

COMM 301L: Empirical Research in Communication
Summer 2014
Lecture/Lab: Tuesday/Thursday, 10:00-12:05 pm, ASC G38

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Instructor: Neta Kligler-Vilenchik
Email: kliglerv@usc.edu
Office: ASC G6 (located at the G level of the west wing)
Office hours: By email appointment

Course description

This course provides you with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to design, conduct, analyze, write up, and present original empirical research in communication. Lectures will focus on the conceptual aspects of research, such as developing research questions, building measurements, sampling, designing methods, and analyzing data. You will also be putting the knowledge gained from course materials and lectures into practice, by completing an original research project. The course format will enable us to tackle some of your assignments within class time.

Course objectives

When you complete this course, you will be able to

- Have competence in reading, understanding and critiquing communication research
- Know how to design empirical research projects
- Know how to analyze quantitative data
- Know how to conduct a full research paper.

Course materials

- The Practice of Social Research (13th edition), by Earl Babbie (2012) (abbreviated as PSR; required). This book is available in University Bookstore or for purchase online. Online, there are cheaper options for its purchase: it can be purchased used, in paperback format, for Kindle, or it can even be rented for one semester.
- Lecture outlines, journal articles, and project materials – available on Blackboard
- SPSS is available in our classroom and in USC computer labs. *If* you would like to have it on your laptops, IBM® SPSS® Statistics Base GradPack is available for 6 month rental, see onthehub.com/spss.

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

Evaluation of performance

Your grade will be calculated based on the following formula:

Exam 1 15%
Exam 2 15%
Exam 3 15%
Research project 30% (Final paper and presentation)
Homework assignments 15%
Attendance and participation 10%

Note: Extra credit opportunities (up to 2% maximum) may be available through not 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

Examinations

There will be three examinations for this course, and they generally hold the following format:

- Multiple choice questions
- Short answer questions
- Analysis questions

Latter examinations may be cumulative in part due to the nature of this course, as information learned later in the course builds upon previous knowledge. The purpose is not to impose a burden on you, but is due to the fact that in research, decisions made in early phases 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.

Research project

The research project is meant to enable you to apply your knowledge of research (that you are learning from your text book, readings, and lecture) to the process of actually doing meaningful research. The end deliverable for this project is a research paper (about 15-20 pages long). To

help you make progress and get the feedback that you'll need to succeed, the project is broken into multiple segments with specific deliverables.

Parts of the course 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 more person.

It is crucial to deliver assignments on time. Late delivery will be significantly penalized (half of possible score per assignment). Punctual delivery of assignments leads to successful final projects.

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.

Assignments

There will be 8 assignments – see document reading and assignment schedule. All homework assignments must be completed in order to pass this course. Some will be done individually, and some with your teammate. Most will serve as milestones toward completion of your final paper. Late assignments will receive half credit at most. However, the homework must still be completed to pass this course.

All assignments will be uploaded to Blackboard.

Attendance and participation in class

Attendance will be taken. The goal is punctual attendance and active participation in class sessions.

One absence from lecture will be excused without penalty. For this absence, you need not tell me why. Thereafter, the second absence costs 1% of the total grade, the third 2%, the fourth 3%. Absence beyond the fourth open the possibility that you may fail the course. We cover a lot of material in class sessions, and being absent will significantly hurt your ability to succeed in this course. However, if you have a legitimate reason for absence—such as illnesses or family emergencies—these will be accepted. Please communicate with me ahead of time and we can discuss the work that needs to be done to compensate for such absences.

For participation, come to class prepared, having done your readings, and be ready to discuss the material. Asking questions or contributing to the discussion count as participation. I will not reward and may penalize disrespectful behavior toward other students or ourselves, or indifferent engagement. An example is surfing social media during class to the point of being distracted from class content.

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 (<http://www.turnitin.com>) 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.

Course Outline (tentative)

* For the reading and assignment schedule, refer to the document "Reading & Assignment schedule"

** For most weeks, the Tuesday session will be fully devoted to lecture. Thursday sessions will be split; the first half for lecture and the second half for lab. Later in the semester we might use our time more flexibly depending on the progress of research projects.

There will be no class on Thursday, 5/22.

Tuesday, 5/27

Introduction and orientation
Ways of knowing

Thursday, 5/29
Research questions & hypotheses

Thursday [LAB]
Project orientation

Week 2

Tuesday, 6/3
Variables and measurement
Relationships and causation
Research ethics

Thursday, 6/5
Research methods
Survey

Thursday [LAB]
Searching articles online
APA
Writing article summaries

Week 3

Tuesday, 6/10
Survey (cont.)
Experiments

Thursday, 6/12
Experiments (cont.); Content analysis

Thursday [LAB]
Choose research topic and questions as team
Search and review existing research

Week 4

Tuesday, 6/17
Content analysis (cont.)
Review for exam 1

Thursday, 6/19
Exam 1

Thursday [LAB]
Search and review of past research

Decide on research method

Week 5

Tuesday, 6/24

Measurement reliability and validity
Threats to validity
Probability sampling

Thursday, 6/26

Non probability sampling
Data collection

Thursday [LAB]

Finding existing measurement
Work on operationalization

Week 6

Tuesday, 7/1

Descriptive statistics

Thursday, 7/3

Descriptive statistics (cont)

Thursday [LAB]

Qualtrics demo

Week 7

Tuesday, 7/8

Descriptive statistics (cont); Review for exam 2

Thursday, 7/10

Exam 2

Thursday [LAB]

SPSS intro / Qualtrics

Week 8

Tuesday, 7/15

Inferential statistics
Hypothesis testing

Thursday, 7/17

Hypothesis testing (cont); t-test

Thursday [LAB]
SPSS: descriptive statistics

Week 9

Tuesday, 7/22
t-test (cont)

Thursday, 7/24
Correlation

Thursday [LAB]
SPSS – t-test

Week 10

Tuesday, 7/29
Correlation (cont)

Thursday, 7/31
Data analysis; writing results section

Thursday [LAB]
SPSS – correlation

Week 11

Tuesday, 8/5
Review for final exam

Thursday, 8/7
Final exam

Thursday [LAB]
Work on final paper

Week 12

Tuesday, 8/12
Presentations

August 19 – final paper due by midnight