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COMX 460.01: Communication Research Methods

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

Fall 2018

CRN # 70272

T/TH 11am-12:20pm

Classroom: Health Science 207

Lab: Monday 1-1:50 SS 258

Instructor: Dr. Steve Yoshimura

Office: LA 347

Office Hours: Wednesday 1-2, and always by appointment

Email: stephen.yoshimura@umontana.edu

Course Objectives

This course is about how to conduct research on human interaction. Its general purpose is to teach you about how to ask meaningful questions that can be answered through systematic study, find out what is already known about the possible answers to those questions, to go about the process of collecting and analyzing data, and 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 labs faithfully, and collaboratively participate with colleagues in all tasks.

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

First pages assignment - Due: Tuesday, 9/11, in class

15 points possible

Literature Review - Due: Friday, 9/21, at my office by 4pm 30 points possible

IRB tutorial certificate (the link to the online tutorial is on the Moodle course page) Due: 9/27, in class (must be submitted prior to collecting data).

Method proposal + Instruments and consent form- Due: 10/11, by 3pm

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: 12/4, by 12 noon 50 points

Final Group Assessment Score - Due: 12/6, final day of class

5 points

Project Presentation - Due: Final week of class

10 points

Exams

Exam 1	50 points
Exam 2	50 points
Exam 3	50 points

COMX 460 Grade Scale (300 points possible)

A = 270-300; B = 240-269; C = 210-239; D = 180-209; F = 179 and below

Course and Relevant Campus Policies

1. Attendance and Participation in COMX 460

Attendance is expected. If you must miss a class for whatever reason, it is *your* responsibility to find out what you missed and to get the lecture notes from one of your classmates. Once you obtain those notes and discuss them with the person who provided them, please make an appointment with me to discuss any questions you have about the course content.

2. Attendance, 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 attendance at the labs, 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. A schedule of lessons and activities for the lab sections is at the end of the syllabus, 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Written Work and email submission policy:

All papers must be proofread and formatted appropriately (using APA format guidelines). All papers must also be stapled in the upper left-hand corner upon submission. Do not send assignments to me via email without first receiving my permission. Any assignment sent to me via email without my consent will be considered unsubmitted until I receive a hard-copy of it.

6. Exam policy:

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

7. 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/VP/SA/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.

8. 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 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. A note on professionalism:

This is a professional setting, in which your success requires attention and engagement. When you enter class or my office, please plan to avoid personal use of electronic communication devices, and non-class related internet activity. If electronic devices appear to be a distraction for any individual or set of individuals in the course, I may institute a no-screen policy.

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/Assignments: BB Chapter 2 (by second class meeting)

WK 2

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

Readings/assignments: BB Chapter 4; Reinard (2001 – see additional course readings in Moodle)

WK 3

Topics: Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Variables

Readings/assignments: BB Chapter 6

Due Tues. 9/11 in class: First pages assignment

WK 4

Topics: Operationalization of variables; Reliability and validity

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

Due Fri, 9/21 by 4pm: Literature Review

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

WK 5

Topics: The Ethics of Conducting and Writing about Research

Readings/assignments: BB Chapter 5

Due 9/27 in class: Certificate of Completion for Human Participant Protections Tutorial (see course website)

Exam 1 (Thurs. 9/27)

WK 6

Topics: Sampling Populations; Survey Research

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

WK 7

Topics: Naturalistic Inquiry

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

Due by 3:00 pm on 10/11: Method proposal + instruments (e.g., any questionnaire/ interview schedules, plus the study announcement script and the consent form).

WK 8

Topics: Focus Groups; Content analysis

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

WK 9

Topics: Experiments

Readings/assignments: BB Chapter 9

Note for this week: Once your questionnaire is fully approved (by me & any stakeholders), begin collecting your data.

WK 10

Topics: Inferential Statistics; Testing Hypotheses

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

Exam 2 (11/1)

WK 11

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

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

WK 12

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

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

WK 13

Topics: Correlation continued

No meeting 11/22 (Thanksgiving break)

WK 14

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)

Due: 12/4 in class: Final Submission

WK 15

Project presentations

Due: 12/6, final day of class: Group assessment

WK 16

Presentations, continued (if necessary)

Final Exam: 10:10-12:10, Friday, Dec. 14th

Lab Schedule

These labs are reserved for you to spend working on research-related tasks. I also recommend that you reserve at least one additional hour (sometimes two or three) outside of the lab for extra group meetings as necessary.

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

Lab 2: Developing research questions/hypotheses

Lab 3: Writing a literature review, and formatting papers in APA style (APA guides are available on Moodle)

Lab 4: Using Qualtrics for survey research

Lab 5: Group work: Locate/develop measures, consent form, and study announcement

Lab 6: Writing a method section

Lab 7: Your research instruments, consent form, and study announcement should be complete by now. Meet to get assistance with formatting/polishing.

Lab 8: Get your instruments 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.

Lab 9: How to set up a data file in SPSS. Otherwise finish any necessary work on your instrument/interview schedule.

Lab 10: Format and clean your data file

Lab 11: Format and clean your data file as necessary

Lab 12: Analyze data

Lab 13: Analyze data

Lab 14: How to present research results