

COM 3183
Research Methods
Fall 2013 Course Information

Professor: John C. Dailey, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: MF 2:00-4:00, TR 2:30-4:00 and by appointment.
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Classroom / Class Time: WH 210, TR, 1:00 pm - 2:15 pm

Catalog Description

An introduction to a variety of research methods, with focus on quantitative methods. Emphasis will be placed on reporting the results of research in both writing and oral presentations. Prerequisite: ENG 1213, Composition II.

Required Text

Treadwell, D. (2013). *Introducing Communication Research: Paths of Inquiry (2nd ed.)*. SAGE Publications, Inc. ISBN-13: 978-1452217352

Required Technology

You will need a basic calculator for this class. Most smart phones have the functions needed for the statistical analyses that will be done in class & for assignments.

Course Content

This course offers an introduction to various approaches, methods, and techniques for understanding and conducting research relevant to the field of Communication as well as many other disciplines. The goals for the course are for you to develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills to help you become an informed, critical, and ethical consumer and producer of communication research.

Course Goals

As a result of this course, you should achieve the following learning outcomes:

1. understand the need for and the uses of communication research
2. understand specific research methodologies and techniques used to investigate human communication phenomena
3. locate, understand, and evaluate published research focused on human communication
4. understand the nature of and the differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods
5. understand and apply basic concepts and practices used for qualitative data analysis
6. understand and apply basic statistical concepts and procedures used for quantitative data analysis
7. design and conduct original communication research
produce appropriate written documentation of your original communication research
present a summary of your research to an audience of your peers
consider your own as well as others' research within the context of ethical research practices

Intended Student Outcomes

Two Intended Student Outcomes (ISO's) are emphasized in class assignments.

ISO #1. Students will communicate effectively.

ISO #2. Students will think critically.

Several different course assignments may be used to document the achievement of the university's Intended Student Outcomes (ISO's): Project Papers, Presentations, or Exams are possibilities for you to consider.

Requirements

Midterm Exam	100 (20%)
Final Exam	100 (20%)
Brief Written Assignments (4x - 10 pts. each)	40 (08%)
*Group Focus Group Research Project/Discussion	50 (10%)
Individual Focus Group Research Project Paper	50 (10%)
*Group Survey Research Project & Presentation	60 (12%)
(Group Project worth 40 points)	
(Group Presentation worth 20 points)	
Individual Survey Research Project Paper	100 (20%)
TOTAL	500 (100%)

***Regarding Group Grades for the Focus Group and Survey Research Project Assignments**

Generally, all members of a research group will receive the same grade for the group portion of the focus group discussion and the survey research project assignment. However, if there are some egregious circumstances of individual members not contributing appropriately to the group's work, those individual members will receive lower grades.

Grade Scale

The final letter grade for the course (and grades for the assignments and tests) will be based on this scale:

A = 93–100%	B = 83–86%	C = 73–76%	D = 63–66%
A- = 90–92%	B- = 80–82%	C- = 70–72%	D- = 60–62%
B+ = 87–89%	C+ = 77–79%	D+ = 67–69%	

Final course grades will be assigned by adding up the total number of points earned for each of the assignments/course work listed previously, and then (if it is the case) subtracting any points lost due to excessive absences, and scored accordingly:

Academic Dishonesty:

For every university student, academic integrity and honesty must be inherent in all behaviors. The work you submit must be your own. When you are using someone else's words and thoughts in your writing, they must properly be acknowledged. Strict and careful attention to citation rules must be followed if you are to avoid plagiarism. Remember to cite the authors of our text in your writing assignments if you are using their ideas. This is one of the most common errors I see, and one of the most easily corrected errors. Proper acknowledgement of sources is critical to your success in college!

Academic Dishonesty (cont.):

You are required to attach a copy of any articles used for exercises, either from a periodical or the Internet. Either APA or MLA citation rules are acceptable. Pay close attention to the use of the author's actual words and thoughts. You must always properly cite sources.

If you are caught cheating on any exam or assignment or helping someone cheat, you will receive an "F" for the assignment. A second offense will warrant the possibility of disciplinary action and an "F" for the course.

You are held to the Academic Integrity standards presented in the University of the Ozarks Student Handbook, The Talon. On Page 1, Academic Integrity is defined, Violations of Academic Integrity are given (including, but not limited to Unauthorized reuse of work), and Faculty Procedures for Violations of Academic Integrity. Incomplete grades, grade appeals by students, and grade changes by instructors are also given there. Become very familiar with this information. It will apply to all of your class work while you attend Ozarks.

