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COMX 460.B01: Communication Research Methods

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**COMX 460: Communication Research Methods
and
COMX 461: Communication Research Seminar (LAB)**

Fall 2020

CRN # 70248

T/TH 11am-12:20pm

Classroom: LA 138 (or outside)

Lab I (CRN 71996): Monday 11-11:50 SS 258 (or outside)

Lab II (CRN 73247): Monday 12-12:50 (or outside)

Professor: Dr. Steve Yoshimura

Office hours: By phone or videoconference only- please email me for an appointment.

Phone: 243-4951

Zoom office meeting ID: 3148080291

Email: stephen.yoshimura@umontana.edu

Course format

For Fall 2020, this class will be offered in “hybrid” format. For this particular course, “hybrid” means that the lectures will be delivered asynchronously online (videos posted on Moodle), but there is an optional face-to-face component if you volunteer to attend it, wear a mask, and if it is safe and allowable by university and health department codes to do so.

You can complete the class entirely online. If you choose the full online option, please email me to let me know by August 20th.

If you are completing the class online, *you must still participate in the group assignments.*

The face-to-face meetings will complement the online lecture content, but be more tutorial in nature. We will collaborate to ensure equity and accessibility to the course content.

Course procedure

You have been assigned to a 3-4 person working group for the semester. In this group, you will work together on the class research project, and **if we are able to begin meeting in person for class (and if you decide to attend)**, you will attend on **either Tuesday OR Thursday**, depending on the group to which you have been assigned. **Please only arrive on your assigned day.**

Tuesday Group Attendance:

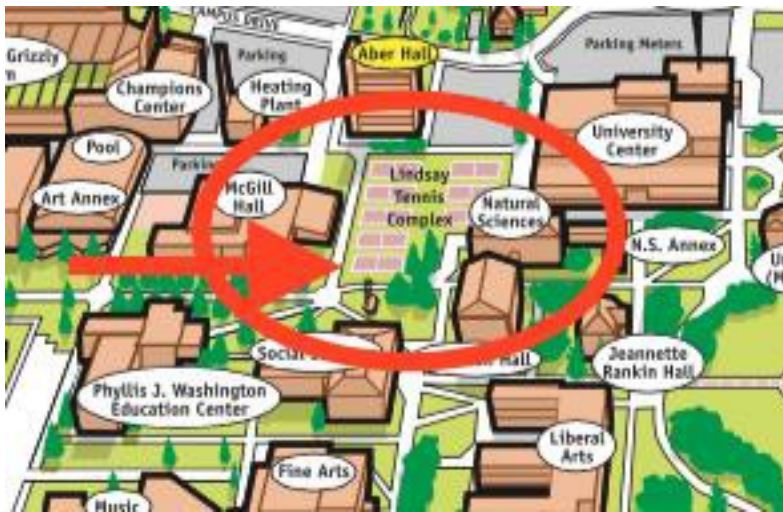
Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Graduate Students

Thursday Group Attendance:

Echo, Foxtrot, India

We will begin our class (and LAB sessions) by meeting outside at the tent on the West tennis courts unless it is unreasonable to do so (the map below shows an arrow pointing

to the meeting location). I recommend bringing your computer or a clipboard for your notebook.



Health Behavior Guidelines for Attending Face-to-Face Classes During COVID-19

These days, you and I are way more interdependent than we would normally be. Simply put, everything we do outside of this class has the potential to affect me, you, and us in a deeply personal and serious way.

If you decide to come to campus for this class, I need you to do your part to hide from COVID-19 as best as you can at all times. Aside from being a professor, I am also a parent to two teenagers, a husband, and a son. I have been working hard to avoid this virus because I have some potentially complicating health factors that may or may not prove fatal if I get sick with this.

