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COMM 460.01M: Research Methods

Stephen M. Yoshimura

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

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COMM 460: Communication Research Methods

Spring, 2013

CRN # 30365 (Blended course)

Classroom: SS 258

In-Class: Tuesday 11-12:30

Online: Thursday 11-12:30 (classroom reserved, but not required)

Instructor: Dr. Steve Yoshimura

Office: LA 347

Phone: 406.243.4951

Office Hours: Monday, 1:30-3, Thursday 11-12:30, and always by appointment

Email: stephen.yoshimura@umontana.edu

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to ways of conducting research on human communication. By finishing this course, you should be able to:

- Comprehend and accurately use research vocabulary
- Locate, read, and write about peer-reviewed research on human communication
- Develop questions about human communication that can be answered through research.
- Apply communication research methods to research questions.
- Analyze and interpret data at a basic level
- Evaluate the quality of research findings

Required Texts

- Baxter, L. A., & Babbie, E. (2004). *The basics of communication research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- American Psychological Association (2009). *Concise Rules of APA style* (6th ed.) Washington, DC. APA. (Available online, through whatever source you prefer)

Course Policies

(1) Attendance and Participation

This is a hybrid (Blended) course. Attendance is expected in both the online and face-to-face sections. Attending the face-to-face sections means that you are both physically, mentally, and socially present. Attendance in the online section means listening and taking notes on the course lecture recordings, *and participating in the forums*.

After listening to the lecture each week, I would like you to post one comment or question that I can bring to the class at the following meeting. In your post, you can do any of the following*:

- Post an opinion based on additional reading or research you do on the topic.
- Respond thoughtfully to the lecture or readings from your own experience.
- Provide links and resources related to the topic that would be of interest to other participants.
- Pose a thought-provoking question related to the topic.
- Collect multiple perspectives on a topic or provide an alternate perspective to the one currently dominating the discussion.
- Thoughtfully and respectfully rebut another participant's comments.
- Synthesize the current class discussion by summing up arguments or discussion points.
- Ask a question that would help clarify your understanding of the current topic.

* Thank you to the University of Oregon's Teaching Effectiveness Program for these guidelines

Forum posts are due by gam of the day we meet in class, and will be evaluated by the criteria above. Posts that do not meet any of the above criteria, show no relevance to the course or topic at hand, show disregard for civility norms, or are posted after the due date will not be given points.

In-class activities are only assigned points when they are submitted in class, and may not be made up except when a face-to-face class is missed due to a university-sponsored event or documented illness.

(2) **Late Work**

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.

Exceptions to the late penalty will not be distributed freely. If you are sick when an assignment is due and want to turn it in late, **you must provide a legitimate doctor's note** that indicates the days that you were unable to attend class. This must be turned in with your completed assignment.

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.

A Note on Computer Problems: You are responsible for knowing how your computer works and the potential problems of using it. Save your work frequently, take care of your discs, make sure that your computer is using an updated virus-protection program, and make every attempt to print your papers ahead of time. Given the computer resources on this campus, I cannot reasonably accept computer-related excuses for late work.

(3) **Group collaboration**

This course requires that you to work collaboratively. You are expected to act responsibly and manage problematic issues as they arise (do not let them take care of themselves). Your contribution to collaborative work is expected. Although grades on collaborative work will be shared, I retain the ability to make adjustments and modifications to the assignment, group/dyad, or individual's grade for reasons related to non-equitable contributions, non-participation, or group conflict.

(4) **Submitting Written Work:**

All papers must be typed, double-spaced, and in the appropriate format (APA). All papers must have a cover page in APA style. Staple your work in the upper left-hand corner.

Please provide me with hard-copies of your work. Do not send me email copies of your work without first obtaining direct permission from me. Assignments due at times other than class meetings should be submitted directly to my office (LA 347).

(5) **Exam policy:**

The exams will be taken in class, and can be taken alone or collaboratively with one other person. For each exam, I will distribute an online survey that allows you to declare whether you wish to take the exam alone or collaboratively. If you choose to take the exam collaboratively, you may choose one partner to work with. Your partner must be declared in advance, and both partners must agree to take the exam with each other. You will be allowed to choose a specific partner, or ask me to assign you a partner.

You can choose the same format for each exam, or choose different formats or different partners.

However, no exam can be made up without a valid and legitimate excuse. Valid and legitimate will be decided on the basis of evidence provided. Note that valid and legitimate never involves plane tickets, vacations, outdoor recreation, or any other random and unverifiable excuses. Dr.'s notes must be originals (no photocopies, carbons, faxes, or emails).

Your attendance is expected at all classes. Therefore, you are expected to be available for any date at which the exam is held. If exam dates change, exams will not be held at other times to accommodate absences for reasons other than university sponsored events or documented illnesses.

Exams taken at times other than the scheduled day may be in essay format.

(6) 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).

Papers written for other courses are also unacceptable to submit.

(7) Incompletes and course withdrawals: See the *University of Montana Catalog* for more information on the policy regarding these options. Incompletes are very rarely granted, and 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 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.

