

CMST 2310: Research Methods

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Office Hours: By Appointment, Wednesdays 10:00-1:00

Course Description: A review of research in communication studies. In this particular social science, what do we study? How do we study it? What should we take away from what is studied? When I use “studied” in this instance, I am referring not to a review of the discipline, but rather, original, peer-reviewed published research. When someone conducts a communication studies scientific study, how ought we evaluate its efficacy? We will examine both quantitative and qualitative investigative methods. Students learn to read and review work within the discipline. In short, we will review 1) the philosophy of science, and the scientific method, 2) ethics involved in studying human subjects, 3) the process of conducting scientific research, and 4) the most common methods or techniques used in communication research. Think of the course as a funnel - from the broad abstract theory of empirical scientific research, to the specific kinds of research methods and techniques employed by communication researchers.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand communication from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives.
2. Identify key epistemological approaches underlying communication theories and appropriately associate different theories and methodologies for any given epistemological approach.
3. Execute thoughtful and appropriate criticism of communication theories, questions, and problems via deductive, inductive, and intuitive modes of reasoning.
4. Identify, access, and comprehend appropriate scholarly sources necessary to answer communication-based research questions and problems.

Expectations and Course Structure: This course in an interactive lecture format. I will present notes and information during each class meeting, and I will count on your contributions. I expect you come to class ready to participate in our creation of our collective knowledge. I invite you to ask questions, answer questions, share insights, and engage in the material during activities. Lectures will not duplicate readings. You should stay atop of the weekly readings and complete

them before coming to class, and be prepared for activities that assess your understanding of ideas in each chapter or article.

The point of class is to be as student driven as possible - because so much of the material will be up and available online, the goal of in-person meetings is to be able to provide greater depth, more clarity, answer specific questions, etc. So consider the classes an in-person seminar, to drive home key elements. All tests and quizzes will be administered online.

Covid 19 Information for Classrooms and Laboratories: Students are required to follow all procedures as specified by [Procedures for Fall 2020 Return to Normal Operations](#). The UT Tyler community of Patriots views adoption of these practices consistent with its [Honor Code](#) and a sign of good citizenship and respectful care of fellow classmates, faculty, and staff.

Students who are feeling ill or experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, or a higher than normal temperature will be excused from class and should stay at home and may join the class remotely. Students who have difficulty adhering to the Covid-19 safety policies for health reasons are also encouraged to join the class remotely. Students needing additional accommodations may contact the Office of Student Accessibility and Resources at University Center 3150, or call (903) 566-7079 or email saroffice@uttyler.edu.

Course Website: We will be using Canvas for this course. I will upload necessary texts that are not part of your course packet, as well as any other course documents that may be of use to you throughout the semester. I will also use Canvas as a communication tool in order to contact you.

Recommended Texts:

Baxter, L.A. and Babbie, E. (2004). *The basics of communication research*. Thomson Wadsworth: Belmont, CA.

— OR —

Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2014). *Mass media research: An introduction* (10th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth.

Both these texts are excellent. They contain all the information you would need for the course. However, in years past I have had students tell me that between the provided readings, and the materials in class, they felt like they never needed to actually purchase the textbook. So I recommend picking one of those up, I think they are useful. They are not a requirement for the course.

Additional readings will be available on Canvas.

Grade Grievance Policy:

If you wish to appeal a grade, please follow this procedure:

- Wait 24 hours before contacting me about a grade unless there was an error in calculation of the grade. I ask that you wait so that you can look back over the assignment or exam and your notes and the textbook, then think about the reasons why you earned the grade. I am very happy to discuss grading and evaluation criterion, you just need to wait 24 hours after I turn a grade back to you to contact me.
- Submit the appeal in writing. E-mail me **within one week of your receipt of the grade**; include your specific appeal and which grade you believe you believe you earned. E-mail me again only if I do not acknowledge your first appeal.
- I will not entertain conversations in the last week of class or after final grades have been posted about being only a few points away from earning a particular letter grade. As you can see, points have already been rounded up. You will receive the grade that you earn throughout the semester, so please start working hard early on.

