

COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS

COMM 3330 | FALL 2020

MW 12:40-2:05

Hybrid

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: By appointment

GTA

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Examination and application of qualitative and quantitative methods of research. (From the catalog)

This course will introduce you to the major approaches and methods used in the field to study human communication. We will explore both qualitative and quantitative approaches to researching communication in a variety of contexts. You will learn to locate, read, and critique communication research, and you will develop a proposal for your senior capstone research project (COMM 4381). The assignments and activities in this course are designed to help you achieve the following learning goals:

- You will be able to describe and distinguish between qualitative and quantitative research and become familiar with specific methods of each type.
- You will become familiar with the different paradigms and philosophical assumptions of qualitative and quantitative research.
- You will be able to read and critically evaluate research reports and critical essays.
- You will be able to develop communication research questions and/or hypotheses, identify appropriate methods for addressing these questions/hypotheses, and develop a formal research proposal.

TEXTBOOK

Davis, C. S. & Lachlan, K. (2017). Straight talk about communication research methods. 3rd Edition. Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt Publishing. [MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE 3rd EDITION—ORANGE COVER; USED OR E-BOOK IS FINE] You can use the paperback or e-book.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

- Workbook Exercises (25%)
- Lab assignments & participation (15%)
- Assignment 1: Proposed Topic (5%)
- Assignment 2: Research Questions (5%)
- Assignment 3: Annotated Bibliography (5%)
- Assignment 4: Draft Introduction & Literature Review for research proposal (10%)
- Assignment 5: Draft Methods & Conclusion for research proposal (10%)
- Assignment 6: Final Research Proposal + Revision Memo (25%)

Final grades will be assigned as follows:

A+ = 97.5-100%; A = 92.5-97.4%; A- = 89.5-92.4%; B+ = 87.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-87.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4%; C+ = 77.5-79.4%; C = 72.5-77.4%; C- = 69.5-72.4%; D+ = 67.5-69.4%; D = 59.5-67.4%; F ≤ 59.4%

COURSE POLICIES

Learning During a Global Pandemic. You are probably tired of hearing the phrase, “this is an unprecedented time.” And yet it is absolutely the only way to describe the reality we are currently experiencing. We are living a moment that many generations across the world have not witnessed in over a century. We are all arriving to this class with the stress, fatigue, and trauma of the past six months. Some of us might be arriving having experienced immense loss over the last year. Our experiences are not equal and nor is the fatigue and trauma that we carry. For many living on the margins, the pandemic has amplified everyday hardship. Not to mention that the largest protests in US civil rights history led by #BlackLivesMatter, precipitated by the death of George Floyd, took place amidst the pandemic. I want us to start this course by acknowledging all of these realities. We must also acknowledge that the world as we knew it is forever altered. These are stressful times. Many of us have been coping by simply getting through each day. Some days are better than others. I do hope that this class will be useful in how we understand ourselves and the world around us, and hopefully change it for the better.

On a practical note, I hope you will all be careful and judicious as you go through your daily life on campus and in town. I urge you to take as many precautions against the virus as you possibly can. There is no vaccine as yet, so the only way we can all stay healthy is through prevention and smart choices. *If you are unwell and feeling even mild flu or cold symptoms, please meet a health professional immediately.*

Student Health Students who are experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing or a higher than normal temperature should inform me by email so they can be excused from class. Students should contact their health care provider or the Student Health Center at <https://www.memphis.edu/health/>.

Students who have a positive COVID-19 test should contact the Dean of Students at deanofstudents@memphis.edu.

Course Format. Due to COVID-19, this will be a hybrid class. The lecture section of the class (COMM 3330) will be held remotely (both synchronous and asynchronous). The lab section, taught by Ms. Lydia Gettings, will also be a hybrid class with both in person and online classes.

This hybrid class is likely to be different than your typical experience, particularly if you are accustomed to the traditional learning experience or are a novice to using your computer for such a purpose. However, I think you will find this class enlightening and incredibly useful. In some ways, it will be a lot more convenient to take the class online, but that is both the good news and the bad news. You will find that having the convenience of working in your own surroundings and at your own pace are both a convenience and an easy way of putting off until tomorrow what you should be doing today. Success will be contingent on mastering

course content while simultaneously surviving all the challenges we currently face during the pandemic. Please plan your time to keep up with the class.

Class Communication. Be sure to check your UofM email and the eCourseware page for this course regularly, as these are the primary means that I will use to communicate with you outside of class.

When you email me, use your UofM email and be sure to include a subject line (COMM 3330: subject of your email).

For more on how to email a professor, see: <http://tinyurl.com/h7r5osv>

Submitting Assignments. All out-of-class assignments will be submitted to the digital drop box on U of M's eCourseware system

- Documents must be submitted in Microsoft Word format (i.e., must be a .doc or .docx file). *Other formats will not be accepted.*
- Documents will not be accepted as email attachments or any other delivery method besides the eCourseware drop box.
- It is *your responsibility* to ensure that you receive a submission confirmation from eCourseware and that your correct document was successfully uploaded.
- Assignments are due before the end of the day (i.e., 11:55pm) of the due date, unless otherwise noted. Documents may be submitted *anytime* before the due date.

