

Communication 494
Communication Research Practicum
Fall 2017

Ken Sereno

Meeting Days, Times and Room: Wednesdays; 3:30 to 5:20; ASCJ 202-C

Office Hours:

Tuesdays: 10:00-12:30
Wednesdays: 10:00-12:30; 2:00-3:20
Thursdays: 10:00-12:30
Other times by arrangement.

Text:

Patten, Mildred L. (2011). **Understanding research methods: An overview of the essentials**. Glendale: Pycszak Publishing.

Field, Andy. (2013). **Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics**. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Course Description:

This course gives you practical skill in conducting empirical communication research. The course will give you experience in every phase of conducting empirical research, including formulating proper research questions, finding relevant theoretic and empirical research, formulating hypotheses, developing an appropriate research method, conducting and gathering data, analyzing findings statistically, and writing a research report. All of you will work as members of a research team under my direction.

Each semester is different. What you will experience depends upon the phase of the research process a specific study is at and the complexity of the study. A study may take two and sometimes three semesters to complete.

Format of the Course:

We meet every Wednesday from 3:30-5:20. This is not a lecture class. Everything we cover will be done as a research team. What we cover on a specific date depends upon what has to be done. I will send you an agenda about 6 days before each class meeting. The agenda will indicate what tasks we'll be addressing and your assignment for the coming week.

Keep a weekly log. I will send the form to you. In the log you'll note what you've done in connection with the study and how much time you've spent. You'll turn your log in to me at the end of the semester. At that time I will assess the quantity and quality of your work based on criteria that will be described below.

Each of you must take the online CITI course that qualifies you to do research with human subjects. You must also get an Annenberg Qualtrics account. Surveys we create are typically distributed through Qualtrics. For you to

have editing access to any survey that we create as a collaborating researcher, you must have taken the CITI course.

Grading:

Your grade will be based on three factors: (1) Contribution to the research project (60 percent), (2) Team self-evaluations (20 percent), and (3) Weekly logs (20 percent).

First, my evaluation of your contribution to the research project based on the following criteria:

1. **Attendance:** You must attend a minimum of 85 percent of the classes to earn a superior attendance grade.
2. **Assignments:** Did assignments on time with high quality.
3. **Time Contributions:** Gathered journal articles and books, collected data, entered data into SPSS, prepared charts, tables and graphs, etc.
4. **Intellectual Contributions:** Proposed projects, suggested methods and procedures, suggested statistical tests and analyses, interpreted prior research, analyzed research findings, wrote/edited final paper.
5. **Leadership:** Suggested areas of focus, distribution of assignments, methods of coordinating work, motivated team members, handled conflict.
6. **Team Player:** Was supportive, positive, and cooperative.
7. **Overall Contribution**

Second, team self-evaluations based on the seven criteria above.

Third, my evaluation of your weekly logs and self-evaluation. I will judge the quantity and quality of the work you report in your logs and the quality of your self-evaluation.

Research Projects Leading to the Project for Spring Semester 2016:

In the spring of 2015, students in Comm 494 developed a beta version of a study to determine the factors that underlie non-communication majors' attitudes toward the field of communication. A proposal was submitted to the USIRB, which approved the study. The survey for the study was pilot tested with a focus group. The revised survey was administered to 159 non-communication majors. The factor analysis failed to reveal strong underlying factors. There were fundamental errors with the scales that were used.

In the fall of 2016, the goal was to develop a brand new survey from scratch. The first third of the semester was spent developing the survey. The first version was tested with a focus group. The scales used for this version seemed to be capable of uncovering factors underlying attitudes toward the field of communication. The focus group suggested that the survey be expanded to

include perceptions of communication students. Time was taken to create scales that tapped factors underlying attitudes toward students majoring in communication. The revised survey was tested with a second focus group. This focus group suggested further modifications to the survey. After the modifications were made, the survey was distributed to non-communication students. An insufficient number of responses were gathered by the end of the semester to conduct a factor analysis.

Research Project for Spring 2017

The survey was distributed to undergraduate non-communication majors. The goal was to obtain a minimum of 250 surveys. We obtained 360 surveys. Students used SPSS to compute descriptive statistics and various inferential statistics, including t-tests, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Factor Analysis. The factor analysis revealed factors underlying non-communication majors' perceptions of the field of communication and communication students.

Research Project for Fall 2017

A similar survey measuring communication majors' perceptions of the field of communication and communication students will be distributed to communication students. Comparisons will be made between non-communication majors' perceptions and communication majors' perceptions.