MMC 6421 (15643)
Research Methods in Mass Communication

Course Info

When: Wednesday 9:35 PM - 12:35 PM

Where: Weimer Hall 1070

Instructor: Dr. Yu-Hao Lee

E-mail: leeyuhao@jou.ufl.edu (my preferred method of communication)

Phone: (352) 392-3951

Office hours: right after class and by email appointment (I'm on campus most weekdays)

Office: 3051 Weimer Hall

Course Description

This course will provide an overview of common research methods in the field of communication. The course will cover four main components of conducting a study:
1) From conceptualization to operationalization a research question
2) Qualitative methods (in-depth interview, focus group)
3) Quantitative methods (survey, experiment, content analysis)
4) Data cleaning, analysis, and writing up the results

This course is meant to be an "introduction" to research methods that will provide you with some basic understanding of research. If you plan to become a researcher, you will need to take additional, more in-depth, courses that focus on each method to master them.

Course Objectives:
1) Develop research questions and testable hypotheses
2) Basic knowledge of qualitative methods
    a. Assumptions and topics
    b. In-depth interviews and focus groups
    c. Reflections on the observer's role
3) Basic knowledge of quantitative methods
    a. Measuring variables (levels, reliability, and validity)
    b. Sampling methods
    c. Survey design, experimental design, & content analysis
4) Data processing and analysis
    a. Data cleaning
    b. Descriptive analysis (e.g., mean, standard deviation, frequency, distribution)
    c. Basic inferential statistics (e.g., correlation, regression, t-test, ANOVA)

Readings

There are no required textbooks for this class, all the readings will be posted on the Canvas course site (https://lss.at.ufl.edu) select "e-Learning in Canvas," and log in using your Gatorlink ID

Requirements

- **Weekly Discussion Questions (2 points x 13 weeks = 26 points)**

Each week before class, you will post two questions on the Canvas discussion board based on the week's readings. These questions can be about parts of the readings that confuse you, concepts that you would like to know more about, or comparing the concepts to other concepts covered in previous weeks, etc. The questions must be posted before 11:59 PM each Tuesday, so I have time to read them before class. We will discuss your question at the beginning of class.

Please include the page number and title if you have questions about the readings so I can find them and answer your questions.

- **Assignments**

Throughout the semester, you will complete seven small assignments that are designed to help you develop your inquiry about society and give you some experience using the methods. Here are some brief descriptions of the assignments. You can find more detailed instructions on Canvas.

*Assignment 1 - IRB training and certification (5 points)***:** For this assignment, you must complete the required training for IRB2 (IRB803). When you've completed the training, send me a copy of your completion form. Afterward, you should create a myIRB account.

Assignment 2 – Developing research questions/hypotheses through literature review (5 points): You will conduct a mini-literature review on a topic of your choice. Based on your literature review, you will propose at least two research questions and two hypotheses. Your research questions and hypotheses should be based on theory or empirical evidence identified through your literature review.

Assignment 3 – In-depth interview / Focus group (5 points): For this assignment, you will create a protocol including a set of interview questions that will allow you to address your research questions. Then you will use the questions to conduct an in-depth interview or a focus group. You will turn in your protocol and a summary of your findings.

Assignment 4 – Qualtrics survey (5 points): For this assignment, you will create an online survey using Qualtrics. The survey should measure at least 8 variables with at least 3 items for each variable. The variables will include your: a) independent variables. b) dependent variables. c) control variables. d) demographics.

Assignment 5 – Experimental design (5 points): For this assignment, you will propose three experimental designs to test your hypotheses. Outline your hypotheses (including independent and dependent variables). Explain how you will induce/manipulate your independent variables, conduct manipulation checks, and measure your dependent variables.

Assignment 6 – Content analysis coding sheet (5 points): You will create a coding sheet that can be used for a content analysis of any media content of your choice. Your coding sheet should include coding schemes for at least 5 variables. Find another person to follow your coding scheme and take notes of their questions.

Assignment 7 – Data cleaning and processing (5 points): I will give you a dataset for you to clean. Your job is to check for missing data, errors in the code, create variables, and perform descriptive statistics. You will send me your syntax and a brief write-up of what you did.

