

MMC 6421

Mass Communication Research Methods

Summer A, 2024 – Online

May 13th through June 24th, 2024

Instructor: Ben Lynn, Ph.D.

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Zoom office hours: By appointment

Course description: This course provides a basic overview of common research methods and data analysis techniques employed in mass communication research. Students will be introduced to both qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, content analysis, surveys, and experiments. The course will provide students with a basic understanding of the research process, from conceptualization to analysis.

Course objectives: Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a working knowledge of mass communication research methods.
- Develop research questions and testable hypotheses.
- Select appropriate research methods for answering RQ's and H's.
- Apply ethical standards while conducting research.
- Explain key methodological terms such as reliability, validity, measurement, sampling, and research design.
- Clearly articulate the limitations of each research method.

Instructional approach: Learning occurs through a combination of textbook modules, data analysis modules, and a research proposal. Within each textbook module are video lectures to help you through the material. These videos provide you with insights about the content from the instructor. Each textbook module contains a quiz that covers content from the relevant chapter. There will also be modules and quizzes dedicated to the data analysis process. The data analysis modules are aimed at providing you with a foundation for understanding the basics of data analysis. The research proposal is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your grasp of the research methods covered in the course.

Course requirements: Access to IBM SPSS statistical software. Access to the software is available for free on campus in the libraries. Or, you can purchase a student version of the software to your home computer through the [campus resources](#) or [On The Hub](#). The cost of a 6-month student license for the base software is \$45.95. The Base software is adequate for this course, but it is recommended you purchase the Standard software for \$61.95 so you have access to the regression functions in the software for use in future research.

Required texts:

The Practice of Social Research (15th ed.) by Earl R. Babbie (2020). ISBN: 9780357360767

Required software:

IBM SPSS statistical software

Administrative Policies

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty: The University of Florida's policies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty can be found [here](#). The policies can be summarized as follows: Do your own work and never take credit for someone else's work and be honest with yourself and others. You will be under a great deal of pressure as you advance through your graduate studies and it will be tempting to plagiarize someone's work or use AI to do the work for you. **DO NOT** plagiarize or use AI for any work in this course.

Special learning accommodations: Students who need learning accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/contact-us/>) at (352) 392-8565 by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodations. Students needing accommodations should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Grading

IRB training – 100 points

Chapter quizzes – 11 quizzes, 1,100 points total

Discussion posts and replies – 5 posts and 5 replies, 20 points each = 200 points

Data analysis – 4 assignments, 100 points each = 400 points

Research proposal – 4 parts, 200 points in total

Total: 2,000 points

Grade assignments

A	93% – 100%
A-	90% - 92.99%
B+	85% - 89.99%
B	80% - 84.99%
C+	75% - 79.99%
C	70% - 74.99%
D+	65% - 69.99%
D	60% - 64.99%
E	< 60%

Chapter quizzes – There will be a quiz for each chapter of the textbook we cover. The quizzes will ask questions related to the material in the chapter and require you to craft responses relevant to the content. There will be lecture videos to support each book chapter and help prepare you for the quizzes. However, the videos are supplemental content to the textbook, not a replacement for carefully reading the textbook. The points for some of the quizzes will vary, but the average value of the quizzes will be 100 pts.

Discussion posts and replies – You will be required to make 5 weekly discussion posts in response to a research-related discussion prompt. Your discussion post must be at least 150 words in length and will be due on Thursdays each week. You will also be required to make 5 responses to another student, one each week. Your responses must be at least 50 words in length and will be due on Saturdays each week. The discussions are meant to be an opportunity to openly discuss research topics and study designs. Your feedback to others should identify areas where they have been especially effective in their design ideas and offer improvements where you believe they can be made. Each post will be worth 20 points and each response will be worth 20 points, for a total of 200 points.

Data analysis – Four assignments are dedicated to the data analysis process. You will be guided through these assignments with video lectures and materials in the data analysis modules. Each assignment will present you with a data analysis task aimed at teaching you how to clean, convert, process, and interpret data using an Excel spreadsheet and IBM's SPSS statistical software. Each assignment will be worth 100 points, for a total of 400 possible points.

Research proposal – Bringing together all the concepts covered in the course, you will design a research proposal aimed at exploring/describing/answering a specific communication problem or theoretical concept. The topic is one of your own choosing and should be important to you. The proposal will include an introduction to the subject (including a driving research question), a brief review of the literature surrounding the topic (including hypotheses and/or research questions), and a rigorous methods section (the focus of the course). The proposal will be designed in portions across four weeks, with feedback from each portion expected to be incorporated into your final research proposal.

Weekly Schedule

Week:	Topics	Readings	Due
Week 1 - May 13	Introduction to the course Inquiry, paradigms, theory, and research	Babbie Chapters 1 & 2	Thurs., May 16 Discussion post 1 Sat., May 18 Quiz 1 – Scientific inquiry Quiz 2 – Paradigms, theory, and research Discussion response
Week 2 - May 20	Ethics and research design Data analysis 1	Babbie Chapters 3 & 4 Data analysis training - Module 1	Thurs., May 23 Discussion post 2 Sat., May 25 IRB training Quiz 3 – Ethics Quiz 4 – Research Design Data analysis 1 Discussion response
Week 3 - May 28	Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement. Index, scales, and typologies. Research proposals	Babbie Chapters 5 & 6 Data analysis training - Module 2 Research proposal - Module 1	Thurs., May 30 Discussion post 3 Sat., June 1 Quiz 5 – Measurement Quiz 6 – Index, scales, and typologies

			<p>Data analysis 2</p> <p>Research proposal – Introduction (25 pts.)</p> <p>Discussion response</p>
<p>Week 4 - June 3</p>	<p>Sampling logic</p> <p>Experiments</p>	<p>Babbie Chapters 7 & 8</p> <p>Data analysis training - Module 3</p> <p>Research proposal – Module 2</p>	<p>Thurs., June 6</p> <p>Discussion post 4</p> <p>Sat., June 8</p> <p>Quiz 7 – Logic of sampling</p> <p>Quiz 8 – Experiments</p> <p>Data analysis 3</p> <p>Research proposal – review of literature (25 pts.)</p> <p>Discussion response</p>
<p>Week 5 - June 10</p>	<p>Surveys</p> <p>Qualitative research</p>	<p>Babbie Chapters 9 & 10</p> <p>Data analysis training - Module 4</p> <p>Research proposal – Module 3</p>	<p>Thurs., June 13</p> <p>Discussion post 5</p> <p>Sat., June 15</p> <p>Quiz 9 – Surveys</p> <p>Quiz 10 – Qualitative research</p> <p>Data analysis 4</p> <p>Research proposal – Methods section (50 pts.)</p>

			Discussion response
Week 6 - June 17	Content analysis	Babbie Chapter 11 Data analysis training - Module 5 Research proposal – Module 4	Thursday, June 20 Quiz 11 – Reading and writing social research Final research proposal (100 pts.)