*For assistance in proper documentation of sources, consult this website:
<http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/mla/journals.shtml> (Both MLA and APA given)*

Assignments - Evaluation

ASSIGNMENTS: Focus Group Discussion & Individual Paper Assignments

Group Focus Group Research Project/Discussion - 50 pts

Individual Focus Group Research Project Paper - 50 pts

Dates for Focus Group Discussions:

Monday 09/30 group #1 interview

Wednesday 10/02 group #2 interview

Individual FG Research Paper due: Thursday 10/17

These two inter-connected assignments requires that you work in a group with a small number of classroom peers as a research team to design and conduct a small scale research study using the focus group method in which original communication research is produced. The focus group discussions will be conducted in class. Additionally, you will be responsible for writing your own individual paper based on the focus group research project.

Assignments – Evaluation (cont.)

ASSIGNMENT: INDIVIDUAL FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT PAPER

Requirements and Guidelines:

Each group member must prepare her/his own individual written document about the study. The following must be included in this paper.

1. An introduction to the research topic and rationale for the study ***as you have come to understand them.***
2. A presentation of the research questions guiding the study
▶ Note: these are not the same as the questions that were asked in the FG.
Simply think about the larger questions we are looking at here.
3. Information about your study participants:
 - How Many
 - Demographic Information << Gender, Nationality, Race
 - Any Other Pertinent Information
4. A section in which findings for each question are presented. Present each discussion question/topic in the order in which it was discussed and summarize the findings your group collected during the interview related to each question.
5. A section in which a brief discussion and interpretation of all of the study results is presented.
6. A section in which study limitations are discussed.
7. Offer suggestions for potential audience(s) for your study results. That is, who do you think would be interested in learning the results of your study?
8. Critique: Briefly discuss what you believe were the strengths and weaknesses of your groups' research process and product, beginning from the first group meeting through subsequent meetings, through the actual focus group discussion and handling of the data that were generated in the FG discussion.
9. ~~Attach a copy of your group's interview protocol used for the FG discussion.~~
NOT NECESSARY
10. Your paper must be typed, carefully proofread, using standing 11-12 point font, double spaced, and should display university level writing. There is no need to put the paper in a binder; however, the paper should be securely fasted with a clip or a safe staple.

Assignments – Evaluation (cont.)

ASSIGNMENTS: Group Survey Research Project, Group Presentation, Individual Paper

- Group Project - 40 pts
- Group Presentation - 20 pts
- Individual Paper - 100 pts

This group of three inter-connected assignments requires that you work in a group with a small number of classroom peers as a research team to design and conduct a small-scale research study using the survey method in which original communication research is produced. The results of the study will be presented in class during the last week of scheduled classes. Additionally, you will be responsible for writing your own individual paper based on the research project.

The survey assignment requires basic descriptive statistical analyses (frequency & percentages) of the data collected with the surveys. The results of the analyses must be presented in appropriate graphic and/or summary table form for both the group presentation and in the individual papers. These procedures and forms of presentation are discussed in the textbook and will be taught in class.

Once all the surveys are collected, the group should work together to analyze the data. Groups should not rely on the rudimentary (& often incorrect) data analyses offered through Survey Monkey or comparable survey platforms. The members of each research team will have collective responsibility for and ownership of the data & subsequent analyses and be able to use what the group has produced for the presentation of group work (class presentation) and for individual papers. However, each research team member must make sure that the analyses are done correctly because each person is responsible for using & reporting that data in their individual papers. Be forewarned: points will be subtracted for incorrect data, both for the group project & for individual papers.

The brief group presentations of these projects are to be done in class (time allotted: 30 minutes, including time for Q & A) during the last week of class prior to the final exam week (see schedule).

Date for presentation of group survey research project (30 minutes time allotted for each group)

Tuesday, December 10

**All Individual Survey Research Project Papers Due: Thursday, December 12
(the last day of class)**

>>> *The prompts for the three parts of this assignment follow.* <<<

Assignments – Evaluation (cont.)

ASSIGNMENT: THE SURVEY

The following requirements & guidelines should be followed for your group project regarding the construction & administration of your survey:

1. Number of questions on the survey: 10 total.
2. Number of demographic questions: 1 (minimum) - 3 (maximum).
3. Format of questions: any combination of closed-ended (including Likert, Likert-type, & Semantic Differential) questions.

NOTE: the demographic questions must be culturally sensitive & inclusive in that they should not denigrate any individual or cultural group and/or request that any respondent refer to her/himself as an “other”.

4. Approximate time it should take someone to complete your questionnaire: 5 - 7 minutes.
5. Delivery method: any one or combination of the following:

In-person interview (you ask the questions & record the responses).