- **Final Proposal (25 points)**

For the final proposal, you will write up a proposal that includes three parts: 1) A brief introduction that justifies the significance of your study. 2) A brief literature review that provides the rationale for your research questions or hypotheses. I do not need you to write a comprehensive scoping review of the field, just focus on the literature and theories that help inform your research questions and hypotheses. 3) A detailed method section based on a method of your choice. This proposal can be based on a paper that you're writing up for another class. However, you will put most of your efforts on the method section for this class. Provide as many details and justifications for each section of the proposal, which typically consists of: sample, stimuli, measures (interview questions), procedures, and in some cases, self-reflection.

Grading

A	93% - 100%	Weekly Discussion Questions	26 points(2 per week)
A-	90% - 92.99%	Assignments	35 points
B+	85% - 89.99%	Final Proposal	25 points
B	80% - 84.99%	Class Participation	14 points
C+	75% - 79.99%		
C	70% - 74.99%		Total: 100 points
D+	65% - 69.99%		
D	60% - 64.99%		
E	< 60%		

Class Policy

Attendance: Seriously, graduate students do not skip classes. The class will start promptly. If you come in late or must leave early, please do so quietly without disturbing others.

Electronic devices: You are allowed to use laptops or tablets for note-taking. Please turn your phone off or turn it to silent mode during class and keep it tucked away. All faculty, staff, and students at the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies several behaviors that are in

violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Policy on Course Syllabi 3 UF, Academic Affairs, July 28th, 2021 Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Special Needs: According to University policy, students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide appropriate documentation to you and they will email this documentation to me when requesting specific accommodation. It is your responsibility to initiate this conversation early in the semester and you should plan to meet with me during office hours to discuss this.

Tentative Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1 Jan. 14th	**Welcome & Introduction to Research Methods**	1. Creswell (2014) Ch. 1
Week 2 Jan. 21th [Assn. 1 due]	**Research Inquiry & Design**	1. Babbie (2016) Ch. 1 & 4 2. Creswell (2014) Ch. 6 & 7
Week 3 Jan. 28th [Assn. 2 due]	**Research and Reporting Ethics**	1. Treadwell (2017) Ch.3 2. APA handbook 7th ed. Pp.11-26

Week 4 Feb. 4st	**Qualitative Assumptions and Observations**	1. Babbie (2016) Ch. 10 2. Crano & Brewer (2009) Ch. 11 3. van Atteveldt, W., & Peng, T. Q. (2018). When communication meets computation: Opportunities, challenges, and pitfalls in computational communication science. *Communication Methods and Measures*, *12*(2-3), 81-92.
Week 5 Feb. 11th	**Interviews**	1. Guest et al. (2017)
Week 6 Feb. 18th	**Focus Group**	1. Krueger & Casey Ch. 2 & 3
Week 7 Feb. 25nd [Assn. 3 due]	**Analyzing qualitative data**	1. Krueger & Casey Ch. 6 2. Burnard, P., Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Analysing and presenting qualitative data. *British dental journal*, *204*(8), 429-432. 3. Bazeley, P. (2009). Analysing qualitative data: More than 'identifying themes'. *Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research*, *2*(2), 6-22.
Week 8 Mar. 4st	**Measurement & Sampling**	1. Hayes Ch. 2 & 3 2. Frey et al. Ch. 4 3. Babbie Ch. 7
Week 9 Mar. 11th	**Survey Design**	1. Dillman et al. Ch.1, 3, & 5 2. Parry, D. A., Davidson, B. I., Sewall, C. J., Fisher, J. T., Mieczkowski, H., & Quintana, D. S. (2021). A systematic review and meta-analysis of discrepancies between logged and self-reported digital media use. *Nature Human Behaviour*, *5*(11), 1535-1547. (Link to summary blog post)
Week 10 Mar. 18th	**[Spring break]**	
Week 11 Mar. 25nd [Assn. 4 due]	**Experimental Design**	1. Trochim & Donnelly Ch. 9 & 11 2. Thorson, E., Wicks, R., & Leshner, G. (2012). Experimental methodology in journalism and mass communication research. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *89*(1), 112-124.
Week 12	**Content Analysis**	1. Riffe et al., Ch. 3, 4, & 6

Apr. 1st [Assn. 5 due]		
Week 13 Apr. 8th [Assn. 6 due]	**Intro to SPSS and Data Cleaning**	1. Field Ch. 3
Week 14 Apr. 15th	**Descriptive Statistics**	1. Field Ch. 4 & 5
Week 15 Apr. 22nd [Assn. 7 due]	**Basic Inferential Statistics**	1. Field Ch. 9 & 10
Week 16 Apr. 29th		