

COMM 702: GRADUATE RESEARCH METHOD

Spring 2019: January 22- May 10, 2019

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| Course Meeting Time | Tuesday 5:30- 8:00 p.m. |
| Classroom | CAC 227 |
| Instructor | Hyosun Kim, Ph.D. |
| Email | hyosun.kim@uwsp.edu |
| Office Hours | Tuesday, 4:00-5:00 p.m. Thursday, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. or by appointment |
| Office | CAC 325 |

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Graduate research methods is designed to introduce students to basic quantitative and qualitative approaches to studying communication phenomena. The seminar seeks to offer critical research skills that enable student to pursue graduate studies and independent research projects - including research for their graduate thesis - in communication. Besides reviewing various research and analytical methods, the seminar follows a hands-on, "learning-by-doing" approach. Accordingly, students are expected to get their hands dirty by designing manageable "mini" research projects, collecting and analyzing some data, as well as communicating the findings as shorter written and oral research reports.

PURPOSE:

Systematic research is used by political scientists and political campaign managers, by students of health communication and by public health practitioners, by professional communicators and by mass communication scholars, to name only a few applications. As these examples suggest, systematic research, like all scientific and evidence-centered approaches, can be used just as easily to generate data for testing theory in a seminar room, for testing the effectiveness of communication campaigns or technologies, for making informed decisions about how to allocate resources strategically, or for making effective management decisions in the board room.

The purpose of this course is to provide you with a broad introduction to the foundations and tools of communication research. These tools will serve you as you complete your program and begin to conduct research for presentation and publication, and when you begin or resume your professional career and are required to conduct research, to evaluate research, and to communicate about research.

Much of the semester will focus on the fundamentals (e.g., key terms and concepts) of quantitative and qualitative social science research, as well as on the application of these methods. We will read research articles to evaluate the methodological choices of social scientists, understand the limitations of studies, and differentiate between reliable and unreliable work. You will learn to formulate research questions, specify independent and dependent variables and measure them reliably, design research projects, and plan their analysis and presentation. You will be exposed to a range of designs used in communication research, including laboratory and field experiments, surveys, quantitative and qualitative content analysis, ethnography, and other qualitative approaches.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

In line with the above purpose, upon the completion of this course, student should be able to:

- Identify and explain the respective strengths and limitations of various quantitative and qualitative research methods
- Pose appropriate research questions and hypotheses
- Demonstrate competence in locating, evaluating, and summarizing research
- Construct adequate measures
- Demonstrate basic competence in sampling and data collection
- Demonstrate basic competence in quantitative and qualitative data analysis
- Develop a quantitative research report
- Identify and discuss the ethical components of communication research

COURSE TEXT:

- Required Text: Babbie, E. (2016). *The Practice of Social Research* (14th ed). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Suggested Text: Kranzler, J.H. (2007). *Statistics for the terrified*, 4th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Additional required and recommended readings and study materials shall be made available via D2L.

GRADING EXPECTATIONS

| Assignments | Points |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Exam 1: | 15 |
| Exam 2: | 15 |
| IRB Certificate: | 5(Pass/ Fail) |
| Qualitative study discussion: | 5(Pass/ Fail) |
| Content analysis study discussion | 5(Pass/ Fail) |
| Quantitative article critique: | 10 |
| Research topic proposal | 5(Pass/ Fail) |
| Final research paper | 40 |
| Total | 100 |

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Examinations (30%):

Two written examinations will be given during this semester. They will be multiple choice/ short answer/short essay exams which will cover assigned readings, class lectures, and class discussions.

IRB Certificate (5%):

IRB Human Subjects Training: All students will complete the *IRB certification* process. This means that you will do the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative course on the internet and print out the certification.

