

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 313 (L01): Communication Research Methods
FALL 2019: September 5 to Dec. 6 (excluding Nov. 10-16)
Lecture: Tuesdays & Thursdays 14:00 to 15:15

Instructor:	Tania S. Smith
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Email:	smit@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L available through MyUofC portal (delete or edit)
Office Hours:	Wednesdays 1-2:30pm, Thursdays 12-1pm or by appointment. Appointment calendar: https://ucalgary.ca/smit/about/appointment-calendar -- email to suggest an available time 11a-5pm weekdays.

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.

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Objectives of the Course

Students who have successfully completed this course should know:

- the fundamentals of methodological practices in communication studies
- the political underpinnings and historical contexts of various methods
- key vocabulary and key concepts that pertain to methods and methodology
- how research is done and issues relating to the process and practice
- how research methods are used in communications and media studies and how communications research applies to various social issues and topics
- the challenges and opportunities of various qualitative and quantitative research methods.
- how to recognize ethically sound, rigorous research methodologies and research design in scholarly articles.
- the ethical considerations of research (covered in the TCPS2 online tutorial).
- how to critically and reflectively evaluate the importance of research ethics in the research process.
- the role of scholarly (secondary) research in the research process
- how to design and propose a research project
- how to write a thematically cohesive literature review
- how to code and interpret collected data.

Textbooks and Readings

Required:

Merrigan, G., Huston, C. L., & Johnston, R. (2012). *Communication Research Methods: Canadian Edition*. Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press.

[2012 CANADIAN EDITION REQUIRED. Ordered for Library reserve; Amazon.ca \$125.67. UCalgary Bookstore new \$99.70, Oxford UP \$97.95 Redshelf ebook \$45.95 (USD?) at <https://www.redshelf.com/book/526715/communication-research-methods-526715-9780199000098-gerianne-merrigan-carole-l-huston-russell-johnston>]

NOTE: Despite the cost, this text will be used thoroughly in lectures, exercises and exams. Consider the cheapest ebook version or signing out from library hourly reserve & copying sections.

Required online resources (free):

Panel on Research Ethics, Government of Canada. (n.d.). *TCPS 2: CORE tutorial*. Retrieved August 28, 2019, from <https://tcps2core.ca/welcome>

Government of Canada, Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics. (2019, April 1). *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018)*. Retrieved from http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2018.html

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *APA Style Blog: APA Style Experts*. Retrieved August 28, 2019, from <https://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/apa-style-experts.html>

Instructor-provided resources (links, .pdf or .docx files) samples, published data sets, and so on, posted to D2L, announced in D2L news and in class.

Policy on the use of Electronic Communication Devices

During each other's oral presentations, students in the audience must put away personal devices and close laptop screens enough to hide them from view.

Laptops, tablets, and mobile phones may be used in class and tutorials only for course-related purposes and only if their use is not distracting others or negatively impacting the learning environment. No audio or video recording is allowed in any class without the instructor's permission.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
10%	Participation in-class. Regular quality contributions to in-class discussion and activities; graded based on quality and quantity of contributions and attendance. Each student will be assigned to another group's presentation as a "respondent."	
5%	Preliminary Research Proposal (Group + Individual sections) Form a group of 3. Co-author the 250-word overview. Each write a separate 500w section on a different method (Choose one of textbook chapters 7-12). Propose a communications or media research project that will guide your individual Literature Reviews and final group Formal Research Proposal.	Sep 24
10%	Presentation (Groups of 3) Presentation slides + 6 minutes plus 2.5 min per group	Scheduled

	member. Focusing on the assigned textbook chapter of the day, find an academic article, thesis chapter, or book chapter not covered in your lit review assignment, and apply the chapter's concepts to describe and analyze its methods.	Oct 8-31
15%	Literature Review. 1000-1500w (individual). A formal, academic literature review that engages in critical analysis of 3 secondary sources to build toward the formal research proposal assignment. DRAFT (required): >500 words of introduction & body paragraphs with in-text citations, References, by the deadline. A scheduled in-class review activity is required. A separate penalty may be applied to the final assignment score for lateness, incompleteness, and/or missing peer review activity (max -10%)	Req.Draft: Oct 1 Review: Oct 3 Final: Oct 10
15%	Online exercises. 5% per phase, as scheduled. This includes completion of the online TCPS 2 CORE tutorial in phase 2. Components become part of collections graded in three "phases." Exercises engage with course concepts from lectures and readings. They may involve answering textbook chapter questions, online research challenges, replying to peers. Detailed instructions for each will be provided. Graded based on quality, quantity and regularity per phase.	Sep 26, Oct 24, Nov 28
10%	Mid-term in-class exam, 1 hour, on readings and lectures to Oct 10. Multiple choice, short answer, and long answer; no resources permitted.	Thurs Oct 17
25%	Final Research Proposal. (Groups of 3, with individual sections) Final: 1000 words + 500w per group member, 1 schedule table. The proposal uses 1 method per member in its research design, at least one of which requires human participants and ethics approval and at least one that involves analysis of publicly available communications artifacts. (Note that students will not be permitted to engage in human participant research for this course, merely to propose the methods for them.) DRAFT: (Required) >250 words of intro & >250w each member's body section, plus scheduled in-class review activity. A separate penalty may be applied to the final assignment score for lateness, incompleteness, and/or missing peer review (max -10%)	Draft: Oct 31 Review: Nov 7 Final: Nov 21
10%	Final in-class exam, 1 hour, on readings and lectures since the Mid-term exam. Multiple choice, short answer, and long answer; no resources permitted.	Tues Dec. 3
100.00%	Total	

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

Note: You must **complete** the following course components in order to pass the course:
Literature review, Midterm exam, Final exam.

