USCAnnenberg

COMM 305: Understanding Social Science Research (4 Units)

Fall 2023 – T, Th   2:00-3:20pm PST
Section: 20477R
Location: ANN 409 A, B, C

Professor: Andrea Hollingshead
Office Hours: 3:20-3:50p T, Th and by appointment
Email: aholling@usc.edu

Course Description

Social science is the scientific study of human social behavior. Much of what we know about human communication is based on social science research. Most careers in the media and communication industries rely on social science research and data to some extent, so understanding social science research gives students a professional as well as academic advantage. The focus in this course is on understanding, evaluating and communicating research rather than on actually conducting research. Topics include source credibility, research ethics, researcher objectivity and biases, research questions, theory and hypotheses, qualitative research (e.g. interviews, participant observations), quantitative research (e.g. experiments, surveys and polls), data analysis basics, interpretation of findings, study limitations, and the importance of replication. We will also discuss how to synthesize, evaluate and integrate research studies on a topic, and how to communicate research findings to a non-academic audience. At the end of this course, students will become informed consumers of social science research.

This is a "flipped course" and is divided into modules. In a flipped course, most content delivery is in pre-class work done by students and class time is devoted to applications of that content. In each module, students read articles, watch videos, and engage in short assignments to assess their knowledge before we discuss the topic in class. Thus, most class time is spent on group discussions, demonstrations, team project meetings, guest speakers and other active-learning activities.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:
● Explain basic social science research concepts, theories and methods
● Discuss how social science research is used to address social problems and issues.
● Identify how politics, ethics and researcher biases affect the methods and findings of social science research.
● Conduct and interpret basic qualitative and quantitative data analyses.
● Evaluate the strengths, limitations and general quality of research studies.
● Collaborate in teams on social science-based projects.

Course Notes

The class will generally meet in ANN 409 A,B,C for in-person instruction. Occasionally, in case of guest speakers. remote experiential activities, professor illness, or other unforeseen emergency we will meet on Zoom during our normally scheduled class time. I will announce pre-scheduled Zoom meetings in class and on Blackboard announcements. Lecture slides, class readings, assignments, and other class materials will also be posted on Blackboard. Check Blackboard regularly and before class for any last minute announcements.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Statement

My goal is to create a classroom learning environment that fosters open and honest dialogue. Every student in this class, regardless of background, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, class, political affiliation, physical or mental ability or any identity category, is a valued and equal member of the class. We all bring different knowledge and experiences to the class and it is the sharing of our different experiences and viewpoints that will enrich this course most. Our classroom should be a safe space to question, challenge, and critique course content. To this end, classroom discussions should always be conducted in a way that honors, respects, and dignifies everyone.. This will allow for a deeper more positive learning experience.

It is my intention to present research on a diverse set of topics from a diverse set of researchers and from underrepresented viewpoints. Please let me know if something in course materials, said or done in the classroom by either myself or other students, causes you discomfort. While the intention may not be to cause offense, the impact is important and deserves attention and remediation as soon as possible.

Description and Assessment of Assignments:

a. **Team Project** . The Comm 305 Team Project is a capstone experience that requires student project teams to review, summarize, critique and integrate research studies on a social science topic for a general audience. The main deliverables are a 15-min professionally presented scripted video with a reference list. All team members must have a speaking role.

   In the third week of the semester, students will be randomly assigned into a 3-5 person research project team. Most work on the team project will be done outside of class. Over the rest of the semester, your team will engage in each of these steps: 1) selecting a research topic; 2) developing a research question; 3) locating relevant peer-reviewed articles; 4) critiquing, synthesizing and integrating the articles; 5) answering your research question; and 7) ultimately producing a team research video for a general audience. Some of these steps will involve a small graded assignment to receive feedback. The team that produces the best video will receive special recognition. Specific guidelines will be given later in the semester.