Self-administered:

- Respondents complete in your presence
- Respondents complete on-line (Survey Monkey or comparable platform)
- Respondents complete & return to you via e-mail

6. Number of questionnaires you should collect: **60 minimum (20 per group member)**

Regarding the introduction, conclusion, and directions for the questionnaire, you will need to adapt these sections depending on the delivery method. Keep the following in mind: Who is going to be handling the questionnaire?

- If it is an in-person or telephone interview, then the introduction, conclusion, and directions need to be written for the interviewer to read to the interviewee.
 - If the questionnaire is to be self-administered (either physically or on-line), then the introduction, conclusion, and directions need to be written with that audience in mind.
7. You will need to have your questionnaires prepared and surveys administered in a timely manner in order to give your group sufficient time to analyze the data and to prepare the presentation as well to have the data available for every group member to use for her/his individual paper.

Assignments – Evaluation (cont.)

ASSIGNMENT: THE PRESENTATION OF YOUR SURVEY RESEARCH

The following requirements & guidelines should be followed for the in class presentation of your group survey research project:

1. Provide an overview of the project (introduce the research study).
2. Present the Research Questions and/or Hypotheses posed
 - ▶ Note: these are not the same as the questions you ask on your survey.
3. Present each question on the survey in the order it is on the actual survey instrument and summarize the findings for each question.
4. Offer a summary and an interpretation of the results you found for the entire study.
5. Discuss the limitations of the study.
6. Offer suggestions for future study.
7. Provide one paper copy of the survey instrument (the questionnaire) to give to the instructor.
 - The presentation you make in class will be the verbal/visual representation of your survey research project; thus, it will constitute a substantial amount of the basis for the research project grade (I will also take into consideration what I learn about your research project from the copy of the questionnaire you provide me). The presentation will also be graded according to how well it meets the requirements & guidelines listed above.
 - Each member of the research team must participate in the presentation.
 - Since we have a SMART classroom, PowerPoint (or similar) is available and strongly suggested for the presentation.

Assignments – Evaluation (cont.)

ASSIGNMENT: THE INDIVIDUAL PAPER ON THE SURVEY PROJECT

Each group member must prepare her/his own individual written document about the survey study. The following are required for this paper:

1. An introduction to the research topic and rationale for the study.
2. A summary of pertinent literature (5 sources).
3. A presentation of the research questions and/or research hypotheses guiding the study. NOTE: These are not the same as the questions you asked on your survey.
4. A section in which you offer a detailed description of the design for the study, including the following information:
 - What time frame did you use (i.e., when were the surveys distributed and when were they completed?)
 - How did you collect the data (what form of survey did you use: in person, telephone, on-line, e-mail? combination?)
 - Who were the study participants? (e.g., students, teachers, individuals in a given profession, any specific demographic?)
 - How did you contact the study participants?
 - What, if any, problems did you have associated with getting study participants?
 - What type of sampling did you use?
 - What was the total number of surveys you collected and analyzed?
5. A section in which findings for each question are presented -- this should be in summary table format or graphic format with short narrative descriptions for each table/graphic
6. A section in which a brief discussion and interpretation of all of the study results are presented
7. A section in which study limitations are discussed
8. Suggestions for future study
9. A statement regarding the potential audience(s) for the study
10. Include a copy of the survey instrument (the questionnaire) as an appendix
11. Include a list of references (in appropriate format) for the literature review

The papers must be typed, carefully proof read, using standard, 11-12 point font, double spaced, and should display university level writing, including proper reference citation. There is no need to put the paper in a binder; however, the paper should be securely fastened with a clip or a safe staple.

Class Attendance

A. In order for you to successfully attain the objectives of this course, I strongly suggest that regular attendance become a top priority. Additionally, I record late arrivals to class that will have a bearing upon your final grade. If you are late to class, you will not receive the full number of attendance points for that class. If you arrive late, you also run the risk of not being counted as present at all because I take roll at the beginning of class.

B. Unless you have spoken with me prior to a class absence or immediately after class meeting time, I consider your absence a cut.

C. I excuse absences for the following reasons:

1. Death in the family.
2. Extended illness for which a doctor is consulted.
3. Important university business that cannot be completed at any other time.
4. **Please note: an excused absence allows you to make up a missed exam or other out-of-class assignments. However, you do lose the attendance points.**

D. Unexcused absences will negatively affect your final grade. We will meet for **30** class sessions; therefore, **3** unexcused absences will lower your grade by one letter, **6** unexcused absences will lower your grade **2** letters; after more than seven unexcused absences, I will advise you to drop the course. Your absences from class may also negatively affect your financial aid.

A significant portion of your grade will come from class participation in activities and strategies. **NO MAKEUP** will be provided for missed classes; these activities only occur once and you need to be present. If you have a **legitimate, excused absence**, you may be given an alternative assignment, but I reserve the right to make this decision based on the circumstances. Excessive absences will be reported to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Student Life.

