

Research Methods in Communication – COM 390

Fall 2011

Western Connecticut State University

Section 001: 10-10:50am
BR 208

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Materials

RECOMMENDED SOURCEBOOK: *APA Publication Manual* (6th ed.). It's the blue and green one.

Trust me, if you're a comm. major, you'll use it for more than just this class!

Objectives/Description

In this course you will not only be exposed to, but will also practice quantitative, qualitative, and critical studies methodologies. You will learn the reasons for using each, the ways to go about designing solid studies, and how to analyze each type of method. In addition to learning and practicing the methods, you will also learn to distinguish “good” or “solid” research from “poor” or “flawed” research practices in the world around you.

What do I expect from you?

- 1) **PREPARATION** - I expect that you will come to class ready to discuss the chapters assigned for that day. I will not simply repeat what the textbook mentions; rather class time offers the ability to apply and extend your readings. I will pick out key ideas from the chapter and expand and provide illustration of them; however you are responsible for all information presented in the text and class lectures.
- 2) **PARTICIPATION** - I expect you will participate in class. Since my classrooms are active learning environments – there will exist what I call “organized chaos.” The class succeeds to the extent you participate and engage.
- 3) **ENGAGEMENT** - I expect you to speak and express your ideas freely. There is no silencing in this classroom. Everyone's ideas are important to consider regardless of where on the “political” or “religious” scale they may fall. In fact, I often play “devil's advocate” to get discussion going.
- 4) **RESPECT** - I expect you to respect individuals in the classroom and to listen when others speak. I also expect you to help create an atmosphere of caring, concern, fun, and energy – and YES – you can tease me.

What can you expect from me?

- 1) I will be fully prepared for each class.
- 2) I will work hard to engage you in the learning process in a fun and engaging manner.
- 3) I will work to provide assignments, discussions, and activities that will stimulate your thinking and teach you to begin to think critically and “outside” the box.
- 4) I will be available to you through email and office hours.
- 5) I will provide clear and concise instructions on all assignments.
- 6) I will return assignments to you promptly with relevant, specific feedback to help you learn.
- 7) I will treat you with respect, laugh with you, and tease you.

RESOURCES:

- APA. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Babbie, E. (1995). Experiments. *The practice of social research* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Boynton, P. M., & Greenhalgh, T. (2004). Selecting, designing, and developing your questionnaire. *British Medical Journal*, 328, 1312-1315.
- Cohen, D. J., & Crabtree, B. F. (2008). Evaluative criteria for qualitative research in health care: Controversies and recommendations. *Annals of Family Medicine*, 6, 331-339.
- Kidd, P. S., & Parshall, M. B. (2000). Getting the focus and the group: Enhancing analytical rigor in focus group research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10, 293-308.
- Kurland, D. J. (2000). *Critical reading*. Retrieved from <http://www.criticalreading.com>
- LeCompte, M. D. (2000). Analyzing qualitative data. *Theory Into Practice*, 39, 146-154.
- Neill, J. (2006). *Qualitative research I*. Retrieved from <http://www.wilderdom.com/OEcourses/PROFLIT/Class6Qualitative1.htm#Types>
- Science Buddies. (2011). *Science fair project background research plan*. Retrieved from http://www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/project_background_research_plan.shtml
- Sommer, B. (2011). *Sampling*. Retrieved from <http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/sommerb/sommerdemo/sampling/>
- Trochim, W. M. K. (2006). *Research Methods Knowledge Base*. Retrieved from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/statdesc.php>
- Vickers, A. J. (2008). A basic introduction to research: How not to do research. *Journal of the Society for Integrative Oncology*, 6(2), 82-85.
- WCSU IRB. (2005). *Institutional review board: Guidelines for researchers*. Retrieved from http://wcsu.edu/irb/index_files/IRB_Guidelines_for_Researchers.pdf

GENERAL POLICIES:

Deadlines and Due dates: All assignments must be turned in ON or BEFORE the due dates. Late assignments will not be accepted. **Do everything early**, because technological difficulties do NOT excuse missing assignments. All assignments should be turned in typed, via email, received prior to the class period it's due. I only accept .doc, .docx, or .odt file attachments. Any other format (including pasting in emails) will not be counted. No matter what your actual grade earned, *you must complete all major assignments to pass the class*.