Submission of Assignments

All drafts, presentation slides, and final assignment materials must be submitted to designated discussion or dropbox areas on D2L* by their deadlines. Follow the detailed written instructions provided on D2L for each assignment's submission areas, file formats and file names.

Please include your name and ID number on all individual assignments submitted only to the instructor. Do NOT put ID numbers on materials shared with other students.

*If you are unable to submit via D2L, do NOT email them to the instructor, but upload them to a file sharing service such as Dropbox or Google Drive that objectively time-stamps your files, and submit them via D2L when you are able. Then arrange via email to show your instructor the version that was submitted by that timestamp.

If you are unable to submit via D2L or submit an online backup, please inform the instructor as soon as you can, and use the drop box 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. **Note:** It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Be prepared to provide photo ID to pick up assignments in SS 320. Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act***. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

All deadlines for items posted to D2L online are due by 11:59pm on the scheduled date.

Components due in class, such as your final presentation slides and peer review notes, are due by the time class begins on the day they are scheduled.

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Note the additional penalties for late or incomplete draft and peer review components, as described above.

The Prelim Proposal, Lit Review and Final Proposal submitted for grading have a 24-hour "Grace period" for late submission. This is not a deadline extension. The grace period is intended for short-term illness or unexpected scheduling challenges, and you do not need to ask permission or explain. The grace period means I do not penalize for the 1st day late, but after 24 hours pass, it is considered 2 days late from the original deadline. (However, the Draft and Peer review are NOT eligible for a grace period for late submission.)

Online Exercises may be posted late with penalties until that phase's discussion board is LOCKED by D2L on the Saturday 11:59pm following the deadline. At that time, later posts and replies are not permitted.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation 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) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, letter grades and their percentage equivalents will be used for the Presentation, Lit Review, and both Proposals. Borderline letter grades are possible (A-/A= 90%). All other course components will be scored as percentages without being converted to a letter grade equivalent.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: 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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

This is a preliminary schedule only. The official schedule is online at

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1MVyG2OrUN1qYFR_6hHJf7nCEmrGQno-iZ-ZEqLxcD4/edit?usp=sharing

Date	Day	Deadlines	%	Readings for homework, lecture topics
2019-09-05	Thurs			Ch 1 Field of Coms; Participation instructions
2019-09-10	Tues			Ch 3a Paradigms: Methodological; Prelim Proposal instructions
2019-09-12	Thurs			Ch 3b Paradigms: Philosophical
2019-09-17	Tues	Form groups of 3		Ch 4 Making claims
2019-09-19	Thurs			Ch 5 What counts as data
2019-09-24	Tues	Group & Individ. Prelim. Proposal	5%	Ch 6 Warrants for research arguments
2019-09-26	Thurs	Phase 1 Online Exercises due	5%	Textual research & APA
2019-10-01	Tues	Draft lit review due (Individual)		Ch. 2 Research ethics
2019-10-03	Thurs	In-class peer review		TCPS Ethics statement
2019-10-08	Tues	Group Presentations begin	10%	Ch 12 Critical studies
2019-10-10	Thurs	Lit Review due	15%	Ch 7 Survey research
2019-10-15	Tues			Exam prep
2019-10-17	Thurs	Midterm in-class exam	10%	Exam day - no assigned readings
2019-10-22	Tues			Ch 8 Content analysis
2019-10-24	Thurs	Phase 2 Online Exercises due	5%	Ch 9 Historical, policy, case analysis
2019-10-29	Tues	Draft of group final proposal		Ch 10 Conversation & discourse analysis

2019-10-31	Thurs	Group Draft final research proposal		Ch 11 Ethnographic research
2019-11-05	Tues			Ch 13 Descriptive stats
2019-11-07	Thurs	Peer review of group drafts	req	
2019-11-12	Tues	Reading week		
2019-11-14	Thurs	Reading week		
2019-11-19	Tues			Ch 14 Inferential stats
2019-11-21	Thurs	Group Final Research Proposal	25%	
2019-11-26	Tues			Exam prep
2019-11-28	Thurs	Phase 3: Online exercises due	5%	Exam prep & Class evaluations
2019-12-03	Tues	Final In-class Exam	10%	In-class Exam
2019-12-05	Thurs	Participation ends	10%	