

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communications Studies COMS 313, L01
COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS

FALL 2015

Wed., SEPT. 9 – Wed., Dec. 2 (excluding Nov.11)

W Lecture with Tutorial 12:00 – 15:50

Instructor: Dr. Monique M. Solomon
Office: SS 307
E-Mail: solomonm@ucalgary.ca
Course Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: Wednesdays after class (4-5pm), or by appointment

Course Description

The course provides an introduction to communications research methods and guides students through the fundamentals of designing a research proposal and conducting various research methods. Students will learn about theoretical and methodological perspectives that inform the processes involved in knowledge production (paradigms of knowing, claims making, ethics). Students will explore, practice, and critically reflect on quantitative and qualitative methods (including surveys, content analysis, interviewing, ethnography, discourse analysis, and internet research). The course highlights qualitative methods used by communications researchers to examine topics in areas such as media, health and illness, business, and the environment.

Additional Information

The lecture and tutorial components of the course run concurrently as a single four-hour class once per week on Wednesday afternoons. Students will learn through lectures, readings, discussion, and in-class activities. The course emphasizes learning through active participation; therefore, regular attendance is strongly encouraged. Tutorial activities take place any time during class. As students learn about various perspectives and methods of research they will critically reflect on how these methods relate or apply to their term research proposal.

Objectives of the Course

- To understand how research methods are used in the field of communications and how communications research applies to various social issues and topics
- To critically reflect on the challenges and opportunities of various research methods
- To develop knowledge and practical skills for proposing and designing research

Textbooks and Readings

Required

Babbie, Earl. (2014) *The Practice of Social Research (14th edition)*, Cengage Learning.

The required text provides students with a comprehensive introduction to qualitative and quantitative research methods and design for social sciences. There are two purchasing options.

Option 1 – Digital format only. The text and MindTap study materials are available to our class in digital format at a reduced price of \$89.95.

Please use the following class link to purchase the online version for \$89.95:
www.nelsonbrain.com/shop/micro/ucalgary/coms313

*Option 2 – Digital format **plus** a Loose-Leaf copy of the text.* If you would like a hard copy you may purchase a loose-leaf copy of the text bundled with a digital access code for \$119.95. You can purchase the bundle at the University of Calgary Bookstore.

Recommended (This text is **not** required)

Merrigan, G., Huston, C. L., and Johnston, R. (2012) *Communication Research Methods (Canadian Edition)*, Oxford University Press.

The recommended text introduces foundational theoretical and methodological approaches to research specifically for communications studies. Select information from the text will be covered in lectures and course slides; therefore the text is not required. However, it is available at the University Bookstore if you wish to purchase a copy. It is also available in digital format at CourseSmart:
http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/4074852/9780199000098?_hdv=6.8

Additional readings may be assigned in class.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops and other electronic devices may be used during class for course related work and note taking, but not during student presentations. Cell phones must be turned off for the duration of class.

E-Mail

When sending email to your instructor include COMS 313 in the subject line, and be sure your name appears somewhere in the email. Please allow up to 48 hours for responses to emails. All electronic communication with your instructor and your fellow students regarding group projects and/or assignments should be addressed and written in a courteous, professional manner.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignments for COMS 313 L01 F15 Details will be posted on D2L and covered in class. Class time will be allotted to work on some assignments.	Weight	Due Date
Test 1 & Test 2 Testing of student knowledge of course concepts covering chapters from the readings and lecture materials. The format may include multiple-choice, true-false, and short answer questions. Material is not cumulative. For each missed quiz student will receive zero points.	10% 10%	September 30 October 28
Research Methods Reports 1 & 2 Individually students write a five-page (1200 word), double-spaced essay discussing a research method and data gathering exercise that takes place during class (such as observation, interview, content analysis, survey design). Activity dates and details provided in class.	15% 15%	October 21 November 18
Research Methods Presentation Pairs of students present (20-25 minutes) on an assigned research method using published academic articles to discuss the method. Students provide two class discussion questions ahead of their scheduled presentation. Presentation notes are to be handed in along with a one-page summary of the method to be posted on D2L. Students who are not presenting participate in discussion, and complete peer reviews for presenters.	15%	To be scheduled throughout term
Group Research Proposal Student groups prepare a research proposal on a topic of their choice that integrates their learning of course concepts. The proposal includes the elements of an academic proposal (introduction to topic, significance of research, literature review, research design, bibliography). The assignment is comprised of: Group Work Plan: A 5-7 page work plan detailing development of the research proposal. Presentation: A 20-minute presentation explaining the research proposal. Final Proposal: A 10-12 page research proposal.	35%	October 14 Nov.25/Dec. 2 December 2

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments:

Assignments are due in class, in hard copy, on the due date unless you are otherwise instructed. Some assignments may be due via uploads to D2L please follow assignment instructions carefully.

As directed please hand in your assignments directly to your instructor. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your assignments.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. For assignments submitted after the due date please provide a note with an authorized reason (i.e., illness).

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf .

Please note:

1. Students seeking accommodations for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors directly. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
2. When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
3. For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ualgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ualgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments, exams, and other work in this course will be graded using a combination of weighted raw scores for each individual assignment. This will be converted into a percentage and letter grade for the assignment. All assignments are then weighted based on their percentage value for the course and the scale below is used to calculate the final grade.

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department. If letter grades are used for an assignment or other course component, the percentage equivalent in the final column will be used for calculating the final grade:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good—clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calgary Police Service• Emergency Text Messaging• Emergency Evacuation & Assembly• Safewalk Program	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/

DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthy-campus If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

A detailed schedule of lectures, readings, and assignments will be posted on D2L, and discussed in class.