Course Assessment: (Additional information will be provided in class)

Research Articles Identification, Review and Critique 20%

Each student will review selected research, and critique research being done in (1) empirical, formal communication research.

* Identify the key elements of those studies' methods, how and with what they were able to conclude, and what implication the research bears.

- Articles must come from a credible, peer-reviewed journal, and be engaged in the field of communication in some way.
- Your report should identify: (1) what is the justification for the study? (1a) what is the *theoretical* justification for the study? (2) what are the research questions and/or hypothesis? (2a) what methodology was pursued in answering these? (3) was the research questions / hypotheses well supported? And was the method of choice by the author an

appropriate way to test these questions? (4) what is the relevance of these findings? How (if at all) do they contribute to the field in question, and communication more broadly?

(5) were there any major limitations to the study?

(5 articles @ 40 points each= 200 points)

Exams 40%

Two exams will be given during the semester, to assess students' knowledge of material covered in the readings. Although the exams will cover only the content from the given unit, some chapters and concepts will utilize concepts from previous chapters, so each exam will contain some amount of cumulative knowledge. The nature and format of the exams will be discussed in class as the date for each exam approaches.

(Exam 1 = 20%; Exam 2 = 20%, 200 pts / exam)

Research Proposal 25%

You will put together a research proposal as your “final” project in the class. Consider this your cumulative project for the semester. More details of the assignment and a rubric will be provided, but here are the basics:

You will propose a quantitative or qualitative study using one of the research methods covered in class. You will write a literature review, propose an original research question or hypotheses. Provide a method to collect data to answer that research question or hypothesis. And provide some speculation as to the results (you will not ACTUALLY collect data and do the study - but I will expect a section of the paper to document *why* answering that research question, or proving/disproving your hypotheses is important and necessary. Lastly, you will provide a brief write-up of the limitations of your proposed study. In short, your assignment should contain 6 sections. While every assignment is different, and there is no “minimum” number of pages, here is a rough guide of what I have seen in most good and complete research proposals.

* Introduction (1/2 - 1 page)

- Literature Review (2-4 pages)
- Research question/hypothesis (paragraph)
- Methodology (1/2 - 1 page)
- Speculation of Results (2-4 pages)
- Limitations (1/2 - 1 page).

- Prior to presenting your final you will turn in a **prospectus** of your proposed research project.

- These are **free points**. You will turn in a few brief paragraphs documenting 1)What body of literature/theory you are drawing your research proposal from, 2) Your proposed research questions and/or hypotheses and 3) Your proposed method to collect data
- By doing these things, you will receive 50 pts of your final grade. You are not being assessed on quality. Rather, this is a way for me to check in with each of you, before you go about your hours of research, to make sure that you're on a good track. I also might suggest potentially relevant work to draw from to improve your final effort.

(Prospectus = 50 pts, Final Proposal = 150 pts)

Grade Breakdown

This course utilizes a 100-point grading scale. Grades will be posted in the course Blackboard site throughout the semester. Students are encouraged to verify that grades posted in Blackboard correspond with their own records and communicate any discrepancies in a timely manner.

Assignment	Point Value
Research Articles Review and Critique	200
Exam 1	200
Exam 2	200
Research Proposal	250
Prospectus	50
Final Presentation	100
Total	1000 (100%)

SUB-TOTAL = 1000 (100%)

Course Policies:

Elasticity Clause: I reserve the right to modify the existing course calendar and assignments. If changes must be made, I and/or my teaching assistants will notify students as soon as possible.

Classroom Civility: People and ideas must be treated with respect. Please avoid disruptive behavior that makes it difficult to accomplish our mutual objectives.

Changes to the schedule: Changes may be made at my discretion and if circumstances require. I will do my best to notify you via email, in class, and with a hard copy of the changes. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced. Readings must be completed for the day they are assigned on the course schedule. Lectures are intended to complement the readings.

