



COM 297-001 Communication Research Methods

Fall 2019

Classroom: Fell Hall 158

Dates & Times: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:35 - 10:50 a.m.

Computer Lab: Fell Hall 108

Instructor: Kevin R. Meyer, Ph.D.

Email: kmeyer@ilstu.edu

Office Phone: (309) 438-3298

Cell Phone: (309) 299-1961

Office: Fell Hall 430

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00-11:30 a.m. & 5:30-6:30 p.m., Wednesdays 5:30-6:30 p.m.,
Thursdays 11:00-11:30 a.m., and by appointment

Required Readings:

The textbook is required and necessary for successful completion of the course. You may purchase the textbook from local bookstores or on-line book sellers (ISBN: 9780190652746).

Merrigan, G., & Huston, C. L. (2020). *Communication research methods* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Other required readings are available through Milner Library or Internet hyperlinks on the ReggieNet website. Citations can be found in this syllabus. In addition, you should obtain a copy of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition).

Course Description and Objectives:

The purpose of this class is to teach you methods of scholarly communication research, research design, data analysis, and reporting of research results. According to the undergraduate catalog, this course is to cover “methods of scholarly research and critical evaluation of research.” We will focus primarily on quantitative research methods, but will also briefly cover qualitative and rhetorical methods. Thus, this course is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To provide students with a comprehensive knowledge of communication research methods.
2. To provide students with the ability to apply research skills through a data-based research study.
3. To develop students’ competence in formulating research questions and hypotheses, constructing research designs, conducting data analysis, reporting results, and analyzing implications of findings.
4. To provide students with experience in data entry and data analysis using SPSS software.
5. To develop students’ understanding of sampling, measurement, and scale development in communication research studies.
6. To develop students’ abilities to locate, critically read, and summarize research.
7. Understand and appropriately explain research ethics.

Special Needs Accommodation:

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services (SAAS) in 350 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu. I am happy to accommodate any special needs you may have, although I require documentation from SAAS for ongoing accommodations.

Professionalism:

Learning is maximized by reading class materials, note-taking, critical listening, cognitive engagement, and focusing one's attention by not yielding to distractions. Professionalism includes listening to others' perspectives (although not necessarily agreeing with those viewpoints), actively listening to those who are speaking during lectures and discussion, and working together in a spirit of cooperation. Collectively, we are a team working together to improve and learn. Each student must be a productive, contributing member of our team. Be on time for class. Turn cell phones on silent and do *not* send text messages, open social media, or surf the Internet with any electronic device. Respect should be demonstrated by listening, ignoring distractions, and being fully present – both physically and mentally. Remain in the classroom for the entire period; 75 minutes is not long enough to justify trips to the water fountain or restroom.

Attendance Policy:

Regular attendance and active engagement are required. Come to class prepared to discuss and engage in activities associated with the daily readings. Perfect attendance is expected, as your group members should be able to count on your presence and because by enrolling in this course you have made a commitment to being present during all class meetings. Being absent will deprive you of valuable class discussions and will also prevent you from fulfilling graded in-class assignments. Historically, there has been a strong correlation between absences and grades; the more class periods that students miss, the lower the grades they tend to earn. Missing more than *four* class periods throughout the semester will result in a 5% deduction from a student's overall course grade for each additional unexcused absence.

Late Work and Incomplete Grade Policy:

All assignments are expected at the beginning of class on the due date. If you do not come to class on an exam day, you will receive a zero for that assignment. When a student misses class, his/her points for that day will be forfeited and cannot be made-up. An automatic 5% of the points possible will be deducted from late written assignments, with an additional 10% deducted for each 24 hours the written assignment is late. In the case of documented university sponsored travel, written assignments, examinations, and lab assignments should be completed *prior* to the absence. As a general rule, incomplete grades will not be given.