I promise to uphold my obligations to you by following health officials' guidelines for best practices in everyday life, and by not taking risks that may result in me getting ill. My main request of you this semester is that you do the same while we are in this relationship. Otherwise, here are some guidelines for our time together this semester:

- Mask use is required whenever we are in the classroom, and recommended when outside.
- Each student is provided with a cleaning kit. Please clean your immediate space when you arrive, and before you leave the classroom.
- Please don't congregate outside classrooms before or after class.
- Specific seating arrangements will be used to ensure social distancing and support contact tracing efforts.
- Class attendance will be recorded to support contact tracing efforts.
- Drinking liquids and eating food is discouraged within the classroom (which requires mask removal)
- If any videoconference meeting is being recorded, I will let you know before starting the recording.
- Stay home if you feel sick and/or if exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms.
- If sick or displaying symptoms, please contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330
- Up-to-Date COVID-19 Information from the University of Montana
 - UM Coronavirus Website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus>
 - UM COVID-19 Fall 2020 website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus/fall2020.php>

Course Objectives

This class is about how social scientific research on communication is conducted. By the time you finish the class, you should be able to:

- Read and comprehend empirical research reports in the social sciences.
- Speak in the basic language of social scientific research methods.
- Discuss and evaluate the use of different types of communication research methods.
- Engage in the process of conducting research on human communication. That is, you should be able to ask empirical questions, employ methods that will help you answer that question, be able to analyze and interpret data at a basic level, and describe research findings.

Required Texts and Materials

- Baxter, L. A., & Babbie, E. (2004). *The basics of communication research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Readings on Moodle course website
- A personal calendar for keeping track of the course schedule
- Access to a computer and the internet. Some recommended additions: an external microphone, HD camera, and good lighting – these add-ons are all helpful in managing your impressions in videoconference settings.

Student Responsibilities:

- Readings and written assignments should be completed as scheduled. Be prepared to discuss and participate at every meeting.
- 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.
- Participate in the group research project faithfully, and collaboratively participate with colleagues in all tasks.
- Practice good online etiquette – on for group videoconference meetings, turn on your video as appropriate, but mute your microphone until you need to speak.
- Check your university email account regularly and use it for all communication with me and your groupmates.

Assignments (See Moodle for all assignment instructions)

∞ = Individual submission

‡ = Group submission

- Worksheets – Due by 2pm most Fridays, 5 points each, **either** ∞ **or** ‡
- Group contract: Due: 8/31, 2pm, 2 points‡
- First articles assignment: Due 9/10, 2pm, 15 points possible‡
- Literature Review: Due 10/1, 2pm, 30 points possible‡
- IRB tutorial completion certificate: Due 10/8, 2pm, 5 points∞
- IRB application for review: Due 10/22, 2pm, 10 points possible‡
- Method proposal + Instruments and consent form: Due 10/27, 2pm, 50 points possible‡
- Final Submission (Revised Literature Review and Revised Method Section [+ Results and Discussion for graduate students], all in one manuscript): Due 11/17, 2pm, 20 points‡
- Final Group Assessment Score: 11/17, 2pm, 5 points∞
- Project Presentation - Due: Final week of class, 10 points‡

NOTE: 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.

Exams

The exams for this class will be conducted orally, by videoconference. You will sign up for an appointment with me during our regular class meeting times the week before each exam, and we will have about a 10-minute conversation, in which I will ask you some questions and assess your responses. The potential questions I'll ask are posted at the top of each week's videos, so you can keep notes as you go along the videos and your readings.

- Exam 1 – 30 points∞
- Exam 2 – 30 points∞
- Exam 3 – 30 points∞

The questions I will ask will be selected from the list of questions that precede each lecture video (I'll provide a study guide aggregating these questions as well). To prepare for the exam, you should look for the answers to those questions in the lecture videos and in your readings. The best answers will be complete, accurate, involve the use of course terminology, and demonstrate understanding about the concepts and their applications in research.

Course and Campus Policies

Attendance and Participation in COMX 460

Attendance and participation in class, whether online or in face-to-face settings, is expected. Please note that the course meetings will proceed on Mountain Time, so if you are located in another time zone, you'll need to adjust your attendance to Montana time.

Participation and Grades in COMX 461

COMX 461 is a one-unit co-requisite segment of the course and will be assessed as such. Your grade in COMX 461 will be based on your group's end-of-the-semester report on your contributions (both in kind and degree) to the project, and my observations of your cooperativeness, responsiveness, and involvement in your project. The lab schedule is in the course schedule below, and a copy of the group-evaluation form is available on the Moodle course supplement. Use this to see the criteria by which your group members will be evaluating each other upon, and as a guide for what constitutes high, moderate, and low cooperativeness, responsiveness, and involvement.

