



**DSM 550:**  
**Analytics and Research Methodology**  
4 units

**Fall 2019**

**Wednesday 6:30-9:20pm**

**Location:** See [Schedule of Classes](#) for assigned classroom.

**Instructor:** Morten Bay, Ph.D.

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 4:00-5:15pm.

Sign up for office hours at:

<https://bay-usc.youcanbook.me>

**Office:** ASC 321

**Contact Info:** mortench@usc.edu,

@mortenbay on Twitter

@mortenbay1 on Instagram

**Course Description:**

This course introduces students to the most common research methods in the field of communication, with a specific focus on techniques used in the digital and social media arenas.

You may wonder why you are required to take a course on academic research and analytics methods when your career objective is to work as a practitioner, not a researcher, in a media world dominated by digital and social platforms?

The simple answer is that when you work with digital media platforms or manage social media in the commercial space, research is everywhere:

- You conduct research when you collect data to find out who your customers/users are and what they think of your product.
- You need either your own or other people's research to find out how to most efficiently reach new audiences, or to determine the optimal time of day to publish a social media asset.
- You need data or documentation to back up your claims when you try to persuade your CEO to prioritize your strategy or project.

Those are just a few examples that illustrate how conducting research or learning from research studies performed by others is unavoidable if you pursue a career in digital social media.

In this course, you will learn how to read papers and data sets describing studies of digital platforms and social media, and how to approach conducting similar research yourself. The course will introduce you to both quantitative and qualitative communication research methods such as surveys, ethnography, experiments, content analysis, and discourse analysis. You will learn the basic descriptive and inferential statistical techniques used to analyze any quantifiable

data collected in such studies. More importantly, the course unpacks the most significant methods used in the digital realm, including network analysis/visualization as well as social media analytics.

### **Learning Objectives:**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Read, comprehend, and explain the results of studies performed using conventional research methods in the field of communication.
- Comprehend and explain the results of network analysis and the most common methods of network visualization.
- Review and summarize social media analytics data.
- Choose an effective method of inquiry for obtaining information critical to any project.
- Begin the process of designing and initiating a communication research study.
- Choose which parameters to measure as well as collect, visualize and analyze data in a social media analytics setting.

### **Class Readings:**

All texts for this class will be available as PDFs on Blackboard, except one.

The only textbook you will need to acquire is '**The Cartoon Introduction to Statistics**' by **Grady Klein and Alan Dabney**: <https://www.amazon.com/Cartoon-Introduction-Statistics-Grady-Klein/dp/0809033593/>

(Please note that a similar book exists called 'The Cartoon GUIDE to Statistics'. Do NOT buy this book as it is inferior to the above one).

**OPTIONAL:** Several excerpts from 'Understanding Communication Research Methods' by Stephen M. Croucher and Daniel Cronn-Mills will be used in class and provided as PDFs. Feel free to purchase this book in paper form if you find that format more convenient – but it is by no means required.

### **Class Assignments:**

There are three major assignments in this class: a statistics quiz, a survey assignment and a final assignment. In addition, weekly reading check quizzes (not the same as the statistics quiz) will must be taken online and completed before each class.

Brief descriptions of these assignments follow. More detailed assignment prompts for the three major assignments, including requirements and submission information, will be distributed in due time.

### Weekly Reading Checks:

You are required to complete online reading check quizzes each week. These will consist of short quizzes (1-5 questions) consisting of multiple-choice questions that gives you the opportunity to check if you have understood the week's reading correctly. Note that the quizzes are mandatory and that completing them carries more weight with regard to the final grade than answering them all 100% correctly. The accumulated point total from the week's quizzes will be converted to a score that will make up 15 percent of your final grade.

### Statistics Quiz:

Upon reading "The Cartoon Introduction to Statistics" by Klein and Dabney, your comprehension of descriptive statistics will be tested in a quiz taken online. Please be aware that the quiz is not an exam per se, but a tool to check your understanding of the material. This will be reflected in the quiz design. It is worth 15 percent of your final grade. **Due date: October 9.**

### Survey Assignment:

Combining the survey and statistics methodologies taught in the weeks prior, you will design and execute a survey, analyze the data and write up the results in a paper, roughly 8-10 pages long, using descriptive statistics. You will have the option to revise this paper based on feedback from Dr. Bay and submit the revised version two weeks later. Your grade in the first version of the assignment will make up 20 percent of your final grade, your revised version 15 percent. **Due date: October 30. Revision due: November 20.**

