findings. As a result of being uninformed about the capabilities and limitations of various research methods, a great deal of confusion about scientific research persists in the general public. Yet, professionals in any field must rely on information based on scientific research in their everyday work. This course will help you understand and interpret research-based information and become a better communication professional.

Professional Standards

Regarding research, the Division of Communication, UWSP identifies the following learning outcome for the Communication Major:

Students should be able to plan, evaluate and conduct basic (quantitative and qualitative) research

In line with this learning outcome, this course seeks to help students develop and explore the followings:

Enduring Understanding – students will understand that...

- Research is a systematic way of learning about the world / a powerful way of knowing
- Various quantitative and qualitative research methods offer different avenues to learning about the world
- Familiarity with research methods enables them to become a competent consumer of research both in their civic and professional lives

Essential Questions

Over the course of the semester we will be exploring the following essential questions about research:

- How does research help us learn about the world / what makes research a powerful way a knowing?
- How do the respective strengths and limitations of various quantitative and qualitative research techniques guide our choices during research process?
- How does competency in research enable someone to become a more competent citizen and professional?

Knowledge – students will be able to ...

- Explain the logic of scientific method as applied to the field of Communication
- Identify and explain the respective strengths and limitations of various quantitative and qualitative research methods

Skills – students will be able to ...

- Design and conduct basic quantitative and qualitative research, including
 - posing appropriate research questions
 - posing research hypotheses
 - constructing adequate measures
 - collecting and analyzing data
- Communicate / present research findings (in the form of a research presentation and /or a written report)

Dispositions – students will be able to ...

- Differentiate between research of good and of questionable quality
- Differentiate between research of high and of questionable ethical standard

Required and Recommended Texts

There is one required textbook to this course:

- Treadwell, D. (2014) *Introducing Communication Research: Paths of Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE (2nd ed.)

The book is available through text rental. Occasionally, additional required and recommended readings (short articles) and study materials shall be made available via D2L.

Required Equipment

This is a “clicker” class. That is, having and regularly using a clicker is a requirement for the class. You can pick up your clicker at the UWSP Help Desk, located in the basement of the LRC (Room 025). The Help Desk is normally open from 7:45AM to 7PM on weekdays. You are required to lease a clicker for \$8 for the semester. This semester lease fee will be automatically added to your UWSP student bill. You will need your UWSP Student ID to lease a clicker.

Activities and Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following assignments and activities taking place over the course of the semester:

- Term Project:

20%

Communication researchers are driven by questions they seek to answer at the end of their research endeavors. The best way to learn about communication research is carrying out a research project. Over the course of the semester you’ll learn how to turn your research question into a research project. Your research project will give you the opportunity to learn about various phases of research, including developing hypotheses, constructing adequate measures, gathering and analyzing data. During the semester each of you will develop a literature review. Also, at the end of the semester, as part of a group project assignment, you will deliver your research findings to the whole class in the form of a research presentation.

1. Literature review (individual project): 10%
2. Research presentation (group project): 10%

- Online quizzes & homework assignments: 25%

- Exams: 40%

1. Exam 1 (online): 10%
2. Exam 2 (online, cumulative): 15%
3. Final Exam (online, cumulative) 20%

- In class (mostly clicker) quizzes and participation in class: 10%

Grading scale for final grade:

95 – 100% = A	84 – 86% = B	74 – 76% = C	60 – 66% = D
90 – 94% = A-	80 – 83% = B-	70 – 73% = C-	< 60% = F
87 – 89% = B+	77 – 79% = C+	67 – 69% = D+	

Attendance

In this class I do not *regularly* take formal attendance. Instead, your attendance is tracked via the electronic records of your clicker use in class. Therefore, should you be unable to attend class for any reason, you don't need to email / contact me. It is your best interest however, to maintain strong attendance: you must be present in class in order to understand the assignments and carry them out effectively. Also, if you are absent you cannot participate in class discussions and take the in-class quizzes (and some occasional extra credits) which could be detrimental to your final grade.