Exam policy and procedure

The oral exams for this course will be held over Zoom. You will sign up for an appointment the week before, and I will provide you with the meeting ID. It is essential that you are punctual for your appointment, as we will have only a brief time to talk before the next appointment begins. If you are late, you will have less time to demonstrate your knowledge, so the exam score will be reduced accordingly.

Appointments are made on a first-come-first-served basis, and some appointments may need to be made outside of our regular class schedule. I can be somewhat flexible with the appointments outside of our regular class time (within reason), so please contact me if you need some other arrangement ahead of time.

If there are complications with a previously-made appointment that you later find about, you must notify me at least 4 hours before the appointment arrives. Missed appointments will result in a 0-point score for the exam, and will only be rescheduled at the instructor's discretion.

Group collaboration

COMX 460 and COMX 461 require you to work collaboratively in a group. Cooperation, responsiveness, and involvement are minimum expectations. In addition, problematic issues should be addressed as they arise (do not let them take care of themselves). Staying enrolled in the course means that you agree to abide by the class and your group's contract.

In the event that one or more group members stops participating, or is participating at such a minimal level to the group project so-as to be uncollaborative or unhelpful, permission can be sought to leave the non-participating group member(s) name(s) off of the submitted work.

Late Work

All assignments, including quizzes or tests are due upon the established due date. No extensions are granted without a valid and legitimate reasons. Note that valid and legitimate reasons never involve plane tickets, vacations, outdoor recreation, or any other random and unverifiable excuses. Physicians' notes must be originals (no photocopies, carbons, faxes, or emails).

Assignments become late when they are turned in after the class period of their due date. A late assignment will receive a **10% penalty for each weekday** that it is late. The assistants in the main office do not mark times or dates on papers that are turned in to them. Please do not email me any late assignments without my permission.

If you will miss class due to a university-sponsored activity, you are required to (a) introduce yourself prior to missing class, (b) provide a copy of your travel schedule that indicates the days you will be missing, and (c) discuss with me your plans for making up the work.

Written Work and email submission policy:

All papers must be proofread and formatted appropriately (using APA format guidelines).

Assignments will be mainly submitted via Moodle. Each assignment as a separate portal through which they get submitted. *Please do not email me any assignments without obtaining my permission first.*

Any submitted hard-copy papers must be stapled in the upper left-hand corner upon submission.

Academic Misconduct:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the student conduct code. Please see the Student Conduct Code for definitions and consequences of cheating and plagiarism at: www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321.

According to the University of Montana Bulletin, "Plagiarism is the representing of another's work as one's own. It is a particularly intolerable offense in the academic community and is strictly forbidden. Students who plagiarize may fail the course and may be remanded to Academic Court for possible suspension or expulsion... Students must always be very careful to acknowledge any kind of borrowing that is included in their work. This means not only borrowed wording, but also ideas. Acknowledgement of whatever is not one's own original work is the proper and honest use of sources. Failure to acknowledge whatever is not one's own original work is plagiarism"(Plagiarism Warning, para. 1).

Other examples of academic misconduct include falsifying data or information, submitting work written by yourself for other courses, and deceiving instructors to gain academic award or avoid academic penalty.

Incompletes and course withdrawals:

See the *University of Montana Catalog* for more information on the policy regarding these options. Incompletes are typically granted only under the most unique circumstances. You may withdraw from the course until the 45th day of the semester. After that, you may petition to withdraw, but only for documentable medical reasons, family emergencies, a change in work schedule, or other uncontrollable reason. It is the policy of the university, department, and this course to not normally grant withdrawal petitions after the 45th day without documentation.

Grade requirements and the Credit/No Credit grade option:

This course is required for Communication Studies Majors. If you plan to apply this course to your graduation requirements, you must take the course for a traditional letter grade, and earn at least a C- in order for the course to count towards your graduation. As for other grade options, please note that the university bulletin indicates that the Credit/No Credit grade option exists "to encourage students to venture into courses where they might otherwise hesitate because of uncertainty regarding their aptitude or preparation..."(Credit/No Credit Grading [CR, NCR, para. 1). It does not exist as protection from poor performance after the 45th day of instruction. So, if you desire the credit/no credit grade option, you must indicate this decision to me within the first 45 days of the semester.

