

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**  
**Communications Studies COMS 313, L02**  
**COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS**  
**FALL 2015**

September 14 – December 7 (No classes on Oct 12 – Thanksgiving)

Classes: Monday 14:00 pm -16:45 pm

Tutorials: Monday 17:00 pm – 17:50 pm

**INSTRUCTOR** : Dr. Adolfo E. Peters  
**OFFICE** : SS 307 (Shared Office)  
**E-MAIL** : [aepeters@ucalgary.ca](mailto:aepeters@ucalgary.ca)  
**OFFICE HOURS** : Monday 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm (or by appointment)

---

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces students to the what, why, and how of research. In simple terms, research is an inspiring, fascinating, engaging, challenging, and rewarding activity that requires dedication, creativity and critical judgment. Students will learn the core research concepts through theory, methods of inquiry and practical examples, but the strength of this course is the hands on approach: how to do field research rather than just thinking about it.

### **Additional Information**

Please e-mail the instructor for urgent/emergency concerns only. Substantive issues should be addressed in person, either in class, office hours, or making an appointment with the instructor. Therefore, do not expect the instructor to respond to e-mails unless there is a matter of urgency.

Be sure to log on D2L at least twice a week to check for messages and course documents.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The course will focus on:

- ✓ the role research plays in knowledge development,
- ✓ the regulations and ethics in conducting research,
- ✓ the link between social theory and research,
- ✓ the logics of qualitative and quantitative research,
- ✓ the advantages of triangulation in research
- ✓ the different types of research projects,
- ✓ the basics of data analysis,
- ✓ the uses and misuses of social research

The course will help students to:

- ✓ gain an understanding of the nature of social research and decisions employed in conducting it,
- ✓ understand the logics of interdisciplinary research,
- ✓ gain some experience in developing and conducting research projects of their own,
- ✓ critically examine the research of others,
- ✓ analyze and interpret research findings and assess their soundness

The course is structured within approximately 12 weeks in a very compressed structure. In order to cover effectively all the materials presented, lectures will be followed by Tutorials (in-class exercises) in which the topics introduced in the lectures, as well as in the assigned readings and other course material, will be further debated through group discussions.

### **Textbooks and Readings:**

**Required Textbook: NO**

**Recommended Readings:** Please refer to the Schedule of Lectures, Readings and Assignments for readings that can be consulted for supplemental references on specific research topics. Lectures will include information derived/adapted from these readings.

### **Internet and electronic communication device information**

Cell phones, pagers, internet surfing, watching videos, playing computer games, checking E-mail (and/or Facebook, twitter, etc.), text messaging, and listening to music are disruptive to everybody in the class. Please be courteous to your classmates and Instructor and **turn off all such devices before the class starts**. Laptop computers, I-Pads and other tablets are to be used exclusively for the purposes of taking notes during class.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

This is a highly research intensive, “hands on” course. There will be no formal partial or final examinations; instead you will work over the length of the course in the following assignments: **ONE Group** Research Project (it includes some individual components as well); **ONE Group** Research Dossier (it includes some individual components as well) prior to conducting the field work; **ONE Individual** Observation Strategies Field Research. Also, you will complete and participate in **three** in-class exercises (individual and group work) including the preparation of a research checklist, a survey on effective teams, and participation in a research panel.

### **COMPOSITION OF FINAL GRADE**

<u>Component</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Weight (%)</u>
✓ Research Check List (In-Class Exercise #1)	Sep 28	10
✓ Observation Strategies (Individual Field Research)	Oct 26	20
✓ Research Panel (In-Class Exercise #2)	Nov 2	5
✓ Research Dossier Panel	Nov 9	15
✓ Survey: Effective Teams (In-Class Exercise #3)	Nov 30	10
✓ Research Project Final Report	Dec 7	30
✓ Research Project (In-Class Presentation)	Dec 7	10
<b><u>Total</u></b>		<b><u>100</u></b>

The description of each one of the above course evaluation components is as follows:

## **Group Research Project**

The major assignment for this course will be a ***Qualitative Research Project on the Many Faces of Homelessness in Calgary***. The Research Project has obtained course-based ethics approval from the Faculty of Arts research ethics committee (See section on Research Ethics). Students will work in groups (*3 or 4 members per team*) to design, conduct and report their research.

At the end of the term, teams will produce a final Research Project Report summarizing each one of the stages of their research project and, most importantly, will present and defend orally the results of their research. The Research Project Final Report (approximately 35 pages including the annotated bibliography section and the full list of references) will be due on **December 7, 2015** and it will count for **30%** of the final grade. The oral presentation and defense component of the research will be due on **December 7, 2015**; this component of the research project will count for **10%** of the final grade.

