

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

Communication and Media Studies COMS 313 L02  
Communication Research Methods

**Fall 2017**

Mon., Sept. 11 – Mon., Dec 4 (excluding Oct 9 & Nov 13)

Monday 2:00 – 4:45 pm

**Instructor:** Dr. Gregory Taylor  
**Office:** SS 308  
**Office Phone:** 403-220-6206  
**E-Mail:** gregory.taylor2@ucalgary.ca  
**Web Page:** <https://commfilm.ucalgary.ca/manageprofile/profiles/gregory-taylor>  
**Office Hours:** Tuesday 10:00 am-12 pm

### **Course Description**

A critical introduction to communication research methods. Students will explore, practice, and critique selected quantitative and qualitative research methods and perspectives on the processes of knowledge production. Through critical reading and writing as well as active learning that encourages a hands on approach to research methods, students will both evaluate others' research and work through their own research process.

### **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 qualitative and quantitative research methods.
- To recognize ethically sound, rigorous research methodologies and research design in scholarly articles.
- To reflectively evaluate the importance of research ethics in the research process.
- To develop knowledge and practical skills for proposing and designing research.
- To learn how to interpret collected data.
- To develop your presentation style and other professional skills

## Textbooks and Readings

Merrigan, G., Huston, C. L., & Johnston, R. T. (2012). *Communication Research Methods (Canadian edition)*: Oxford University Press.

## Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops are permitted for note taking and may be useful for some assignments. **Tablet computers (unless for notes), cellphones and gaming devices may not be used at all during class.** Please respect the instructor and your fellow students. Improper use of electronic devices will impact your participation grade.

## Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Course components	Due
20%	Two (10% each) responses to textbook discussion questions	Oct 2 (first) Nov 27 (last)
20%	Midterm exam –closed book. 90 minutes.	Nov 6
20%	Group class Presentation	various
10%	Initial Proposal with Literature Review	Nov 13 (via D2L); may be submitted by 2:00 pm Nov 14 with no late penalty.
20%	Final Research Proposal	Dec 4
10%	Class Participation (includes in-class projects)	ongoing

### **Participation—10%: Due date—ongoing**

Students are expected to not only be in attendance every week, but to contribute significantly to the class discussions via individual comments, in-class group work activities, and short presentations. Oral participation will help solidify concepts for yourself and others.

### **Desire2Learn Short Writing Assignment —20% (2 X 10%): Due date—various**

Throughout the course, students will be required to write a total of two (2) responses to a prompted discussion question in the syllabus in the textbook. The first assignment must be completed **within the first four weeks of class (by Oct 2)**. This assignment is about your ideas – therefore the responses are due before the class in which the reading will be discussed. Assignments will not be accepted after the class begins and the readings are discussed. The class on **November 27** is the final class to submit the second short writing assignment.

Each response must be between 500 and 750 words, equivalent to two (2) or three (3) pages double-spaced. This assignment seeks to synthesize course material with experience from students' personal research engagement. Write about your own experience but incorporate the ideas presented in the text. Not all questions will inspire a three-page response but each chapter includes four or five questions, so you have choice. **Responses must demonstrate sound analysis of the ideas**

**from the text and include specific quotes.** Other sources may be used if formally cited but are not required.

These assignments are to be uploaded to D2L.

***Initial Proposal and Annotated bibliography —10%: Due date—Nov 13, but can be submitted by 2:00 pm Nov 14 with no late penalty.***

Students must submit a two (2) page (500 word), double-spaced proposal regarding their final research proposal. Proposal submissions must include a Background/Problem Statement that includes key research question(s). Relevance of study Literature review/Theoretical framework

Marks will be awarded for clarity of the proposal and its potential applications of methodologies studied in the class. **(5 marks)**

In addition to the initial proposal, students must submit a list of five (5) academic sources from a variety of resources (books, book chapters, journal articles, etc.). Each source must include a brief annotation *in your own words* of three-to-five (3-5) sentences, as to its relevance for your potential final research proposal. **(5 marks)**

***Midterm—20%: Nov 6***

A midterm examination will test knowledge on all course readings up to this point in the course and content presented in lectures. Midterms must be taken in class unless documentation is provided for a legitimate absence. Students will have the first half of class (90 minutes) to write the midterm. No class is scheduled for the second half. The exam is closed book.

