

CMST 7915: SEMINAR IN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

CORE METHODS

Fall, 2015, TTH 10:30-12:00, 153 Coates

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This course provides an in-depth examination of social scientific research methods used in interpersonal communication. No prior knowledge of research methodology or statistics is assumed.

Students will better understand the discipline of communication theory and identify theories and methods that can inform their areas. The objectives are as follows:

1. Improve students' abilities to comprehend research articles in communication and to synthesize areas of research.
2. Develop an understanding of the importance of theory in communication research.
3. Introduce students to the "empirical attitude and perspective."
4. Create an awareness of the ethics of research and an understanding of the Institutional Review Board.
5. Develop an understanding of the types of problems empirical research tools are appropriate for solving, and the kinds of solutions these tools offer.
6. Teach the students the logic and basic techniques of experimental and survey research.
7. Teach the fundamental concepts of descriptive and inferential statistics and their use in communication research.
8. Create and develop student interest and skill in conducting empirical research to test theories of communication.

TEXTS

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Babbie, E. (1998/2001/2004). *The practice of social research* (8th/9th/10th edition). Belmont, CA: Thompson/Wadsworth.

Other required readings available on Moodle

PARTICIPATION/ASSIGNMENTS, 30% of final grade

Although this is not a seminar in the traditional sense, you are expected to participate in a variety of ways:

- Attending class (This should go without saying: never miss a day) and listening actively
- Asking and answering questions (demonstrating your understanding of reading assignments)
- Providing examples
- Making oral reports (on articles and other readings)
- Presenting a mini-lecture on some topic (10-15 minutes)

Throughout the semester, I will give you a variety of small assignments such as

- Finding a recent article of interest
- Earning certificate for Protecting Human Research Participants
<https://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>
- Creating a questionnaire on Qualtrics

- Creating a complex questionnaire on Qualtrics
- Using RPS
- Recording a conversation or group discussion
- Developing and using a coding scheme
- Reviewing a journal submission
- Reviewing papers by classmates

EXAMS. We will have one or two exams (midterm/final) worth a total of 30% of the final grade. These exams will be in a format similar to what you will experience in a general exam.

PAPERS, 40% of final grade

You will work on two paper projects this semester. The first will be a joint research project to be developed and conducted by the full class. You will make contributions to the conceptualization, review of literature, method, data collection, statistical analysis, interpretation, and writing. 15% of final grade.

You are also responsible for a second research project in which you will review a body of literature, justify and posit 2-3 hypotheses and/or research questions, and write a detailed methods section for conducting the study. You will also discuss limitations to the study. In essence, this paper will be the first 2/3 of a research article along with a couple paragraphs that would be part of a discussion. Data collection is optional. For this paper, we will use a method of draft, review, and revision. The components of the paper will be due on dates (tba) spread throughout the semester.

GRADING SCALE

96-100 = A+	80-82 = B-	63-66 = D
93-95 = A	77-79 = C+	60-62 = D-
90-92 = A-	73-76 = C	59.9 and below = F
87-89 = B+	70-72 = C-	
83-86 = B	67-69 = D+	

WORKLOAD

Students are expected, in addition to time spent in class, to spend a minimum of an additional 6 hours per week reading and thinking about material and putting forth effort toward the completion of course assignments. Thus, students are expected to devote at least 9 hours per week toward the successful completion of CMST 7915; exemplary performance will likely require additional time and/or effort.

ACCOMODATIONS

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that impacts your work in this class and for which you may require accommodation, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall). After you receive your accommodations letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.

UNITS OF STUDY

1. Interpersonal communication as a field of study
2. Ethics in communication research
3. Perspectives
4. Variables and hypotheses

5. Measurement, reliability, validity
6. Communication measures
7. Sampling
8. Design: experimental, survey, content analysis, other.

Good Ways (to Remember Your Rules on How Not) to Write

1. Verbs HAS to agree with their subjects.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.
4. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
5. Avoid clichés like the plague. (They're old hat)
6. Also, always avoid annoying alliteration.
7. Be more or less specific.
8. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are (usually) unnecessary.
9. Also too, never, ever use repetitive redundancies.
10. No sentence fragments.
11. Contractions aren't necessary and shouldn't be used.
12. Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
13. Do not be redundant; do not use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
14. One should NEVER generalize.
15. Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
16. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
17. One-word sentences? Eliminate.
18. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
19. The passive voice is to be ignored.
20. Eliminate commas, that are, not necessary. Parenthetical words however should be enclosed in commas.
21. Never use a big word when a diminutive one would suffice.
22. Use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.
23. Understatement is always the absolute best way to put forth earth-shaking ideas.
24. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
25. If you've heard it once, you've heard it a thousand times: Resist hyperbole; not one writer in a million can use it correctly.
26. Puns are for children, not groan readers.
27. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
28. Even IF a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
29. Who needs rhetorical questions?
30. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
31. There should not be any sentences that begin with the word "there." It is also not good to begin sentences with "it."

And the last one...

31. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.

Frequently used comments on research papers

Follow APA style sheet

Edit and Proof read! (I should not be the first person to read the printed copy of your paper!)

You need to articulate your rationale clearly – what are you arguing and why?

Review of literature – clarify the connections between the articles – they should reveal a pattern

Justification – be careful not to overstate the usefulness of your results (e.g., help with remediation of CA when you don't test strategies for doing it)

Avoid summarizing study after study – include transitions that build your argument and create a framework for your rationale

Define concepts before discussing research related to them

Literature review should be building a framework for the rationale, not just summarizing past research on the topic

Avoid saying that past researchers “believed” or “felt” something – they argued, proposed, posited, suggested, etc.

Don't review a body of research that you don't incorporate into your study

Methods

Describe sex, age (*M* and *SD*), ethnic/racial background of sample plus any other important characteristics

Explain how scores were calculated for each variable. Do higher scores reflect more of the variable?

List all the items on a scale you develop (put in a table if more than six or seven).

Make sure that you compute the scale based on the items with acceptable reliability.

Describe how all variables were measured (nominal and interval level variables).

Provide means and SD's and frequencies for all variables.

Reliability info belongs in the methods, not the results. Two decimal places

Critical alpha is generally .05

Use one-tailed alpha if you have a directional hypothesis

Be careful not to conclude the null, e.g., Do not say: “this study found that there is no relationship between...”

In the discussion...

Link results to past research

Limitations to current study

Directions for future research

Reference list should only include sources you actually cited in the paper. Must read the original if you cite it.