

CMGT 540 USES OF COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

COURSE SYLLABUS, SUMMER 2010

Instructor: Katherine Ognyanova (Katya)
Office Hours: TBD, best by appointment
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Course: CMGT 540 Uses of Communication Research
Term: Summer 2010
Time: Tuesday, 6pm - 10pm
Room: GFS 207

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course provides a broad overview of many analytical tools and techniques used in research. You will learn how to define research questions, develop hypotheses, choose appropriate theoretical and methodological frameworks, and design studies of your own. The lectures will introduce you to a wide variety of methods and you will explore some of them in depth for your final project.

In-class demonstrations and exercises will familiarize you with the software tools and the research strategies you will need in your work. We will discuss the way other scholars have employed those techniques in their research. You will be asked to critically evaluate academic studies and identify the strengths and weaknesses of their design.

Many of the methods you will learn in class can be applied in your professional career. Data collection and interpretation are essential in industry decision-making. Survey design and focus group studies are widely used in business settings. The class will, in addition, put emphasis on the use of traditional research methods in an online environment. We will cover areas like online ethnography, web analytics, and the application of network analysis to the study of social networking platforms on the Web.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance and participation will be noted. If you are unable to attend a class, please try to let me know in advance. Missing one class during the semester is permissible. Missing more will affect your grade and may prevent you from successfully completing the course.

You are expected to go through all of the required materials and be prepared to discuss them in class. We will also use a Web platform allowing us to continue the class conversation online.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

ASSIGNMENTS

In the course of the semester, you will be assigned seven mini projects based on the theoretical approaches and methods discussed in class. All assignments should be e-mailed to CMGT540@ognyanova.net before 6pm Tuesday of the week when they are due. Late assignments will be accepted within two weeks of the original deadline and will receive only half of the total points.

FINAL PAPER

The final project for this class involves writing a research proposal on a topic of your choosing. This will give you a chance to use the analytical approaches learned in class to explore a research question relevant to your interests. The final paper should include a literature review and a detailed outline of your proposed methodology. It should be 10-12 pages long and written according to the APA guidelines. The proposal should be submitted no later than Aug. 10. Be sure to give me a hard copy in addition to e-mailing your paper.

PARTICIPATION

You are expected to take part in the class discussion. The course will also have a space for online conversations where you can post comments and questions about the readings. Participation in the online forum is not mandatory, but will be rewarded with extra credit points towards your final grade.

Starting the second week of the semester, we will have weekly student presentations. Every week one or two of you will be asked to find an interesting research paper that uses the approaches we've talked about that day. During a 15-minute informal presentation, you will have to explain what the study's focus was, what methods and theories were employed, and what improvements (if any) could be made to its research design.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Assignments:	56% (7 x 8%)
Final paper:	24%
Paper presentation:	10%
Participation:	10%
Total:	100%

COURSE MATERIALS

All required materials will be available on Blackboard.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- *Focus Groups, Theory and Practice*, 2nd Ed.(2007) by David W. Stewart, Prem. N Shamdasani & Dennis W. Rook
- *The Content Analysis Guidebook* (2002) by Kimberly A. Neuendorf
- *The Sage Handbook of Online Research Methods* (2008) by Nigel Fielding, Raymond M. Lee & Grant Blank (Eds)
- *Networks, Crowds, and Markets: Reasoning about a Highly Connected World* (2010) by David Easley and Jon Kleinberg. [Available online.](#)
- *Using SPSS for Windows and Macintosh, Analyzing and Understanding data*, 5th Ed. (2007) by Samuel B. Green & Neil J. Salkind
- *Reasoning with Statistics* 5th Ed. (2001) by Frederick Williams and Peter Monge
- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th Ed. (2009) by the American Psychological Association (abbreviated as APA)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism is committed to upholding the USC Academic Integrity Code as detailed in the SCampus Guide. It is the policy of the School to report all violations of the code. Any violation will at a minimum result in no credit earned for the assignment in question. Any serious violation or patter of violations of the Academic Integrity Code may result in the student's expulsion from the program. It is incumbent upon each student to understand and avoid plagiarism. If you have any questions, please contact me.

ACCOMMODATION

This class will accommodate any student requesting assistance. Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability need to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP). A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please make sure that the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located at STU 301, 8:30 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Friday, and can be reached at (213) 740-0776.

COURSE OUTLINE

Click on a date below to see the schedule for that week

Week 1 - May 25, 2010

Week 5 - June 22, 2010

Week 9 - July 20, 2010

Week 2 - June 1, 2010

Week 6 - June 29, 2010

Week 10 - July 27, 2010

Week 3 - June 8, 2010

Week 7 - July 6, 2010

Week 11 - August 3, 2010

Week 4 - June 15, 2010

Week 8 - July 13, 2010

Week 12 - August 10, 2010

WEEK 1 - MAY 25, 2010

Introduction, overview of the class syllabus.

The research process: methods and theory. Qualitative vs. quantitative approaches to research.

Research ethics.

Readings

Ch.2: Instruments and Social Inquiry. In Colton & Covert (2007) *Designing and Constructing Instruments for Social Research and Evaluation*

Ch.1: Understanding Research. In Vanderstoep & Johnston (2009) *Research methods for everyday life: blending qualitative and quantitative approaches*

Wikipedia: Milgram's Experiment. [Online Resource](#)

WEEK 2 - JUNE 1, 2010

Communication theories, writing a literature review.

Finding data & academic resources online.

Basics of APA style.

Demo: Online research using the USC resources. Using citation management software ([EndNote](#), [Zotero](#))

Readings

Ch. 5: Communication Theory as a Field. In Craig & Muller (Eds.) (2007) *Theorizing Communication*

Theory Clusters, University of Twente. [Online resource](#).