Academic Misconduct Policy:

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the *Code of Student Conduct*. All ideas are to be appropriately cited in both oral and written form when borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Inadequate citation, unauthorized and unacknowledged collaboration, and/or the presentation of someone

else's work constitutes plagiarism. Students found to commit intentional acts of dishonesty (including cheating on an exam, falsifying evidence, or plagiarizing a written assignment) will receive a failing grade in the course and will be referred for appropriate disciplinary action through Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. Please note, I am very serious about reporting academic dishonesty and view it as my professional responsibility; I have never been shy about enforcing the consequences of this policy. For group assignments, the same principle applies: groups may not plagiarize the work of others outside that group.

SPSS Lab Assignments/Results Write-ups:

Students will complete a series of SPSS lab assignments. The results must be written-up in APA Style, 6th edition, in accordance with the examples you will be provided. Missing lab days will impact the grade you are able to earn on each lab assignment.

Examinations:

Exams are closed book/closed notes; however, you may use a handwritten study guide - the length and content of which will be restricted based on guidelines provided prior to each exam. The format will consist of objective style questions, such as multiple choice, true/false, matching, and fill-in-the blank. Whereas the final examination is comprehensive, the other exams will only address readings and material covered during the weeks preceding that exam.

Journal Article Review:

Each student will write a journal article review. *The due date for the assignment depends on which article you pick to review, but the assignment is due at the beginning of class on the day we are scheduled to discuss that article.* Plan ahead to avoid waiting until the last opportunity. You must select one of the following studies: Simonds et al. (2006), Min & Feaster (2010), Meyer et al. (2008), Boudewyns & Paquin (2011), or Ledbetter et al. (2011). The review must be a minimum of 2 pages in length, typed single-space with headers and level headings. Depending on your major, you may pick from one of the following formats: popular press article or scholarly summary/extended annotated bibliography. The review must identify and explain the research questions/hypotheses, sample, procedure, data analysis, results, and implications. The review must also critique the study.

Group Research Project:

Each Research Group will conduct a data-based research study. Groups must approve their study topic and research design with me. First, groups will design a research project. Second, groups will construct and administer a survey, collecting data. Then, groups will conduct data analysis. Finally, groups will document their results in a final paper. Institutional Review Board approval is required if your group or any individuals intend to present or publish your data (even at the ISU Research Symposium); talk to me if you want to pursue this route.

The *Group Research Proposal Paper* should be typed double-spaced in 12-point plain Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins on the sides, top, and bottom. Your paper should be a minimum of 15 full pages, excluding the title page, abstract, references, and appendixes pages. The paper should include a literature review, research questions/hypotheses, and methods. A minimum of 30 outside sources should be cited meaningfully (journal articles found in Milner

Library's "Communication Source" database). The paper and references should follow APA style, 6th edition. Write well and proofread carefully.

The **Group Executive Summary** should follow APA style, 6th edition, where applicable and will be in the form of an extended executive summary. The paper should be typed single-spaced in 12-point plain Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins on the sides, top, and bottom. The executive summary should be a minimum of 4 full pages, including the title, abstract, research questions/hypotheses, methods, results, and discussion, but excluding references, tables, figures, and appendixes pages. Use level headings to help organize the report.

Grading rubrics are posted on ReggieNet. For each group assignment, all group members will receive the same score, unless voted less than a 100% share by other members. Any student wishing to vote another member less than a 100% share of the group score must email me the specific share percentage and a detailed rationale justifying the percentage (e.g., didn't complete work, absent from meetings, failed to participate fully in the assignment). Emails will be kept confidential and must be received no later than 24 hours following the assignment due date.

Course Assignments and Grades:

The grading scale is as follows: A= 100-90%; B= 89-80%; C= 79-70%; D= 69-60%; F= 59% and below. Percentages will be calculated based on points earned from:

<u>Examinations</u>	<u>Points Possible/Your Points</u>	
First Examination	100	/_____
Second Examination	100	/_____
Third Examination	100	/_____
Final Examination	100	/_____
<u>Written Assignments</u>		
SPSS Lab Assignments/Results Write-ups	40	/_____
Journal Article Review	50	/_____
<u>Group Research Project</u>		
Group Research Proposal Paper	50	/_____
Group Executive Summary	50	/_____
<u>Research Study Announcement Board</u>	10	/_____
(The board is at: https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies/)		
(Students wishing not to participate in the research studies may complete a 5-page journal article review instead. A sample is on ReggieNet.)		
Total	600	/_____