Participation: This course is designed with various projects to mirror the real world, where showing up and looking interested are mandatory. Missing class on the day of an in-class assignment means you cannot make up that assignment. Missing class on the day take-home work is assigned means you are responsible for getting that homework information from a classmate or the TA and turning it in on time. My office hours exist to help students with work and understanding concepts; they do not exist to re-cover material we covered on a day you were absent or not paying attention. Texting, sleeping, reading, doing other-class homework are not acceptable in this class. If you do any of them (and trust me, I always see you), you will *automatically be counted absent* for that day. If you decide to use a laptop in class to take notes, each day you use it, you will need to email me the full set of lecture notes you have taken on it by 5pm that day. *There *may* be extra credit opportunities provided throughout the semester – both in and outside of class. I will present these to you. *Do not ask for extra credit; no one receives it when anyone asks.**

Attendance: Absences do not excuse students from assignments due on the date of their absence. I do realize there are times when you simply cannot be in class so 4 absences, (**excused or unexcused**) will be allowed without penalty. I do not need *or want* documentation, notes, or phone calls...just use these freebies judiciously, if at all. Be wise in this area – I find this is where grades are impacted most. Attendance will be taken every class period and you will be graded on participation. **If you miss a class, you are responsible for the material we covered that day. Please do not ask me to re-cover the class for you; get the material from a classmate.**

This course begins on time. Habitual tardiness will equate to an absence, as will leaving class early, and will also count against your overall participation score. Each absence above your “freebies” will result in a point deduction of **15 pts.** from your overall score. You are ultimately responsible for your own withdrawal by the withdrawal date.

TARDINESS: This a very condensed class. With that in mind, walking in consistently late begins to affect the knowledge you are capable of gaining through the course. I keep track of attendance every day. I also keep track of

late attendance. A few minutes late will not affect you, but if you are *significantly late* (i.e., I have already started lecturing), you will be noted as late. Because I understand we all have days when we are just running late, your tardiness will only affect you if it becomes habitual. In other words, when you have accumulated more than 4-5 significantly late days on the attendance roster, you will receive a deduction on your participation points. Again, treat this course like you would a job.

Plagiarism: Academic dishonesty of any kind is cheating. It is the responsibility of the student to not only abstain from cheating, but to avoid making it possible for others to cheat as well. Any student knowingly helping another student cheat is as culpable as the student they assist. Submission of someone else's work (in literal word or in thought) as one's own constitutes plagiarism. *In other words, if you submit a paper with information from another source and do not say the sources in your paper, you are plagiarizing!* Academic honesty requires that ideas taken from another source be cited (fully acknowledged) at all times. First identification of plagiarism will result in the student receiving a zero on whichever assignment plagiarism is employed. Second offenses will result in the student failing the course and being dismissed from class.

Writing style: *All writing assignments should be typed (Times New Roman, 12 size font) and carefully proofread for errors.* Both quality of writing style and substance of ideas will be graded; meaning and importance of ideas are inseparable from the language through which they are conveyed. A paper with significant typos, grammar errors, poor organization, lack of clarity, or NOT typed will be turned back to the student without a grade. *In other words, if I have a difficult time reading your college-level paper, I can't grade it for a college course.* Take the time to make all assignments acceptable at a **college level**.

The *Writing Lab* (106 Berkshire Hall; 837-8728), managed by the English Department, is a place where students can improve all aspects of writing: development, style, organization, grammar and mechanics.
<http://www.wcsu.edu/writinglab/>

We will use APA writing style on all assignments; APA citation must be provided whenever you refer to the words, ideas, statistics or other information provided by another author.

Accessibility: It is my desire to have all students included in this class. It is the student's responsibility to let me know of any needs to aid course participation. Let me know as soon as possible if special accommodations are needed due to disability. Students with disabilities, who require special administration of an examination, should contact the coordinator of disability services at (203) 837-8225 or 837-8221 or cohende@wcsu.edu in Higgins Annex 017 to discuss reasonable accommodations.

Grades are earned, not given!