E-mail: E-mail is my preferred form of contact (note the address above). I cannot guarantee a response to e-mails sent to other addresses, including Canvas. Allow a 48-hour window for a response. If an e-mail is after 4 p.m. on any given day, I cannot guarantee a response before 9 a.m. the following business day. Emails about assignments will not be responded to after 9 p.m. and are not guaranteed after 2 p.m. the night before the assignment is due. As we will discuss, I am the Director of Forensics here at UT Tyler, which means I also have debate tournaments and other competitive endeavors many weekends of the year. To that end, I have inconsistent access to email over the weekends. If you allow me one business day to respond, I will get back to you.

Also, please NEVER HESITATE to email me more than once. If somehow something gets lost, or you have questions that I have not answered, reach out early and often! I am not offended by multiple emails, or multiple requests for information. So email me! And email me again if you need! And again after that! I want to hear from you, so please never hesitate to reach out.

All assignments must be turned in on time. If you know you will be missing class due to religious observance, athletics, or competitions, you must inform me no later than the second week of classes.

Assignments: All papers must be typed using Times New Roman in 12-point font, one-inch margins (with no extra spaces between paragraphs), and proper APA style. You must cite ALL references used in your papers (using APA) within text and in a references page. For help with APA style and writing, please do not hesitate to visit the Undergraduate Writing Center on campus or online. NO handwritten copies will be accepted. NO assignments will be accepted via email unless approved by me prior to the day the assignment is due.

Late Assignments & Make-up Work: There is no such thing as late work, nor is there make-up work for unexcused, missed or failed assignments. I do not give make up exams or quizzes except under serious unforeseen and/or extenuating documented circumstances about which I am notified immediately.

Plagiarism

Academic Honesty: The core values of The University of Texas at Tyler are integrity, optimism, curiosity, accountability, leadership, initiative, and development. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values.

All students must adhere to the UT- Tyler Honor Code (“Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor accept the actions of those who do”). Furthermore, students must complete their work with academic integrity outlined at <http://www.uttyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php>. All students are expected to maintain absolute honesty and integrity in academic work undertaken at The University. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be pursued to the fullest extent allowed by University policies and procedures. Adding another student’s name to an attendance roster when he or she is not in class is academic dishonesty.

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

1. “Cheating” includes, but is not limited to:
 - copying from another student’s test paper;
 - using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
 - failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
 - possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed “crib notes”. The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;

- using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an un-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
- collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
- substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
- paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an un-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an un-administered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
- falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit; • taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
- misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

1. “Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit.
2. “Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.
3. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by SafeAssignTM, available on Canvas

The “Common Knowledge” Clause: Material does not have to be cited if it is common knowledge—that is, knowledge that most American high school graduates already know. (E.g. Humans once painted in caves. Berlin is the capital of Germany. Etc.)

The “Textbook” Clause : Material does not have to be cited if both of these points are true:

1. If the information contained in a student’s work is found in a course textbook or other assigned reading
2. And if that information is presented in such a way that the work is not copying or nearly copying the reading material word-for-word.

For example, if a student's textbook lists the Stone Age as beginning in 3,000 BCE, then a student can simply include this date. But, if a student copied full sentences from the textbook, then that would be plagiarism.

The “10% Rule”: As a general rule, a college assignment is considered an original work only if the vast majority of text is original. Generally, no more than 10% of a work can be someone else's words, regardless of proper quotes or citation.

Intent: When reviewing a possible case of plagiarism, the student's intent will not be taken into consideration. In other words, an act of plagiarism is plagiarism whether or not the student claims to have intended plagiarism.

Mistakes & Accidents: The possibility that the student mistakenly or accidentally committed plagiarism will not be taken into consideration. I strongly suggest that you discuss your sources with the Writing Center before turning in work.

Appeal to Ignorance: A student's claim to ignorance with concern to policy will never be treated as a valid justification of plagiarism.

Collaboration: Students are not permitted to collaborate on an essay, discussion post, quiz, test, or any written assignment. Having someone proofread your work is ok, but that can only entail matters of style, grammar, and spelling.

Disciplinary Action for Plagiarism: Per departmental policy, the first offense of plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment. Any additional acts of plagiarism will result in an F for the course and possible disciplinary action by the Dean (e.g. expulsion).

