



**COMM (301): Empirical Research in  
Communication (4 units)**  
**Summer 2021 – Tues/Thurs, 9:30am-1:40pm**  
**Section: 20477D**  
**Location:** online via Zoom  
**Instructor: Liyuan Wang**  
**Office:** online via Zoom  
**Office Hours: by appointment.**  
**Contact Info: liyuanwa@usc.edu**

### **I. Course Description**

Social science research is not just for scientists to make new discoveries. One needs to have some knowledge in social science research to make more informed decisions (to start with, not drinking disinfectants). This course is designed to help you develop literacies in the social scientific approach. It aims to help you develop the ability to understand, interpret, and design social science research in the field of communication. Lectures will be focused on the philosophy of empirical research, which includes, but not limited to, generating hypotheses, creating measurements, and developing your own research projects. In the lab sessions, you will also learn to analyze and interpret the results of your own research. You will be provided with a wide range of research tools that can help you organize and visualize your research findings.

### **II. Student Learning Outcomes**

In this course, you will develop skills in:

- Reading, understanding, and critiquing social science research
- Analyzing and visualizing quantitative data
- Conducting research in communication
- Writing and presenting your research

This course fulfills the General Education Requirement in Quantitative Reasoning (GE-F). “The quantitative reasoning category engages students in the analysis and manipulation of data and information related to quantifiable objects, symbolic elements, or logic in order to help them navigate the complexity and sophistication of the modern world. All quantitative reasoning courses, be they formal, abstract or empirical are designed to increase the capacity of students to evaluate chains of formal reasoning and to assess the validity of mathematical, logical, or statistical inferences. A course in this category aims to develop one or more of three sets of skills: formal reasoning (the use of formal logic or mathematics), abstract representation (the use or construction of symbolic or diagrammatic representations), and empirical analysis (the use of statistical inference).” ~Taken directly from General Education Requirements, University of Southern California

### **Required Readings/Materials:**

### **III. Course Notes**

- This course is delivered remotely through Zoom. You can have access to the class after you login on your Blackboard.
- COMM301 has a very rigorous schedule. And we are covering the materials that usually requires a whole semester in six weeks. To excel in this class, you are expected to (1) finish the assigned readings before class, (2) come to each class prepared to discuss the course content, and (3) actively participate in the class.

- As it is an online class, please turn on your cameras the whole time (except breaks). It could help me a lot in knowing if you understand the course materials.
- The first two hours (9:30am-11:30am) are usually lectures and discussions. The second two hours (11:40am-1:40pm) are usually reserved for labs.
- We will invite researchers to help you understand different examples of research

#### IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments

As it is an intensive summer course, let's try to get the most out of our class time. By that I mean you will be evaluated by only one exam rather than three. As *this is a lecture-lab combined course*, you are expected to accomplish *eight lab-assignments*. You are to complete a research project as a group assignment. You will also be asked to **write up your research project** to **present** your research as if you are presenting in an academic conference. *Class attendance and active participation* will also be counted as a factor in improving your grades.

**Attendance policy.** Attendance directly and indirectly reflects your grade. You have two absences without harming your grade for this class. However, your grade will be affected if you miss class activities during those two absences. Each absence (beyond your two free absences) will result in a 10% reduction of your participation grade. Absences for illness or personal emergencies may be excused if the student presents satisfactory documentation to the instructor within 7 days of the absence. Documentation for illness normally requires a note from the doctors of university health services or your physicians. If you have an illness but do not have such documentation, or if you have missed class or will miss class because of a non-medical emergency, please consult the instructor to discuss the kind of documentation you will need to provide. In the case of family excuses, a copy of an obituary or a lawyer's note is required.