Simply meeting the requirements of an assignment *may* garner you a C. Time spent does not equal time earned. Excellence is rewarded, effort is not (though it is appreciated ☺). **Remember, COM majors need at least a C for this class to count.**

A = Superior work. Greatly exceeds requirements. Outstanding levels of creativity, skill, initiative, and/or effort. *Elicits the "excellent, really excellent" comment.*

B = Good work/above average. Exceeds requirements. Shows substantial creativity, skills, initiative, and/or effort. Goes beyond the minimal requirements of the assignment. *Elicits the "nicely done" comment and gets me telling other professors that you guys are doing really nice work and I am so proud of you!*

C = Average work. Meets the requirements in every aspect, but does not exceed requirements. I already expect this level of completion from every student on the assignment. *Elicits the "OK, they did the work" comment.*

D = Deficient. Meets some requirements, but deficient in others. *Elicits the "hmmm, I wonder if they waited till the last minute to do this?" comment.* I had to call upon God for grace in grading this paper. A good thing to do when you get this grade is to come and see me -- I am gracious and kind and I really DO want you to pass this class.

F = Poor. Deficient in most or all requirements. *Elicits the "well, they blew this assignment off" comment from me.* A MUST is to see me!! I am gracious and kind and I really DO want you to pass this class.

TO EARN CREDIT:

Please keep track of your grades on the grid provided to follow. That way, you will always know what you are getting in the course and will never need to ask. ☺ *I will not keep a running total of your grades for you* – please do it yourself. This also means that if you are not doing well in the course, you are responsible for withdrawing yourself. Your end-of-semester grade should never come as a surprise, because I've returned each and every point to you immediately, throughout the semester.

Complete the course- “Social & Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Course 1” at <http://www.citiprogram.org> - print out your completion certificate to proceed with class...

Participation: (65 pts)

This course is interactive in nature and requires class participation. You will be required to *actively* demonstrate effective communication skills in both oral and written assignments. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss and participate in activities associated with the material. I will make this qualitative assessment of your participation/involvement at the end of the semester, when I grade. In addition to assessing your level of active involvement in the course on a day-to-day basis, other “negative” things (e.g., tardiness, sleeping, texting/phone use, poor attitudes, hostility/rudeness toward me or your classmates, and inappropriate behaviors) will also bring down this score.

Activities: (365 pts)

Throughout this class you will be asked to do exercises that will reinforce what we are learning. Most of these will be assigned or completed in class, others outside of class as homework. Those activities and assignments done in class will not be able to be made up. If absent, those activities assigned in class as homework for subsequent class periods may be obtained from a classmate.

APA Exercises: (3 totaling 105 pts)

These assignments will teach you to properly format/cite and synthesize research in APA style. Due dates are assigned in class.

Mini-Exams: (4 @ 50 pts each = 200 pts)

There will be 4 (50 point) mini-tests, allowing you an opportunity to do well on each by not having to cover a vast amount of information. Tests encourage mastery of concepts and aid in examining your understanding of skills from lecture and readings.

“Pop” Quizzes: (11 @ 15 pts each = 165)

The primary purpose of this class is to “learn” methods. One way of accomplishing this is to make you read ☺. Therefore, in-class “pop” quizzes will be given covering readings. Each day a reading assignments is due, I will give “pop”-quizzes based solely on the reading for that day. Thirteen pop-quizzes will occur and your lowest two scores will be dropped, for a total of 11 that count toward your final grade. If you are absent on the day of a pop-quiz, you will not be able to make it up.

Methods/Results Paper: (100 pts)

You will learn how to write a research paper by producing the research/methods portions (i.e., Methods & Results) of an APA-formatted paper. Specific details on this assignment will be provided later in the semester.

Tentative Schedule

		COVERED	HAVE READ	IN CLASS
Aug 29	M	Intro to Class & CITI Training		
Aug 31	W	Research Basics	Vickers (2008)	Syllabus Quiz
Sept 2	F	APA Formatting		
Sept 5	M	Labor Day – NC		
Sept 7	W	Background Research	Science Buddies (2011)	
Sept 9	F	Background Research		Assessing Research Activity
Sept 12	M	Finding Participants	Sommer (2011)	Take-Home Abstract Due
Sept 14	W	Quantitative Basics		APA 1 DUE
Sept 16	F	Quantitative Methods		Take-Home Reliab/Valid Due Design Quant Study Activity
Sept 19	M	Qualitative Basics	Neill (2006)	
Sept 21	W	Qualitative Methods		Qual Research Ideas Activity
Sept 23	F	Critical Analysis Basics	Kurland (2000)	
Sept 26	M	Critical Analyses		Take-Home Crit.Analysis Due
Sept 28	W	Exam Day		Mini Exam 1
Sept 30	F	Application - Kinsey	Cohen & Crabtree (2008)	All CITI Training certificates DUE
Oct 3	M	Application - Kinsey		