Citations for Required Article Readings (listed in the order we read them):

- Parks, M. R., Faw, M., & Goldsmith, D. (2011): Undergraduate instruction in empirical research methods in communication: Assessment and recommendations. *Communication Education, 60*, 406-421. doi:dx.doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2011.562909
- Klein, L. W. (2011, September 9). Statistical terms used in research studies: A primer for journalists. *Journalist's Resource*. Retrieved from <http://journalistsresource.org/reference/research/statistics-for-journalists>
- Rosenau, J. (2011, May 31). The importance of being median [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://scienceblogs.com/tfk/2011/05/the_importance_of_being_median.php
- Siegfried, T. (2010, March 27). Odds are, it's wrong: Science fails to face shortcomings of statistics. *Science News, 177*(7). Retrieved from <http://www.sciencenews.org/>
- Simonds, B. K., Meyer, K. R., Quinlan, M. M., & Hunt, S. K. (2006). Effects of instructor speech rate on affective learning and student perceptions of instructor immediacy, credibility, and clarity. *Communication Research Reports, 23*, 187-197. doi:10.1080/08824090600796401
- Min, S-J., & Feaster, J. C. (2010). Missing children in national news coverage: Racial and gender representations of missing children cases. *Communication Research Reports, 27*, 207-216. doi:10.1080/08824091003776289
- Meyer, K. R., Hunt, S. K., Hopper, K. M., Thakkar, K. V., Tsubakopoulos, V., & Van Hoose, K. J. (2008). Assessing information literacy instruction in the basic communication course. *Communication Teacher, 22*, 22-34. doi:10.1080/17404620801926925
- Boudewyns, V., & Paquin, R. S. (2011). Intentions and beliefs about getting tested for STDs: Implications for communication interventions. *Health Communication, 26*, 701-711. doi:10.1080/10410236.2011.563353
- Ledbetter, A. M., Mazer, J. P., DeGroot, J. M., Meyer, K. R., Mao, Y., & Swafford, B. (2011). Attitudes toward online social connection and self-disclosure as predictors of Facebook communication and relational closeness. *Communication Research, 38*, 27-53. doi:10.1177/0093650210365537
- Allen, M. (2009). Meta-analysis. *Communication Monographs, 76*, 398-407. doi:10.1080/03637750903310386

Tentative Schedule

Week 1	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Aug. 20	*Introduction to Course *Philosophy of the Course *Syllabus Assignments and Policies *Overview of Research Methods and Course Content	*Read Syllabus *Purchase Textbook *Explore ReggieNet website *Locate readings
R, Aug. 22	*Comparing Academic to Popular Press Coverage of Research *How to Read Journal Articles **“Undergraduate Instruction in Empirical Research Methods in Communication: Assessment and Recommendations.” **“Statistical Terms used in Research Studies: A Primer for Journalists.” **“The Importance of Being Median.” **“Odds are, it’s Wrong: Science Fails to Face Shortcomings of Statistics.”	*Read Parks et al. (2011) *Read Klein (2011) *Read Rosenau (2011) *Read Siegfried (2010)
Week 2	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Aug. 27	**“Preface.” **“Foreword: Islands of Inquiry.” by Brian Spitzberg	*Read Preface and Foreword in Merrigan & Huston (2009)
R, Aug. 29	**“Introduction to Communication Research.” *Formation of Research Groups for the Semester	*Read Chapter 1 in Merrigan & Huston (2009)
Week 3	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Sept. 3	**“Three Paradigms of Knowing.”	*Read Chapter 2
R, Sept. 5	**“Ethics and Research.” * <i>Deadline for Approval of Group Projects</i>	*Read Chapter 3
Week 4	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Sept. 10	**“Making Arguments for Association and Causality.”	*Read Chapter 4
R, Sept. 12	**“Measuring and Designing Quantitative Social Science Research.” *Review for First Exam	*Read Chapter 5
Week 5	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Sept. 17	*** <i>FIRST EXAMINATION</i>	
R, Sept. 19	**“Experimental Research: Predicting Causes and Effects.” *Review Exam Results *Introduction to SPSS	*Read Chapter 6