Unique Needs

I and the University want everyone to have a fair chance at doing well in class. If you have unique needs that help you overcome some challenge to your learning, please contact me and/or see Disability Services for Students (DSS) in the Lommasson Center (Room 144; 243-2243). This will help you determine what types of resources are available to help you. If the issue is not DSS related, see me and I will help you find some ways forward. If DSS determines specific helpful accommodations, provide me with their letter and we will work together to make sure that you begin with a "level playing field" for your performance in this course.

Sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination resources

You have a federal right to study in an environment free from harassment, sexual assault, and discrimination. If you or someone you know has been harassed, assaulted, or discriminated against you can find the appropriate resources by contacting the Student Advocacy Resource Center's 24-hour line at 406-243-6559.

If you participate in University-sponsored activities (e.g., sports, debate, etc.):

I need a letter from your coach documenting your participation, as well as copy of your schedule indicating which days of class you'll need to miss due to your activity. You are responsible for getting notes and making arrangements to turn in your assignments/take exams.

A note on professionalism and the student conduct code:

The entire student conduct code applies to this course. But the most important thing to know is that this is a professional setting, in which your success requires attention, engagement, and concern for others. Online etiquette is expected, as are "showing up" for your group, submitting assignments on time, and acting with integrity. In practice,

this includes being punctual, participating and collaborating with your group, being respectful, being task oriented during group meetings, submitting work on time, submitting only original work, being careful about your online self-presentation, and being honest about any failures so that competent solutions can be generated.

Course Calendar*

BB = Baxter and Babbie textbook

*Calendar may need to be modified as the semester develops

Day 1 (Thursday, August 20) No meeting today. Engage the online course shell instead:

- Class Topic: Course Introduction
- Watch - Introductory videos posted in Moodle course shell
- Read: Syllabus and begin BB chapter 4 (skim chapters 1-3, and familiarize yourself the book's content overall)
- Do: Schedule your assignment due dates in your personal planner.

WK 1 (Week of 8/24 - 8-28; begin Face-to-Face meetings this week)

- LAB: Introductions, develop project idea, and exchange contact information, work on group contract this week.
- Class Topic: Developing Research Ideas, the cycle of social scientific research
 - Reading: BB Chapter 4
- **Due: by 2pm 8/28: Worksheet 1: Finding and reading inductive and deductive research**

WK 2 (Week of 8/31-9/4)

- LAB: Further discuss your project idea and dividing up the first articles assignment work.
- Class Topic: Developing Research Questions and Hypotheses
- Readings/assignments:
 - Reinard (2001 – see special reading under the Hypotheses and Research Questions video).
 - Watch the “how to locate and read research articles” video in the “APA guides” section of Moodle this week.
- **Due 8/31: Group contract**
- **Due by 2pm 9/4: Worksheet 2: Hypotheses and Research Questions**

WK 3 (Week of 9/7-9/11)

- NO LAB MEETING (LABOR DAY). Work on first articles assignment
- Class Topic: Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Variables
- Readings/assignments:
 - BB Chapter 6
 - This week, accumulate peer-reviewed studies related to your main research question
- **Due 9/10: First articles assignment**
- **Due by 2pm 9/11: Worksheet 3: Conceptualizing and operationalizing variables**

WK 4 (Week of 9/14-9/18)

- LAB: How to design and construct a questionnaire in Qualtrics
- Class Topic: Reliability and validity
- Readings/assignments:

- BB Chapter 6, *esp. pp. 121-127.*
- This week: Begin the CITI IRB certification course (see course website for the link to the tutorial)
- **DUE by 2pm 9/18: Worksheet 4: Reliability and Validity**

WK 5 (Week of 9/21-9/25) This week: Schedule an online videoconference meeting for Exam 1

- LAB: Work on developing/refining your study's hypothesis
- Class Topic: The Ethics of Conducting and Writing about Research
- Reading: BB Chapter 5

WK 6 (Week of 9/28-10/2) – EXAM 1 (No F2F class meetings this week – online oral exams instead)

- LAB: Work with your group on refining/editing literature review, work on CITI training as necessary
- Class Topic: Sampling Populations (will be covered in Exam 2)
- Readings/Do:
 - BB Chapter 7
- **Due 10/1: Literature Review**
- **Due by 2pm 10/2: Worksheet 5: Sampling**