The maximum length for the team video is 15 min; the minimum is 10 min. This assignment is worth 25% of your final grade, and is due by Monday,April 24 at 11:59pm PST. We will watch the videos in class during the last week of the semester.

b. **Weekly Modules.** As mentioned earlier, this course is structured as a flipped classroom so it is essential that all students are well-prepared to participate and benefit from in-class activities. It is also important to keep up with coursework as each topic builds on the previous one.

There are 10 weekly modules. Each module contains learning materials and short assignments to complete class sessions on that topic. Each module will appear on Blackboard on Thursdays after class and will be due the following Wednesday at 11:59 pm. Each module should take 3-4 hours on average to complete. (See Course Schedule and Weekly Breakdown for due dates.)

Each module is weighted equally in the module completion grade. Module grades are based on whether students carefully review the materials (Blackboard indicates whether students actually reviewed them.) and the quality of short assignments in the module. This component is worth 25% of your grade. A late penalty will be assessed on all late modules. Modules submitted more than 48 hours late will receive a 50% penalty.

c. **Exams**. There are two open-book/note exams. The exams will be given on Mar 1 and on May 4 during the final exam period. Each exam is worth 15%, for a total of 30% of the course grade. Exam details will be provided later in the semester.

d. **Individual Research Video.** Each team member will prepare a video review and critique of one peer-reviewed journal article. This assignment will be useful for your team projects. It is due on Blackboard along with a pdf of the reviewed article on Mar 29 at 11:59pm PST. I will give specific guidelines later in the semester. It is worth 10% of your course grade.

e. **Class Participation.** Attending class significantly improves the course learning experience. Students who attend regularly tend to earn higher grades and enjoy the course more.. I will provide numerous opportunities for engagement through questions, comments, and activities. The class time works best when lecture is integrated with insights from students. Please be prepared to bring your views to class.

While in class, I expect everyone to be engaged and ready to participate. Devices such as phones or laptops should be used only for note-taking and class activities. Using phone or laptops for personal purposes lowers the energy level in the class and affects everyone.

To receive full class participation credit, in addition to being fully engaged, you must also complete all in-class work products. These will vary depending on the class. Some will be done individually; some as a group. These work products include participation in polls, surveys, quizzes, and/or in-class short assignments. Students who do not complete the work products will receive partial class participation credit..

3

It's not possible to make up missed classes. However, class slides will be posted on Blackboard, so you can see what you missed. If you are sick, please do not attend class. If you have a special circumstance that affects your ability to attend class, please let me know as soon as possible. Students can miss up to two days of class with no class participation penalty.

Grading

a. **Grade Components and Weighting**

Assignment	% of Grade
Team Project	25
Weekly Modules	25
Exams	30
Individual Research Critique	10
Class Participation	10
TOTAL	**100%**

b. **Grading Scale.** Below are the grade thresholds for assignments, exams, and final course grades. Your final course % must be in the range to receive that grade, there is no "rounding up."

93% to 100%: A	80% to 82.99%: B-	67% to 69.99%: D+
90% to 92.99%: A-	77% to 79.99%: C+	63% to 66.99%: D
87% to 89.99%: B+	73% to 76.99%: C	60% to 62.99%: D-
83% to 86.99%: B	70% to 72.99%: C-	0% to 59.99%: F

c. **Grading Standards.** All assignments will be graded on content, organization, format and attention to detail. Excellent, high quality work that demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the content along with attention to detail such as correct spelling, grammar and following assignment instructions is required for an "A" grade. Work that does not meet these high standards will receive lower grades as described below.