***Group Class Presentation — 20% November 20 and 27***

Class discussions and lectures will provide insight into many of the main research methods for Communication Studies. The purpose of these presentations is to shed light on other methods we may have missed. In groups of four, you will be asked to prepare a presentation on one of the following:

- Digital Methods
- Focus Groups
- Feminist methodology
- Social Media Research
- LGBTQ methodology
- Public Relations Research
- Interviews
- Ethnography and Participant Observation
- Decolonizing and Indigenous Methodologies
- Marxist Methodology
- Another methodology you propose to Dr. Taylor

Each member of the group will participate in the presentation of 20 to 30 minutes. Visual elements should be incorporated into the presentation. Each group must clearly explain the method chosen with reference to at least two academic articles that plainly demonstrate an application of the research method. What are the clear strengths and weaknesses of this particular methodology? Are there ethical or political concerns when using this approach? Each group member should explain if this methodology could be of use for their particular field of interest in Communication Studies.

***Final Research Proposal —20%: Due date —Dec 4 (start of class)***

Students will write a research proposal (2000 - 2500 words – 6 pages) on a topic of your choice. What methodology is appropriate for the problem in question? Students are advised to use this assignment as an opportunity to practice and prepare for potential honours work or a major project. This assignment will give you practice in writing a research proposal.

A proposal typically has the following components.

- Title
- Background/Problem Statement (including research question(s)/Relevance of study
- Literature review/Theoretical framework
- Methods/Research design
- Schedule of research
- Bibliography

You must have a clearly conceived research question. Your literature review must cite at least five academic studies relevant your topic or clearly demonstrating the value of a particular methodology. Do not just mention the approach you will use; provide an explanation of why this is the correct methodology for your research. What do you learn from studying other uses of this research methodology? If you are planning interviews or surveys, describe how you will carry out the interviews/surveys and provide sample questions. Will ethics approval be required?

All references must be properly and fully cited in a consistent format (APA or Chicago preferred). Proposals must generally follow what was proposed in the initial proposal assignment unless otherwise discussed with the instructor.

**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:** The two responses and initial proposal/literature review are to be submitted via D2L. Please hand in your final research proposal directly at the start of class on Dec 4. 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 marked final exams in SS 320. 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/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

**Note:** It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

### **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.

### **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.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- 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.
- 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. 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.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

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

Final grades and term papers are reported as letter grades. Other grades will be numerical.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film.

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

\* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

\*\* These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

### 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 (3<sup>rd</sup> 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 (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve 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 . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca">artsads@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/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a> If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). 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>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/">https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a>

<p><b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Counselling Services</b></li> <li>• <b>Health Services</b></li> <li>• <b>Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</b></li> <li>• <b>Online resources and tips</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a></p> <p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a></p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a></p> <p>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.</p>
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## Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

### Week One (Sept 11)

Why Methods Matter. Who is a researcher?  
Chapter Three: Three Paradigms of Knowing (34 – 47)

### Week Two (Sept 18)

**Guest: Melanie Willerth (MA student)**

Reading: Chapter One: Intro to the Field of Communication (1-19)  
Is there a Canadian way in Communication research?

### Week Three (Sept 25)

Ethics  
Reading: Chapter 2: 20-33.  
Complete TCPS tutorial in class

### Week Four (Oct 2)

Reading: Chapter 9: Historical, Policy and Case Analysis

Archival work: Guest – Regina Landwehr, Associate Archivist, University of Calgary Archives

**(Oct 9 – Thanksgiving holiday. No Class)**

### Week Five (Oct 16)

Government sources: CRTC and Industry Canada  
Chapters 13 (Descriptive Statistics) and 14 (Inferential Statistics)

### Week Six (Oct 23)

Chapter 8 (Content Analysis) and Chapter 12 (Critical Studies)



**Week Seven (Oct 30)**

\*\*\*choose presentations and groups for weeks 9 and 10\*\*\*

Chapter 10 (Conversation and Discourse Analysis)

**Week Eight (Nov 6)**

Mid Term Exam (90 minutes)

**Nov 13 – Remembrance Day and Fall Reading Days. No Class. However...**

**\*\*\*Initial Proposal and literature review due by this day via D2L. You may submit this proposal and literature review by 2:00 pm Tues., Nov 14 with no late penalty.\*\*\***

**Week Nine (Nov 20)**

Group Presentations

**Week Ten (Nov 27)**

Group Presentations

**Week Eleven (Dec 4)**

\*\*final proposals due\*\*