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COMX 460.01: Communication Research Methods

Stephen M. Yoshimura

University of Montana, Missoula, stephen.yoshimura@umontana.edu

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**COMX 460: Communication Research Methods
and
COMX 461: Communication Research Seminar**
Spring 2022
CRN # 32553
T/TH 11am-12:20pm
Classroom: McGill Hall 210
COMX 461: Wednesday, 1-1:50pm, LA 304

Instructor: Dr. Steve Yoshimura
Office: LA 347
Office Hours: Wednesday 2-3, and by appointment
Email: stephen.yoshimura@umontana.edu

Course Objectives

Welcome to COMX 460, Communication Research Methods. In this class, we learn about how to conduct research on human interaction. You'll learn how to spot problems in communication and ask meaningful questions that can be answered through systematic study. You'll learn how pre-existing research findings can provide some possible answers to those questions, and how to go about the process of collecting and analyzing data to develop new answers to those questions. Ultimately, you'll learn how to generate new knowledge about how or why people communicate in the ways they do. The course is a highly interactive, hands-on experiential course that teaches you the ways and means of conducting communication research. By successfully completing this course, you should be able to locate, comprehend, and evaluate others' research, ask meaningful questions about communication, construct your own studies to answer those questions, analyze data at a basic level, and competently communicate your interpretations to an educated audience.

Required Texts

- Baxter, L. A., & Babbie, E. (2004). *The basics of communication research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Readings on Moodle course website

Student Responsibilities:

- Readings and written assignments should be completed prior to attending class, and sometimes several days before attending class. Be prepared to discuss and participate.
- Maintain awareness of the course content. Know exactly when assignments are due, and when tests will be administered.
- Arrange your schedule to allow yourself to do accurate and thoughtful work. You might consider re-arranging your schedule if you are taking this class in conjunction with another that fulfills the upper-division writing requirement or if you have an unusual amount of responsibility outside of the classroom.
- Attend all group meetings, and collaboratively participate with colleagues in all tasks.

Assignments (See the course website for assignment descriptions and details)

Worksheets – Due weekly, 3 points each

Please print and bring each worksheet to class on the day it is due (They are available on Moodle). Worksheets can be submitted individually or as a group. Please note that the worksheets are designed to help scaffold your preparation for the course exams, so you will benefit from completing the worksheet on your own even if one worksheet is submitted as a group.

Group contract - Due 1/27, 3 points

First pages assignment - Due: 2/1 15 points possible

Literature Review - Due: 2/17 30 points possible

IRB tutorial certificate (the link to the online tutorial is on the Moodle course page) Due: 2/24 (must be submitted prior to collecting data).

Method proposal + Instruments and consent form- Due: 3/10 40 points

NOTE: I, and possibly the IRB, must approve your study *before you begin collecting any data.*

Final Submission (Revised Problem Statement and Literature Review, Revised Method Description, Results, and Discussion) Due: 4/21 50 points

Final Group Assessment Score - Due: by 5/5 5 points

COMX 460 Research Conference Presentations - Final week of class 10 points

Exams

Exam 1 50 points

Exam 2 50 points

Exam 3 50 points

COMX 460 Grade Scale (330 points possible)

A = 297-330; B = 264-296; C = 231 - 263; D = 198 - 230; F = 197 and below

This is a web-based version of the syllabus, for public viewing. Please contact Stephen.yoshimura@umontana.edu to request the complete version for course use.

Course Calendar*

BB = Baxter and Babbie textbook

*Calendar may be modified as necessary

WK 1

Topics: Developing Research Ideas; Introduction to Communication Research Paradigms

Readings: BB Chapter 2 (by second class meeting)

LAB: Introductions, develop project idea, and exchange contact information, work on group contract this week.

Due Thursday: Worksheet 1 - Finding and reading inductive and deductive research

WK 2

Topics: The Cycle of Social Scientific Research; Developing Research Questions and Hypotheses

Readings: BB Chapter 4; Reinard (2001 – see this additional course reading in Moodle)

LAB: Further discuss your project idea and dividing up the first articles assignment work.

Due Thursday: Group contract

Due Thursday: Worksheet 2: Hypotheses and Research Questions

WK 3

Topics: Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Variables

Readings: BB Chapter 6

LAB: Developing research questions and hypotheses for your study

Due Tues. 2/1: First pages assignment

Due Thursday: Worksheet 3: Conceptualizing and operationalizing variables

WK 4

Topics: Operationalization of variables; Reliability and validity

Readings: BB Chapter 6, esp. pp. 121-127.

LAB: Writing a literature review, and formatting papers in APA style (APA guides are available on Moodle)

This week: Begin ethics tutorial (see course website for the link to the tutorial)

Due Thursday: Worksheet 4: Reliability and Validity

WK 5

Topics: The Ethics of Conducting and Writing about Research

Readings/assignments: BB Chapter 5

Lab: Work on refining/editing the literature review

Due Thurs. 2/17: Literature Review

Exam 1 (Thurs. 2/17)

WK 6

Topics: Sampling Populations; Survey Research

Readings/assignments: BB Chapter 7, for sampling discussion BB Chapter 8 (surveys)

LAB: How to design and construct a questionnaire in Qualtrics

Due Thursday: Worksheet 5: Sampling

Due Thursday: Certificate of Completion for Human Participant Protections Tutorial (see course Moodle page)

WK 7

Topics: Experiments

Readings/assignments: BB Chapter 9

LAB: Work on developing your research proposal

Due Tuesday: Worksheet 6: Experiments

WK 8

Topics: Naturalistic Inquiry

Readings/assignments: BB Part 3 Intro (pp. 296-300) + Chapter 13

LAB: Work on your research proposal

Due 3/10: Method proposal + instruments (e.g., any questionnaire/ interview schedules, plus the study announcement script and the consent form).

WK 9

Topics: Content analysis

Readings/assignments: BB Chapter 14, esp. pp. 340-342 + BB Chapter 10

Due Tuesday: Worksheet 7 – Content analysis

Lab: Develop IRB proposal

Note at this time: Submit your IRB proposal once your method proposal is fully approved (by me & any stakeholders), you may begin collecting your data.

Exam 2 (Thursday, 3/17)

WK 10: SPRING BREAK

WK 11 (No meeting on Thursday this week)

Topics: Inferential Statistics; Testing Hypotheses

Readings/assignments: BB chapter 12, pp. 271-282

LAB: Catching up on the project and preparing data

WK 12 (No meeting on Thursday this week)

Topics: Testing and Analyzing Group Differences (*t*-test)

Readings/assignments: BB chapter 12, pp. 283-286

Lab: Data Analysis

Due Tuesday: Worksheet 8 – Inferential statistics

WK 13

Topics: Testing and Analyzing Group Differences (*t*-test, continued); Associations Between Variables (Correlation)

Readings/assignments: BB chapter 12, pp. 290-293

LAB: Data Analysis

WK 14

Topics: Correlation continued

LB: Data analysis/preparing the final report

Due Thursday: Worksheet 9 on t -tests and correlations

Due: 4/21: Final Submission

WK 15

Topics: Data Analysis and Report meetings; How to give a research presentation

Readings/assignments: "Talking the Talk: Tips on Giving a Successful Conference Presentation" (see link in Moodle)

LAB: Prepare the final report and your presentation

WK 16

COMX 460 Annual Research Conference

Due: by 5/5: Group assessment

Final Exam: Friday, 5/13, 8-10am