Letter Grade	Description
A	Excellent; demonstrates very high achievement; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; all requirements met and/or exceeded; high attention to detail such as spelling and grammar
B	Good; moderately broad knowledge and good understanding of subject matter; most requirements met, moderate attention to detail
C	Satisfactory/Fair; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; at least one major requirement not met, little attention to detail
D	Marginal; minimal knowledge and understanding of subject matter; most major requirements not met, lack of attention to detail
F	Failing; unacceptably low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter

    d. **Grading Timeline and Grade Appeals.** I will do my best to post grades on Blackboard within two weeks from the assignment due date. There is a 24-hour waiting period after grades are posted for grade appeals. Any grade-related appeal must be submitted to me in writing via email, ***no sooner*** than 24 hours after, and ***no later*** than one week after the grade is posted to be considered. Your written inquiry must include a justification for any requested change. I will carefully review all appeals and provide a response within one week.

Assignment Rubrics

Specific assignment rubrics will be available on Blackboard under "Syllabus and Rubrics."

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are due on the date and time specified and <u>must</u> be submitted via Blackboard to receive full credit. Allow plenty of time to upload assignments by the deadline. You should receive a confirmation from Blackboard if the assignment was successfully submitted. I use Blackboard exclusively for keeping track of the assignments and grading. Please do <u>not</u> email your assignments to me.

Late assignments will receive a late penalty that will increase over time. Assignments more than 48 hours after the deadline will receive a 50% penalty. If you have an issue that may affect your ability to submit your assignment on time, please contact me well before the due date.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

All course materials, which include readings, videos and supplemental materials will be available through Blackboard. There is no required textbook.

Laptop Policy

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors 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.

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001

(15 weeks: 1/9/2023 – 4/28/2023; Final Exam Period: 5/3-10/2023)

Link: https://classes.usc.edu/term-20231/calendar/

Last day to add: Friday, January 27, 2023

Last day to drop without a mark of "W" and receive a refund: Friday, January 27, 2023

Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit: Saturday, January 28, 2023 [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Last day to add/drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Audit: Tuesday, January 31, 2023

Last day to withdraw without a "W" on transcript or change pass/no pass to letter grade: Friday, February 24, 2023 [Mark of "W" will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply.

*Please drop any course by the end of week three for session 001 (or the 20 percent mark of the session in which the course is offered) to avoid tuition charges.]

Last day to drop with a mark of "W": Friday, April 7, 2023

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students: Be advised that the topics/daily activities may change based on the progress of the class, guest speaker availability, and unforeseen consequences. Assignment and exam due dates will not change.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 Jan 9	Introduction to Social Science Research		

Week 2 Jan 16	Data and the Research Process	Module 1: How to Read and Evaluate Social Science Studies	**Module 1 due: Jan 18 by 11:59pm PST**
Week 3 Jan 23	Ethics, Politics & Bias in Research	Module 2: Research Ethics, Politics and Bias	**Module 2 due: Jan 25 by 11:59pm PST**
Week 4 Jan 30	Research Questions and Team Selection	Module 3: Research Questions and Methods of Inquiry	**Module 3 due: Feb 1 by 11:59pm PST**
Week 5 Feb 6	Inttro to Qualitative Research	Module 4: Intro to Qualitative Research	**Module 4 due: Feb 8 by 11:59pm PST**
Week 6 Feb 13	Observational Research and Content Analysis	Module 5: Qualitative Research	**Module 5 due: Feb 15 by 11:59pm PST**
Week 7 Feb 20	Interviewing and Focus Groups	Module 6: Finding Sources for Research Projects	**Module 6 due: Feb 22 by 11:59pm PST**
Week 8 Feb 27	Qualitative Research Wrapup & Exam 1		**Exam 1 on Mar 1**
Week 9 Mar 6	Public Opinion and Survey Research	Module 7: Public Opinion and Survey Research	**Module 7 due: Mar 8 by 11:59pm PST**
SPRING BREAK Mar 13	NO CLASS THIS WEEK		
Week 10 Mar 20	Experiments	Module 8: Experiments	**Module 8 due: Mar 22 by 11:59 pm PST**
Week 11 Mar 27	Experiments	No Module	**Individual Journal Article Critique Video Due on Mar 29 by 11:59pm PST**