### Final Assignment / Paper:

In the final paper, you will conduct a study based on one of the methods described in the course, either qualitative or quantitative. It is permitted to do another survey or re-analyze the data collected in the survey assignment, using a different type of data analysis than before. The resulting paper is expected to be longer than the survey assignment, between 12-15 pages. This assignment is worth 25 percent of your grade. **Due date: December 16.**

## **Assignment Submission Policies**

Style and formatting rules: Assignments must be submitted double-spaced, using a standard, legible font in 12-point size. Only .DOC(X), .PDF or .RTF files will be accepted. You are free to choose any academic writing style, as long as you adhere to its rules consistently throughout your paper. However, APA style is encouraged, as some USC Annenberg programs use it exclusively.

Submission rules: Assignments are submitted through Blackboard. If Blackboard is down, you are welcome to submit your assignment to me via email by the deadline, but be sure to attach a screenshot confirming blackboard issues.

### Breakdown of Grade:

Assignment	% of Grade
Class participation	10
Reading checks	15
Statistics Quiz	15
Survey Assignment (20%) + revision (15%)	35
Final Assignment	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Course Grading Policy:

You will receive details about each assignment/exam separately. **All assignments need to be completed and handed in on time to avoid a grade reduction. If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, you must provide written documentation that will allow you to be excused, or discuss your situation with me in a timely manner. Do not wait until the end of the semester to sort things out.**

In order to pass this class, you will need to complete ALL of the assignments. Failure to complete one or more of them will result in an F in the class.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A/A-	outstanding, thoughtful and enthusiastic work
B+/B	above average work, demonstrating good insight into assignment
B-/C+	needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow-through
C and below	fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores won the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A	= 100-94	C	= 76-74
A-	= 94-90	C-	= 73-70
B+	= 89-87	D+	= 69-67
B	= 86-84	D	= 66-64
B-	= 83-80	D-	= 63-60
C+	= 79-77	F	= 59-0

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must appeal it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate, within one week of receiving the graded assignment. No late appeals will be accepted for review.

### **A note on writing and class participation**

The quality of your writing *\*will\** affect your grade in this class. Please leave yourself enough time to revise and edit your written work carefully, and seek help from the various writing resources on campus, including:

Graduate writing coach Francesca Gacho  
(<https://cmgtwriting.uscannenberg.org> )

The Writing Center  
(<https://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/>)

For non-native English speakers, there are additional resources here:  
<https://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/for-non-native-speakers/>

Note that the class participation part of your grade will not merely be evaluated based on attendance, but also your performance in class discussions and in-class activities.

### **Other Classroom Policies:**

#### **Respectful Learning Environment**

This class -- and USC in general -- is a place for all of us to become better versions of ourselves, and to learn from each other.

Therefore, a strict zero-tolerance policy for any speech or behavior that can be construed as demeaning or discriminatory on the basis of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, culture or religion is enforced in this class. You will be asked to leave if you engage in any of the above and further punitive steps will be taken if necessary.

Conversely, if you have any concerns or issues at all with utterances or actions by me or another student, please inform me immediately. I see it as my utmost duty to create a safe space in the classroom and to make everyone feel welcome.

Please refrain from activities that may distract your classmates and therefore compromise their ability to learn. These activities include regularly arriving late to class, and regularly getting up to leave in the middle of class. If you have to leave early or arrive late, please inform the instructor beforehand and do so in an orderly and non-disruptive manner.

If you do not adhere to these basic standards of classroom decorum, I reserve the right to dismiss you from the class to ensure a quality learning environment for your peers. If you have concerns about your ability to undertake these responsibilities, please see me early in the semester.

## Technology

Some studies show that we learn better when we write with pen and paper than on a computer or tablet, and for that reason, you are encouraged to do so when writing notes for yourself. For many people, however, handwriting notes is a slower process than typing, and can impair their ability to obtain a complete set of class notes. You are therefore allowed to use laptops and tablets in class.

However, and I cannot stress this enough, spending significant parts of class time on non-class related activities, such as checking social media or watching a YouTube video with the sound off will impact your grade. This is not just because the instructor might accidentally discover it and dock your class participation grade. It is a simple fact with a ton of evidence behind it that not paying attention will lessen your comprehension and you will have difficulties completing the assignments. You are adults and are responsible for your own education. There are always some students who fall prey to the distractions mentioned above and are get into trouble when the assignments are due. Don't be one of those students.