#### V. Grading

##### a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
8 Lab Assignments	300 = 37.5 * 8	30
Research paper	300	30
Research Presentation	150	15
Exam	150	15
Participation	100	10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b>

#### VI. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

#### VII. Grading Standards and Grading Timeline

**Final Grades.** You may earn a possible 100 points in this class. Your final letter grade will reflect this distribution:

<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>
93-100 %	A	930 - 1000
90-92%	A-	900 - 929
88-89 %	B+	880 - 899
83-87%	B	830 - 879
80-82%	B-	800 - 829
78-79 %	C+	780 - 799
73-77%	C	730 - 779
70-72%	C-	700 - 729
60-69%	D	600 - 699
59% and below	F	599 and below

**A Note About Grades:**

**A** = Work that is outstanding and exceeds all assignment requirements.

**B** = Work that is good in most areas and exceeds some assignment requirements.

**C** = Work that is average and that generally meets the minimum expectations of the assignment.

**D** = Work that does not sufficiently meet all of the minimum expectations of the assignment.

**F** = Work that fails to meet any of the assignment requirements.

**Note:** Your final grade is final. Adjustments will be made only in the case of a mathematical error. Applying subjective standards after the fact in order to bolster your grade is unfair to your classmates, and therefore will not occur.

**VIII. Assignment Submission Policy**

- All due dates are reflected in the course schedule section
- **24/7 Rule:** By enforcing a 24/7 rule, I do not discuss the grade you earned for all papers, tests, and assignments until at least 24 hours after they are returned to you. The 24-hour rule gives students time to take careful consideration and reflection of their grades, which facilitates meaningful discussion. In addition, if you want to discuss your grade, you must contact me within 7 days of the assignment being returned to you. I will not discuss the grade of your past assignments after a week.
- **Policy for Make-Up Assignments:** Make-up assignments are allowed only under extenuating circumstances with proper documentation. The course instructor determines those situations in accordance with college and university policies.

**IX. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

- Dixon, J. C., Singleton, R. A., Jr., & Straits, B. C. (2019). The process of social research (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. [Available at the USC Bookstore or Online via Chegg Books, Vital Source, Knetbooks]
- All additional required readings will be made available on Blackboard (Bb).
- SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS). IBM SPSS is available via: (a) Remote Access through Cloudapps.usc.edu (VDI) [free], and (c) software rental (<http://www.onthehub.com/spss/> or <https://studentdiscounts.com>) [purchase].

**Recommended Supplemental Materials**

- American Psychological Association (2009). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

**X. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

**Important note to students:** Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change

- based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

		Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1	July-1	Theory and Conceptualization	Lab1: introduction to SPSS,	
Week 2	July-6	Variables, types of relationships, hypotheses, and normal distribution	Lab2: central tendency/dispersion , reliability and composites	July-6 <sup>th</sup> by class time
	July-8	Ethics (IRB, common sense, politics) , Will leave time for class projects	Lab 3: hypothesize and research question writing	July 8 <sup>th</sup> by class time
Week 3	July-13	Measurement and correlations	Lab 4: reliability	July 13 <sup>th</sup> by class time
	July-15	Content Analysis	Lab5 : Frequencies & Kalpha	July 15 <sup>th</sup> by class time
Week 4	July-20	Sampling, Experiments, and one-way ANOVA (guest lecture)	Lab6: one-way ANOVA Research Project Assignments (plan your groups and research ideas ahead of time)	July 16 <sup>th</sup> by class time
	July-22	Experiments, and one-way ANOVA, CONT.	Lab 7: Linear Regression	July 22 <sup>nd</sup> by class time
Week 5	July-26	Guest Lecture: starting with communication research by Leslie Clark, Children's hospital, Los Angeles	Class meeting for your research project  Lab 8: write up your research results in APA	July 26 <sup>th</sup> by class time
	July-29	Surveys and linear regression	Research Topic Due	July 29 <sup>th</sup> by class time
Week 6	August-3	Networks and other computation methods		
	August-5	Research Project Presentation		Presentation slides will be graded
FINAL EXAM	August-10	Final Paper Due	.	

## XI. Policies and Procedures

## **Communication**

*This is a rather hands-on class, you will have the chance to ask questions and discuss research with me most of the time during class. If you need to meet with me other than class time, please email me and make an appointment. Please allow 24 hours for me to reply to your emails.*

## **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](http://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](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

#### *USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity*

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

### **b. Support Systems**

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](https://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](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*

[uscsa.usc.edu](https://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](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.

*Annenberg Student Success Fund*

<https://annenbergsuccessfund.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

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.