USCAnnenberg

CMGT 514: Analytical Tools for Communication Decisions
Four units
Spring 2020 – Monday – 2-4.50pm
Section: 21720
Location: ASC 328
Instructor: Mathew Curtis
Office: ASC 321
Office hours: Monday 1-2pm.
Contact info: mcurtis@usc.edu
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.

Student Learning Outcomes

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.

Prerequisite(s): none
Co-Requisite(s): none
Concurrent Enrollment: none
Recommended Preparation: familiarity with intermediate statistics and SPSS

Description and Assessment of Assignments

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.

Research Projects (40%)

Following the format of a 540 method module you will learn about the naturalistic observation method, self-select a topic and collect data on that topic 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 is also a larger project, again self-selected, which will be discussed during class, which consists of three parts, a proposal, a presentation, and a paper.

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.

Grading

Breakdown of Grade

Component	Weighting
Research projects	40% (4 times 10)
Method and statistical debates	20%
Discussions	4%
Participation	5%
Assignments & Quizzes	31%

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.

Grading Scale

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

Letter Grade	Grade Range
A	93-100%
A-	90-92.99%
B+	87-89.99%
B	83-86.99%
B-	80-82.99%
C+	77-79.99%
C	73-76.99%
C-	70-72.99%
D	60-69.99%
F	59.99% or less

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.

Grading Timeline

Most work will be graded within 7 days of submission.

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 toowl.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.

Assignment Submission Policy

The majority of work is due at the time class starts and submitted via blackboard. Exceptions to this will be listed in the weekly email and/or in class.

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.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
   ISBN# 1433805618 / 978-1433805615. Price: $21
   As a CMGT student you should already own this.

We will likely use some Harvard Business School articles
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.

Laptop Policy

All students are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the Annenberg Digital Lounge for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's Information Technology Services website.

Note on Use of Laptops during Class

Many of you expect to be able to use your 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 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"

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 1/13/20 – 5/1/20)
Friday, January 31: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001
Tuesday, February 4: Last day to drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund for Session 001
Friday, February 28: Last day to drop a course without a mark of "W" on the transcript for Session 001. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]
Friday, February 28: Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade for Session 001. [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]
Friday, April 3: Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown
The course schedule will be followed as closely as possible but may vary depending on the pace of the class and possible guest speaker.
Readings are assigned on blackboard and vary depending on the work covered during class.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 **13th January**	Introduction, 540 recap	Reverse scoring	
Week 2 **20th January**	Holiday No Class		
Week 3 **27th January**	Data screening, splitting, and syntax	Syntax	

Week 4 **3rd February**	Composites, selecting data	Selecting data	
Week 5 **10th February**	Topic generation, Naturalistic observation	Research topic generation	
Week 6 **17th February**	Holiday No Class		
Week 7 **24th February**	Naturalistic Observation	Research ideas	
Week 8 **2nd March**	Guest speaker		
Week 9 **9th March**	Naturalistic Observation	Observations practice	
Spring Break **16th March**	Holiday No Class	Observations collection	Observation paper
Week 10 **23rd March**	Repeated measures	Repeated measures	
Week 11 **30th March**	Effect sizes	Effect sizes	Research proposal
Week 12 **6th April**	SLR	SLR	
Week 13 **13th April**	MLR, LR	MLR, LR	
Week 14 **20th April**	R intro		
Week 15 **27th April**	R calculations	R calculations	
Finals 11th May			Poster Paper

Policies and Procedures

Communication

Outside of class time email is the best way to contact me. Face-to-face communication is usually better so if possible talk to me during class or office hours. Office hours are best used via appointment. You are welcome to attend office hours without an appointment but during office hours priority is given to students who have an appointment. If you have not received a response from me within 48 hours please contact me again as I have likely missed your initial email.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems
a. Academic Conduct
Plagiarism
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. Other forms of academic dishonesty are
equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on
scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

b. Support Systems
Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.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
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 and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL),
press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call*
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-
based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by 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.
The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct,
intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim
measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and
Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776
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
uscsa.usc.edu
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
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, 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
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund
https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards
The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.