COMM 301L: Empirical Research in Communication
Fall 2013
Lecture: Tuesday/Thursday, 9:30-10:50am, ASCJ 225
Lab: Thursday, 1:00-1:50pm, ASCJ 329

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Instructor: Young Ji Kim (call me Young Ji, which is pronounced as young-gee)
Email: youngji@usc.edu
        * Please allow two business days for a response. If you have not received a response after
        48 hours, please try again, or see me in person.
Office: ASC G6 (located at the G level of the west wing)
Office Hours: by appointment (Please email me at least 24 hours prior to meeting)

Course Description

This course introduces you to the basic set of knowledge and skills needed to design and execute
research. Lectures will focus on the conceptual aspects, such as developing research problems,
building proper measurements, sampling, designing methods, and analyzing data. The laboratory
sessions will focus on completing a research project that puts into practice the lessons learned
during lecture. When you complete this course, you will be equipped to move beyond being a
passive recipient of research, and become discriminating consumers and burgeoning
practitioners.

Course materials

- *The Practice of Social Research (13th edition)*, by Earl Babbie (2013) (abbreviated as
  PSR; required, available in University Bookstore)
- Lecture outlines, journal articles, and project materials (available on the Blackboard)

Note: Come to class having done all of your readings.

Evaluation of Performance

In recognition of that student learn and demonstrate their understanding in different ways, I will
use two different formulas to calculate your grade and assign you the *higher* of the two grades.
        Grading Formula 1 (exam emphasis)
                Exam 1 20%
                Exam 2 20%
                Exam 3 20%
                Research project 20% (Final paper and presentation)
                Homework assignments 10%
                Attendance & Participation 10%
        Grading Formula 2 (project emphasis)
                Exam 1 15%
                Exam 2 15%
                Exam 3 15%
                Research project 30% (Final paper and presentation)
                Homework assignments 15%

Attendance & Participation 10%

There is one exception to these grading formulas:
- A student who is judged by his or her group as having not contributed his or her fair share to the project will have his or her grade calculated using the *lower* of the two grading formulas

Note: Extra credit opportunities (up to 2% maximum) may be available though <u>not</u> guaranteed.

This course uses the following grading scheme:

A	93% or higher
A-	90%-92%
B+	87%-89%
B	83%-86%
B-	80%-82%
C+	77%-79%
C	73%-76%
C-	70%-72%
D+	67%-69%
D	63%-66%
D-	60%-62%
F	59% or lower

<u>Examinations</u>
There will be three examinations for this course, and they generally hold the following format:
- 8 to 15 multiple choice questions (20-30% of the examination's points);
- 5 to 8 fill in the blanks or short answer questions (10-20% of the points);
- 5 to 8 analysis questions (50-70% of the points).

The latter examinations may be cumulative in part. In general, no more than 20% of the later examinations will test materials covered in prior examinations. The purpose is not to impose excessive burdens on you during examinations; the purpose instead is to highlight the inter-linked nature of many decisions we make in designing research methods: decisions made in the earlier phases of the study will shape the available options in the study's later phases.

Requests to take examinations on other dates will be considered only for unexpected, justifiable and documentable reasons. For example, if you missed the scheduled examination to attend to a close friend's sudden illness, the instructor will ask for formal documentation from the medical authorities.

<u>Research Project</u>

The research project is meant to give you the experience of conducting research in an abbreviated and meaningful way. The end deliverable for this project is a report (about 12 pages

long). To help you make progress, the project is broken into multiple segments with its specific deliverables. Refer to the document "Research Project Guidelines" for details.

Your laboratory sessions will focus on getting this project done.

The project requires both individual and group effort: for certain parts you will work on your own; for other parts you will work in a team with one or two other people.

The required format is an MS Word document. For some assignments, you will be required to submit to Turnitin on Blackboard.

It is crucial to deliver assignments on time. ***There are significant penalties for late delivery*** (e.g., half of possible score).

A Note About Statistics
I know the thought of statistics scares many of you. While we do cover statistics in this course, this is not a statistics course. We focus on the CONCEPTUAL elements of statistics with the aid of SPSS and Excel for real calculations.

SPSS and Excel are installed on the classroom computers and all of Annenberg's computer labs. Therefore, you are not required to buy the software. However, if you would rather complete homework assignments from home, please speak to me, and I can direct you where you can purchase the software for a discount.

Homework Assignments
There will be about 7-8 assignments (TBD). All homework assignments must be completed in order to pass this course. Some will be done individually, and some will be done with your group. Some will serve as milestones toward completion of your final paper, and others will give you practice with statistics. **Late assignments will receive no credit.** However, the homework still must be completed to pass this course.

All assignments will be uploaded to Blackboard (sometimes they may require the uploading of multiple files).

Attendance and participation in class

You are allowed two absences without penalty. For these absences, you need not tell me why. Thereafter, the second absence costs 1% of the total grade, the third 2%, the fourth 3%. Absences beyond the fourth open the possibility that you may fail the course. Arriving past five minutes to class is considered poor form, and will incur a penalty (half that of absences).

