

## CMST 3570: Quantitative Communication Studies Research Methods

Instructor: Dr. Timothy Curran

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Office: Lundberg 204 (to the left of Old Main if you are looking at it from the Quad).

Office Hours: Wednesday 9:30 – 11:20

### Course overview:

This course examines the process of conducting communication research from a social scientific perspective. We will address the processes of advancing research questions, variable definition and measurement, sampling, survey research, experimental research, writing research reports, and hypothesis testing. One of our major foci will be on learning how to assess human social skills and their link to health outcomes. Successful completion of this course will help you become a savvy consumer of research, as well as provide you with the foundation necessary to conduct your own research. Even if you do not pursue a career in social science research, the skills that you acquire in this course will be useful in your career, in more advanced methods courses, and in everyday life.

### Prerequisites/Restrictions:

CMST 2110 (or permission of instructor) and STAT 1040 or STAT 1045. Please note that although this is not a statistics class (it is a *methods* class), you will be expected to have a basic understanding of hypothesis testing and research results.

### Required Materials

#### Book:

Title: Strait talk about communication about communication research methods

Authors: Christine S Davis, Kenneth A Lachlan

Edition: 3

Copyright: 2017

### Evaluation

Your course grade will be based on percentages by combining scores from three sources: exams, homework assignments, and team assignments.

- **Exams: 40% of the final grade (20% each).** The class will have a midterm that contains both multiple-choice and short answer questions. The final exam will be of similar format, yet over the course of 2 hours. Make-up exams are scheduled only in cases of religious holidays and other officially excused absences, as per USU official guidelines. No make-up exams will be given for personal reasons (e.g., work, family events, airline ticket reservations, vacation plans, etc.). You must send me notification at least two weeks prior to the scheduled exam and provide documentation if you hope to reschedule an exam.
- **Homework Assignments: 10% of the final grade.** Four homework assignments will be due throughout the semester. Homework is due to canvas via file upload at the

beginning of class that day.

- **Team Task Assignments: 50% of the final grade.** Each student will pick a team early in the semester. Teams will be comprised of **four** individuals. All team tasks will be related to the major research project focused on a theme relevant to family relationships. Teams will complete 4 assignments.
- **Your name cannot be on any team task assignment until you have completed CITI Training for research on human subjects. This training is due on the September 4<sup>th</sup> before class.**
- **Once you complete the training, you will send your certificate of completion to me and Kimberly Noble via email – [tim.curran@usu.edu](mailto:tim.curran@usu.edu) and [kimberly.noble@usu.edu](mailto:kimberly.noble@usu.edu)**
- **You will also pass in a printed-out document showing your certificate of completion for the CITI training to me in class on 9/4/18. The website for CITI training can be found here: <https://rgs.usu.edu/irb/training/>**

### Course Policies

#### The syllabus

The syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

#### “Firing” Teammates

If one member consistently demonstrates a lack of dedication to the team (by not attending meetings, not doing the required work, or turning in unacceptable work on behalf of the group), the other members have the right to "fire" that member up until the 9<sup>th</sup> week of classes (October 30<sup>th</sup>). Firing involves a 2 step process: The team (in consultation with me) gives the errant member a warning and that teammate must negotiate with the group how he or she is going to be a better teammate, and (2) if the member continues to act dissatisfactory, that individual will be fired from the group by me. If you are fired, you forfeit all team benefits associated with completing the Team Tasks and the Team Project as a group. You will have to turn in individual assignments (including the research project) from the point of firing on.

#### Grading

Please keep a record of all grades received. Use the formula below to assess your work and grade in the course. Please keep all graded papers until you receive your final grade in the course. Grades are rounded to the nearest tenth. For example, an 89.89 is rounded to an 89.9 – making that a B+ in the course.

A = 93--100%	B+ = 88-89%	C+ = 78-79%	D+ = 68-69%	F = 0-59%
	B = 83-87%	C = 73-77%	D = 63-69%	

A- = 90-92%

B- = 80-82%

C- = 70-72%

D- = 60-62%

- **Final Grades.** Your final grade is final. Adjustments will be made only in the case of a mathematical error. Applying subjective standards after the fact to bolster your grade is unfair to your classmates and therefore will not occur.

### **APA style**

All written work that communication scholars submit to their colleagues (in the form of journal articles, conference papers, etc.) must be written in accordance with the most recent guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA). This standard also holds for most written work submitted for this class. Team task 2 and 4 must be completed in APA style complete with title pages, abstracts, and reference sections. Homework assignments need not be in APA style. The directions for a given assignment will specify if your assignment needs to be in APA style. Your grade is partly judged on your adherence to APA guidelines.

### **Attendance policy**

#### Absences

Attendance will be taken at every class. Illness, personal or family emergencies, or university-sponsored activities constitute excused absences. However, in order to count as such, students must provide appropriate documentation to me in a timely manner (**meaning one week ahead of time for university sponsored activities and the class meeting after you return from an illness**).

In the case of illness, you must get a note from either your private physician or from the Student Health Center signed by a doctor or physician's assistant that says something to the effect: "In my opinion, this student should not be in classes today and/or tomorrow (specify the particular date[s] involved)." Typically, a private physician or clinician will write a note for an illness for one or two days. However, if your illness lingers, you will need to recheck with the private physician or clinician and request an additional note to document your absence. The note does not have to indicate the specifics of your illness, but that the physician or clinician does not think you are well enough to attend class. An indication that you had an appointment at the health center is NOT SUFFICIENT.