Late Work

*Please keep this syllabus and refer to the **Course Schedule** regularly. All deadlines for submission of major assignments are clearly stated in that calendar, and it is your responsibility to be prepared to turn them in. These assignments are due the day listed in the calendar. Revisions to the Course Calendar will be made during the semester as needed.*

*Late assignments (for example, **Group Research Project Paper, Survey Research Project Paper**) will only be accepted within one week of the original due date; a **50 % penalty** will be assessed to the late work. **Tardy assignments, without a valid reason for the delay, will not be accepted more than one week late.***

ADA Statement

If any member of the class has a documented disability and needs special accommodations, the instructor will work with the student and the office of Student Support Services or the Jones Learning Center or the Academic Center for Excellence to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure the student a fair opportunity to perform in this class. In order to plan for optimum success, please advise the instructor of the disability and the desired accommodations as soon as possible. Students are strongly encouraged to notify the instructor during the first week of classes. Without ample planning / preparation time, we cannot assure the availability of needed accommodations in a timely manner.

Behavior Guidelines, Standards and Expectations

I want you to be successful in this class, in your other classes, and in your life. I want the theories and concepts discussed to have immediate value to you as you develop your own improved communication skills. To create a successful classroom experience and achieve the stated goals, we must all uphold certain principles and expectations:

1. Respect For each of us to receive a valuable education in this class, we will all need to listen openly and discuss ideas respectfully.
 2. Attendance You are expected to attend classes and arrive on time.
 3. Responsibility Late work *will only be accepted within one week of the original due date; a 50 % penalty will be assessed to the late work.*
 4. Honesty Plagiarism and cheating are serious acts of misconduct and will result in failure of the course and/or academic discipline per the policies of this institution.
 5. Equal Opportunity If you need course adaptations or if you need to make any special arrangements, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.
 6. Commitment Doing well in this class requires you to keep up with the readings, assignments, and class work. If you need to miss a class, contact a classmate for assignments and notes. You are responsible for the material you miss.
- Digital Device Policy: Cell phones and other digital communication devices should be silenced during class. I understand that you may need to occasionally check or respond to a message; however, if your device use becomes a distraction to me or to others, you will lose 10 participation points each time I have to ask you to put it away. **Absolutely no cell phone or other digital communication device use is permitted during exams.** Any student caught using a device during an exam will receive a zero on that exam.

COURSE SCHEDULE (may be revised to meet the needs of the class...)

Date	Introducing Communication Research	Topic
Week 1		
August 27		Introduction To Course And Each Other
August 29	Chapter 1	Getting Started: Possibilities and Decisions
Week 2		
September 03	Chapter 2	First Decisions: What? Why? How?
September 05		
Week 3		
September 10	Chapter 3	Ethics: Your Responsibilities as a Researcher.
September 12		Brief Written Assignment #1 DUE
Week 4		
September 17	Assessment Day	
September 19	Chapter 4	Reading Research
Week 5		
September 24	Chapter 5	Measurement: Research Using Numbers.
September 26	Focus Groups Meet	Brief Written Assignment #2 DUE
Week 6		
September 30	Monday @ 1 - Focus Group A	Group #1 Moderates
October 02	Wednesday @ 1 - Focus Group B	Group #2 Moderates
Week 7		
October 08	Focus Groups Analysis	
October 10	Chapter 6	Statistics: Data Reduction And Descriptive Statistics
Week 8		
October 15	Chapter 7	Inferential Statistics: Generalizing Research Results
October 17	Chapter 7	Individual Focus Group Papers DUE
Week 9		
October 22	Take Home Midterm (Chps. 1-7)	
October 24	Midterm DUE	
Week 10		
October 29	Chapter 8	Sampling: Who, What and How Many?
October 31	FALL BREAK	NO CLASS
Week 11		
November 05	Chapter 9	Surveys: Putting Numbers on Opinions
November 07	Group Meeting	Brief Written Assignment #3 DUE
Week 12		
November 12	Chapter 11	Qualitative Research: Watching And Listening
November 14	Group Meeting	
Week 13		
November 19	Chapter 12	Content Analysis
November 21	Group Meeting	Brief Written Assignment #4 DUE
Week 14		
November 26	SURVEYS GO LIVE	
November 28	THANKSGIVING	NO CLASS
Week 15		
December 03	Chapter 14	Writing And Presenting Research
December 05	Group Meeting	
Week 16		
December 10	Group Presentation	
December 12	Research Paper DUE	
Finals Week	1:00 - Thursday, December 19th	FINAL EXAM