Missed/Late Assignments

You are expected to give your research presentation on the class day when you are scheduled. If you miss your presentation, it will be impossible to make it up.

Written assignments must be handed in via D2L or at the end of the class as specified by the assignment. Late assignments receive a failing grade.

If you miss a quiz, an exam or an assignment, unless you are granted an excused absence, you will not be permitted to make it up. Excused absences (for illness, death in the family, or other unforeseen circumstances that prevent you from attending class) can be arranged only if proper documentation -- from a physician or a university official -- is presented.

Academic Honesty

When completing your assignments, you are expected to do original work. That is, you must avoid any form of plagiarism. I consider plagiarism - as defined by *Dictionary.com* -- the "use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work." A student caught on plagiarizing shall receive a failing grade for his/her assignment. Further academic misconduct shall be sanctioned in accordance with the *UWSP Chapter 14 – Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures*.

Conduct in Class

To provide a fruitful experience and an effective learning environment for all of us, I expect each of you to conduct yourself with respect for your fellow students. Also,

- Students are to be seated in class by 8:00AM for the Monday lecture session, by which I will be ready to teach. Promptness is also expected in the discussion sessions on Wednesdays. I consider lateness disruptive. Accordingly, I close the classroom door at the beginning of the class session. Late arrivals are asked to wait by the door until an appropriate time to enter. I signify the appropriate time by opening the door.
- For both the lecture and the discussion sessions, students must be equipped with their clickers. Those without clickers won't be able to fully participate in class discussions, take short in-class quizzes, and establish a strong attendance record. Please note that it is your responsibility to make sure you learn how to use your clicker and that your equipment functions properly. Improper use or dysfunction of your clicker may prevent you from obtaining credit for class participation and in-class quizzes.
- Any use including the visual display of **cell phones** is not tolerated in this class. By the beginning of class, all cell phones must be **turned off and put away** until the end of class. I consider any use of cell phones, including text messaging, as disrespectful and disruptive.
- Use of **laptop** computers and **tablets** is **not allowed** in class. Exception is made in case of students who are unable to take paper notes due to some documented physical condition.

Course Schedule

(Note: This schedule is subject to change. Should changes occur, they will be announced in class)

Date	Topics and Activities	Activities & Assignments Due
25-Jan	Class introduction	
27-Jan	The field of communication research; Getting started	Ch1
1-Feb	Variables and the nature of causation	
3-Feb	First decisions: what, why, how?	Ch2
8-Feb	Research ethics	Ch3
10-Feb	Research questions workshop	
15-Feb	Reading research	Ch4
17-Feb	Measurement 1	Ch5
22-Feb	Measurement 2	
24-Feb	Observation & content analysis	Ch11; ch12;
29-Feb	Observation & content analysis	Annotated bibliography due
2-Mar	Surveys 1	Ch9;
7-Mar	Surveys 2, review for exam 1	
9-Mar	Sampling 1	Ch8; Exam 1
14-Mar	Sampling 2 + catch-up	
16-Mar	Descriptive statistics	Ch6
21-Mar	Spring break - no class	

23-Mar	Spring break - no class	
28-Mar	Descriptive statistics workshop	Literature review due
30-Mar	Inferential statistics 1	Ch7
4-Apr	Inferential statistics workshop 1	
6-Apr	Inferential statistics 2	
11-Apr	Inferential statistics workshop 2	
13-Apr	Writing and presenting research; Data analysis workshop 1	Ch 14
18-Apr	Data analysis workshop 2	
20-Apr	Catch-up day	
25-Apr	Back to causation: Experimental Research 1	Ch10
27-Apr	Experimental Research 2	Exam 2
2-May	Research presentations 1	
4-May	Research presentations 2	
9-May	Online activities / prep. for final exam (class does not meet)	
11-May	Online activities / prep. for final exam (class does not meet)	
18-May	Final Exam (online)	