

Comm316-02—Research Methods
T/TH 11:00-12:15 p.m.

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Office hours: T/TH 3:30pm – 4:30 pm and by appointment

Textbook website:

http://highered.mheducation.com/sites/0078036917/student_view0/index.html

Purpose of the Course

This course will examine the relationship of theory and methods, research design, and measurement in communication contexts.

Course Outcomes

This course will introduce communication research methods from a social-scientific perspective. It will teach the basic vocabulary of research methods and enhance students' understanding of the theory-research link. This course will present the conceptual foundations, principles, practices, and traditions on which communication research is grounded. At the conclusion of this course, students should:

- Understand the predominant quantitative and qualitative research designs and methods used by communication scholars
- Understand deductive and inductive analytical processes
- Understand basic research procedures and techniques
- Understand basic statistical concepts
- Be better consumers of communication research literature encountered in other communication classes

COURSE POLICIES

Required Text

Keyton, J. (2011). *Communication research: Asking questions, finding answers*. (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Note: This is an older edition -- Check for cheap access to the text via sites like Chegg Books or www.scribd.com

Required Materials

On-line lecture recordings accessed through Blackboard.

Optional Materials

PowerPoint slides from text book (provided on-line via the book's website) - **OR** - Dr. Della's PowerPoint slide shells provided on-line via Blackboard.

On-line Excel Tutorials - example, Excel Basics on You Tube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmSp2-Fa4rg>

Special Needs

Students with special learning needs are encouraged to discuss accommodations with me early in the semester. Student may be asked to contact the Disability Resource Center to determine academic accommodations (852-6938).

Academic Dishonesty

1. Any student caught cheating in any way will receive a **zero for the semester**. Cheating includes but is not limited to glancing at another student's exam, using unauthorized materials during an exam, handing in written work produced by someone else, reusing a paper submitted by a student who took the course in a past semester, plagiarism, helping someone else cheat, collaborating excessively with another person and claiming the work as your own (i.e., handing in a paper/presentation/homework write-up that is the same as someone else's in the class), etc.
 - Be aware that working together to complete assignments is okay. However, the final product that you hand in must be written in your own words. If the paper/presentation/homework write-up that you hand in is the same as someone else's in the class, I will conclude that cheating has occurred and award all students involved a Zero for the assignment.
2. Plagiarism includes cutting and pasting directly from a published research paper without including a proper citation (i.e., quotation marks, plus the authors' last names and the year of publication in parentheses). Please be sure to properly cite the original article if you need to directly quote someone else's article or webpage for an assignment.

Cell Phones

Turn off your cell phones when you enter the classroom unless you have prior approval from me. **BE PROFESSIONAL**. These interruptions are distracting to me and your fellow classmates. If your cell phone rings or you are texting/surfing the Internet during class I may ask you to hand your phone over to me for the remainder of the class. If you are texting/surfing the Internet during class, I will make a note and you will not receive the attendance/professionalism points available for that day. Be aware that I may not make notes about your disruptive behavior until after class has ended (i.e., I may or may not inform you about the lost points), so the best approach is to keep your phone in your bag until class ends to avoid losing points and encountering a big surprise (i.e., many lost professionalism points) at the end of the semester. If you know you will be receiving an important phone call during class, please notify me of the anticipated disruption, sit near the door, quietly step out and take your call and then return to class.

All cell phones should be turned off during exams. If your cell phone rings during an exam, you will not be allowed to complete the exam and will receive a zero for that particular exam. If you receive a zero as a result of a noisy cell phone, the exam will be treated as a missed exam and you will be required to take a cumulative final that will count double.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This course will be taught in an inverted fashion, meaning that you will access most of the lecture material via Blackboard's Panopto function before attending class. You should be prepared to listen to lectures on-line and take notes using Panopto. PowerPoint-based notes "shells" are available via Blackboard: you may choose to use these note-taking aids if you find them helpful. You may also choose to simply take your own notes or to use the PowerPoint slides provided via the textbook's website.

