

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
COMS 313 (L01): Communication Research Methods
WINTER 2021: Jan. 11 to Apr. 14 (excluding Feb. 14-20 & Apr. 5)
Asynchronous Lecture: M 9:30-10:45
Synchronous Discussion: W 9:30-10:45

IMPORTANT NOTE ON COURSE DELIVERY FOR WINTER 2021:

This Winter 2021 course will be offered entirely online as part of the University's plan to ensure everyone's safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please read the outline carefully to see which course components will be offered synchronously (where you are expected to participate at the usual scheduled course time) and which components will be offered asynchronously (to be completed on your own time). Synchronous course sessions will be hosted on Zoom, a video-conferencing program. To access scheduled Zoom course sessions, go to D2L, click on the COMMUNICATION tab, and select Zoom 5 or 10 minutes before class is scheduled to begin.

If you will not be able to participate in scheduled synchronous class sessions owing to time differences, then you should arrange to take this course when it is offered in person in the future.

Note that the time indicated on course outlines for all timed quizzes and exams in CMCL, COMS, and FILM courses includes 50% extra time to allow for technical difficulties.

Instructor:	Tamara Shepherd
Email:	tamara.shepherd@ucalgary.ca -- emails will be responded to within 24 hours, M-F
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	Wednesdays 11am-1pm, or by appointment

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.

COMS 313 will enable students to:

- explain the fundamentals of methodological practices in communication studies
- review the political underpinnings and historical contexts of various methods used
- apply key vocabulary and key concepts that pertain to methods and methodology
- describe how research is done and what issues are part of process and practice
- critique the limitations of scholarly studies
- develop research and writing skills

Textbooks and Readings

All readings will be available on D2L.

Learning Technologies and Requirements & Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

This is an online course. In order to complete online (or blended) courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external);
- A microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone. If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact the university's IT department. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Instructors may arrange to record synchronous zoom class sessions for lesson capture; however, students are not to share recordings with others. Please carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
40% (5% each)	Reading Quizzes Every week, students will complete a timed quiz (30 minutes, which includes the extra 50% time) on D2L that covers the content from that week's required readings. Each quiz has 10 multiple choice and true/false questions. Students have from Monday 9:30am to Tuesday 9:30am to complete the quiz. The quizzes are open-book. While completing the quiz, students may consult the course materials, but communicating with other students about a quiz before it closes will be considered academic misconduct. There are 9 quizzes in total, but the lowest mark will be dropped.	Weekly: Jan 18 to Mar 30 (inclusive)
25%	Literature Review Students will write a 4-6 page literature review that analyzes 8 sources (articles/book chapters), which apply a particular research method from a list provided by the instructor. The paper will summarize and synthesize how the sources have applied that specific method by focusing on the authors' research design, sample, analytical framework, benefits, limitations, and ethical considerations.	March 17
35%	Research Proposal Building from the literature review, students will invent a research study that they might like to do to find out more about a contemporary media and communications phenomenon. For this assignment, students can apply the method that they have already researched in the literature review to a specific topic of their choice. The 8-10 page proposal will use the following subheadings: topic & rationale, research questions, research method, study design, limitations, ethical considerations. Students may complete this assignment on their own or in pairs.	April 14

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: You do not have to complete all the assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in this course.

If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments electronically by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox (unless instructed otherwise in the assignment guidelines). Include your name and ID number on all assignments. 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).

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

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.

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, percentage grades will be used for all assignments.

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://success.ucalgary.ca/home.htm>

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

1	Jan 11, 13	Intro to qualitative research	
	Reading:	Sarah J. Tracy, 2010. "Qualitative Quality"	
PART I: STUDYING PEOPLE			
2	Jan 18, 20	Surveys	
	Readings:	Valerie Sue & Lois Ritter, 2012. "Introduction" to <i>Conducting Online Surveys</i>	
3	Jan 25, 27	Ethnography	
	Reading:	Laurence de Garis, 1999. "Experiments in Pro Wrestling"	
4	Feb 1, 3	Interviews and Focus Groups, Ethics	
	Reading:	Koen Leurs, 2015. "Methodological Trajectory: In-depth Interviews"	
	Bonus:	Complete the TCPS 2 CORE Ethics Tutorial at https://tcps2core.ca/welcome for 2% extra credit on your overall course grade. Submit the certificate by Feb 3.	
PART II: STUDYING TEXTS			
5	Feb 8, 10	Content, Textual, and Discourse Analysis	
	Reading:	Hilary Janks, 1997. "Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool."	
6	Feb 15, 17	NO CLASS: Reading Week	
7	Feb 22, 24	Archival / Historical Research	
	Reading:	Michael R. Hill, 1993. "Introduction," and "Chapter 1: Archival Sedimentation."	
PART III: STUDYING THE DIGITAL			
8	Mar 1, 3	Users	
	Reading:	Christine Hine, 2008. "Virtual Ethnography: Modes, Varieties, Affordances"	
9	Mar 8, 10	Interfaces	
	Reading:	Ben Light, Jean Burgess, & Stephanie Dugay, 2016. "The Walkthrough Method"	
10	Mar 15	NO CLASS: independent work	No class Mar 17: *Literature Review due*
PART IV: MAKING RESEARCH CRITICAL			
11	Mar 22, 24	Decolonizing methods	
	Reading:	Margaret Kovach, 2005. "Emerging from the Margins"	
12	Mar 29, 31	Political Economy	
	Reading:	Janet Wasko, 2014. "The Study of the Political Economy of the Media..."	
13	Apr 7	Participation & Creativity	No class Apr 5 for Easter Monday
	Reading:	Carla Rice, et al., 2020. "Making Spaces: Multimedia Storytelling..."	
14	Apr 12	Last class wrap-up	No class Apr 14: *Research Proposal due*