

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communications Studies COMS 313, L01/T01
COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS

WINTER 2016

Mon., Jan. 11 – Mon., Apr. 11 (excluding Feb. 15)

M 12:00-14:45; Tutorial: M 15:00-15:50

Instructor: Dr. Shawn J. Mueller
Office: SS 307 (shared office)
Office Phone: N/A
E-Mail: muellesj@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: Mondays 15:50 hrs. (immediately after class, or by appointment)

Course Description

A critical introduction to communication research methodologies. Students will explore, practice, and critique various quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and various perspectives on the processes of knowledge production.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of the term, students should be able to:

- articulate the value of research in communication and cultural studies;
- understand the differences between major methodological traditions and research techniques within social sciences;
- understand the interdependency of research and social theory
- command data gathering and analysis processes;
- know how to use databases for secondary research and recognize their value in primary research;
- design ethically sound research projects;
- understand sampling strategies and how to use them;
- make use of interdisciplinary approaches to social research;
- know how to gather information using qualitative and quantitative research methods and create basic research tools for each;
- critically analyze research results of others;
- interpret research results and report the findings in academic and professional settings.

Textbooks and Readings

The following textbooks are required and are available as e-books through the University of Calgary Library.

- May, Tim, *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Research* 4th ed. (2011)

- Denscombe, Martyn, *Ground Rules for Social Research: Guidelines for Good Practice* 2nd ed. (2010)

Internet and electronic communication device information

No restriction on the use of laptops (iPads, netbooks, etc.) in class if they are used to take notes or find information relevant to the class, and if there is no disturbance of other students or the instructor. Phones must be turned off during class time unless you are a health care or law enforcement professional with appropriate ID.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignments in this course are designed to build an understanding of research theory and methodology in the Humanities and Social Sciences. While there will be no formal examinations, there will be a total of five deliverables in this course: four will address four of the major techniques used by researchers (Questionnaire Design, Participant Observation, Case Study and Content Analysis). We will rely heavily on the May text for the development of these projects.

The fifth deliverable is a reflections journal, in which students will engage directly with the assigned readings on topics related to research theory. The journal will be submitted as a single document on the last day of class, April 11, 2016.

In-depth assignment descriptions and marking rubrics will be available in D2L. A summary of due dates and assignment values is included below:

Assignment / Description	Value	Due Date
1. Questionnaire Design Students will apply the guidelines and best practices identified in lecture and readings to design a 20 question survey on a topic of interest (or from a list of suggestions)	20%	Monday, January 25, 2016
2. Participant Observation Students will carry out a participant observation exercise involving an in-class activity (games, presentations, etc.) and will then create a short report (3-5 pages) on the proceedings describing the activity.	20%	Monday., February 8, 2016
3. Case Study Students will review and evaluate a sample case study in terms of its relevance and traction in wider research initiatives. Report should be 3-5 pages in length.	20%	Monday, February 29, 2016
4. Content Analysis Students will conduct a content analysis on a topic/social issue of their choosing (in consultation with the instructor), and will submit a written report (6-10 pages) on their findings and conclusions.	20%	Monday, March 28, 2016

Assignment / Description	Value	Due Date
5. Reflection Journal Students will be given a total of ten topics for the journal and will be expected to produce one to two page summaries for each topic. Both texts must be referenced for the journal topics.	20%	Monday, April 11, 2016

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

All assignments are to be submitted via D2L. Submission process will be reviewed prior to the due date of the first assignment.

Submission of Assignments: All tutorial assignments completed electronically are to be submitted via D2L. If the assignment is handwritten, please hand it directly to the instructor at the end of the class.

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 written 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.

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.ucalgary.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.ucalgary.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

- letter grades
- percentage grades
- raw scores (e.g., a score out of 15 for an assignment worth 15 /100 of the final grade)
- GPA values (using any value on the 0 to 4.0 scale, including, e.g., 3.2 or 2.8)
- a combination of the above.

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%

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
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/healthycampus 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

Comprehensive schedule of lectures and readings will be posted to D2L.