

COMM5310 –COMM RESEARCH METHODS
Online June 29-August 15
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Course Description: This course provides an accessible introduction to research methods in communication, with a focus on quantitative approaches. Designed for beginners, the course breaks down the research process into manageable weekly topics, including research design, measurement, sampling, survey construction, experimental design, content analysis, and interviews. Students will develop a working understanding of key concepts such as validity, reliability, and variable types. Through hands-on assignments, peer discussions, and guided article reviews, students will learn how to interpret and design basic research tools. By the end of the course, students will be equipped to critically evaluate published studies and apply research methods in academic or professional settings.

As an asynchronous online class, you can learn the content at your own pace. However, to ensure you take the quizzes and submit the assignment in time, I recommend you to learn one module per week. Please check the class schedule in the class schedule table.

Zoom link for weekly office hours:

<https://uttyler.zoom.us/j/84957222326?pwd=rS2dcLiRk0tFO4BmDAUEwyC1TVMjlp.1>

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe and apply foundational concepts in communication research, including research questions, hypotheses, variables, validity, and reliability.
- Identify appropriate measurement and sampling strategies and explain how they influence the quality of research findings.
- Design basic research tools such as surveys, experiments, coding sheets, and interview guides tailored to different research methods.
- Critically evaluate peer-reviewed research articles, comparing methodological choices and assessing the strengths and limitations of each study.
- Communicate research designs and critiques effectively through discussion, quizzes, and written assignments.

Course Requirements

1. **Required Readings:**

- A. Principles and Methods of Social Research, Page & Parnell, 4th edition, ISBN: 9781003271734
- i. A free e-textbook version can be found in the school library
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781003271734/principles-methods-social-research-william-crano-marilynn-brewer-andrew-lac?context=ubx&refId=5e8a1029-e2d9-402c-b49f-18abe147654e>
 - ii. Book chapters can be found on Canvas

Evaluation and Grade Calculation

In-class discussion	20%
Paper Analysis	20%
Course Project Milestone	40%
Quiz	20%
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Total	100%

Percent	Letter Grade
90% - 100%	A
80% - 89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59% and below	F

Class Policies and Expectations

1. Classroom Policies and Expectations

- A. Work hard - learning requires constant reading, researching, thinking, discussing, and working with your classmates and me. Everyone has something important to contribute. My job is to present new information and prepare a climate in which you can contribute your own special knowledge. Your job is to be prepared to contribute.
- B. Participate – you must be an active part of the course to succeed. You will also have to give effort outside of class.
- C. Treat each other with respect and display common classroom courtesies.
 1. You are responsible for your attitude and how you treat others. I will not tolerate name calling, fighting, students belittling each other for differing opinions, etc. I expect you to act like adults, show each other respect, and to challenge yourself and each other to learn/understand opinions you may not agree with. If you are not treating individuals with respect or are causing a distraction, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
- D. Grading – The grading process begins with the assumption that the work is good, which earns a grade within the range of a “B.” To earn an A, you must show

exceptional understanding of the material, utilizing additional sources, examples, and original thought. This means going beyond stating the obvious, the simple answer, or what Google says. Additionally, poor organization, not following assignment instructions, grammar/spelling, lack of depth and thought, failing to illustrate an understanding of the material, etc. will result in your grade being lowered.

- E. I use Canvas and email to communicate, post assignments and readings, present feedback and provide a space for you to communicate with your classmates. I expect you to check both daily and stay aware of what is coming up.
 - 1. It is highly recommended that you download the Canvas application and adjust your settings to allow for notifications.
- F. Communicate - If you have a problem with anything throughout the semester, getting an assignment in on time, needing to be absent from a class, getting your book, checking out equipment, or anything I'm doing as a professor, talk to me about it. I cannot help you or fix the problem if I am unaware of it.

2. Assignment Policies

- A. Assignments do have deadlines and these deadlines need to be met. It is your responsibility to utilize time outside of class in an effective manner so you can ensure that you submit each assignment before the due date and time.
 - a. For many assignments, not all, the submission folder will stay open for one week after the due date. Any assignments turned in after the due date will receive a point per day deduction. Specific point values that will be deducted each day can be found on the assignment overviews on Canvas. It is your responsibility to know when the assignment is due for full credit, when the assignment closes, and the number of points that will be deducted each day for late submissions. Assignments will not be accepted after this final date.
 - b. All the assignments will be graded within one week.
- B. Assignments and due dates may be changed at the instructor's discretion with fair notice to students.
- C. I will not accept assignments via email unless there are issues with Canvas and the email includes your assignment and a screenshot of the Canvas malfunction.
- D. Merely completing all assignments does not guarantee that you will pass the course. You must put forth effort and show an understanding of the material to earn a satisfactory grade.
- E. Spelling, grammar, and neatness count and you will lose points on assignments if your submissions are not edited.
- F. You are required to utilize **APA format** for any assignment that requires the utilization of outside sources.
- G. I will not accept screenshots of assignments. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments must be typed, formatted to be a .DOC, .DOCX, PPT, or PPTX.(Pages, Google Drive, and other online word processors must be exported to this specific format), and submitted via Canvas.