Oct 5	W	Application - <i>Kinsey</i>		
Oct 7	F	Doing Surveys	Boynton & Greenhalgh (2004)	Kinsey Response Due
Oct 10	M	Doing Surveys		Take-Home "Questions" Due
Oct 12	W	IRB	WCSU IRB (2005, pp. 4-11)	
Oct 14	F	APA 2 Assigned		
Oct 17	M	Application – <i>Miss Evers' Boys</i>		
Oct 19	W	Doing Experiments	Babbie (1995)	Miss Evers' Response Due
Oct 21	F	Catch-up Day		
Oct 24	M	Exam Day		Mini-Exam 2
Oct 26	W	Get materials/Begin data collection		APA 2 DUE
Oct 28	F	Doing Interviews/Focus-Groups/Observations	Kidd & Parshall (2000)	
Oct 31	M	Analyzing Qualitative Data	LeCompte (2000)	Take-Home Observation Due
Nov 2	W	Analyzing Data – Coding Application		All Data DUE to me
Nov 4	F	APA 3 in-class		APA 3 in-class
Nov 7	M	Analyzing Data – Descriptives Info	Trochim (2006)	All Coding DUE to me
Nov 9	W	Analyzing Data – Descriptives Info & SPSS		
Nov 11	F	Descriptives Workday		
Nov 14	M	Discuss Descriptives		Descriptives Worksheet
Nov 16	W	Exam Day		Mini-Exam 3
Nov 18	F	Analyzing Data – Relationships Info		
Nov 21	M	Analyzing Data – Relationships SPSS		
Nov 23-25		Thanksgiving Break		
Nov 28	M	Discuss Relationships		Relationships Worksheet Take-Home (Fix APA 3) Due
Nov 30	W	Methodology/Results/Discussion	APA (2010)	
Dec 2	F	Putting it all together Discuss Final Paper		
Dec 5	M	Exam Day		Mini-Exam 4 Morse et al. (2011) optional due
Dec 7	W	Final Paper Workshop		
Dec 12	M	Final Paper DUE (email attachment) BEFORE 5:00pm on Monday, December 12th		Final Paper DUE

RECORD OF MY GRADES:

	Total Possible	My Scores
Quality of In-Class Participation	65	
Activities	365	
Syllabus Quiz	10	
Assessing Research Activity	10	
Take-home: Abstract	15	
Take-home: Reliability/Validity	15	
Design Quantitative Study Activity	10	
Qualitative Research Ideas Activity	10	
Take-home: Critical Analysis	25	
<i>Kinsey</i> Response	20	
Take-home: Question Types	15	
<i>Miss Evers' Boys</i> Response	20	
Take-home: Observation	15	
Descriptive Statistics	35	
Relationships Statistics	35	
Take-home: Interpret Relationships	15	
Survey Project Completed Surveys (data)	30	
Survey Project Coding Results	40	
Take-home: Fix APA	25	
IRB CITI Training	20	
APA Exercises	105	
#1	30	
#2	35	
#3	40	
Mini-Exams	200	
Mini-Exam 1	50	
Mini-Exam 2	50	
Mini-Exam 3	50	
Mini-Exam 4	50	
Reading "Pop" Quizzes (drop 3 lowest)	165	
Pop <i>Vickers (2008)</i> Quiz 1	15	
Pop <i>Science Buddies (2011)</i> Quiz 2	15	
Pop <i>Sommer (2011)</i> Quiz 3	15	
Pop <i>Neill (2006)</i> Quiz 4	15	
Pop <i>Kurland (2000)</i> Quiz 5	15	
Pop <i>Cohen & Crabtree (2008)</i> Quiz 6	15	
Pop <i>Boynton & Greenhalgh (2004)</i> Quiz 7	15	
Pop <i>WCSU IRB (2005)</i> Quiz 8	15	
Pop <i>Babbie (1995)</i> Quiz 9	15	
Pop <i>Kidd & Parshall (2000)</i> Quiz 10	15	
Pop <i>LeCompte (2000)</i> Quiz 11	15	
Pop <i>Trochim (2006)</i> Quiz 12	15	
Pop <i>APA (2010)</i> Quiz 13	15	
Methods/Results Paper	100	

MY TOTAL POINTS = _____/1000

SCALE

90-100%	=	A	=	900-1000
80-89%	=	B	=	800-899
70-79%	=	C	=	700-799
60-69%	=	D	=	600-699
59% or below	=	F	=	599 or less