Because research methods is a subject that is better understood when the concepts are practiced, the lectures will introduce concepts that will be the foundation of in-class activity. Thus, I will track whether you have accessed the lectures on-line before class on the day they are due by reviewing activity reports AND by asking iClicker questions in class about the material covered. **I will review whether you have simply logged into the lecture versus having watched the full lecture.** If no topic/chapter is outlined for a particular date you can safely assume that there is no lecture to view for that day. However, I may still ask iClicker review questions in class. If you have difficulty accessing Panopto I suggest contacting the Blackboard help line (852-7997) to troubleshoot. I cannot solve any password or account access issues. If you cannot log in to Panopto you must contact Blackboard help directly (852-7997). **Technical difficulties are not an acceptable excuse for missing lecture content - the textbook should always serve as your back-up in a pinch.** If you are unfamiliar with Panopto, I suggest taking time at the beginning of the semester to contact the Blackboard Help Line for a quick tutorial. A staff person from the REACH center in the library should also be able to help you.

There may also be days where we will need to meet virtually through Blackboard. Please note that I will always post an announcement to Blackboard and copy your university email address about any scheduling updates at least 45 minutes before class begins. If we are meeting on-line for a particular class period, specific instructions will be provided for how to earn the day's participation points.

Snow Days/University Closings

Given the array of material that we will cover this semester in order to meet the objectives of the course, if the university closes due to adverse weather (or we cannot meet physically for any other reason) you will still be expected to access and review the lecture material posted to Blackboard. Instead of an in-class learning activity, you should expect to complete on-line practice and/or discussion through Blackboard and or Perusall. I will always attach professionalism points to these activities and participation in them will count toward attendance requirements in the course.

Unless the university **officially** cancels classes, you should assume that we will still meet physically at our regularly scheduled room and time. And even if the university officially cancels classes, we will still meet virtually (as described above). First and foremost please know that I want everyone to be safe. However, if you choose to miss class due to inclement weather and the university is officially open, then your missed day will count toward one of your three free misses (see attendance policy below).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Major Homework Assignments

All assignments must be completed and turned in on or before the date assigned. If you fail to turn in an assignment on time you will lose one letter grade for each day (including weekend days) it is late. Assignments are always due at the beginning of class. If an assignment is turned in after class has started, I will consider it late and deduct the appropriate number of points from your final grade. Assignments that are more than four (4) days late will not be accepted and will receive a grade of ZERO. **Unless you have prior permission from me, I will not accept assignments via email.**

All assignments (except #1 below) must be typed (12 pt. Times New Roman font and 1" margins) and submitted in hard copy. The major assignments for this course include:

1. **Measurement assignment (individual):** An assignment that will provide practice with identifying various types of data (e.g., discrete versus continuous). Again, this assignment will be submitted on-line through Blackboard.
2. **Survey Project (instructor assigned group):** This assignment is a group project that will allow you to practice designing a survey, collecting survey data, and entering data into a spreadsheet. Because I believe it is important that we, as communicators, learn to work and effectively communicate with diverse individuals, I will assign you to a group for this assignment (i.e., I will choose who you will work with).

*** Group members will also have an opportunity to evaluate their peers' contributions. At the end of the project, each group member will submit a confidential peer review (submission of the peer review will count toward professionalism points). I take group participation very seriously and will rely heavily on the peer reviews in assigning final individual project grades. Thus, it is possible for a group to score very high on the project, but for an individual group member to receive a low (or zero) grade for the project based on his/her participation!*

*** For this project and the computer project, you may use any means available to communicate as a group (e.g., Skype, Facebook, Google Documents, Dropbox, WhatsApp, group text) in order to complete the assignment. You may also use technologies such as Survey Monkey, Facebook and email to collect surveys. This assignment may cost up to \$10/group (\$3-\$4 per person) to print on campus. Keep in mind that you can print for free at the public library.*

3. **Computer Project (instructor assigned group):** This assignment is a follow-up to the survey assignment, and allows you to practice calculating inferential statistics in MS Excel. Because it is a follow-up to the survey project, you will continue to work with the same group members you did to complete the survey project. However, prior to beginning this project, each group will be allowed to “let go” of any member who did not participate or work well during the survey project. To let go of a group member, all other group members must file a peer review indicating that they wish to “let go” of an individual. The request to let go of someone will only be granted if all other group members are in agreement.

***If you are “let go” from a group, you may join forces with other individuals who have been let go or choose to complete the computer project on your own.*

*** Group members will also have an opportunity to evaluate their peers' contributions to this project (submission of the peer review will count toward professionalism points). Again, it is possible for a group to score very high on the project, but for an individual group member to receive a low (or zero) grade for the project based on his/her participation!*

4. **Ethnography (individual):** You will conduct an ethnographic study of your neighborhood, analyze your field notes, and write up your findings/interpretations. You must upload your write-up to SafeAssign in Blackboard by the stated time in the syllabus schedule on the day the assignment is due.

