

CAS 204
Communication Research Methods
SPRING 2014
107 Willard

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Office Hours: by appointment

Lecture: MWF 9:05-9:55

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to acquaint you with the basic concepts and issues of research methods in Communication. You will learn how Communication researchers conduct and evaluate research from a variety of traditions (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, rhetorical). By the end of the course, you will possess the knowledge necessary to understand and evaluate arguments utilizing research to persuade, as well as, to conduct simple, yet, sound research on your own. A primary goal of the course is to enable you to become a critical consumer and producer of information that defines the world around you. The course will educate you on the proper terminology/concepts used in research methods. The end result of the course should be a fundamental understanding of how to critique and to conduct research in the field of Communication.

Course Objectives:

1. To become familiar with the appropriate language or terminology of research methods.
2. To understand the ethical decisions involved with conducting sound research.
3. To be able to articulate the similarities and differences in the different types of research methods.
4. To understand the challenges of selecting an appropriate method to study a communication issue.
5. To develop the skills necessary to critically evaluate the methods used in various types of research.
6. To be able to construct a valid argument utilizing appropriate research methods.

Required Texts:

Treadwell, D. (2014). *Introducing communication research: Paths of Inquiry*. (2nd edition) Los Angeles: Sage.

Nussbaum J. F. (2012). *Readings in communication research methods: From theory to practice*. San Diego, CA: Cognella.

Course Requirements:

- 1. Examinations (300 points total).** There will be three 100 point exams. They will cover content from the lecture and the texts.
- 2. News Article Critique (50 points).** For this assignment, each student will find a recent news article that utilizes a research method discussed in class to “prove” the point of the article. You will be responsible for critiquing the article. The assignment is worth 50 points and needs to be 3 pages (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point font)
- 3. Participation Assignments (100 points total):** Throughout the semester, various assignments will be given in class that reinforce the material that you are learning. In total, these assignments will be worth 100 points, and unless you have a University sanctioned absence, cannot be made up outside of class.
- 4. Attendance Policy:** In order to earn an A for this course no more than three (3) total absences are permitted. To earn a B, no more than five (5) absences are permitted. More than 7 absences will result in an F for this course. There are no excused absences. Each time you are not in class will count as an absence.
- 5. Academic Dishonesty:** Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. Plagiarism involves any instance in which one presents another’s ideas or writing as one’s own. The policies concerning academic integrity are identified in the Penn State catalogue. Every student is held accountable for understanding these policies.
- 6. Late Work and Incompletes:** All assignments for this course must be completed and turned in on the assigned due dates. Failure to meet these guidelines will result in a significant deduction of your grade.
- 7. Discrimination and Harassment:** All students will treat one another with respect and create an environment where learning is fostered and not hindered. Discrimination and harassment of others based on their race, age, gender, sexual preference, religion, opinions and beliefs will not be tolerated. It is vitally important to be open and to consider the thoughts and ideas of others in class with respect.

Grading Distribution:

Total Points: 450 points

94% and above = A

90-93.9 = A minus

87.7- 89.9 = B plus

83.33-87.6 = B

80-83.32 = B minus

75- 79.9 = C plus

70-74.9 = C

60-69.9 = D

59.9 and below = F

Tentative Schedule:

Week	Topic	Readings <u>Treadwell</u>	<u>NussBaum</u>
1	Research in Communication	Chpt. 1	Chpt. 1
2	Problems and Hypotheses	Chpt. 2	
3	Ethics	Chpt. 3	
4	Measurement	Chpt. 5	Chpt. 2
5	EXAM 1		
6	Survey Research	Chpt. 9	Chpts. 4, 5
7	Experimental Research	Chpt. 10	Chpts. 6, 7
8	Sampling	Chpt. 8	Chpt. 3
9	Descriptive Statistics	Chpt. 6	
10	Inferential Statistics	Chpt. 7	
11	EXAM 2 (News Article Critique Due)		
12	Qualitative Research	Chpt. 11	Chpts. 10, 12-14
13	Qualitative Research		
14	Content Analysis	Chpt. 12	Chpt. 15
15	Rhetorical Analyses	Chpt. 13	Chpt. 11
*FINAL EXAM – TBD			