

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
Communication and Media Studies COMS 313, L02
RESEARCH METHODS

Winter 2019

Thurs., January 10 - Thurs. April 11 (excluding Feb. 19 & 21)
TR 16:00 - 17:15

Instructor:	Shawn Mueller
Office:	SS 254
Office Phone:	N/A
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Web Page:	D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours:	Prior to and/or following each class or by appointment

Course Description

A critical introduction to communication research methodologies. Students will explore, practice, and critique various quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and various perspectives on the processes of knowledge production.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the term, students should be able to:

- articulate the value of research in communication and cultural studies;
- understand the differences between major methodological traditions and research techniques within social sciences;
- understand the interdependency of research and social theory
- command data gathering and analysis processes;
- know how to use databases for secondary research and recognize their value in primary research;
- design ethically sound research projects;
- understand sampling strategies and how to use them;
- make use of interdisciplinary approaches to social research;
- know how to gather information using qualitative and quantitative research methods and create basic research tools for each;
- critically analyze research results of others;
- interpret research results and report the findings in academic and professional settings.

Textbooks and Readings

The following textbooks are **required** and are available in e-book format through the University of Calgary Library:

May, Tim, *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Research*, 4th ed. (2011)

Denscombe, Martyn, *Ground Rules for Social Research: Guidelines for Good Practice*, 2nd ed. (2010)

Internet and electronic communication device information

No restriction on the use of laptops (ipads, netbooks, etc.) in class if they are used to take notes or find information relevant to the class, and if there is no disturbance of other students or the instructor. Phones must be turned off during class time unless you are a health care or law enforcement professional with appropriate ID.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignments in this course are designed to build an understanding of research theory and methodology in the Humanities and Social Sciences. While there will be no formal examinations, there will be a total of five deliverables in this course: four will address four of the major techniques used by researchers (Questionnaire Design, Participant Observation, Case Study and Content Analysis). We will rely heavily on the May text for the development of these projects.

The fifth deliverable is a reflections journal, in which students will engage directly with the assigned readings on topics related to research theory. The journal will be submitted as a single document on the last day of class, April 11, 2016.

All assignments are to be submitted via the course D2L portal.

In-depth assignment descriptions and marking rubrics will be available in D2L. A summary of due dates and assignment values is included below:

Assignment / Description	Value	Due Date
1. Questionnaire Design Students will apply the guidelines and best practices identified in lecture and readings to design a 20 question survey on a topic of interest (or from a list of suggestions)	20%	Tuesday, January 29, 2019
2. Participant Observation Students will carry out a participant observation exercise involving an in-class activity (games, presentations, etc.) and will then create a short report (3 pages) on the proceedings describing the activity.	20%	Tuesday., February 12, 2019
3. Case Study Students will review and evaluate a sample case study in terms of its relevance and traction in wider research initiatives. Report should be 3 pages in length.	20%	Tuesday, February 26, 2019

Assignment / Description	Value	Due Date
4. Content Analysis Students will conduct a content analysis on a topic/social issue of their choosing (in consultation with the instructor), and will submit a written report (6-10 pages) on their findings and conclusions.	30%	Thursday, March 28, 2019
5. Reflection Journal Students will be given a total of five topics for the journal and will be expected to produce one to two page summaries for each topic. Both texts must be referenced for the journal topics.	10%	Thursday, April 11, 2019

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

You do not need to complete all assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Submission of Assignments:

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide photo ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Student Accommodations and Deferrals:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or for another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not

require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, please see the following:

- Section N.1 of the *University Calendar*:
<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/n-1.html>
- FAQs for Students at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Note that when accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to that of another assignment or test.

For information on deferrals, see the following sections in the *University Calendar*:

- G.7 Deferral of Term Work at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>
- G.6 Deferral of Final Exam at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades. The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* *
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%

1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. Research and citation resources are also available on the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) website at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>. If you have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations, as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 https://arts.ucalgary.ca/advising
CAMPUS SECURITY & Safewalk Program <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calgary Police Service• Emergency Text Messaging• Emergency Evacuation & Assembly	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IT help line	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing Support Services• Events & Info for Students	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faculty of Arts Reps• Student Ombuds	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds

<p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Services • Mental Health Services • Distress entre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	<p>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>
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Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

This is designed to be a flexible schedule. When and how certain topics are covered in class may change. Students are strongly advised to keep up with the reading schedule to ensure full benefit of class discussion.

Week	Topic/Reading	Assignment(s)
1 (Jan 11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course introduction • Keeping a reflection journal 	<p>Because cultural context is important, watch any or all of these movies for a better understanding of in-class references, anecdotes and commentary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Empire Strikes Back</i> • <i>Ocean's Eleven</i> (either version) • <i>Porco Rosso</i> • Any <i>Godzilla</i> movie • <i>The Great Escape</i> <p>Not mandatory but a good way to spend a weekend.....</p>
2 (Jan 15, 17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking • Ethics <p><i>Denscombe</i>: Ch. 1, 2, 5</p> <p><i>May</i>: Ch. 1</p>	
3 (Jan 22, 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framing a question • Critical reflexivity <p><i>Denscombe</i>: Ch. 6, 7</p> <p><i>May</i>: Ch. 3</p>	

Week	Topic/Reading	Assignment(s)
4 (Jan 29, 31)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research design I • Research instruments <i>Denscombe: Ch. 8</i> <i>May: Ch. 5</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire Design Assignment DUE Tue, Jan 29
5 (Feb 5, 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research design II • Different kinds of participant interactions <i>Denscombe: Ch. 9</i> <i>May: Ch. 6 (optional)</i>	
6 (Feb 12, 14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature reviews <i>Denscombe: Ch. 10</i> <i>May: Ch. 7</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Observation Assignment DUE Tue, Feb 12
Feb 19, 21	READING DAYS - NO LECTURES/LABS <i>(but you can be reading, of course!)</i>	
7 (Feb 26, 28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies and the research milieu <i>Denscombe: Ch. 11</i> <i>May: Ch. 8</i>	
8 (Mar 5, 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies and research design review (inspiration) <i>May: Ch. 9</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Study Assignment DUE Tue, Feb 26.
9 (Mar 12, 14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iterations - cycles of research <i>Denscombe: Ch. 12</i> <i>May: Ch. 10</i>	
10 (Mar 19, 21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content analysis and other instruments of passive data collection <i>May: Ch. 11</i>	
11 (Mar 26, 28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research architectures (learning the ropes of faculty approvals, ethics review and funding) <i>Denscombe: Ch. 3, 4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Analysis Assignment DUE Thur, March 28

Week	Topic/Reading	Assignment(s)
12 (Apr 2, 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection journal revisited (or "why didn't I start this sooner?")	
13 (Apr 9, 11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presenting your research• Course review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection Journal DUE Thur, Apr. 11.