CITI Certification – all individuals conducting human subject research projects reviewed by the UWSP IRB boards – including faculty, staff, students, affiliated personnel – will be required to

successfully complete CITI's HSR basic course or show evidence of having done so elsewhere within the last 3 years. Information on the CITI program can be found at <https://www.citiprogram.org/index.cfm?pageID=1>

Please visit UWSP IRB website to learn about IRB.
<https://www.uwsp.edu/acadaff/orsp/irb/Pages/default.aspx>

This certification may take some time, so it may be helpful to do it in stages. **The certification must be completed and documentation provided by beginning of class Tuesday, Mar. 5, 2018.**

Qualitative Article Discussion (5 points, or 5% of course grade)

You must choose an example of qualitative study (ethnography, focus group, in-depth interview) in your area of research and bring it to class for discussion. Make six hard copies and bring them to class so we can discuss your example as a group. The assignment is due at the beginning of class on **Tuesday, Feb. 5.**

Your discussion leading should cover the following areas:

- 1) Objectives of the study
- 2) Research method
- 3) Participants
- 4) Brief findings & limitations of the study

Content Analysis Article Discussion (5 points, or 5% of course grade)

You must choose an example of content analysis article (news article, social media posts etc.) in your area of research and bring it to class for discussion. Make six hard copies and bring them to class so we can discuss your example as a group. The assignment is due at the beginning of class on **Tuesday, Feb. 12.**

Your discussion leading should cover the following areas:

- 1) Objectives of the study
- 2) Unit of analysis
- 3) Sampling design
- 4) Measurements & limitations of the study

Quantitative Article Critique (10 points, or 10% of course grade)

You are responsible for writing a critique of a published research article – ideally one that is important for your research project. Your critique should demonstrate your grasp of the semester's work. You should specify variable the study tested, method and design, sampling employed, measures of reliability, etc. You should also provide a summary of the article's key claims and point to the strengths and possible limitations of the study. This assignment is **due in class on Mar.12. You will deliver Power Point presentation.**

Research Topic Proposal (5 points, or 5% of course grade)

In order to design your search, it is important how your study would contribute to the current scholarship by resolving communication problems. The assignment is due at the beginning of class on **Tuesday, Feb. 19.**

The written assignment should be 3-5 double-spaced pages.

Present clear, brief statement of the problem.

Describe the significance of the problem with reference to one or more criteria below:

1. Is timely
2. Relates to a practical problem
3. Relates to a wide population
4. Relates to an influential or critical population
5. Fills a research gap
6. Permits generalization to principles of communication process or theory
7. Sharpens the definition of an important concept or relationship
8. Has many implications for practical problems
9. Creates or improves an instrument for observing and analyzing data
10. Provides opportunity for gathering data that is otherwise restricted

Final Research Proposal (40%):

The **project proposal** lays out your thinking and plan of action for the study you intend. Your final project will consist of the research question(s) and literature review along with the outline of a proposed study that could be conducted as part of your graduate work. In other words, the full proposal should outline your research questions, which need to be grounded in the social scientific or professional literature, and then propose a study to answer them.

The full proposal will include a title page, summary, introduction, section explaining the purpose and significance of your study, research questions and literature review, your hypotheses or anticipated findings, full discussion of the methods you will use, plan for carrying the study out, conclusion, and references. The methods and research plan sections will explain, in detail, how you plan to answer the questions you have asked and defend the methodological choices you make. Your proposal should run 13-18 double-spaced pages, excluding endnotes, graphics, and appendices. Any draft questionnaire, instrument, interview schedule, or coding protocol for the project should be included as an appendix to the proposal. **A clean (perfectly edited) copy of the completed manuscript is due at 5pm, May 10, 2019, but may be submitted earlier. Please submit your manuscript to a dropbox in D2L.**

Class Participation

Consistent and enthusiastic class participation is assumed because scholarship is a shared endeavor among those who seek a better understanding of their discipline and who want to communicate that understanding to others. You will profit from the insights and concerns of others. Your own comments and suggestions will help others to do their best research. In addition, class members and the instructor will help each other in various steps of the research process.

