Course Number: CMGT 514
Title: Analytical Tools for Communication Decisions
Semester: Fall 2019
Time: 2:00-4.50pm
Room: ASC 228
Instructor: Mathew Curtis
Office: ASC 321 Phone 213-821-4430
Office hours: Monday 1.00-1.45pm and by appointment
Email: mcurtis@usc.edu (best for contact)
Course website: blackboard.usc.edu

Check your email linked to Blackboard regularly. I will regularly send emails about class agenda and logistical arrangements through Blackboard.

Course description
In many ways this course is an extension of CMGT 540. It covers statistics and methods. If you did not do well and/or did not enjoy 540 this class is likely not a good a fit for you.

An important task in today’s world is to make sense of various types of data in respect to communication. Data tell a story but this story needs to be interpreted and then communicated. One way to successfully achieve this communication is via statistics. Without statistics data are often simply overwhelming to the human brain. Statistics though simply represent more numbers (just as the data was) so again we must communicate statistics effectively otherwise information is lost. In this respect statistics is a tool for us to use, we use the history of the past (our data) to understand what happened and often in an attempt to predict the future. Perhaps the most important role for statistics is the ability of statistics to communicate support for opinions – whether these opinions are about marketing, who to hire, or where to expand. Everyone can have an opinion but statistics allows your communication to be grounded in data.

Given you are in this optional course the word statistics is likely less intimidating to you than many of your peers who avoided this class. We will work on demystifying statistics in this course and develop a perspective of statistics as a method of organizing data and understanding events. In other words a useful and valuable tool. Like most tools though statistics is only useful when used correctly. The second core component of this class is to analyze situations to determine what is needed to make and communicate decisions. Sometimes the data needed is already present but you need the ability to analyze the data to identify which specific data is useful. At other times though you need to identify what data is missing and propose the tools needed to collect that data. This is distinct from statistics and is in respect to analyzing a situation to identify what is known and what is not known. We then work on developing the skill set to collect appropriate data to reduce the number of things not known.

As you should recognize statistics can be complicated and generate a lot of numbers. As a
communication specialist we need to not only be able to calculate statistics but also to communicate what these statistics mean (and often this communication is with people who hate numbers and freak out about statistics). Data and statistics on their own do not make a compelling argument to most people and must be augmented by communication skills. One thing we will not do in this course is memorize formula. As much as possible we will try and avoid formula. This is an applied degree and I want the focus to be on using and doing. Just as you can drive a car without knowing what happens in the engine when you press the accelerator or brake pedal you can use statistics without knowing exactly what happens when you run an analysis.

In addition to statistics we will also examine methods not covered in CMGT 540 such as naturalistic observation and extend methods we did examine in CMGT 540. Given this successful completion of CMGT 540 is a prerequisite for the class. Although this description focuses more on statistics than method the ability to understand and apply methods is essential for data collection and analysis. We will spend similar time on method as we do statistics and use both method and statistics to generate decisions. Given that research methods and research question formulation is an important part of this course.

All the articles we read in this class are published in communication journals. This reflects the focus of the course design to serve future careers in the communication industry. To be an effective communication practitioner it is important to know and master knowledge from leading communication journals.

In short, we will use a variety of tools (e.g. SPSS, survey method) to analyze a situation to make decisions. Once the decision is made we practice how to communicate these decisions effectively.

**Course format**

Class will meet weekly for 2 hours and 50 minutes. Class meetings will consist of lectures, presentations, exercises, videos and/or discussions.

**Learning objectives**

Statistics and research methods are an evolving discipline. It is easy to think that statistics and research methods do not change but the fields develop to evolve new techniques. For instance, a focus group today can be very different from one fifty or even five years ago. We will examine modern techniques for research methods and statistics as well as covering the older traditional foundations on which these are based. We will utilize both methods and statistics to analyze situations, make decisions, and then communicate conclusions.

The objective of this course is to educate you regarding a selection of research methods and statistics. Through the reading of communication articles you will understand how communication professionals and researchers utilize data to communicate decisions. This will empower you to communicate effectively the conclusions you generate. Given this is a 15 week
course and not a statistics/methods degree we will not cover everything but by the end of the course you will be proficient and skilled in a number of methodological and analytical approaches which will differentiate you on the job market from your competition.

When you have completed this course you should be able to:
1. Form and communicate inferences from data.
2. Use data to make predictions which you can communicate concisely.
3. Apply data mining, data exploration and data screening.
4. Develop, review and use the naturalistic observation method.
5. Translate statistical reports into actionable recommendations.
6. Develop further methods learned in CMGT 540 – focus groups, surveys, content analysis, and experiments.
7. Perform complex analyses in the statistical programs SPSS and R.
8. Be able to identify known and unknown information in a variety of situations.