University Policies:

UT Tyler Honor Code: Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

Student Rights and Responsibilities: To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www2.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

Classroom Diversity: It is my desire to create a stimulating work environment that challenges each student in this class to perform at top levels. In order for our learning community to succeed, each member must treat others that way that they would like to be treated. I expect students to respect the opinions and ideas of each individual. As an instructor, I am committed to providing an atmosphere of learning that is representative of a variety of diverse perspectives, including race, religion, gender, nationality, age, sexual orientation and physical abilities. In this class, you will have the opportunity to express and experience culturally diversity as we discuss diversity issues as they pertain to the classroom environment and the course materials.

Tobacco-Free: All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler campus or in my classroom or office. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, affiliates, contractors, and visitors. This includes cigarettes, pipes, cigars, water pipes, e-cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, and all other tobacco products.

Campus Carry: We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy: Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date). Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions. The last day to withdraw from a course at UT-Tyler is Monday of the 11th week of class.

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies: Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment

Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract. The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

Student Accommodations: In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, PTSD or ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment you are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility and Resources office and schedule an interview with the Accessibility Case Manager/ADA Coordinator. If you are unsure if the above criteria applies to you, but have questions or concerns please contact the SAR office. For more information or to set up an appointment please visit the SAR office located in the University Center, Room 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities: If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement: It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation: Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Dates and topics subject to change by instructor. Check email and Canvass for updates.)

Week 1	Monday, August 25	<i>Course Introduction</i>
	Wednesday, Aug 27	<i>More Introduction</i> <i>What is Research and why should we care? (1)</i> <i>Primary v Secondary Research</i>
Week 2	Monday, September 1	<i>Labor Day No Class</i>
	Wednesday, September 3	<i>Elements of Research (1/2)</i> <i>Scientific Method</i> <i>Research questions / Hypothesis</i>
Week 3	Monday, September 8	<i>Elements of Research (2/2)</i> <i>Understanding Variables</i> <i>Validity, Reliability, Credibility</i> <i>Research Ethics (1/2)</i>
	Wednesday, September 10	<i>Research Ethics (2/2)</i>

Week 1	Monday, September 15	IN CLASS MOVIE: Stanford Prison Experiments *Article Critique #1 due*
	Wednesday, September 17	IN CLASS MOVIE: Stanford Prison Experiments Debrief
Week 2	Monday, September 22	<i>Sampling (1/1)</i> Overview: Quantitative Methods Survey Design
	Wednesday, September 24	<i>Sampling (2/2)</i> Survey as Experiments Online Surveys
Week 3	Monday, September 29	***EXAM 1***
	Wednesday, October 1	<i>Experiments</i> Labs, Replicability Article Critique #2 due
Week 4	Monday, October 6	<i>Experiments (2/2)</i> Campaigns, Interventions, Content analysis
	Wednesday, October 8	<i>Quantitative Data Analysis</i> Analyzing Data Limitations Writing and Critiquing Quantitative Research
Week 5	Monday, October 13	<i>Introduction to Qualitative Methods</i> The “critique” of quantitative methods Qualitative strengths and Weaknesses *Article Critique #3 due*

	Wednesday, October 15	<i>Qualitative Research (1/2)</i> Ethnographies, Anthropology
Week 1	Monday, October 20	<i>Qualitative Research (2/2)</i> Interviews
	Wednesday, October 22	<i>Focus Groups (1/2)</i> *Article Critique #4 due*
Week 2	Monday, October 27	<i>Focus Groups (2/2)</i>
	Wednesday, October 29	<i>Texts and Artifacts</i>
Week 3	Monday, November 3	<i>Qualitative Data Analysis</i> Analyzing Data Writing and Critiquing Qualitative Methods Limitations
	Wednesday, November 5	<i>Qualitative, Quantitative, and Big Data</i> Por que no los dos? Social Science and Your Future
	Monday, November 10	Exam Review Work Session for Final Presentations
	Wednesday, November 12	Ethnography
Week 4	Monday, November 17	Focus Groups *Article Critique #5 due*
	Wednesday, November 19	Interviews
	Monday, November 24	<i>THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS</i>
	Wednesday, November 26	<i>THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS</i>

Week	Monday,	Exam Review
	December 1	
	Wednesday, De	Exam 2