The End of Theory: The Data Deluge Makes the Scientific Method Obsolete. By Anderson (2008) in *Wired Magazine*. [Online resource](#).

Skim through the APA Basics online tutorial [available here](#).

Assignment Due: Research ethics case

WEEK 3 - JUNE 8, 2010

What constitutes a good hypothesis? Operationalization of variables.

Levels of measurement, measurement reliability and validity.

Population Inference and sampling methods.

Readings

Ch.2: Fundamentals of Measurement & Ch.3 Sampling In Hayes (2005) *Statistical Methods for Communication Science*

Ch.3: Measurement & Ch.4: Instrument Construction, Validity, and Reliability. In Colton & Covert (2007) *Designing and Constructing Instruments for Social Research and Evaluation*

Assignment Due: Literature review.

WEEK 4 - JUNE 15, 2010

Survey design & online surveys.

Pretesting, scales and measurement.

Demo: Putting together a [Qualtrics](#) survey.

Readings

Ch.6: Quantitative Approaches in Social Science Research, Sample Surveys section. In Henn, Weinstein & Foard (2006) *A short introduction to social research*

Ch.10: Overview: online surveys & Ch.11: Sampling Methods for Web and E-mail Surveys. In Fielding, Lee & Blank (2008) *Handbook of Online Research Methods*

Optional: Ch.12: Internet Survey Design & Ch.13: Internet Survey Software Tools. In Fielding, Lee & Blank (2008) *Handbook of Online Research Methods*

WEEK 5 - JUNE 22, 2010

Data analysis and hypothesis testing.

Introduction to SPSS, basic descriptive statistics, the logic of the *t* test.

Demo: SPSS hypothesis testing

Readings

Ch.5: Predicting Parameters, Ch.6: Testing Hypotheses & Ch.7: The T-Test. In Williams & Monge (2001) *Reasoning with Statistics, 5th Ed.*

Ch.22: *t* Test Procedures. In Green & Salkind (2008) *Using SPSS for Windows and Macintosh, 5th Ed.*

Assignment Due: Online survey.

WEEK 6 - JUNE 29, 2010

Focus groups & issues specific to online focus groups.

Readings

Ch.7: Focus Groups. In Ritchie & Lewis (2003) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*

Ch.19: Focus groups in marketing research. In Belk (2006) *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing*

Ch.16: Online Focus Groups. In Fielding, Lee & Blank (2008) *Handbook of Online Research Methods*

Assignment Due: SPSS lab exercise.

WEEK 7 - JULY 6, 2010

Introduction to network analysis; studying the structure of online social networks.

Hyperlink analysis.

Demo: UCINET - exploring network structure

Readings

Ch. 2: Graphs & Ch.13: The Structure of the Web. In Easley & Kleinberg (2010) *Networks, Crowds, and Markets: Reasoning about a Highly Connected World*.

Ch.2: Network Concepts, Measures, and the Multitheoretical, Multilevel Analytic Framework. In Monge & Contractor (2003) *Theories of Communication Networks*

Optional:

Ch. 8: Analyzing Social Networks via the Internet. In Fielding, Lee & Blank (2008) *Handbook of Online Research Methods*

The Social Hyperlink. Adamic, L. (2008) in *The Hyperlinked Society: Questioning Connections in the Digital Age*. [Available online](#).

WEEK 8 - JULY 13, 2010

Introduction to content analysis.

Automated textual analysis.

Semantic networks and concept maps.

Demo: WORDij - automated content analysis

Readings

Ch.11: An Introduction to Content Analysis. In Berg (2001) *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*

Coding Choices for Textual Analysis: A Comparison of Content Analysis and Map Analysis. By Carley, K. (1993) in *Sociological Methodology*, Vol. 23

Optional: Implicit media frames: Automated analysis of public debate on artificial sweeteners. Hellsten, Dawson & Leydesdorff (2009) in *Public Understanding of Science*.

Assignment Due: Social network measures.

WEEK 9 - JULY 20, 2010

Web analytics, defining online project goals and measuring success.
Search engine optimization techniques.

Demo: using Google Analytics

Readings

Ch.3: The Awesome World of Clickstream Analysis: Metrics.

Ch.4: The Awesome World of Clickstream Analysis: Practical Solutions. In Kaushik (2010) *Web Analytics 2.0: The Art of Online Accountability & Science of Customer Centricity*

Ch.2: Creating an SEO Plan. In Ledford (2008) *SEO Search Engine Optimization Bible*

The world of web analytics changes fast - expect additional readings capturing recent trends to be added to this section in July. You will find those on Blackboard.

Assignment Due: Content analysis.

WEEK 10 - JULY 27, 2010

New directions in online research.
Virtual worlds and online ethnography.

Readings

Virtual Worlds: Petri Dishes, Rat Mazes, and Supercolliders. By Castronova & Falk in *Games and Culture*

The Scientific Research Potential of Virtual Worlds. By Bainbridge (2007) in *Science* 07/317

Ch.14: Virtual ethnography: modes, varieties, affordances.

Ch.18: Research Uses of Multi-User Virtual Environments. In Fielding, Lee & Blank (2008) *Handbook of Online Research Methods*

Assignment Due: Web analytics.

WEEK 11 - AUGUST 3, 2010

TBD by students: a lab providing a more detailed overview of SPSS / network analysis software/ semantic mapping/ hyperlink analysis / web mining / web analytics.

Q&A on class projects

Readings

TBD

WEEK 12 - AUGUST 10, 2010

Student presentations

Assignment Due: Turn in final project