Reading materials
As a CMGT student you should already own this.


Readings posted on blackboard. Price: Free
Readings posted on blackboard. Price: Free

$$ - in this class we will collect data online which costs money (payment of participants). Each student will likely spend about $40-50 collecting data during the class.

SPSS. This software program is required but you have access to a free copy as an Annenberg student. We will discuss in class how you access this program.

R. This software program is required but is available for free online. We will discuss in class how you access this program.

Assignments
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research projects</td>
<td>40% (4 times 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method and statistical debates</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments &amp; Quizzes</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All assignments are submitted via blackboard in a Word document. Do not submit pdfs/pages or other types of files. Do not email submissions to me.

**Method and Statistical Debates (20%)**

Debates are an important way to develop critical thinking and persuasion skills. These are essential skills for a graduate of this program. Each student will take part in an in-class debate where you will debate a class mate for about 10 minutes. Some of these debates will be about statistics, some about research methods, and some about both. Reflecting the title of the course you will analyze a situation and make decisions based on the information available. A key component of the grade here is the ability to communicate/debate effectively. These are not presentations but debates where you will argue and counter argue. These are intended to be scary and fun at the same time.

**Discussions (4%)**

Throughout the semester there will be discussions. In most instances you prepare for these discussions before class and bring a print out of your preparation to class.

**Participation (5%)**

This grade is broken up into peer evaluations and overall course participation. There are peer evaluations where your group members will indicate how effective you were in group work.

Contribute professionally to class discussions, group work, and peer review. Simply being in class does not mean you score well on participation. Doing a minimum amount of work in the group activities means you will score poorly on participation. Students who take initiative in an appropriate manner in group work and at times do more than their ‘fair’ share of work (for instance helping a group member who is struggling) will likely score higher. I take note of students who are distracted in class time (e.g. surfing the web) or not participating appropriately in other ways and such students score poorly in participation. Similarly your group members notice this as well and so also evaluate you poorly.

If you do not complete the evaluation your participation score will be substantially lowered.
This is a graduate level course and the expectation is you are in class each week, you arrive on time, and do not leave early. You cannot participate in the course if you are not here. Given this is Los Angeles with the associated traffic problems and life happens there may be occasion where you are late, leave early, or miss class. If you know you will miss part, or all of, the class make sure to inform me ahead of time if possible and check with me about what work was missed and what make-up work is expected. Frequently being late or leaving early results in deductions from your course grade.

During the course we have frequent small group discussions and exercises. If you are not in class you are encouraged to participate in these activities remotely (e.g. via Skype). Doing so will mean less make-up work for you. If you do this please have a member of your group tell me at the start of the activity so I can confirm you are participating.

Missing class is always more work than being in class. The make-up work for a missed class takes longer than being in class. When you miss class all deadlines for the course remain the same unless an agreement is reached with me.

If you miss class email me promptly to inform me you have missed class. Your personal circumstances dictate what promptly means but in all but very rare instances this means within 24 hours. Failure to do this reduces your participation grade.

If you miss more than one class it lowers your participation grade unless the absence is approved by me. Missing class due to official university sponsored activities is permitted but you must notify me ahead of time and verify your activity falls within this category. If you have four or more unexcused absences from class, which represents more than 25% of the class, you will fail the class.

**Assignments & Quizzes (31%)**

Research generates data. Lots of data. Statistical skills are needed to interpret the data you gather. You will receive instruction on statistical concepts but perhaps the most effective way to learn statistics is via ‘hands-on’ use of statistical programs. In most assignments there is a dual focus – calculating the statistics but also communicating effectively the findings.

You will have various small assignments and quizzes throughout this course. There will also be reading quizzes. In any week there may be a quiz on the readings. This quiz will only cover the readings assigned for that week. For example, if there is a quiz in Week 3 it only assesses the readings assigned for Week 3. The quiz is not announced ahead of time and so you should prepare for a quiz every week by completing the readings. There is no quiz in Week 1. Reading quizzes are closed book and timed.
**Research Projects (40%)**

Following the format of a 540 method module you will learn about the naturalistic observation method, create a project chosen by you to collect data on using this method, analyze the data, and write a short paper. This is your chance to investigate something of interest to you. What would be useful for you to know more about? There will also be additional research projects discussed later in the class.