WK 7 (Week of 10/5-10/9)

- LAB: Complete CITI training as necessary; otherwise begin designing your study and outlining your method proposal; begin gathering in self-report measures you need for your study.
- Class Topic: Survey Research
- Reading: BB Chapter 8 (surveys)
- **Due 10/8: Certificate of Completion for Human Participant Protections Tutorial**

WK 8 (Week of 10/12-10/16)

- LAB: Work on method proposal
- Class Topic: Experiments
- Readings: BB Chapter 9
- **Due by 2pm 10/16: Worksheet 6: Experiments**

WK 9 (Week of 10/19-10/23)

- LAB: Finish/edit Method Proposal; including consent form, study announcement and Qualtrics survey
- Naturalistic Inquiry
- Readings/assignments:
 - BB Part 3 Intro (pp. 296-300) + Chapter 13
 - **Schedule online meeting for your oral Exam 2**
- **DUE 10/22: IRB application for review**

WK 10 (Week of 10/26-10/30)

- LAB: Work on method proposal and instruments
- Class Topics: Content analysis
- Readings/assignments: BB Chapter 14, *esp. pp. 340-342* + BB Chapter 10

- **DUE 10/27: Method proposal + instruments** (e.g., any questionnaire/ interview schedules, plus the study announcement script and the consent form).
- **Due by 2pm 10/30: Worksheet 7 – Content analysis**

WK 11 (week of 11/2-11/6) EXAM 2 (No F2F class meetings this week – online oral exam instead)

- Class Topics: Inferential Statistics; Testing Hypotheses (will appear on exam 3)
- Readings/assignments: BB chapter 12, pp. 271-282
- LAB: Oral exams this week – we'll use the lab time for exam appointments
- **Due by 2pm 11/6: Worksheet 8 – Inferential statistics**

WK 12 (Week of 11/9-11/13) Schedule your appointment for Exam 3 this week

- LAB: Revise entire paper to prepare final submission, and begin preparing online presentation
- Class Topics: Testing and Analyzing Group Differences (*t*-test) and Associations Between Variables (Correlation)
- Readings/assignments:
 - BB chapter 12, pp. 283-286 (*t*-test)
 - BB chapter 12, pp. 290-293 (correlations)
 - “Talking the Talk: Tips on Giving a Successful Conference Presentation” (see link in Moodle)
 - Schedule final exam appointment
- **DUE by 2pm 11/13: Worksheet 9 on *t*-tests and correlations**

WK 13 (Week of 11/16-11/20) (Exam 3 will be held starting 11/19)

- LAB: Work on final submission, and presentation
- Class Topics: COMX 460 Academic Conference (11/17) + Final exam appointments
- **Due 11/17: Final Submission**
- **Due by 11/17: Group assessment**

WK 14 (11/23 and 11/24) – Exam 3 on Monday or Tuesday

Graduate Student Research Project Schedule

Week 1: Overview, project objective formulation/clarification, and group scheduling

Week 2: Develop research questions/hypotheses, begin accumulating sources to support your research project

Week 3: Develop the literature review, begin CITI training

Week 4: Learn how to use Qualtrics for self-report research (Submit literature review this week, if possible)

Week 5: Begin planning and designing your study. Locate/develop measures, consent form, and study announcement. Begin developing Qualtrics survey if necessary. Finish CITI training and submit your completion certificate. Submit literature review if not already submitted.

Week 6: Work on your method section

Week 7: Your research instruments, consent form, and study announcement should be complete by now. Meet to get assistance with formatting/polishing. (Submit method section)

Week 8: Get your method section back and work on making changes (Fix formatting, add cover letter, provide/modify instructions, add/repair transitions, closing). When my suggested changes have been made, bring the instrument to anyone else who should approve it and make any of their requested changes. This may include the IRB, depending on the nature of your project.

Week 9: Make an appointment with Dr. Yoshimura to get instruction on how to download and clean up a data file in SPSS. Otherwise finish any necessary work on your instrument/interview schedule. Begin collecting data after IRB approval.

Week 10: Collect data; begin formatting and cleaning your data file once collection is complete.

Week 11: Analyze data

Week 12: Write results section

Week 13: Write discussion section/present your research

Lab 14: Submit final project