- H. Canvas includes a syllabus function that outlines upcoming due dates, due dates can be seen listed on each assignment under the assignment tab in Canvas, assignment due dates can be added to your Canvas calendar, I have provided a list of graded assignments and activities and the date they are due, and each due date will be listed in the course modules.
- I. It is your responsibility to ensure that your assignments are being submitted correctly to Canvas by the due date and time. If an assignment appears to be not submitted beyond the assignment closing, it will receive a zero. If you do not regularly check your grades or check Canvas for technical errors, there is little that can be done at the end of the semester. If you do experience technical difficulties submitting assignments, you must email me before the assignment closes and, if the issue persists, contact IT.
- J. Students will adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. A student who is caught doing either will earn a “0” for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action. If a student is caught a second time, they will automatically fail the course.
- a. In addition to UT Tyler’s Student Conduct and Discipline policy, plagiarism/cheating includes the use of papers or other materials previously submitted in my classes or other professors’ classes, as well as video and audio recordings. I expect you to submit work created specifically for this class during this semester.
 - b. Artificial Intelligence Statement**

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools’ ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler’s Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler’s Academic Integrity Policy.

For this course, I encourage you to explore using artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, for all assignments and assessments. Any such use must be appropriately acknowledged and cited, following the guidelines established by the APA Style Guide, including the specific version of the tool used. However, you cannot simply copy and paste answers from AI. The

process of training AI and improving answers is required to share. The submitted work should include screen-shots to show the exact prompt you used to generate the content and the AI’s complete response as an appendix. Because AI-generate content is not necessarily accurate or appropriate, you must assess the validity and applicability of any submitted AI output. You will not earn full credit if inaccurate, invalid, or inappropriate information is found in your work.

[APA Style Citation Information](#)

Course Schedule

Date	Key Concepts	Tasks
Week One: What Is a Good Study		
TBD	Research; Internal and external validity; Research question; Hypothesis; Research Gap.	<u>Reading:</u> Ch. 1, Ch. 2; <i>Article: National University Research Process Guide: Identifying Research Gaps</i> <u>Discussion:</u> A good communication study example <u>Research Article Analysis:</u> (Okazaki et al., 2008) <u>Course Project Milestone:</u> CITI Training Quiz 1
Week Two: How Do We Measure What Matters		
TBD	Variables; Measurement; Reliability; Validity.	<u>Reading:</u> Ch. 3, Ch. 4; <i>Article: A concise and clear explanation of the four levels of measurement—nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio—with practical examples.</i> <u>Discussion:</u> What makes a good measure <u>Research Article Analysis:</u> (Meppelink et al., 2019) <u>Course Project Milestone:</u> Measure your own variables Quiz 2
Week Three: How Do We Choose Who (or What) to Study?		
TBD	Sample; Population; Probability; Random sample; sampling methods; Non-probability sampling methods; Sampling bias.	<u>Reading:</u> Ch. 12 <u>Discussion:</u> What’s the Most Difficult Population to Sample—and Why? <u>Research Article Analysis:</u> (Dalisay et al., 2012) <u>Course Project Milestone:</u> Sampling plan Quiz 3
Week Four: Designing Surveys That Work: Asking the Right Questions the Right Way		

TBD	type of variables and scales relations between variables	<u>Reading:</u> Ch. 16 Article: <i>Survey Method: Key Features</i> <u>Discussion:</u> Is Survey the Right Method? A Case Reflection <u>Research Article Analysis:</u> <u>Course Project Milestone:</u> Survey Design Quiz 4
Week Five: Experiments: Testing Cause and Effect in Communication Research		
TBD	True experiment; Random Assignment; Manipulation; Factorial design; Manipulation check; Control.	<u>Reading:</u> Ch. 5, Ch. 6 Article: <i>Experimental Methods Explained</i> . <u>Optional reading:</u> Ch. 7 <u>Discussion:</u> When Are True Experiments the Best Option? <u>Research Article Analysis:</u> (Keller et al., 2003) <u>Course Project Milestone:</u> Experiment Design Quiz 5
Week Six: What's in a Message? Unlocking Patterns with Content Analysis		
TBD	Unit; Coding Sheet; Themes; manifest variables; Latent variables; Intercoder reliability.	<u>Reading:</u> Ch. 14 <u>Discussion:</u> What Can We Code from Pictures? <u>Research Article Analysis:</u> (Sink and Mastro, 2017) <u>Course Project Milestone:</u> Content Analysis Design Quiz 6
Week Seven: Designing Interviews for Mixed Methods Research: From Exploration to Explanation		
TBD	Mixed method; Qualitative methods; Interview design	<u>Reading:</u> Ch. 15 Article: <i>Mixed methods in communication research. In Advanced communication research methods</i> <u>Optional reading:</u> Article: <i>Getting Started in Qualitative Research. In Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies (pp. 1–17)</i> <u>Discussion:</u> Designing Mixed Methods Around Your Project <u>Research Article Analysis:</u> (Skjuve et al., 2021) <u>Course Project Milestone:</u> Design interview Quiz 7

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to adjust the syllabus according to the needs of the class.