

QUANTITATIVE COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS

COMMUNICATION STUDIES 4570 – Spring 2016
Tuesday & Thursday 10:30-11:45
Old Main 301 and AGRS 135 (lab days only)

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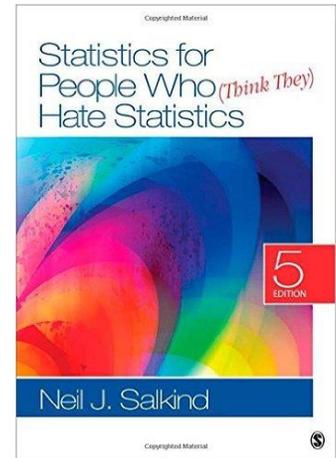
Office Hours: Tues 11:45-1:30pm and by appointment

Course Readings & Resources:

Salkind, N. J. (2014). *Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Additional readings and materials will be posted on our Canvas site

1. Utah State University Writing Center: <http://writing.usu.edu/>
2. Communication Studies Library Services:
<http://libguides.usu.edu/cmst>
3. APA: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/12/>
4. Textbook resources: <http://studysites.sagepub.com/salkind5e/study/default.htm>



Course Objectives:

This course is designed to extend the knowledge gained in introductory statistics courses by exposing students to a range of social-scientific research methods used to investigate human communication. Students will review and put into practice what they learned in STAT 1040 or 1045 by executing a communication research project. The primary course goals are to:

- (1) Provide students with a general understanding of the types of research questions, procedures, and analyses used by scholars in communication and related fields, as well as by practitioners in fields such as marketing and consumer research, etc.;
 - (2) Equip students to critically evaluate research reports, including those they may read in other courses at USU as well as those described in the popular media, appearing in business reports, grant applications, and so forth;
 - (3) Enable students to design and conduct elementary research studies about communication-related topics.
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Course Overview:

The course is organized into three components, which are addressed simultaneously throughout the semester: (1) Research Design, (2) Statistics, and (3) Statistical Software. The Research Design component focuses on the process of planning research, considering the range of choices researchers must make in order to conduct useful studies. This component will not only help you conduct research, it will make you a more critical research consumer. The Statistics component is concerned with analyses by which numerical data can be synthesized, described, and interpreted. This component provides a strong conceptual introduction to statistics—with a limited amount of math—and will help you to be confident in analyzing basic numerical data for almost any purpose. The software component is closely allied with the Statistics component. This component focuses on basic applications of Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)—a powerful, but user-friendly computer program—and will give you an immediately marketable skill (something to put on the resume). This course should be of use to students with a number of goals, including those: (a) who are contemplating graduate study in communication or related disciplines; (b) whose current or future career may require them to answer questions by collecting and analyzing data (e.g., advertising, human relations, marketing, public relations); and (c) who want to develop their skills at critically evaluating research and knowledge claims made by “experts” on communication issues.

Learning Philosophy:

Most students find that Quantitative Methods is a challenging class: there is a lot of material to be covered, technical terms must be learned, there are real “right” and “wrong” answers, and a basic level of proficiency at mathematical reasoning must be attained. My role as professor is to show you that this challenge is worthwhile, and to make it as manageable as possible. I do this by choosing accessible readings, structuring each class around small sets of concepts and skills, delivering well-organized lectures with examples, and providing many opportunities for hands-on SPSS instruction. I strongly encourage questions and discussion in and out of class, and help you design projects that build on homework assignments and apply course concepts in a personally meaningful way. However, your success depends most on you being engaged in the learning process. It is essential that you: (a) study the readings in advance of class; (b) attend class and stay focused on the day’s material; (c) complete all of the statistics and SPSS homework assignments, and talk to me if you have questions about these assignments, and (d) plan in advance for the completion of projects and studying for exams. In short, it is essential that you take significant responsibility for your own learning. If you do so, you may find that Quantitative Methods is not only challenging but rewarding.

Course Requirements:

1. *Exams:* Students will complete three exams. Exams will include several question formats (multiple-choice, T/F, matching). Each exam will cover material from lectures, discussion, and readings. They will assess your knowledge of research methods, statistics, and SPSS (ability to use and interpret output). Review sheets

will be distributed before each exam. Please do not make travel arrangements that interfere with the scheduled exams. Each exam is worth 200 points.

2. *Research Project:* To encourage synthesis of knowledge and skill across all of the course components, you will work in a group on a research project. The project involves understanding and summarizing existing research on the topic as well as the collection, analysis, and “write-up” of data collected from other USU students. Detailed descriptions of this project will be provided as the semester progresses. **Students must present their project at a poster session on Monday, April 25 in the TSC.** The research project is worth 200 points.
3. *Lecture Homework Assignments:* Students will complete approximately 20 homework assignments. These will be assigned during class and typically be due the following class period (140 points total, 7 pts each).
4. *Attendance/Participation:* Attendance and participation are vital if you are to do well in this course. COM 4570 is one of the most cumulative classes that you will take in your major – each day’s material builds on prior material. Hence, it is difficult to do well on exams, the research project, and lab/homework assignments if you miss class. I will not take attendance each day in class, but I will conduct in-class exercises regularly throughout the semester. Being present for and turning in all or all but one of the in-class exercises will result in you earning a total of 60 points; each absence beyond one will result in the deduction of 4 points from your overall participation grade (e.g., 2 absences = you earn 56 total points, 3 absences = you earn 52 points...). Excused absences may be granted for documented travel with university-related events (e.g., varsity sports, forensics) *if such documentation is provided in advance*. Excused absences may be granted for *documented* illness or emergencies, but only at the instructor’s discretion.

Course Policies:

1. *Make-up Exams:* The exams must be taken on the scheduled day at the scheduled time unless negotiated with me PRIOR TO THE DAY OF THE EXAM. Exceptions will be made only in the case of documented illness or emergencies, and then only at my discretion.
2. *Late Work:* Research projects and homework assignments will be accepted late only when arrangements have been made with the instructor PRIOR TO THE DATE THAT THE ASSIGNMENT IS DUE. Exceptions will be made only in the case of documented illness or emergencies, and then only at my discretion.
3. *Academic Dishonesty:* Cheating on the exams, research project, or homework assignments is grounds for failure of that assignment, and potentially for the entire course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: copying others’ answers or using crib sheets during an exam; quoting materials from one of the course texts or other outside readings without citation; and turning in work completed by