Late Assignments. All assignment due dates are listed in the syllabus and in the course schedule. Any changes to these dates will be announced on ecourseware. Requests for individual extensions must be made and approved by the instructor at least *one week* in advance of the due date. If you have university-related activities, other obligations, or sickness that will prevent you from submitting an assignment on time, you must notify the instructor as soon as possible. Extensions may be offered at discretion of the teacher, though documentation will be required. Otherwise, all assignments are due at the time and date indicated. Since this semester is within a compacted timeframe, there is no opportunity to create make-up exams or to accept late assignments. ***Late assignments will not be accepted.***

Academic Honesty: I expect that all work turned in under your name is yours and yours alone. Please cite all external works in papers and do your own work for assignments and workbook exercises. In accordance with University of Memphis policy, plagiarism and cheating (which includes submitting the same paper for more than one class) are serious offenses and may result in a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. For additional information, please see:

<https://www.memphis.edu/osa/students/academic-misconduct.php>

“Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may

be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.” (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

Students with Disabilities. Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities. For additional information, please see:

<http://www.memphis.edu/drs/>

Other campus resources:

- Center for Writing & Communication: <http://www.memphis.edu/cwc/>
- Counseling Center: <http://www.memphis.edu/counseling/>

GRADED DELIVERABLES

Participation

Participation in this class is just as important as it is for a face-to-face class. Each week, you are required to view every posted lecture, listen to all recordings, read all posted materials, do all workbook activities and turn in all major assignments. Learning course material requires full participation in the course. You should expect to spend between 4-6 hours every week, and at times, more.

We will have four zoom sessions (synchronous meetings) scheduled around major assignments so that we can re-connect as a class and discuss any questions you may have. If need be, I may go over some key concepts for that week's readings too.

Towards the end of the semester, we will have individual conferences, where you will meet with me one-on-one to discuss your research proposal.

You will also present your research proposal to the whole class at the end of the semester.

Workbook Exercises

There are seven weekly Workbook Exercises (see schedule for dates) based on each week's reading. You will not have a workbook exercise on the weeks that you have a major assignment due. I will be asking probing questions regarding the readings. You will have to demonstrate that you have read the required chapter and engage critically with the readings/question. **You can complete any five of these seven to receive the full grade (25%). If you do all seven, you will receive a bonus grade (to be determined).**

Be sure to complete the entire workbook exercise (all pages); you will not get credit if the exercise is not completed.

All exercises must be uploaded to the ecourseware. You can write in the responses in the printed worksheet and scan or photograph and upload them (upload as a pdf or jpeg file, please); or you can type the responses in a word document and upload the document. If you type in the responses, please be sure to submit as a Word file. No other formats will be accepted. Whatever you submit, I must be able to read it (and your handwriting) or you will not get credit for the answer whether or not it is correct.

Due: Sunday on 8/23, 8/30, 9/6, 9/20, 10/4, 10/11, and 10/25 by 11:55 pm in dropbox.

Lab Attendance: There are 11 lab sessions in the semester (from week 2 until the end of week 12). You may miss two of these without penalty. Your lab grade will be penalized 25% for each additional absence. With permission of the GTA, you may attend a different lab than the one you are scheduled for *in the same week* (e.g., if you cannot attend your regular Monday lab, you may, with permission, attend the Wednesday lab in the same week, or vice versa).

LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Proposed Topic

Description of your topic. Due: Sunday, 9/6, by 11:55 pm in dropbox.

Assignment 2: Research Questions

Due: Sunday, 9/13, by 11:55 pm in dropbox.

Assignment 3: Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is a document in which you list and summarize research articles that you have read that are relevant to your research project. For this assignment, you need to summarize at least 8 journal articles published in communication journals or other scholarly journals that report on your topic. See the guidelines for Assignment 3 for specific information. Keep in mind that these must be scholarly journal articles. Websites will not count for this assignment. Due: Sunday, 9/27, by 11:55 pm in dropbox.

Assignment 4: Draft of Intro/Lit Review

This assignment is a draft of the first part of the research proposal document and should be about 5-7 pages. Due: Sunday, 10/18, by 11:55 pm in dropbox.

Assignment 5: Draft Methods/Conclusion

This is a draft of the second half of your research proposal and should ultimately be about 5 – 7 pages. See the Assignment Guidelines for specific information. Due: Sunday, 11/1, by 11:55 pm in dropbox

Assignment 6: RESEARCH PROPOSAL PROJECT

The final project in this course is a research proposal. This proposal will serve as the basis for your capstone project in COMM 4381 – Senior Capstone. Most of you will be taking that course next semester. The final draft of the proposal will put together the two previous drafts and *should be revised in accordance to feedback received on the previous assignments*. You must make substantial revisions if you wish to earn a high grade on the final draft. **The research proposal includes:**

1. An introduction
2. A review of literature (which means a summary of scholarly articles that have already been written about your topic or that relate to your topic in some way)
3. A rationale for your study (which is a few paragraphs about why it is important to undertake this study. Why does your topic matter? What is at stake?)
4. Research questions or hypotheses
5. A method section

6. A conclusion
 7. A reference list, where every in-text citation is listed according to APA style.
- To excel on this project, you will need to do a great deal of work outside of class. The following sequence of assignments and drafts is designed to help you keep up with the required work and to get feedback along the way. You should begin thinking of research ideas and doing library research on possible research topics as soon as possible.

In summary, you should submit two documents for the final draft:

1. A revised final proposal, including all sections, in a single paper (DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY).
2. A **revision memo** in which you describe and explain the revisions you've made to the proposal since the previous drafts. (Note: This document is *required*. If you do not submit this, you will receive a grade of 0 for the final draft). This memo must include the following:
 - a. A summary of the feedback that you received on your drafts
 - b. A description of major revisions that you made to your drafts (i.e., new additions you make to the proposal, major deletions from the proposal, substantial rewriting to existing text, and why you made those changes).
 - c. A description of minor changes that you made to your drafts (grammatical, typographical, formatting, etc.).
 - d. A description of additional changes that you might need to make that you were not able to make in the final draft.
3. Citation and formatting for these assignments are to be done in APA style. See <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

DUE: Final Revised Proposal due 11/22 by 11:55pm