

COM 203: Communication Research Methods

Department of Communication and Media Studies

Spring 2019

COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor: Satomi Sugiyama, Ph.D.

Instructor's Email: ssugiyama@fus.edu

Office Hours: M/TH 15.45 – 17.00 (LAC office 9)

Class location: LAC 5 (EC)

Class meeting times: M/TH 14:30 – 16:45

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to quantitative and qualitative research methods as they apply to communication and media studies. The course will study concepts and techniques in research design and data analysis. Students will attain an understanding of research methods and acquire the analytic and critical skills needed for assessing those methods and their usefulness for investigating issues in communication and media studies. They will undertake a series of original research project exercises analyzing and applying research methods.

RATIONALE AND COURSE GOALS

This course is designed to prepare communication and media studies majors/combined majors to understand the basic logics behind communication research, and also, gain the basic skills for conducting an empirical research project. As such, it is a 200-level foundation course for the major and serves as a prerequisite for many of the upper level courses that the department offers.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Understand various methodological approaches for conducting research in communication and media studies
2. Design communication research projects
3. Analyze both quantitative and qualitative data at the level appropriate for undergraduate communication research
4. Present a research project in a clear and cohesive manner, conforming to the disciplinary standard

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

Croucher, S. M., & Cronn-Mills, D (2015). *Understanding Communication Research Methods: A Theoretical and Practical Approach*. New York: Routledge.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

3 group research exercises (15%*3 = 45%)

You will conduct three group research exercises by the end of the semester. Details of each exercise are as follows:

Survey exercise

1. Form a group of 4 people.
2. Select a scale from the designated list (will be announced in class).
3. Learn about the variable that the given scale measures, and come up with a research topic.
4. Learn about the research topic and propose a research with hypothesis (hypotheses) or research question(s).

This is a review of COM 202 Literature Review assignment. Since the main focus of the exercise is data collection and analysis, this section can be brief (2-3 pages). In developing your research proposal, please use at least 3 scholarly sources.

5. Explain the method to test the hypotheses or answer the research questions. This section should contain the following sub-headings: Participants, Instrument, and Procedure.
6. Collect and analyze the data.
7. Report the results, answering your hypothesis (hypotheses)/research question(s).
8. Interpret and discuss the results, in relation to your literature review. Discuss research limitations.
9. Write up the conclusion of your study.
10. Prepare a page of references.

Quantitative content analysis exercise

1. Form a group of 4 people.
2. Select a topic in consultation with me.
3. Learn about the research topic and propose a research with hypothesis (hypotheses) or research question(s).

This is a review of COM 202 Literature Review assignment. Since the main focus of the exercise is data collection and analysis, this section can be brief (2-3 pages). In developing your research proposal, please use at least 3 scholarly sources.

4. Explain the method to test the hypotheses/answer the research questions. This section should contain the following information: what media texts you analyzed and how you selected them (sampling), content categories, and coding procedure.
5. Collect and analyze the data.
6. Report the results, answering your hypothesis (hypotheses)/research question(s).
7. Interpret and discuss the results, in relation to your literature review. Discuss research limitations.
8. Write up the conclusion of your study.
9. Prepare a page of references.

Qualitative analysis exercise

The paper structure of a qualitative research tends to develop rather organically based on the content of the paper. We will discuss this more in class, but it will general take the following steps:

1. Form a group of 4 people.
2. Select a research topic in consultation with me.
3. Learn about the topic, and develop a research question. Please identify at least 3 scholarly sources for this exercise. Write up a section of research rationale (1-2 pages).
4. Explain the method for answering the research question.
5. Collect and analyze the data.
6. Answer your research question (results/discussion).
7. Write up the conclusion of your study. Discuss research limitations.
8. Prepare a page of references.

Note 1: As many of you have already experienced, a group work relies on all group members' active and fair participation. Please be a responsible group member and take each group exercise professionally. Please also note that group exercises are meant to put key concepts into practice, and hence, each of you are expected to participate in all steps of each group exercise. This also means that if you don't understand any of these steps, there is a good chance that you do poorly in quizzes.

Note 2: If your group decides to divide the task of writing a paper itself, feel free to do so, but each group member should contribute to the development of its content/analysis. This means that if you put your name on the paper, you should know the content of the entire paper.

Note 3: If you think you might not be contributing to the group work sufficiently (in terms of the quality of analysis as well as the quality of writing), come talk to me immediately and do not solely rely on your group members. I'd be happy to help you.