Professionalism

Professionalism encompasses the following elements: attendance, timeliness, on-line lecture views, in-class exercises, small practice homeworks, general attitude, professional in-person and virtual communication, etc.

Attendance

Attendance is expected in-person. If you miss more than three classes without a valid excuse, you will receive a “F” grade for this course. Valid, university-excused absences include:

- a university-sanctioned absence (e.g., intercollegiate athletic competition, debate contests, student government congresses),
- a serious illness requiring hospitalization (Please note: getting the flu or a cold, having a doctor’s appointment, etc. do not count as a serious illness. You should plan ahead and arrange your schedule so that these types of activities do not interfere with class time), or
- a death in the immediate family (i.e., parents, siblings, children, or grandparents). Although you may be close with your aunt, uncle or next door neighbor they are not considered immediate family members.

You must bring authenticated written proof of such incidences to me either 1) prior to your absence, if you will be missing class due to a university-sanctioned activity, or 2) on your first day back to class, if you missed class due to a serious illness or death in the immediate family. I reserve the right to request a copy of the obituary notice before excusing an absence.

*** If you come into a class meeting after 11:00am or leave before the end of the class period, you have missed an important portion of the course. Three (3) tardies or early departures will be counted as one absence.

*** Most days attendance will be taken using iClickers. If you don’t have your iClicker with you, it will count as an absence for the day. For this reason, I suggest keeping your clicker in your bag along with an extra set of batteries.

Panopto Lectures

Attendance on-line (i.e., by way of viewing the Panopto lecture content) is expected as preparation for each class period. **NOTE: This preparation step is required as it replaces the historical requirement of reading the assigned chapter before class.** University guidelines suggest that students spend 2 to 3 hours per week working on a course outside of class for every one hour spent in the classroom. Given that this class meets for 2.5 hours each week, you might estimate that you will need to spend 5-7.5 hours learning, studying, and practicing the material outside of class *each* week. If after putting in the requisite time to learn the material you are still having a problem or issue understanding a concept or procedure, please come see me for additional help!

Throughout the semester, I will track whether you have accessed the lectures on-line. Panopto allows me to track whether you have simply logged into the lecture or whether you have watched the full lecture, so be sure you’re getting the most out of this required class preparation step by watching each lecture in its entirety. I know that technical issues can happen. Hopefully these instances will be few, but in the event that you have trouble accessing Panopto be sure to read the assigned chapter in the textbook so that you will be prepared for class and the upcoming iClicker questions. Please note: I cannot solve any password or account access issues. If you cannot log in to Panopto you must contact Blackboard help directly (852-7997).

If you miss more than THREE (3) Panopto recordings, a penalty of -5 points will be applied to your “professionalism” score for each subsequent missed recording. In other words, the 4th time you

fail to watch a Panopto recording before the class for which it is due, you will LOSE FIVE (5) points per each missed recording from there on out for the remainder of the semester.

Please be sure to view the lectures on-line and come to class and arrive on time. You will learn more and your final grade will be higher.

Small In-Class Activities and Homeworks

There will be small practice activities assigned throughout the course. These activities are designed to allow you to practice statistical calculations and methodological concepts before you are faced with taking an exam. Completing these activities should help you identify your strengths and weaknesses in the class, allowing you to study and ask for assistance with your weaker areas before an exam. Please take advantage of these activities; they can be a good gauge of how well you understand specific concepts. Once we have worked the activities in class, if appropriate (e.g., if we were calculating statistics), I will post the answers on Blackboard so that you can review them again on your own time.

There will be some days where we may need to meet virtually rather than in our physical classroom. On those days, there will be instructions for how to participate in class on-line through Blackboard. Always check your email and Blackboard announcements before coming to campus to ensure that we will be meeting in person. I will always post an announcement to Blackboard and copy your university email address with any scheduling updates.

If you are not present or do not participate on-line, you may miss the points awarded for completing these activities. Of course, if you miss an activity I suggest that you still work through the activities on your own time. If appropriate, I will post them under the “In-Class Handouts” link in Blackboard so you should check there before emailing me about what you missed. **Please be aware, however, that I will not provide make-up opportunities for the points earned by completing these activities in class. You must be present and complete the exercise in class to earn the points!** The points you earn from these activities will comprise part of your professionalism grade, which will be posted on Blackboard at the end of the semester. I will take note of who is actively participating in completing these activities and award professionalism points accordingly.