**Grading System**

The number of points each assignment is assigned does not reflect the importance of the assignment in determining your final grade. The weighting each assignment receives is the determining factor (see assignment table). Many assignments are scored out of 100 points (including all papers) but some important assignments are scored out of 10 points. Blackboard displays a weighted total which indicates your grade in the course.

**Final grade**

There is no rounding. Plus/minus grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.99% or less</td>
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</table>

Some students think that putting effort into a course automatically equals an “A” grade regardless of the level of mastery of the course material. In other words, some students mistakenly equate effort with mastery, which is not true. For example, a runner can put a lot of effort into a race, but if the runner has not mastered the effective techniques of running, then the running performance will not be excellent.
Weekly emails

Each week after class an email will be sent via blackboard. This email lists the tasks to complete before the next class. Typically this email will be sent within 24 hours of the end of class. I will usually have already described in class all the tasks listed in the email. The email serves as a convenient reminder/to do list and may occasionally list things not previously described in class. It is your responsibility to check your email and ensure you are aware of what is expected.

Due Dates

The majority of work is due at the time class starts.

Writing Quality

The course project demands much in terms of writing. The quality of your writing will significantly influence how your work is evaluated.

Many students judge themselves to be good writers. This judgment is often over-optimistic. The writing demands in this course are very high, complex, and constant. Even competent writers will be challenged. Hence, be prepared to expend much effort in improving your writing. I encourage you to be open and receptive to feedback for improving.

The effort to improve must come from you. I will highlight where your writing needs to improve, and point you to resources. Then, it is your responsibility to use these resources to improve.

How will writing quality be evaluated? One basic component is writing mechanics. Good mechanics refer to careful attention to spelling, punctuation, and grammar; good grammar includes subject-verb agreement, appropriate use of parallel structures, absence of sentence fragments, and so on. Another aspect of mechanics is the use of proper vocabulary and expressions. For a refresher, refer to owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html. More resources are listed at: dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter

Another component of writing quality is organization. In a well-organized paper, the arguments flow smoothly; the transitions from one idea to another are well written, i.e., the reader knows when different arguments are being presented and can grasp the important and subtle distinctions. A well-organized paper respects the reader’s cognitive burden and shepherds the reader’s attention carefully.

The basic criterion is to communicate well to your readers (your instructor and your peers). If your readers cannot understand your writing due to flaws in grammar, vocabulary or organization, then the quality of your thinking cannot be appreciated. I will not spend minutes to decipher a sentence you wrote. You cannot ask me to ignore poor writing in order to focus on content.
A paper with good ideas but bad writing will earn a poor grade. When evaluating your writing, I may correct the first few language errors. Thereafter, I may not comment on the same language error if it repeats elsewhere in the paper.

**Paper Guidelines**

All documents should be in Microsoft Word format. Papers must be type-written or word-processed, double-spaced, with 12 point font. Make sure you keep a copy of all submitted papers. Please ensure that each paper is written in APA style. Refer to the APA manual (6th Edition). Finally, typos and spelling errors are unforgivable at this level and reflect poorly on you. This is a professional program and a paper with multiple grammar, typo, or spelling errors will receive substantial deductions. All page length requirements are for double-spaced pages, with 1-inch margins, in 12-point Times New Roman font.

**Classroom atmosphere**

In this course, we will engage in classroom discussions. Any true discussion involves personal exposure and taking risks. Your ideas may or may not be consistent with those of your classmates. However, as long as your points are supportable, they need to be respected by all of us in the classroom.

There will be times when you will give wrong answers to technical questions posed during classroom discussions. This is acceptable because I assume that you do not know everything about methods and statistics. If you did, you would most likely not be enrolled in this course.

**Note on use of personal laptops during class.**

Many of you expect to be able to use your personal laptops in class. Laptops are useful tools but also distracting devices. When you have your laptop in front of you, you will tend to IM, email, check sport scores, or watch YouTube videos while your peers are trying to engage in the lecture. This is very frustrating. When you are using your laptop for tasks other than note taking you also distract those next to you. Distracting fellow students who are trying to attend to the lecture material is a selfish act. As an instructor it is typically obvious when a student is using their laptop for tasks unrelated to the class. To improve the classroom atmosphere please use laptops only for tasks related to the class. In many classes I may have times when all laptops are closed.