However, if you fall ill, you should not neglect your health; take the time to rest. I will accept authentic documented medical conditions. More generally, this principle applies to other authentic, justifiable crises that you may encounter in your life as the semester progresses.

However, these situations do not exempt your participation in the missed sessions, nor completely excuse your need to complete assignments on time. In such situations, you must inform me in time. You must also communicate with me to discuss how you can compensate for missing deadlines and sessions. Informing me well after (especially with invented excuses) is not acceptable and penalties will apply.

For participation, come to class prepared to discuss and ask questions about the material. Asking a question or contributing to the discussion counts as participation. Simply being present in class does not. What I will not reward and will penalize, among other things, is disrespectful behavior towards other students or ourselves, or indifferent disengagement. An example is actively Facebooking and giggling at the Facebook content while in class.

Extra credit: Participation in other research projects

You may have the opportunity to participate in other research studies conducted by Annenberg graduate students and faculty. Participation is voluntary. Credit earned depends on effort and time required when participating. More details will be provided as each opportunity arises.

Academic Integrity

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity code as detailed in the in the SCampus Guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor.

The School and the University is committed to the general principles of academic honesty that include and incorporate the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. By taking this course, students are expected to understand and abide by these principles.

This course places high demands in bringing together existing knowledge on a topic and acknowledging these sources in your writing. Hence, opportunities to commit plagiarism are numerous. You must understand what constitutes plagiarism and not commit it. In particular, see SCampus Section 11: http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. You cannot plead ignorance.

All submitted work for this course may be subject to an originality review as performed by Turnitin technologies to find textual similarities with other Internet content or previously submitted student work. Students of this course retain the copyright of their own original work, and Turnitin is not permitted to use student-submitted work for any other purpose than (a) performing an originality review of the work, and (b) including that work in the database against which it checks other student-submitted work.

USC policy for students with disabilities

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure this letter is delivered to your instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in the Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

(Tentative) Course Outline

*From Week 2 onward, readings are TBD. I will provide a separate sheet of reading assignments soon. Once assigned, all reading assignments should be completed **prior** to their date on the assignment schedule. Please check the Blackboard.

Week 1
Tuesday, 8/27
    Introduction and orientation
    Review of the syllabus

Thursday, 8/29
    Ways of knowing
    Developing researchable questions; concepts and definitions
    Searching for and critiquing research articles
    Reading:
        PSR Chapter 1

Thursday [LAB]
    No Lab

Week 2
Tuesday, 9/3
    Building good measures
    Levels of measurement

Thursday, 9/5
    Writing good article summaries
    Ethical issues in research

Thursday [LAB]
    Organize for project; define research question

Week 3
Tuesday, 9/10

Overview of research methods
Survey design

Thursday, 9/12
Survey design (continued)
Writing a literature review

Thursday [LAB]
Choose research topic and research questions as teams; Search and review existing research.

Week 4
Tuesday, 9/17
Experiments

Thursday, 9/19
Experiments (Continued)
Content analysis

Thursday [LAB]
Continue search and review of existing research

Week 5
Tuesday, 9/24
Content analysis (Continued)

Thursday, 9/26
Review for Examination 1

Thursday [LAB]
Decide on the research method you can use

Week 6
Tuesday, 10/1
Examination 1

Thursday, 10/3
How to find and use existing measurements

Thursday [LAB]
Work on project

Week 7
Tuesday, 10/8

Measurement reliability and measurement validity
Relationships and causation; rival hypotheses
Making valid claims and threats to validity

Thursday, 10/10
Sampling

Thursday [LAB]
Work on project

Week 8
Tuesday, 10/15
Non-probability sampling
Data collection

Thursday, 10/17
Descriptive statistics

Thursday [LAB]
Work on project

Week 9
Tuesday, 10/22
Descriptive statistics (Continued)

Thursday, 10/24
Review for Exam 2

Thursday [LAB]
Work on project

Week 10
Tuesday, 10/29
Examination 2

Thursday, 10/31
Hypothesis testing

Thursday [LAB]
Work on project

Week 11
Tuesday, 11/5
Hypothesis testing (Continued)

Thursday, 11/7

Inferential statistics: t-test

Thursday [LAB]
    Work on project

Week 12
Tuesday, 11/12
    Inferential statistics: t-test (continued)

Thursday, 11/14
    Inferential statistics: correlation

Thursday [LAB]
    Work on project

Week 13
Tuesday, 11/19
    Inferential statistics: correlation (continued)

Thursday, 11/21 NO CLASS
Thursday [LAB] NO LAB

Week 14
Tuesday, 11/26
    Inferential statistics: chi-square

Thursday, 11/28 - - THANKSGIVING NO CLASS

Week 15
Tuesday, 12/3
    Presentations

Thursday, 12/5
    Review for final examination

Thursday [LAB]
    Work on project

Final Project Due – Tuesday, 12/10

Final Examination – Tuesday, 12/12 11am -1 pm