Non-class-related use of smartphones during the lecture is **NOT** allowed. If you are expecting an important call or message, please keep your device on vibrate, out of sight, and step quietly outside the classroom to respond. If you keep exiting the class because you are in a texting argument with your partner, I will ask you to leave the class for the night. If you have a smartwatch and can use it discreetly, I will allow it. If you need to have your smartphone out because of a family emergency, or because you are using it in lieu of a laptop or tablet, please inform me about it right before class starts.

Use of any other devices not related to class is banned. This includes, but is not limited to: gaming devices, drones, media players, devices used for communicating with the dead, oscilloscopes, UFO scanners, rocket powered roller skates, unmanned spy planes, sphygmomanometers, robots that serve you drinks, or anything whose use would be a distraction to the class.

If you have any special needs or disabilities that must be taken into administrative consideration, please inform the instructor as soon as possible.

## **Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/26/19 – 12/6/19) (optional)**

Friday, September 13: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 13: Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W," except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001

Tuesday, September 17: Last day to drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund for Session 001

Friday, October 11: Last day to drop a course without a mark of "W" on the transcript. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the week three equivalent for short sessions) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, November 15: Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

*Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change based on the progress of the class, current events, and/or guest speaker availability.*

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
<b>Week 1 Aug 28</b>	Introduction.  Ethnography, Interviewing, Focus Groups	Croucher and Cronn-Mills: "Understanding Communication Research Methods"  p. 2-7 , p. 133-146, p. 155-167, P. 173-184  (These pages appear sequentially in the PDF)	
<b>Week 2 Sep 4</b>	Netnography.  Library research session with Chiméne E. Tucker, USC Libraries.	Kozinets: "Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online" p. 58-73	<b>[Labor Day: Monday, September 2]</b>
<b>Week 3 Sep 11</b>	Grounded theory and Case Studies	Daymon and Holloway: "Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications", p. 114-144 (Chapter 7+8)	
<b>Week 4 Sep 18</b>	Critical Studies and discourse analysis	Merrigan and Huston: "Communication Research Methods", page 261-275,  Croucher and Cronn-Mills: "Understanding Communication Research Methods" P. 310-331	
<b>Week 5 Sep 25 No class</b>	Read Stats book and take quiz	Klein and Dabney "The Cartoon Introduction To Statistics"	
<b>Week 6 Oct 2</b>	Descriptive Statistics	Croucher and Cronn-Mills: "Understanding Communication Research Methods" P. 238-252	

<b>Week 7 Oct 9</b>	Inferential Statistics	Croucher and Cronn-Mills: "Understanding Communication Research Methods" P- 261-286	Statistics Quiz due
<b>Week 8 Oct 16</b>	Surveys and experiments	Croucher and Cronn-Mills: "Understanding Communication Research Methods" p. 222-237, p. 292-310	
<b>Dates: 10/17-10/18</b>	<b>No Classes</b>		<b>[Fall Break]</b>
<b>Week 9 Oct 23</b>	Content Analysis	Croucher and Cronn-Mills: "Understanding Communication Research Methods" p. 205-222	
<b>Week 10 Oct 30</b>	Network analysis 1	Valente: "Communication Network Analysis"	Survey assignment due
<b>Week 11 Nov 6</b>	Network analysis 2	Krempel: "Network Visualization"	Survey assignment returned for revision
<b>Week 12 Nov 13</b>	Social media analytics 1	Tuten & Solomon: <i>Social Media Marketing, chapter 10</i> : Social Media Analytics, p. 316-337	
<b>Week 13 Nov 20</b>	Social media analytics 2	Tuten & Solomon: <i>Social Media Marketing, chapter 11</i> : Social Media Metrics	Revised Survey assignment due
<b>Week 14 Nov 27</b>	No class/ Thanksgiving		
<b>Week 15 Dec 4</b>	Visual studies in social media	Pearce et al.: "Visual cross-platform analysis: digital methods to research social media images"	<b>Course evaluations submitted in class</b>
<b>Week 16 + 17</b>	Study days + exams		<b>Final assignment due Monday, Dec 16</b>

### 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” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](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, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](https://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

#### Support Systems:

*Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*  
[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call*  
[engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) / Title IX - (213) 740-5086*  
[equity.usc.edu](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

*Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421*  
[studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*  
[dsp.usc.edu](https://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710*  
[studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](https://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.