**Lateness**

I realize that all students may occasionally submit an assignment late. To encourage everyone to hand in assignments, I will accept late work. However, in fairness to those who do turn things in on time there will be a price to pay for late work. I will grade all late assignments and then deduct percentage points. Work less than 24 hours late will be deducted up to 10%, work more than 24 hours late but under a week late will be deducted up to 25%. Work that is more than one week late will be deducted up to 50%. An exception to this rule is at the end of the semester. Any
late work must be submitted before the last day of class unless approved by me. After the last class I am finalizing grades and grading the final paper and so typically cannot accept late work. If you are going to be late turning in an assignment, email me to notify me of this, and then email me again to alert me when you have submitted the assignment. Additionally, late assignments may only receive a score and no feedback or minimal feedback. Extensions are available but extensions will only be approved for a ‘good’ reason and it is my subjective interpretation of what good means. Additionally, unless the reason is unexpected extensions are highly unlikely to be approved when requested within 24 hours of the due date.

Class absence. As we only meet once a week, and much of the material from lecture does not overlap with that of the text, **attendance and participation is crucial.** Everyone is allowed one absence per term in recognition of the demands of life – however, note the make-up policy for any missed class (even the first class). If you do not attend class you are not participating. If you are **absent more than once** you will lose participation points unless a reason deemed valid by me is provided. If you miss a second class you are deducted 2% of the total grade, the third absence results in an additional 3%, the fourth an additional 5% (i.e., having four unexcused absences costs 10%, 2+3+5=10). Additionally, being absent from four or more classes opens the possibility that you may fail the course regardless of your performance in the class.

When you are absent from a class I need to ensure you understand the material. For this reason whenever you miss a class you owe me about three hours work (the length of a missed class). This means you will be required to write a five page paper on the material covered in the lecture that you missed. Five pages are about 1,500 words. You do not gain points for writing this paper. However, if you fail to submit a paper for a missed class you lose significant points from your final grade. The specific deduction is 5% for each missed paper. When you miss a class it is your responsibility to contact me within seven days to allow me to inform you of the material you will write five pages on and your due date for this paper. If you know ahead of time you are going to miss a class you can contact me before the missed class to discuss the five pages if you wish. Failing to contact me within seven days of the missed class equates to failing to complete the paper and you lose significant points from your final grade. This five page paper is required regardless of the reason for missing a class (e.g. family emergency, medical, work/career, sport, wedding/funeral, religious holiday). Note also the participation section in the evaluation of performance and how absence from class affects performance on this criterion. Completion of the five page paper does **not** compensate for your failure to participate in any class you miss. The five page paper should be emailed to me.

**The grade of incomplete (IN)**

A grade of incomplete can be assigned only if there is work not completed because of documented illness or some other emergency. Students must NOT assume that I will agree to the grade of IN. Removal of the grade of IN must be instituted by the student and agreed to by myself and the department and reported on the official “Incomplete Completion Form”
**Changes to syllabus**

The course schedule will be followed as closely as possible but may vary depending on the pace of the class.

**Course Schedule: An approximate weekly breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
*Data fluency* chapters 1-4 |
*Data fluency* chapters 5-8 |
*The analytical marketer* chapters 1-5. |

| Week 5 | Naturalistic observation for communication: Theory |

| Week 6 | Naturalistic observation for communication: Design |

| Week 7 | Naturalistic observation for communication: Analysis |

*Algorithms to live by chapters 1-5*

Algorithms to live by chapters 6-11 |


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 13</th>
<th>Data examination with a communication focus 2</th>
<th>No readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>No readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct .

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity code as detailed 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.

It is particularly important that you are aware of, and avoid, plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating data for a project, submitting the same paper to more than one class, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. If you have doubts about any of these practices, confer with a faculty member.

Resources on academic honesty can be found on the Student Judicial Affairs website:
( https://sjacs.usc.edu/ ): In the general resources tab on this website the following two guides are especially relevant

1. "Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism" addresses issues of paraphrasing, quotations and citations in written assignments, drawing heavily upon materials used in the university's Writing Program;

2. "Understanding and Avoiding Academic Dishonesty" addresses more general issues of academic integrity, including guidelines for adhering to standards concerning examinations and unauthorized collaboration.

The “SCampus" ( http://www.usc.edu/scampus ) contains the university's Student Conduct Code and other student-related policies.

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. 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.

Disabilities policy

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

http://dsp.usc.edu/

Library access

As a USC student, you have access to all the library resources and the Annenberg Librarian, Chimene Tucker (cetucker@usc.edu), is available to assist you with any inquiry you may have.

Statement on Support Systems

Support Systems:
Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.
https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/

Sexual Assault Resource Center
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: http://sarc.usc.edu/

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class: https://equity.usc.edu/
Bias Assessment Response and Support
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response: https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/

Diversity at USC – https://diversity.usc.edu/
Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students