Professionalism

The classroom is an inclusive and professional environment. Everyone is to be treated with respect. Do not engage in side conversations or be otherwise disruptive when someone is speaking in front of the room. All types of communication in this course should be formal and professional. For example, when emailing the instructor or your colleagues, remember to include a proper subject line, greeting, and proper grammar.

Your participation in class will suffer if you are not fully present, and that will detract from the learning environment in the room as a whole.

| | |
|---|---|
| Excellent Participation = A+ | The student consistently adds value to discussion, makes connection to the text/course material, and always/mostly follows the principles stated above. |
| Good Participation = A | The student regularly adds to the discussion, but has not consistently made connections to the text/course material. The student typically follows the principles stated above. |
| Average Participation = B | The student adds some value to discussion, but rarely makes connections to the text/course materials. The student sometimes follows the principles stated above. |
| Superficial Participation = C | The student infrequently participates and does not make connections to the text/course material. The student infrequently follows the principles stated above. |
| Non-Helpful Participation = D | The student does not add value to the discussion, or comments are completely unrelated. The student is unprofessional and does not follow four principles stated above. |
| No participation = F | The student does not attend class and thus does not participate. |

Course Policies for a Successful Class

Cell Phone Rules:

Cell phones should be silenced and not used in the classroom. When you're working at an agency, texting during a meeting with colleagues or your supervisor will not be tolerated. Start preparing for that now. If you are expecting a phone call or text message that is absolutely urgent, please let the instructor know ahead of time, and then quietly excuse yourself from the room to take care of the matter.

Laptop and Tablet in the Classroom:

You are permitted to use laptops for note-taking, research, and other work as assigned in class. However, to minimize distractions to your classmates and to me, I ask that you refrain from using them for purposes other than note taking, in-class assignments, or class-related research.

Assignment Submission to D2L:

Written work must be posted to the D2L dropbox in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx), PDF, or pptx formats only. **I do NOT take late assignments sent via e-mail.** Be sure to keep copies of your work and the feedback for the entire duration of the course.

When necessary, the instructor will communicate with the class and/or individual students via the email address listed in your D2L account. It is your responsibility to check that email account regularly.

Late Assignments:

No late assignments are allowed. Deadlines are crucial in public relations profession. Any assignment not handed in during the class period in which it is due won't be accepted. Exceptions will only be made in emergency cases, and only when discussed in person and in advance with the instructor. Students should never assume that leaving a voice mail message or sending an email message to the instructor constitutes an accepted excuse. It is always the student's responsibility to obtain an excuse from the instructor personally. If you become aware of a serious problem which will prevent you from taking an exam or being at class, you must inform me of this **ahead of time** and we can reach a compromise. If you give me an excuse after-the-fact, I reserve the right to deny a retake of a test or quiz. Please note all work is due at the start of class on the due date. If you arrive late to class on a due date, your work will not be accepted.

To be eligible for permission to make up an assignment due to a verified absence, you must provide:

- Written evidence of the absolute need for you to be absent (emails are not acceptable)
- This evidence must be from an appropriate, verifiable source

Evidence must be presented to your instructor no later than one week after the missed assignment (e.g., a formal doctor's note). Except in the cases of extreme emergency, however, students who need to be absent should contact their instructor at least one week *prior* to the date they will be absent. Instructors will accept late work without prior arrangement in the case of extenuating circumstances (such as hospitalization, major accident, injury or bereavement). Students who suffer such a circumstance must notify the instructor as soon as possible of the extenuating circumstance that prevented them from submitting work on time and determine a deadline with the instructor for submitting the work. In these instances, the instructor will waive the late penalty. ***Students who do not meet the deadline arranged with the instructor will receive a grade of zero on the assignment.***

All work must be turned in on time. Again, the instructor will not take late assignments. If you do not turn in your assignment by the scheduled deadline or fail to show up for your presentation, you will get ZERO points for the assignment.

The 24/7 Rule:

When I return an assignment, please take at least 24 hours to review my comments before you come to me to discuss. You then have 7 days to meet with me. I will not discuss in May an assignment that was returned in March.

