

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 313 Sec 01
Communications Research Methods
Fall 2017

(Tuesday, September 12, 2017 to Tuesday, December 5, 2017)
(T 12:30-3:15)

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Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: T: 10-11/Th:1-2

Course Description

This course provides students with an introduction to the concepts, theories, methods and tools used in communication studies research. Through critical reading and writing as well as active learning that encourages a hands on approach to research methods, students will become both consumers and producers in their own research process. As consumers, students will learn about the various theoretical and methodological perspectives that can be applied to communications research. As producers, they will become familiar with the various research methods (including surveys, content and discourse analysis, interviewing, focus groups, ethnography) that can be applied to a wide array of research questions on a number of communications research topics.

Objectives of the Course

To understand how research methods are used in the field of communications and how communications research applies to various social issues and topics.

To critically reflect on the challenges and opportunities of various qualitative and quantitative research methods.

To recognize ethically sound, rigorous research methodologies and research design in scholarly articles.

To reflective on and evaluate the importance of research ethics in the research process.

To understand how important scholarly research is to the research process and to learn how to write a thematically cohesive literature review.

To develop knowledge and practical skills for proposing and designing research.

To learn how to code and interpret collected data.

To learn in a safe and collaborative environment.

Textbooks and Readings

Seale, C. (Ed.) (2012). *Researching Society and Culture*. London, UK: Sage
Other class readings will be posted in D2L.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops and other computer devices are welcomed in the course and are to be used only for class activities and note taking. Please be respectful of your fellow classmates while using them.

Assignments and Evaluation

| Weight | Course components | Due |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 5% | Each student will complete the online TCPS tutorial during class time. Time: 2 hours | Sept. 29 |
| 5% total (2.5% each) | Reading quizzes: 15-20 minutes. Students will complete two RAT (Readiness Assessment Tests) that will test their reading knowledge of that week's assigned reading as well as prepare them for the problem based learning activity that will take place in class. | Oct. 3 and Oct 17 |
| 25% | Literature Review Assignment Individually, students will compile an annotated bibliography and develop a thematically cohesive literature review using at least 6-8 sources related to a research question on a topic of their choice. Length: 1200 words | Oct. 24 |
| 30% | Mid-term Exam (2-2.5 hours) The mid-term exam will consist of multiple choice questions, fill in the blanks, short answer and longer application style question. | Nov 14 |
| 15% | Research Proposal Presentation In their research groups, students will present their research proposals outlining and explaining the choices they made regarding research questions, methodology, literature review, etc. Length: 30 minutes | Nov. 28 and Dec. 5 |
| 20% | Student groups will submit a research proposal on a topic and research design of their choice. The proposal will include the elements of a formal academic proposal (introduction to topic, significance of research, research questions, | Dec. 5 |

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| | literature review, research design, task chart, reference list and appendices). | |
| | Length: 2000-2500 words plus appendices | |

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: (choose one of the following & delete the other two statements)

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments: All assignments are digital and the instructor will not accept any hard copies. Please hand in your essays directly to the appropriate dropbox in D2L.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments. 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/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

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.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- 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.
- 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. 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. All assignments will be graded on a numerical scale.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

| Grade Point Value | Description | Grade | Dept of CMF 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% |
| 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 | 0- 49.99% | 0% |

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** 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.

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 (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve 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 . . . |
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| 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 |

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| 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 <p>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.</p> |

