**CMGT 514:** Analytical Tools for Communication Decisions

**Four units**

**Spring 2023 – Monday – 2-4.50pm**

**Section:** 21722

**Location:** ASC 331

**Instructor:** Mathew Curtis

**Office:** ASC 321

**Office hours:** Monday 1-2pm

**Contact info:** [mcurtis@usc.edu](mailto:mcurtis@usc.edu)

**Course website:** blackboard.usc.edu

There are two sections of 514 that meet on Monday. One section starts at 2pm and one section starts at 6pm. Regardless of circumstance you can only attend the section you are registered for.

*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 (model) 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. 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

**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.

**Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

American Psychological Association. (2019). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th edition).* Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association. ISBN-10: 143383216X Price about $21

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.

**Online class**

Three classes will meet online only. These classes are as follows.

* 13th February: **online only**
* 20th March: **online only**
* 3rd April: **online only**

**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 in-class debates 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.

When you miss class all deadlines for the course remain the same unless an agreement is reached with me.

**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 may 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. You are responsible for notifying me within one week of a score posting if you think a score is missing or inaccurate. Moreover, you only have this period of time to contest a score.

**Writing Quality**

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

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

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

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

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

The basic criterion is to communicate well to your readers (your instructor and your peers). If your readers cannot understand your writing due to flaws in grammar, vocabulary or organization, then the quality of your thinking cannot be appreciated. I will not spend minutes to decipher a sentence you wrote. You cannot ask me to ignore poor writing in order to focus on content.

A paper with good ideas but bad writing will earn a poor grade. When evaluating your writing, I may correct the first few language errors. Thereafter, I may not comment on the same language error if it repeats elsewhere in the paper.

**Paper Guidelines**

All documents should be in Microsoft Word format. Papers must be type-written or word-processed, double-spaced, with 12 point font. Make sure you keep a copy of all submitted papers. Please ensure that each paper is written in APA style. Refer to the APA manual (7th 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 is 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.

**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 10%; work more than 24 hours late but under a week late will be deducted 25%. Work more than one week late will incur an additional 1% deduction for every day late. Two concrete examples are as follows: work 8 days late receives a 26% penalty (25 + 1 = 26), work 13 days late receives a 31% penalty (25 + 6 = 31). 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.

**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”

**Synchronous session recording notice**

Online class sessions will be recorded and made available to students through Blackboard (including transcriptions). Please remember that USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. As a student, you are responsible for the appropriate use and handling of these recordings under existing SCampus policies regarding class notes (https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/). These rules will be strictly enforced, and violations will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanction.

**Attendance policy**

**Attendance**

When you are absent from a class I need to ensure you understand the material. For this reason there is make-up work for every missed class that will be discussed on a case by case basis. Typically, this make-up work takes about three hours to complete. This make-up work is assigned for any reason you miss class. This includes religious holidays, medical emergencies, university approved absences, or any other reason that may arise.

**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.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Topics/Daily Activities | Readings and Homework | Deliverable/Due Dates |
| Week 1  9th January | Introduction, 540 recap | Reverse scoring, TURF analysis |  |
| 16th January | No class | No class | No class |
| Week 2  23rd January | Data screening, splitting, syntax, and TURF | Syntax |  |
| Week 3  30th January | Topic generation, Naturalistic observation | Research topic generation |  |
| Week 4  6th February | Composites, selecting data | Selecting data | Online only |
| Week 5  13th February | Naturalistic Observation | Research ideas |  |
| 20th February | No class | No class | No class |
| Week 6  27th February | Guest speaker | Observations practice | Online only |
| Week 7  6th March | Naturalistic Observation | Observations collection |  |
| 13th March  Spring Break |  |  |  |
| Week 8  20th March | Repeated measures | Repeated measures | Observation paper |
| Week 9  27th March | Effect sizes | Effect sizes | Research proposal |
| Week 10  3rd April | SLR | SLR | Online only |
| Week 11  10th April | MLR, LR, and Regression methods | MLR, LR |  |
| Week 12  17th April | R intro |  |  |
| Week 13  24th April | R calculations | R calculations |  |
| Finals |  |  | Poster  Paper |

**Important note to students:** Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, events, and/or guest speaker availability, where relevant. Students should consult the Registration Calendar for dates regarding add/drop deadlines, fees, grading options, etc.

**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.

**Academic Integrity**

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university’s mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity’s website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

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.

Academic Conduct

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

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**Accommodations Policy**

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.osas.usc.edu/

**Library Access**

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

**Statement on Support Systems**

**Support Systems:**

*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.

*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.