You have two unexcused absences before penalty on your final grade. You cannot make up any work for non-excused absences. For every absence after two, ½ a percent of your overall grade in the class is deducted at the end of the semester.

### **Homework and team task deadlines**

All homework and team task assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day that they are due as specified on the syllabus. No late assignments will be accepted under any circumstance. No e- mailed assignments will be accepted, without earlier approval from me. If you cannot come to class on the day that an assignment is due, you must turn in your assignment to the main office of the Communication Studies department and have a staff

member time stamp the assignment (assignments turned in after class time will receive a zero).

### **Help**

This class will introduce you to the language, techniques, and procedures for conducting research. The course content is often brand new to students; therefore, this class can be challenging. You are strongly encouraged to form study groups and to review course material frequently.

### **24/7 Rule**

Students that wish to discuss grades on any assignment must wait 24 hours before raising the issue to your instructor. After 24 hours, you have 7 days to discuss the issue before it will no longer be considered for a grade appeal. For example, if you receive an exam grade on a Monday, you must wait a day until Tuesday and you have until the following Tuesday to contact me to discuss the grade. After 7 days the assignment will no longer be eligible for an appeal. Appointments may be scheduled via email, however discussions regarding grades will only be done in face-to-face interactions. You are expected to come to the discussion with concrete comments and/or concerns.

### **Respect and Etiquette**

**In-class:** In this class we will discuss sensitive topics. Our goal is to have an open a comfortable classroom environment. Comments that are disrespectful will not be tolerated.

Here are some things to remember:

- When another student is speaking, listen respectfully, without interrupting.
- Do not explain things to a peer unless a question is asked of you directly. Even if you are trying to be helpful, this can come across as condescending when you are not in a position of authority.
- If you take umbrage with an argument or point being made, feel free to express your concerns if you can do so professionally and respectfully. When/if you do so, focus on critiquing the idea (not individuals), and avoid using inflammatory language.
- When speaking, do so in a way that invites others to engage the topic. Put otherwise, keep your opinions dialectical, or open to response – perhaps by taking note of your tone or using I-language.
- Ask questions when you do not understand something, and don't assume you know what others are thinking or what motivates them (everyone has different fields of experience).
- Do not expect individuals to speak on behalf of their (perhaps perceived) gender, race, culture, class status, or sexuality. It is unfair to expect someone to be a "spokesperson."
- Commit to learning, not debating.

**Email:** Professional communication is essential when constructing emails in this class and others. Please begin emails with by addressing me by "Tim," have a clear body with proper grammar, and end with your name. This is a good model for all emails you send to instructors.

**Cellphone/Computer Use:** Computers can be used for notes only. If you plan on using a computer please consider sitting toward the back the class to minimize distracting others.

**Academic honesty & the University Honor Code.**

Plagiarized work will receive an F for the assignment and may, depending on the severity of the infringement, receive a failing grade for the course and/or expulsion from the university. Refer to the university honesty/honor code for further policies pertinent to this class.

**Reasonable Accommodation Policy**

If you have a disability, I strongly encourage you to contact the Disability Resource Center and myself so that the classroom environment can be made conducive to your learning style.

**Copyright Notice**

All materials from this course including the syllabus, course notes, activities, paper assignments, exams, etc. are copyrighted as the intellectual property of the instructor (unless otherwise noted and credited) and are not to be duplicated or reproduced without permission. Refrain from taking pictures of slides.

Day	Topic	Major Assignment Info
Aug. 28	Course Introduction	
Aug. 30	Introduction to communication research	
Sept. 4	Research paradigms	CITI Training Due
Sept 6	Research paradigms	
Sept 11	Library research and lit reviews	Meeting in library Homework 1 due
Sept. 13	Writing and lit reviews	
Sept. 18	Research questions and hypotheses	Team task 1 due
Sept. 20	Research questions and hypotheses	
Sept. 25	Understanding variables	
Sept. 27	Understanding variables	
Oct. 2	Research ethics	
Oct. 4	Research ethics	
Oct. 9	Sampling	Team task 2 Due
Oct. 11	Sampling	Homework 2 due
Oct. 16	<b>Midterm</b>	
Oct. 18	Validity and Reliability	
Oct. 23	Validity and Reliability	
Oct. 25	Survey Research	
Oct. 30	Experiments	Homework 3 due
Nov. 1	Data Analysis	
Nov. 6	Data Analysis	
Nov. 8	Data Workshop	
Nov. 13	Data Workshop	
Nov. 15	Data Workshop	

Nov. 20	Data workshops	
Nov. 22	<b>Thanksgiving break</b>	
Nov. 27	Data workshop	
Nov. 29	Writing Day and Review	
Dec. 4	Group Presentations	Homework 4 due Team task 3 due
Dec. 6	Group Presentations	
Dec 10	<b>Final Paper Due</b>	<b>Team task 4 due</b>
<b>Dec 13</b>	<b>Final Exam</b> 9:30-11:20 a.m.	