Week 6	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Sept. 24	**“Survey Research: Explaining and Predicting Attitudes and Behaviors.”	*Read Chapter 7
R, Sept. 26	**“Content Analysis: Explaining and Interpreting Message Categories.”	*Read Chapter 8
Week 7	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Oct. 1	**“Analyzing and Interpreting Quantitative Data.”	*Read Chapter 9
R, Oct. 3	**“Conversation Analysis: Explaining Talk’s Structure and Function.”	*Read Chapter 10
Week 8	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Oct. 8	**“Making Arguments for Multiple Plausible Realities.”	*Read Chapter 11
R, Oct. 10	*** <i>SECOND EXAMINATION</i>	
Week 9	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Oct. 15	** <i>Meet in Fell 108 computer lab</i> *SPSS Lab Assignment **“Effects of Instructor Speech Rate on Affective Learning and Student Perceptions of Instructor Immediacy, Credibility, & Clarity.”	*Read Simonds et al. (2006)
R, Oct. 17	** <i>Meet in Fell 108 computer lab</i> *SPSS Lab Assignment **“Missing Children in National News Coverage: Racial and Gender Representations of Missing Children Cases.”	*Read Min & Feaster (2010)
Week 10	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Oct. 22	** <i>Meet in Fell 108 computer lab</i> *SPSS Lab Assignment **“Assessing Information Literacy Instruction in the Basic Communication Course.”	*Read Meyer et al. (2008) ** <i>SPSS Results Write-up due</i>
R, Oct. 24	** <i>Meet in Fell 108 computer lab</i> *SPSS Lab Assignment **“Intentions and Beliefs About Getting Tested for STDs: Implications for Communication Interventions.”	*Read Boudewyns & Paquin (2011) ** <i>SPSS Results Write-up due</i>
Week 11	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Oct. 29	** <i>Meet in Fell 108 computer lab</i> *SPSS Lab Assignment **“Attitudes Toward Online Social Connection and Self-Disclosure as Predictors of Facebook Communication and Relational Closeness.”	*Read Ledbetter et al. (2011) ** <i>SPSS Results Write-up due</i>
R, Oct. 31	** <i>Meet in Fell 108 computer lab</i> *SPSS Lab Assignment **“Meta-Analysis.”	*Read Allen (2009) ** <i>SPSS Results Write-up due</i>

Week 12	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Nov. 5	*** <i>THIRD EXAMINATION</i>	
R, Nov. 7	** <i>Meet in Fell 108 computer lab</i> *Data Analysis for Research Study **“Interviews and Focus Groups: Interpreting Guided Responses.”	*Read Chapter 12
Week 13	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Nov. 12	** <i>Meet in Fell 108 computer lab</i> *Data Analysis for Research Study **“Ethnography: Interpreting and Evaluating Cultural Communication.”	*Read Chapter 13 ** <i>Group Research Proposal Paper due</i>
R, Nov. 14	** <i>Meet in Fell 108 computer lab</i> *Data Analysis for Research Study **“Discourse Analysis: Interpreting and Evaluating Language-in-Use.”	*Read Chapter 14
Week 14	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Nov. 19	** <i>Meet in Fell 108 computer lab</i> *Data Analysis for Research Study **“Rhetorical Criticism: Interpreting and Evaluating Messages.”	*Read Chapter 15
R, Nov. 21	**“Critical Studies: Evaluating and Reforming Ideologies.” *Course Evaluations	*Read Chapter 16
Week 15	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Nov. 26	* NO CLASS (Fall Break)	
R, Nov. 28	* NO CLASS (Fall Break)	** <i>Research Board Participation due</i>
Week 16	Topic	Assignments Due
T, Dec. 3	*Review for Final Exam	** <i>Group Executive Summary due</i>
R, Dec. 5	**“Glossary.” *Review for Final Exam	*Read Glossary
Finals Week	Topic	Assignments Due
?, Dec. ?	*** <i>FINAL EXAMINATION</i> in Fell 158 **Exact Date and Time TBA by Registrar	