Final Grade Scale

| Letter Grade | |
|--------------|---|
| A | Outstanding Work |
| A- | Performance Exceeding Standards |
| B+ | Good/Satisfactory Work |
| B | Performance Meeting Standards |
| B- | |
| C+ | Average Work |
| C | Performance Meeting Minimum Standards |
| C- | |
| D+ | Needs Improvement |
| D | Performance Not Meeting Minimum Standards |
| D- | |
| F | Unacceptable Performance |

Standards for Success

Academic expectations:

All work must be typed. Improper spelling, poor word usage, and grammatical errors will be deducted from your final grade. This will be rigidly enforced. Plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Students are expected to comply with all relevant Wisconsin statutes, the state administrative code, and the UW System academic policies. Students with cell phones, electronic tablets, and laptops should make sure they are turned off before the beginning of class. Arriving late or leaving early for this class without speaking in person to the instructor will be recorded as a missed class and will be reflected in your final class participation grade.

Expectations for presentations and papers will be discussed. Students must be responsible and fully engaged in this process and with each assignment. Deadlines must be met. Communication must be professional. Students must be able to accept subjective evaluation of each presentation from the instructor and peers.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

From the UWSP 14.01 STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES – Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Students who violate these standards must be confronted and must accept the consequences of their actions. For more info: <http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Academic-Misconduct.aspx>

Note: Submissions via D2L will be automatically screened for plagiarism.

Students with Special Needs/Disabilities

If you have a disability and require accommodation, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center (6th floor of the Learning Resource Center – that is, the Library) and contact me at the beginning of the course. More information is available here: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency, this course complies with UWSP's outline for various situations. A full list of these emergency plans is available here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures/default.aspx>

COURSE SCHEDULE

This course syllabus is a general plan for the course. Changes announced to the class by the instructor may occur.

| DATE | CLASS TOPIC & *ASSIGNMENTS DUE | READINGS/ NOTES |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| WEEK 1 Jan. 22 | Class introduction Research topic exercise | No readings |
| WEEK 2 Jan. 29 | Science; Research paradigms; ethics and politics of research IRB process and IRB certificate | Babbie CH 1,2,3, |
| WEEK 3 Feb. 5 | Qualitative research field research 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethnography - In-depth interview - Focus group interview - *Bring an example of qualitative study in your area of interest | Babbie CH 10 Cheong & Morison (2008) Wilson (1998) |
| WEEK 4 Feb. 12 | Unobtrusive research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis - Conducting research using secondary research data - Conducting research using online data - *Bring an example of content analysis study in your area of interest | Babbie CH 11 Vargo (2016) Kim (2016) |
| WEEK 5 Feb. 19 | Quantitative research 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research design - Conceptualization, Operationalization, Measurement - * Research topic proposal is due | Babbie CH 4,5 |
| WEEK 6 Feb. 26 | Quantitative research 2: Sampling | Babbie CH 7 |
| WEEK 7 Mar. 5 | Quantitative research 3: Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - *IRB Certificate due | Babbie CH 9 |
| WEEK 8 Mar. 12 | Quantitative article critique presentation | |
| WEEK 9 Mar. 19 | NO CLASS: Spring Break | |
| WEEK 10 Mar. 26 | Exam 1 | |
| WEEK 11 Apr. 2 | Quantitative research 5: Experiment | Babbie CH 9 Bandura et al. (1963) Kim & Lee (2018) |
| WEEK 12 Apr. 9 | Quantitative data analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SPSS (1) | Babbie CH14 |
| WEEK 13 Apr. 16 | Quantitative data analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SPSS (2) | Babbie CH16 |
| WEEK 14 Apr. 23 | Quantitative data analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SPSS catch-up workshop | Babbie CH 14, 16 |

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|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| WEEK 15 Apr. 30 | Research Proposal Presentation | |
| WEEK 16 May. 7 | Exam 2 | |

Your final research proposal is due on May 14, 2019 at 5 p.m. Please submit to a dropbox in D2L.