Week 12 Apr 3	Data Analysis and Statistics Basics	Module 9: The Basics of Statistics	**Module 9 due: Apr 5 by 11:59pm PST**
Week 13 Apr 10	Data Analysis and Statstics	Module 10: Creating and Delivering Team Research Presentations	**Module 10 due: Apr 12 by 11:59pm PST**
Week 14 Apr 17	Data Science and the Future of Social Science Research	No Module	
Week 15 Apr 24	Team Research Videos and Course Wrapup	No Module	**Team Project Videos Due: Mon. Apr 24 by 11:59pm PST**
STUDY DAYS Apr 29-May 2			
FINAL EXAM PERIOD May 3-May 11	**Take-home Final** will be posted on Blackboard May 4 @ 2pm PST		**Take-home final due: by May 5 @ 2 pm PST**

Policies and Procedures:

<u>Blackboard</u>

I use Blackboard extensively in class and expect students to check at least once per day for updates and announcements. Check Blackboard before class for any last minute announcements.

<u>Communication and Office Hours</u>

For accommodations, appointments, and emergencies, please email me. Expect a response within 24 hours on weekdays, 48 hours on weekends.

I hold office hours after class or by appointment scheduled via email. I enjoy meeting and getting to know students, so please come to my office hours to discuss class topics in more detail, tell me about a research study, or just to say hello. If you have a special circumstance that I should know about, please set up a time to discuss it with me. The sooner I know about a situation, the more I can help.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

[The USC Student Handbook](https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/USC_StudentCode_August2022.pdf)
(https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/USC_StudentCode_August2022.pdf)

Academic Integrity

USC's Unifying Value of integrity is a foundational principle that inspires the community to match its values to its actions. Academic integrity is ultimately the sole guarantor of the legitimacy of one's education, and therefore, is vitally important not just for oneself, but for the entire USC community. The value of all USC degrees is negatively impacted by violations of academic integrity. In the classroom, general principles of academic integrity include 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. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles

Academic Integrity violations (academic dishonesty) include, but are not limited to:

Plagiarism and Cheating

• The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student's own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.

• Re-using any portion of one's own work (essay, term paper, project, or other assignment) previously submitted without citation of such and without permission of the instructor(s) involved.

• Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers, including drafts. Also, all students involved in collaborative work (as permitted by the instructor) are expected to proofread the work and are responsible for all particulars of the final draft.

• Acquisition of academic work, such as term papers, solutions, or other assignments, from any source and the subsequent presentation of those materials as the student's own work, or providing academic work, such as term papers, solutions, or assignments that another student submits as their own work.

The School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school's policy.

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.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

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

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

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086

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.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS)](#) - *(213) 740-0776*

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - *(213) 740-0411*

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

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - *(213) 740-2101*

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*

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call*

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - *(213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - *(323) 442-2850 or* otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

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.

Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund

https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards

Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

About Your Instructor

Andrea Hollingshead is a social scientist. She is a Professor of Communication, and an expert on group communication. Much of her research examines how people communicate their expertise and share knowledge in groups. She studies a wide array of groups: from very small to very large; from offline to online to hybrid; across a wide range of work, social and educational settings. Her current research projects investigate team wellbeing, online incivility, and human-machine teaming. She has published three books and her research articles appear in top-tier social science journals such as *Communication Research*, *Communication Monograph*s, *Human Communication Research*, *Communication Yearbook, Organization Science, Academy of Management Proceedings, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* among many others. Professor Hollingshead teaches courses on group communication at the undergraduate, masters and PhD levels. She also teaches Comm 305 "Understanding social science research" and Comm 400 "Mindful communication." Professor Hollingshead earned her B.A. in Psychology from Yale University and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Social Psychology from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is an avid scuba diver and enjoys plants, LA farmers markets, cooking, and running. She is married and has a pup named Pancho.

https://annenberg.usc.edu/faculty/andrea-b-hollingshead