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

| Date | Topic | Activities | Readings and Assignments Due |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tuesday, Sept. 12 | Introduction to the class Course Objectives What is research? Intro to philosophical paradigms and theoretical perspectives. | Choosing groups | Chapter Three: Silverman, D. (2012). Research and theory. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp 30-44). London, UK: Sage. |
| Tuesday, Sept. 19 | What are the contexts of research? What are good research questions and good research design? | Chapter Discussion Questions | Chapter Four: Silverman, D. (2012). Research and policy. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp 46-57). London, UK: Sage. Chapter Seven: Kelly, M. (2012). Research questions and proposals. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp 98-117). London, UK: Sage. |

| Date | Topic | Activities | Readings and Assignments Due |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tuesday, Sept. 26 | No Formal Class Why are ethics in research important? Ethics and Social Research | No Formal Class: Please complete the TCPS 2 Tutorial Course on Research Ethics and post your certificate in the Ethics dropbox in d2l http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/education/tutorial-didacticiel/ | Complete the TCPS 2 Tutorial Course on Research Ethics (5%) by Friday, September 29. http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/education/tutorial-didacticiel/ |
| Tuesday, Oct. 3 | Ethics and why it is important to a researcher | Flipped class: (The class will start with a 15-30 minute reading quiz based on the reading assigned for this class. Students will then engage in a problem based learning activity.) | Chapter Five: Ali, S & Kelly, M. (2012). Ethics and Social Research. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp 59-76). London, UK: Sage. Reading Quiz: 2.5% |
| Tuesday, Oct. 10 | What is a Literature Review? | Locating sources and the annotated bibliography. Learning how to organize a literature review thematically. | Chapter Six: Branley, D. (2012). Doing a literature review. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp 78-89). London, UK: Sage. |
| Tuesday, Oct. 17 | What is content analysis? | Flipped class: (The class will start with a 15-30 minute reading quiz based on the reading assigned for this class. Students will then engage in a problem based learning activity.) | Chapter Twenty-Six: Seale, C. & Tonkiss, F. (2012). Content and comparative keyword analysis. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp. 459-478). London, UK: Sage. Reading Quiz 2.5% |
| Tuesday, Oct. 24 | What is visual and critical discourse analysis? | | Chapter Sixteen: Ali, S. (2012). Visual analysis. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp. 283-301). London, UK: Sage. Chapter Twenty-Three: Tonkiss, F. (2012). Discourse analysis. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp. 405-423). |

| Date | Topic | Activities | Readings and Assignments Due |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | London, UK: Sage. Literature Review Due (25%) |
| Tuesday Oct. 31 | What is data and how do I collect it? Structured Methods: Interviews, Questionnaires and Observation | | Chapter Eleven: Phellas, C.N., Bloch, A & Seale, C. (2012). Structured methods: Interviews, questionnaires, and observation. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp 182-205). London, UK: Sage. |
| Tuesday, Nov. 7 | What is data and how do I collect it? Qualitative Interviewing and Focus Groups | Practicing Interviewing and Focus Groups. | Chapter Twelve: Byrne, B (2012). Qualitative interviewing. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp 206-226). London, UK: Sage. Chapter Thirteen: Tonkiss, F. (2012). Focus groups. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp 228-244). London, UK: Sage. |
| Tuesday, Nov. 14 | Mid-term exam | | Mid-term exam (30%) |
| Tuesday, Nov. 21 | What is data and how do I collect it? Ethnography/Participant Observation Research Method Presentation (Ethnography) How is a research report structured? How do I give an effective presentation? | Exploring the mundane, everyday spaces and social phenomena, using a variety of qualitative methods. Conducting ethnographic research. | Chapter Fourteen: Walsh, D. (2012). Doing ethnography. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp 246-261). London, UK: Sage. Chapter Twenty-Eight: Rivas, C. (2012). Writing a research report. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp. 497-517). London, UK: Sage. Chapter Twenty-Nine: Silverman, D. (2012). Giving oral presentations. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp. 518-527). London, UK: Sage. |

| Date | Topic | Activities | Readings and Assignments Due |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tuesday, Nov. 28 | How do I code qualitative data? Group Presentations | Identifying patterns and themes from qualitative data. | Chapter Twenty-One: Rivas, C. (2012) Coding and analyzing qualitative data. In Seale, C. (Ed.), Researching society and culture (pp 366-392). London, UK: Sage. Research Presentation Due 15% |
| Tuesday, Dec. 5 | Class Presentations | | Research Presentation Due 15% Research Proposal Due 20% |