It is the student's responsibility to organize and equally contribute to all teamwork. All members of a team are assigned a team grade except either in specific individual components (i.e. conclusions and recommendations of personal significance – disciplinary concentration) or in situations where individual team members have not contributed equally to the research efforts in which case the instructor will evaluate the individual student's work. It will be at the instructor's discretion to attend to situations (and possible penalties) where some team members are not fully attending to their team responsibilities.

Since the research project in total will count for **40%** of the final grade it will be important that students allocate time wisely and give significant attention to the project to ensure that they do well in the course.

## **Research Dossier**

In the first part of the course you will be required to: conceptualize your research question, conduct a literature review on your topic (annotated bibliography style), complete a research ethics form and other research forms, design your research plan, etc. All these will be included in a Research Dossier, which will allow the teams to apply for and obtain approval for their project from the instructor, and conduct their fieldwork. The Research Dossier will be due on **November 9, 2015**; this assignment will count for **15%** of the final grade.

## **Observation Strategies (Individual Field Research)**

Students will conduct individually a field exercise around the observation of an important social or cultural activity. Guidelines for this field exercise will be discussed in class as the term progresses. The report of this exercise will be due on **October 26, 2015**; this assignment will count for **20%** of the total grade.

## **In-class exercises**

There will be three graded in-class exercises: completion of a research checklist – individual and team exercise (**10%**), completion of a survey research – individual and team player approach (**10%**), and participation in a research panel (**5%**). These exercises will be carried out during

Tutorial times.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO**

**Note:** All assignments must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

**Submission of Assignments**

Please hand in your assignments directly to the 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. **You are strongly reminded not to leave your assignments in the instructor's office** as this space is shared with other instructors and teaching assistants and papers can get misplaced.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments 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.

**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 date late.

Where possible, you must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to complete the group research project activities or to hand in your assignments. All requests for extension of an assignment due to health reasons must comply with university policies as set out in the calendar sections E.3, G.6, G.7, and with the university accommodation policy, as outlined in the following section. Here is the link to the university calendar section E.3:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-3.html> . Travel arrangements, personal engagements (i.e. work, meetings, etc.) and/or misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting an extension of an assignment or absence to an in-class exercise. Extensions will not be granted if it is determined the student does not show that just cause. Please notice that there is no any type of make-up work for missed in-class exercises, but other kinds of accommodations may be offered where circumstances warrant.

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

**Grading System of the Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale** Grades are entered as percentages into the grading system. Your final letter grade is computed based on the weighted sum of your percentages. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in Communication, Media and Film:

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 course 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%

Notes: (1) Please be aware that the instructor does not post partial grades on D2L. Students are advised to keep track of their partial grades as returned by the instructor. (2) Final grades will not be posted by the Department of Communication, Media and Film, they will be available on your Student Centre once they have been reviewed and approved by the Department.

### 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 quotations marks. 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. All assignments must be properly documented employing the *APA Citation Format*. There are several academic sites (i.e. Calgary, Cornell, Purdue, Toronto, Alberta, Simon Fraser) that can be consulted for examples about how to use the APA format. If you have questions about how to

document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Taylor Digital Family Library, <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

*This course has obtained course-based ethics approval from the faculty research ethics committee. Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., 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/research/research-ethics>*

**Note:** Research teams will complete a “practice” Ethics form that has been adapted for the purposes of this course; it will have to be reviewed and approved by the course instructor before you are given clearance to start the fieldwork component of your research project.

### Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about...	Visit or contact...
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:picarts@ucalgary.ca">picarts@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary Police Service</li> <li>• Emergency Text Messaging</li> <li>• Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</li> <li>• Safewalk Program</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b> <b>403-266-1234</b> <b>Emergency: call 911</b> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergency/plan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergency/plan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergency/plan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergency/plan/assemblypoints</a> If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort ( <b>220-5333</b> ). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a>
<b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT help line</li> </ul>	<a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a> 403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Support Services</li> <li>• Student Services Mobile App</li> </ul>	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>
<b>STUDENT UNION CONTACTS</b>	<a href="http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-">http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-</a>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">officials/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a></p>
<p><b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling Services</li> <li>• Health Services</li> <li>• Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</li> <li>• Online resources and tips</li> </ul>	<p><b>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9.00-4:30 pm</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a></p> <p><b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a></p> <p>If you are 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.</p>

### **SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

A detailed schedule of lectures, readings and assignments will be posted on D2L. I will endeavour to have my lecture notes posted once a week.