(8) Grade requirements and the Credit/No Credit grade option: This course is required for Communication Studies Majors. If you entered UM after the 2005 course catalog, 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 30th day of instruction. So, if you desire the credit/no credit grade option, you must indicate this decision to me within the first 30 days of the semester.

(9) 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 see Disability Services for Students (DSS) in the Lommasson Center (Room 144; 243-2243). They will help you determine what types of resources are available to help you and will provide you with a letter to me detailing those resources. Give me the letter and we will work together to make sure that you begin with a "level playing field" for your performance in this course.

(10) 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.

Course Assignments

Detailed assignment instructions are available elsewhere on the course website. Grades for collaboratively completed activities and assignments will be shared among the collaborators.

- In-class activities (Each activity = 5 points possible, 50 total points available)
- Online forum posts (10 required posts, each post = 3 points; 30 points total)

Research paper (150 available points)

- Purpose statement: 20 points
- Literature review: 30 points
- Method proposal: 30 points
- Method report and Observation results: 40 points
- Full report, including discussion: 30 points

- Exam 1: 50 points
- Exam 2: 50 points
- Exam 3: 50 points

Total course points available: 380

Course Calendar

This schedule may be revised as necessary.

Week	Topics and course activities	Readings/assignment due dates BB = Baxter & Babbie
Week 1 1/29 1/31	Class: Course Introduction and overview Online: Communication Research Paradigms and the Cycle of Social Scientific Research Online forum: Discuss research paradigms or the cycle of research	For class: Course syllabus For online: BB Chapter 3 and 4
Week 2 2/5 2/7	Class: Paradigm activity Online: Developing research questions and hypotheses + APA style Online forum: Discuss Research questions or hypotheses	For online: Reinard (2001; Available on Moodle), and Appendix D and E in BB
Week 3 2/12 2/14	Class: How to develop research questions and write hypotheses Online: Conceptualizing and operationalizing variables Online forum: Discuss Conceptualizing and Operationalizing variables	For online: BB Chapter 6 Due (By Thursday @ 4pm): Purpose statement
Week 4 2/19 2/21	Class: Finding conceptual definitions and operationalizations Online: The Ethics of conducting and writing about research Online forum: Discuss research ethics, or ask and answer questions about the exam study guide	For online: BB Chapter 5 <i>This week: Locate and read scholarly sources for your literature review, and begin writing your paper.</i>
Week 5 2/26 2/28	Class: Exam 1 Online: Validity and Reliability Online forum: Discuss validity and reliability	For online: BB chapter 6, esp. pp. 121-128 <i>This week: Continue writing the Literature Review.</i>

Week 6 3/5 3/7	<p>Class: Assessing reliability and validity Online: Sampling Online forum: Discuss Sampling</p>	<p>For online: BB Chapter 7 Due: Literature review (in class)</p>
Week 7 3/12 3/14	<p>Class: Sampling strategies Online: Survey Research and Intensive Longitudinal Methods Online forum: Discuss either survey research or Intensive Longitudinal Methods</p>	<p>For online: BB Chapter 8 BB Chapter 14, esp. pp. 340-342 <i>This week: Write your method proposal</i></p>
Week 8 3/19/ 3/21	<p>Class: Developing surveys Online: Experiments Online forum: Discuss experimental design</p>	<p>For online: BB Chapter 9 Due: (by Thursday @ 4pm): Method proposal</p>
Week 9 3/26 3/28	<p>Class: Evaluating experiments Online: Naturalistic Research and text analysis Online forum: Discuss naturalistic research or text analysis</p> <p><i>Once I approve your method proposal, begin conducting field observations or other approved method.</i></p>	<p>For online: (1) "How to do field observations" handout on Moodle (2) BB Part 3 Intro (pp. 296-300) (3) Chapter 13</p>
Week 10 4/2 4/4	<p>Spring Break</p>	
Week 11 4/9	<p>Class: Exam 2</p>	<p><i>This week: Continue/Finish conducting field observations (or other method), and write your Method Report and Results.</i></p>
Week 12 4/16 4/18	<p>Class: Text analysis: Practice and interpretation Online: Descriptive Statistics/Measures of Central Tendency and Inferential Statistics - Testing Hypotheses Online Forum: Discuss hypothesis testing</p>	<p>For class: BB Chapter 10 For online: BB chapter 12, pp. 271-282 Due (In class): Method Report and Study Results</p>
Week 13 4/23 4/25	<p>Class: Interpreting statistics Online: Testing and Analyzing Group Differences (t-test) Online forum: Optional discussion</p>	<p>For online: BB pp. 283-286 <i>This week: Revise previous papers, and begin writing Discussion section</i></p>
Week 14 4/30 5/2	<p>Class: Making sense of group difference statistics Online: Associations Between Variables (Correlation) Online forum: Optional Discussion</p>	<p>For online: BB pp. 290-292 Due (By Thursday @ 4pm): Full report, including discussion</p>
Week 15 5/7 5/9	<p>Class: Making sense of correlations Online: Course conclusion Online forum: Optional Discussion</p>	
Week 16	<p>Final Exam: Tuesday, May 14, 8:00am - 10:00am</p>	