Note 4: I keep the right to adjust grade for those who did not sufficiently contribute to the group's collaborative work.

4 quizzes – 55% (15% for Quiz 1, 10% for Quiz 2 and Quiz 3, 20% for Quiz 4)

You will take four quizzes so that you can demonstrate your understanding of the materials you have learned and are implementing in group exercises. Format of the quiz will vary depending on the particular research method covered in the quiz. It is essential that you keep up with all readings and assignments, and actively participate in the group research exercises. There will be no make-up quizzes unless there is a documented emergency.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

Because the group research exercises assignment is an essential component of the course, and we will spend significant amount of time for group work in class, it is critical you attend class and participate in the exercises. If you miss more than one in-class group working day without prior arrangement with your group members per exercise (please notify me for such prior arrangement in advance), you will receive one grade lower than the grade of your group project. If you miss two in-class group working days, you have a chance of receiving a grade of zero for the given exercise. If you are absent from illness and turn in a medical note indicating the exact dates under medical care, we will discuss appropriate arrangements regarding how you can make up for the missed classes/participation.

POLICY ON USING PERSONAL COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (E.G., MOBILES, LAPTOPS) IN CLASS

As a student who studies communication and media studies, I would like each of you to think about what would be an effective way of using communication technologies in classroom in order to create a productive learning

environment for you as well as your classmates. I expect each of you to be responsible for making your own choice as to when/how to use them and when/how not to use them.

PAPER/WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT POICY

Unless otherwise instructed, all papers/written assignments need to be typed (Times New Roman, 12 font), printed out, and turned in at the beginning of class on the due date. That is, turning in the papers/assignments right after class means a day late. Late paper/written assignment will receive a grade of one letter down (e.g., An "A" paper will receive "A-" grade).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: STATEMENT ON CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

A student whose actions are deemed by the University to be out of sympathy with the ideals, objectives or the spirit of good conduct as fostered by the University and Swiss community, may be placed on Disciplinary Probation or become subject to dismissal from the University. Cheating is a dishonest action out of sympathy with the ideals, objectives and spirit of the University. Furthermore, cheating reflects negatively on one's personal integrity and is unjust to those students who have studied.

See the Academic Catalog for full statement (page 199):

https://www.fus.edu/images/pdf/FUS_ACADEMIC_CATALOG_2018_2020_web.pdf

COURSE SCHEDULE (AS OF JANUARY 21, 2019)

Date	Topics and Readings	Assignments
1/21 (M)	Welcome and review	
1/24 (TH)	Introduction and research ethics (Ch 1 & 2) Intro to SPSS	
1/28 (M)	Intro to Research Paradigms (Ch 3 & 4)	
1/31 (TH)	Literature review and RQ/H (Ch 6 & 9)	
2/4 (M)	Surveys (Ch 15) Data (Ch 7) Survey exercise group work begin	
2/7 (TH)	Evaluating research (Ch 8) Survey exercise group work	
2/11 (M)	Survey exercise group work	
2/14 (TH)	Descriptive statistics (Ch 16) Survey exercise group work	
2/18 (M)	Inferential statistics and t-test (Ch 17) Survey exercise group work	
2/21 (TH)	ANOVA (Ch 17) Survey exercise group work	
2/25 (M)	Correlations (Ch 17) Survey exercise group work	
2/28 (TH)	Survey exercise group work	
3/4 (M)	Survey exercise group work presentations	Group exercise 1 due
3/7 (TH)	Quiz 1	
3/11 – 3/22 Academic Travel		

3/25 (M)	Content analysis and chi-square (Ch 14 & 17) Content analysis exercise group work	
3/28 (TH)	Content analysis exercise group work	
4/1 (M)	Quiz 2 Content analysis exercise group work	
4/4 (TH)	Content analysis exercise group work	
4/8 (M)	Content analysis exercise group presentation	Group exercise 2 due
4/11 (TH)	Ethnography, interviewing, and FGI (CH 10, 11 & 12) Review Chapter 3, 4, and 8 Qualitative analysis exercise group work	
4/15 (M)	Qualitative data analysis (Ch 13) Qualitative analysis exercise group work	
4/18 (TH)	Quiz 3 Qualitative analysis exercise group work	
4/22 (M)	Easter Break	
4/25 (TH)	Qualitative analysis exercise group work	
4/29 (M)	Qualitative analysis exercise group work presentation	Group exercise 3 due
5/2 (TH)	Review for Quiz 4	
5/9 (TH) 13.30 – 15.30	Quiz 4	