General Attitude and Professional Communication

I recognize that this class is challenging for some. I want to communicate that it is a class that will require consistent effort throughout the semester (i.e., it may require a little attention every night to help the new concepts to “stick” rather than a few cram study sessions throughout the semester). Please keep a positive perspective and an open mind about the material. I am happy to quickly clarify a point immediately after class. However, more complex and complicated questions are matters that should be reserved for office hour discussions (either in person or via phone): a safer, more private, and less rushed environment for discussion. I am also happy to meet with you at other times during the week if my scheduled office hours do not work with your schedule (just send me an email to coordinate a mutual meeting time).

If you are feeling frustrated, I encourage you to come see me during office hours early in the semester. If you have questions or need clarification about something course-related, I am happy to communicate via email. However, I expect that your emails will be professionally structured (i.e., with a respectful salutation, your request or question, and a signature). I will not respond to emails that lack this professional structure and repeated unprofessional communication will count against your professionalism score at the end of the term. In class and via email, I prefer to be addressed as Dr. Della or Professor Della, not “hey”, “yo”, “Della” or “Mrs. Della”. Mrs. Della is my mom!

I sometimes equate quantitative methods to learning a new language and studying science at the same time. There are words that take on special meaning in an academic research environment and there are lots of complex details and processes to master. You will need to do more than read/watch the assigned material, attend class and then study the night before an exam to really learn the material. I generally recommend incremental studying/practice a few days a week, as the concepts from the beginning of the course need to be mastered in order for those at the end of the course to make sense.

iClicker

We will use iClickers in this course. <http://www.iclicker.com/> You will need to purchase an iClicker and register your iClicker for the course through Blackboard (click “tools” and the “i>clicker student registration”). You will need to bring your iClicker to class every day, beginning the second day of class. Each day there will be at least one (1) iClicker question (some days we may have more than one). These questions will be based on information provided in the Panopto recording(s) due for that day (the material will also be covered in the assigned textbook chapter) or lecture material covered in a previous class. These questions are designed to help you (and me) gauge how well you are grasping specific concepts in the course. They are good practice for exam questions and should provide you with an idea of what to expect on the multiple choice section of each exam. There will be an opportunity to earn a total of 100 points across the semester. iClicker points cannot be made up. However, I will forgive three (3) unanswered questions at the end of the semester. You should bring your iClicker everyday, beginning on the second day of class. **If you forget your iClicker, you forego the points for that day. Please do not ask me if you can write down the answers on a piece of paper and turn them in, it is too difficult to keep track of multiple scraps of paper throughout the semester. You must bring a functioning iClicker to earn the points available for that day, period.**

You can purchase iClickers new or used, or you can share iClickers with other students as long as they are not also enrolled in this class or another class on the same days and times. If you are unlikely to use iClicker again (e.g., you’re a graduating senior), you might be interested in their webclicker app (REEF), which is cheaper for one term than buying a handheld device <https://app.reef-education.com>. Regardless of the route you choose for obtaining the iClicker, it is your personal responsibility to make sure your iClicker works and you bring it to class. Running out of batteries or forgetting your clicker at home means that you will forego the iClicker points for that day’s class - they cannot be made up at a later date.

Perusall

We will use Perusall in this course to aid in the reading and comprehension of some assigned material. Perusall is an eBook social annotation tool that allows you to collaboratively mark up and discuss your textbook with other students in class. To access Perusall, you will need to set up an account at <https://app.perusall.com/> and enter the following access code: DELLA-8469

A total of 40 possible points are available for completing assigned readings and annotations in Perusall, which averages out to about 10 points per assigned reading. To complete each assigned reading, you will log in to Perusall, read the required content before class, and complete at least 5 annotations (i.e., comments and/or questions) per assignment. Each annotation in Perusall is automatically scored by the system and rated as poor (0 pts), adequate (1 pt), or good (2 pts). I will double check the scores assigned by the system and I can override a score if I disagree with it. Once all annotations have been made, Perusall will scale your point tally so that your final score falls between 0 and 10 for each assignment.

Exams

Three exams composed of multiple choice, T/F, and statistical interpretation will be given from assigned readings and lectures. Given the wealth of information you will be exposed to and the objectives of the course, these exams will NOT test your ability to memorize concepts, but rather test your abilities to apply concepts. Unless told otherwise, you should bring a basic calculator (you may not use your cell phone or a graphing calculator) and a pencil.

