

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 313 L02
Communication Research Methods

Winter 2020

Revised 16 March 16, 2020 to Accommodate Coronavirus Shutdown

January 14 – April 15 (excluding Feb 16 – 22)

Tuesday/Thursday 3:30PM - 4:45PM

Room SH 274

Instructor: Dr. Gregory Taylor
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Office Hours: Wednesday, 11 am - 1:00 pm or by appointment

Course Description

A critical introduction to communication research methods. Students will explore, practice, and critique selected quantitative and qualitative research methods and perspectives on the processes of knowledge production. Through critical reading and writing as well as active learning that encourages a hands on approach to research methods, students will both evaluate others' research and work through their own research process.

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found on D2L. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Objectives of the Course

- To understand how research methods are used in the field of communications and how communications research applies to various social issues and topics.
- To critically reflect on the challenges and opportunities of various qualitative and quantitative research methods.
- To recognize ethically sound, rigorous research methodologies and research design in scholarly articles.
- To reflectively evaluate the importance of research ethics in the research process.
- To develop knowledge and practical skills for proposing and designing research.
- To learn how to interpret collected data.

- To develop your presentation style and other professional skills

Textbooks and Readings

Merrigan, G., Huston, C. L., & Johnston, R. T. (2012). *Communication Research Methods (Canadian edition)*: Oxford University Press. (required)

Policy on the use of Electronic Communication Devices

Laptops, tablets, and mobile phones may be used in class and tutorials only for course-related purposes and only if their use is not distracting others or negatively impacting the learning environment. No audio or video recording is allowed in any class without the instructor's permission.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Course components	Due
30%	Two (15% each) responses to textbook discussion questions (Previously 10% each)	Feb 6 (first) April 7 (last)
10%	Initial Proposal with Literature Review	March 12 (via D2L)
20%	Midterm exam –closed book. 90 minutes.	March 19
20%	Group class Presentation	April 2,7,9
30%	Final Research Proposal (Previously 20%)	April 14
10%	Class Participation (includes in-class projects)	ongoing

Participation—10%: Due date—ongoing

Students are expected to not only be in attendance every week, but to contribute significantly to the class discussions via individual comments, in-class group work activities, and short presentations. Oral participation will help solidify concepts for yourself and others.

Desire2Learn Short Writing Assignment—30% (2 X 15%): Due date—various

Throughout the course, students will be required to write a total of two (2) responses to a prompted discussion question in the syllabus in the textbook. The first assignment must be completed **within the first four weeks of class (by Feb 6)**. This assignment is about your ideas – therefore the responses are due before the class in which the reading will be discussed. Assignments will not be accepted after the class begins and the readings are discussed. The class on **April 7** is the final class to submit the second short writing assignment.

Each response must be between 500 and 750 words, equivalent to two (2) or three (3) pages double-spaced. This assignment seeks to synthesize course reading material with experience from students' personal research engagement. Write about your own experience but incorporate the ideas presented in the text. Not all questions will inspire a three-page response but each chapter includes four or five questions, so you have choice. **Responses must demonstrate sound analysis of the ideas from the text and include specific quotes.** Other sources may be used if formally cited but are not required.

These assignments are to be uploaded to D2L.

Initial Proposal and Annotated bibliography — 10%: March 12 via D2L

Students must submit a two (2) page (500 word), double-spaced proposal regarding their final research proposal. Proposal submissions must include a Background/Problem Statement that includes key research question(s). Relevance of study Literature review/Theoretical framework

Marks will be awarded for clarity of the proposal and its potential applications of methodologies studied in the class. **(5 marks)**

In addition to the initial proposal, students must submit a list of five (5) academic sources from a variety of resources (books, book chapters, journal articles, etc.). Each source must include a brief annotation *in your own words* of three-to-five (3-5) sentences, as to its relevance for your potential final research proposal. **(5 marks)**

Midterm—20%: March 19

A midterm examination will test knowledge on all course readings up to this point in the course and content presented in lectures. Midterms must be taken **in-class on the scheduled date** unless documentation is provided for a legitimate absence. ~~Students will have 90 minutes to write the midterm. The exam is closed book.~~

Exam questions will be posted to D2L at 3:30 pm on March 19. Students will have two hours to complete their answers and submit via drop box.

~~Group Class Presentation — 20% April 2, 7, 9 (Cancelled)~~

~~Class discussions and lectures will provide insight into many of the main research methods for Communication Studies. The purpose of these presentations is to shed light on other methods we may have missed. In groups of four, you will be asked to prepare a presentation on one of the following:~~

- ~~• Digital Methods~~
- ~~• Focus Groups~~
- ~~• Feminist methodology~~
- ~~• Social Media Research~~

- ~~LGBTQ methodology~~
- ~~Public Relations Research~~
- ~~Interviews~~
- ~~Ethnography and Participant Observation~~
- ~~Decolonizing and Indigenous Methodologies~~
- ~~Marxist Methodology~~
- ~~Another methodology you propose to Dr. Taylor~~

~~Each member of the group will participate in the presentation of 20 to 30 minutes. Visual elements should be incorporated into the presentation. Each group must clearly explain the method chosen with reference to at least two academic articles that plainly demonstrate an application of the research method. What are the clear strengths and weaknesses of this particular methodology? Are there ethical or political concerns when using this approach? Each group member should explain if this methodology could be of use for their particular field of interest in Communication Studies. There will also be a peer evaluation element: students who are not presenting in that class will be responsible for submitting an evaluation of the presentation. These evaluations will inform the final presentation mark and count toward class participation.~~

Final Research Proposal —30%: April 14 (start of class via D2L dropbox)

Students will write a research proposal (2000 - 2500 words – 6 pages) on a topic of your choice. What methodology is appropriate for the problem in question? Students are advised to use this assignment as an opportunity to practice and prepare for potential honours work or a major project. This assignment will give you practice in writing a research proposal.

A proposal typically has the following components.

- Title
- Background/Problem Statement (including research question(s)/Relevance of study
- Literature review/Theoretical framework
- Methods/Research design
- Schedule of research
- Bibliography

You must have a clearly conceived research question. Your literature review must cite at least five academic studies relevant your topic or clearly demonstrating the value of a particular methodology. Do not just mention the approach you will use; provide an explanation of why this is the correct methodology for your research. What do you learn from studying other uses of this research methodology? If you are planning interviews or surveys, describe how you will carry out the interviews/surveys and provide sample questions. Will ethics approval be required?

All references must be properly and fully cited in a consistent format (APA or Chicago preferred). Proposals must generally follow what was proposed in the initial proposal assignment unless otherwise discussed with the instructor.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments and hand in your essays either to D2L or directly to your instructor as indicated in the assignment. If you are unable to do so, please use the drop box in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Note: It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Be prepared to provide photo ID to pick up assignments in SS 320. Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act***. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation 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 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, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*.

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, percentage grades will be used for short written assignments and the midterm, while percentage grades will be used for presentations and final papers.

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%

- * Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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 obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.