OUTLINE OF STEPS IN RESEARCH DESIGN

Adapted from the *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement* by Delbert C. Miller.
A research project should include the steps outlined below to assure a meaningful study.

I. SELECTION AND DEFINITION OF A COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEM

- A. Present clear, brief statement of the problem.
- B. Describe the significance of the problem with reference to one or more criteria below:
 - 1. Is timely
 - 2. Relates to a practical problem
 - 3. Relates to a wide population
 - 4. Relates to an influential or critical population
 - 5. Fills a research gap
 - 6. Permits generalization to principles of communication process or theory
 - 7. Sharpens the definition of an important concept or relationship
 - 8. Has many implications for practical problems
 - 9. Creates or improves an instrument for observing and analyzing data
 - 10. Provides opportunity for gathering data that is otherwise restricted

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- A. Describe the relationship of the problem to a theory or paradigm (if appropriate).
- B. Discuss previous research related to or relevant for the problem.
 - 1. Especially discuss any work related to your study's dependent variable.
 - 2. Especially discuss any work related to your study's independent variables.
- C. Present your own ideas on the problem and relate them to theory and past research.

III. HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- A. Clearly state any hypotheses and explain their rationales, making explicit Independent and Dependent Variable relationships.
- B. Indicate the significance of hypotheses to theory and previous research.
- C. Define the concepts of the variables in the hypotheses at the conceptual level
- D. Draw a picture of the above using arrows to represent causal flows from Independent to Dependent variables and + or - signs to indicate positive or negative influences.
- E. Define any other relevant variables and include them in the drawing.
- F. If hypotheses are inappropriate, specify research questions, noting relevant parts of A to E above.

IV. STUDY METHOD

- A. Survey Research Design:
 - 1. State why this design is appropriate to the problem
 - 2. Note any limitations of the design for the problem
- B. Survey Sampling Procedures:
 - 1. Describe sample you will study
 - a. Specify the population to which the hypotheses or questions relate.
 - b. Explain determination of size and type of sample
 - c. If the study uses a purposive (non-random) sample, justify why
 - d. If the sample is randomly drawn, specify acceptable sampling error

2. Specify the method of drawing sample and relate this to the study goals
- C. Data Collection
1. Describe the variables and concepts of interest (e.g., knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, behaviors, intentions, etc.)
 - a. Specify the variables and concepts to be analyzed
 - b. Specify procedures for identifying the concepts of interest
 - c. Describe the bounds of the analysis in terms of time frame or material
 - d. Describe how the concept measures will be processed prior to analysis
 2. Include the following in description of concept measurement:
 - a. Specify and define measures for independent and dependent variables. Specify and define measures of other variables.
 - b. Describe the measurement of variables, including level of measurement
 - c. Describe if/how interviewers will be trained
 - d. Specify interviewer reliability procedures
 - e. Address validity issues
- D. Data Analysis
1. Specify method of analysis of collected data.
 - a. Use “hypothetical” data to illustrate how hypotheses and questions are addressed
 - b. Specify and Illustrate statistical measures needed
 2. If random sampling is used, note necessary tests of statistical significance
 3. Use tables, graphs, charts, etc. to illustrate how data will be presented

V. FINDINGS

- A. General Descriptions of Findings – Frequencies on main variables
- B. Findings for Hypotheses (if any)
- C. Findings for Research Questions (if any)
- D. Other Relevant Findings

VI. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

- A. Discuss how study outcomes relate to theory or past research (speculate for proposal).
- B. Discuss future research indicated by study outcomes (speculate for proposal).
- C. Discuss any practical implications of results (speculate for proposal).

VII. PUBLICATION OR REPORTING PLAN

- A. Convention Presentation
 1. Where might these findings be presented for scholarly review?
 2. To what lay audiences might these findings be relevant or important?
- B. Study Publication
 1. What peer-reviewed journal might publish this research?
 2. Why is this particular journal relevant for the research?

VIII. ENDNOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHY AND QUESTIONNAIRE