As a general rule, I do not give make-up exams. Off campus work, doctor's appointments, traffic, bad weather, personal travel, car problems, etc. are not legitimate reasons to miss an exam. Look at the schedule: if you cannot make it to the exam on the day assigned, you must contact me **at least 2 days before the exam is scheduled** to arrange to take it **prior to the scheduled period**. If you fail to come to class on an exam day, that score will be dropped from your overall grade but you will be required to take a cumulative final that will count double.

Noncumulative, Exam #3 will be given during the final exam period but should not require the full exam period. If you have missed an exam, you will be allowed to take the cumulative final during the officially scheduled final exam period for this course and will be allowed to stay for the full exam period (i.e., Thurs., April 26, 11:30AM - 2:00PM)

Grading Scale

Professionalism (includes attendance & timeliness, Panopto lecture views, in-class exercises, any on-line collaborative work, any small practice homework assigned, general attitude, ability to collaborate with group members, etc.)	60
Perusall	40
iClicker Questions	40
Research projects Measurement assignment (40) Survey project (80) Computer project (60) Ethnography (80)	260
Exam 1 (Ch. 1,2,3,5,6,9)	150
Exam 2 (Ch. 7,8,10,11,12, & 17)	150
Exam 3 (Ch. 4,13,14,15,16, & 18)	150

Scores and grades for projects/exams will be reviewed/returned as soon as I have them graded. If you fail to attend the class in which an item was returned, you may come see your score during office hours.

We have a total of 850 possible points. The grading scale is as follows:

820 - 850 points	A+	650 - 676	C+	506 or fewer	F
791 - 819	A	621 - 649	C		
765 - 790	A-	592 - 620	C-		
735 - 764	B+	565 - 591	D+		
706 - 734	B	536 - 564	D		
677 - 705	B-	507 - 535	D-		

Schedule

Date	Readings and Panopto Lecture Topics	Major Assignments and Exams
Jan. 9	Introduction to course and each other	
Jan. 11	Chapters 1 & 2: Intro to Research in Communication & The Research Process: Getting Started	Register your iclicker and sign up for Perusall
Jan. 16	Chapter 5: Research Ethics Supplemental Ethics Readings (on Perusall)	5 annotations due on Perusall
Jan. 18	Deductive Research Chapter 3: Intro to Quantitative Research	
Jan. 23	Chapter 6: Measurement	
Jan. 25	Chapter 9: Surveys and Questionnaires	Measurement Assignmt. due (40 pts)
Jan. 30	Exam review	
Feb. 1	Exam will cover chapters 1,2,3,5,6,9	Exam 1
Feb. 6	Chapter 7 (parts 1 & 2): sampling	
Feb. 8	Chapter 10: (parts 1 & 2) Descriptive Statistics, Significance Levels, and Hypothesis Testing	
Feb. 13	Chapter 11 part 1: Testing for Differences - X^2	
Feb. 15		
Feb. 20	Chapter 11 part 2: Testing for Differences - t and F	
Feb. 22	t and F statistic reading (on Perusall)	5 annotations due on Perusall
Feb. 27	Discuss t/F reading Chapter 12: Testing for Relationships	
Mar. 1		
Mar. 6	Chapter 8: Quantitative Research Designs	Survey Project (80 pts) due
Mar. 8	Chapter 17: The Quantitative Research Report Quantitative academic article (on Perusall)	5 annotations due on Perusall
Mar.12-18	Spring Break!	
Mar. 20	Using Excel- Go to computer lab in Library!	Supplemental Reading on Excel
Mar. 22	Exam review	Exam 2
Mar. 27	Exam will cover chapters 7,8,10,11, 12, & 17	
Mar. 29	Chapter 13: Quantitative Analysis of Text	
Apl. 3	Inductive Research Chapter 4: Intro to Qualitative Research	
Apl. 5	Chapter 14: Designing Qualitative Research	
Apl. 10	Chapter 15: Qualitative Methods of Data Collection	Computer Project due (60 pts)
Apl. 12	Chapter 16: Analyzing Qualitative Data	
Apl. 17	Chapter 18: The Qualitative Research Report	
Apl. 19	Qualitative academic article (on Perusall) Exam 3 Review	5 annotations due on Perusall
Apl. 24	Reading Day	Ethnography due (100 pts)
Apl. 26	Exam 3 will cover chapters 4,13,14,15,16 & 18 (Cumulative Final available for those missing an exam)	Scheduled final exam period is 11:30AM - 2:00PM

All items in this syllabus are subject to change as dictated by needs of the class.