

**COMMUN 3422: Communication Research Methods**  
**Spring 2015**  
**Dr. Haley Kranstuber Horstman**  
**University of Missouri**

**TEXTBOOK:**

Baxter, L. A., & Babbie, E. R. (2003). *The basics of communication research*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

The course is designed to introduce you to the social scientific research methods in the Communication discipline so that you can conduct and translate empirical research. In this class, you will learn about the various principles and techniques of research methods, which will allow you to more critically analyze and translate empirical studies. You will have a better understanding of the process of research and its importance in various career paths. Aspects of communication research will be explored through readings, lectures, published research, and statistical problems.

The primary objectives of the class are to:

1. Enhance your understanding and appreciation of the study of communication and how knowledge is derived in the Communication discipline as a whole,
  - a. Increase your familiarity with the important journals and organizations in the Communication Studies discipline.
  - b. Introduce you to the ethical issues involved in the research process,
  - c. Improve your ability to critically evaluate social scientific research methods,
2. Increase your knowledge of the principles, objectives, and limitations of different approaches to research and scholarship,
  - a. Introduce you to and encourage you to practice the process of conducting literature reviews, formulating arguments, and writing research reports,
  - b. Increase your knowledge of the basic principle of statistical analyses,
  - c. Provide you with practice in performing and interpreting statistical analyses.
3. Translate your research methods knowledge and skills into varying practical career fields.
  - a. Adapt your ability to read and discuss empirical sources into tangible and marketable skills.
  - b. Adapt your ability to develop strong written arguments into tangible and marketable skills.
  - c. Adapt your ability to conduct and interpret statistical tests into tangible and marketable skills.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**1. Class Participation & Involvement (50 points)**

Part of your grade in this class depends on your active, prepared, and thoughtful participation in-class discussion, in-class activities, and in-class analysis. Your involvement is what will bring meaning and make this class worthwhile to you and to others. With that said, I am looking for quality involvement, not just quantity. This means that I want you to engage fully in class discussion and activities to best enhance your and your classmates learning. Participation in activities, asking questions, and integrating reading materials into class discussion also serve as quality involvement. Additionally, there will be quizzes on the readings, which cannot be made up despite circumstances. The quiz questions should be apparent to one who has read the material.

Therefore, involvement includes, but is not limited to:

- Attending class regularly and on time
- Being focused and practicing good listening skills
- Relating class material to the “outside” world
- Eliminating the use of distracting technology
- Completing sample statistical problems and **homework assignments**
- Excelling on **in-class (pop) quizzes** on relevant course material
- Meaningfully creating and contributing your **Talking Points**<sup>1</sup> for the day’s reading

In preparation for each class, you will create a list of Talking Points (TPs) on the most relevant or interesting parts of the reading to you. These TPs should include two distinct parts: a) **3-4 Main Ideas** from the reading, and b) **2-3 Application Ideas**, or questions and ideas about ways you can apply the chapter content to your current or future life/career. Please label each of these two parts and keep them separate from each other. TPs will be collected periodically and must be typed.

## **2. Exams** (4 @ 100 points each)

Three exams will be included as part of your final evaluation. Each exam will cover material from lectures and class readings. Although the first two exams will not be comprehensive, understanding certain concepts will be based on your understanding of material covered in earlier portions of the course. The information covered in each exam will be extensive; therefore, it is necessary that you stay current on the reading as we progress through the course in order to do well on these exams. The exams will assess both your ability to reproduce as well as apply and critique course concepts.

## **3. Research Translation Paper** (50 points)

One of the main objectives of this course is to develop and enhance your skills of reading empirical articles and then translating them for the public. In this paper, you will serve as the translator between the academic world and the “real” world. You will be required to summarize a journal article for a popular press research website such as NPR, Huffpost, or Science of Relationships. See examples on Blackboard. A detailed write-up of this assignment is located in the Syllabus Appendices. Articles from which to select are posted on Blackboard.

## **4. Research Proposal Project** (225 points total)

For your final project, you (and a partner, if you wish) will propose a research study that addresses an interesting communication-focused research question. Consider questions or problems relevant to you or your classmates' careers, relational lives, health and well-being, or social responsibility. You will write a literature review, propose a RQ or hypothesis, and design a study appropriate to your paradigm. We will focus on this project throughout the course to ensure that we are working toward a polished and sophisticated research paper at the end of the semester.

### Extra Credit

You may earn up to **10 points of extra credit** in this course. Each extra credit option is worth 5 points, and you may participate in each type of option more than once.

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

Week	Topic	Reading/Assignment Due
	<b><u>Step 1: Understanding the Research Process</u></b>	
1	Research 2.0: Why Research is an Asset to you Right Now	Review Syllabus and Addendums
	Introduction to Research Culture	Chapter 1; Find Pop Research HW; <i>Assign Research Translation Paper</i>
2	Building Blocks of Conducting Research	Chapter 2; <i>Assign Research Project</i> ; <b>Goal Sheet Due</b>
	Paradigms of Knowing in Research	Chapter 3
3	Logic Systems and Theory in Research	Chapter 4
	Ethics of Communication Research	Chapter 5
4	<i>Unit Synthesis &amp; Review</i>	<b>Research Translation Paper Due;</b> <i>Prep Review Sheet</i>
	<b>Exam 1</b>	
	<b><u>Step 2: Designing Research Projects and Sampling Participants</u></b>	
5	Conceptual and Operational Definitions Independent and Dependent Variables	Chapter 6
	The Logic of Sampling	Chapter 7; <b>Final Project Topic Due</b>
6	Survey Research	Chapter 8
	Experimental Design	Chapter 9
7	Quantitative Text Analysis	Chapter 10
	Quantitative Design Application Day	Survey Reading – Willer & Cupach

8	Interviews & Focus Groups	Chapter 14
	Ethnography & Other Qualitative Designs	Chapter 13
9	Qualitative Design Application Day; <i>Unit Synthesis, &amp; Review</i>	Interview Reading – Colaner & Kranstuber <i>Prep Review Sheet</i>
	<b>Exam 2</b>	
	<b><u>Step 3: Analyzing Data</u></b>	
10	Basics of Quantitative Data Analysis & Inferential Statistics	Chapter 11 & 12
	Tests of Difference (Chi-Sq, T-test, ANOVA)	FBK Chapter 12*; T of D Reading – Revisit Willer & Cupach
11	Tests of Association (Correlation and Regression)	FBK Chapter 13*
	Quantitative Data Analysis Application Day	T of A Reading – Miller-Ott, Kelly , & Duran
12	Qualitative Data Analysis	Chapter 16
	Qualitative Data Analysis, Cont.	Chapter 16
13	Qualitative Data Analysis Application Day; <i>Unit Synthesis, &amp; Review</i>	Interview Reading –Colaner & Kranstuber; <i>Prep Review Sheet</i>
	<i>In-Class Final Project Consultation Day</i>	
14	<i>In-Class Final Project Consultation Day</i>	
	<b>Research Proposal Presentations</b>	<b>Research Proposal Projects Due</b>
15	<b>Research Proposal Presentations</b>	
16	<b>Exam 3</b>	

\* Reading posted on Blackboard