



SCHC384
RESEARCH LIKE A PRO: EXPLORING QUANTITATIVE SOCIAL SCIENCE METHODOLOGIES
SPRING 2022
T/R 10:05 - 11:20 AM
GAMBRL 106

This syllabus is prepared for face-to-face course delivery and subject to change as needed.

INSTRUCTOR

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REQUIRED TEXT

Keyton, J. (2018). *Communication Research: Asking Questions, Finding Answers* (5th edition). Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers students hands-on experience in social science research, with a specific aim to produce a research study publishable in a scholarly journal. Learning in this class involves identifying research questions, designing research procedures, collecting data, running statistical data analyses, and writing a research paper. Research areas may include multiple disciplines in social science, such as public health, public perceptions of science and engineering, and various types of communication research, including journalism, public opinion and political communications, and strategic communications (such as advertising and public relations). Methodologies covered in class include surveys, experiments (using UofSC's Biometric and User Experience Lab), and text data collection (using UofSC's Social Media Insight Lab). The course is designed for beginners and intermediate learners, particularly those who have passion in pursuing a career in research and/or academia. There are no assumptions about students' previous work in statistics or research methods. Fear of mathematics will not be a barrier to success in the course.

The instructor will provide context and lecture materials, but a significant portion of course time will be spent identifying research questions, designing and running data collection, analyzing data using SPSS, making sense of outputs, and writing a research paper to report primary findings. This means two things. First, students will not learn much from this course, unless they actively engage in the material. Second, as a member of research group, each student will be working with other group members throughout the entire semester. Each group will design and execute a survey study, using Qualtrics Survey, to test their research questions and/or hypotheses. Students will maintain regular meetings with other group members outside classroom and class time to work on their research project together. At the end of the semester, each group will present their findings and turn in a formal research paper.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After passing SCHC384, all students should be able to:

1. Understand the critical framework for evaluating social science research.
2. Have a first-hand experience in research process.
3. Examine how research questions, originating from academic or client-specific interests, are translated into a research project.
4. Understand how to select an appropriate research topic, develop measurements, draw a sample, conduct a specific form of data collection, analyze data, and interpret the results.
5. Understand different uses of research in a variety of settings.
6. Conduct formal social science research and produce a research paper.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading Assignment

To fully comprehend lectures and complete other assignments, students are required to read textbook chapters and other materials assigned each day before they come to class. Students are also required to check their UofSC email and course Blackboard (BB) in a timely fashion and on a regular basis. It is students' responsibility to be informed about what they are supposed to read or submit in advance. See Course Outline and Assignment in this syllabus for details. Readings beside textbook chapters will be posted on BB or handed out in class. These readings comply with copyright and fair use policies. Readings are copyrighted and belong to the copyright holder. Do not redistribute readings without expressed written permission; ask the instructor if this policy is unclear. BB access is required as part of this course. It is not possible to complete this course without reading and comprehending the required readings on a routine basis, in addition to completing other assignments.

Exams (200 points)

Two exams (midterm and the final, 100 points each) are scheduled during the semester. See Course Outline and Assignment for the scheduled dates. Exam questions will be taken from reading assignment (textbook chapters and other required readings), lectures, and class discussions.

Research Project (200 points)

What students learn from this class will culminate in a research project based on quantitative data analysis. Specifically, this will include outlining a problem and its relevance for a specific social science discipline, translating the problem into formal research questions and/or testable hypotheses, developing a measurement instrument (a Qualtrics survey), collecting and analyzing data, and providing an analytic answer. This project will involve a series of group assignments, and everybody in the same group will receive the same grades for the group assignments. This year's group research will focus on the transition to "contactless human interactions" as an outcome of the advances in digital communication technologies. Students will design a research study to identify micro-level contributors to and outcomes of such a transition. Details are explained in the Group Research Project section at the end of this syllabus and will be discussed throughout the semester. The research addresses a social science topic and should be based on social science theories and literature. That is, students should not raise a research question simply out of curiosity. Research questions and hypotheses should be

theoretically originated and have theoretical and practical implications. The instructor will assist students with identifying testable and theory-driven research questions and hypotheses.

Peer Evaluation

At the end of the semester, each student will evaluate other members in their group on how actively and meaningfully they participated in the group project. Students will evaluate other members as either “acceptable” or “unacceptable.” Each person in your group giving you an “unacceptable” evaluation will lower your final score (400 total) by 15 points.

GRADING

At the end of the semester, your grade will be determined by the percentage of the total possible points you have accumulated. If you have 90.0% or more, you will get an A, 85.0-89.9%, a B+, 80.0-84.9%, a B, and so forth. The following table shows the maximum points for each assignment.

Midterm	100
Final Exam	100
Research Project	200

	400

A	360 or higher
B+	340 – 359.99
B	320 – 339.99
C+	300 – 319.99
C	280 – 299.99
D+	260 – 279.99
D	240 – 259.99
F	Below 240

Note that the instructor will not round up decimals; 359.99 is a B+, not an A. There will be no extra credit opportunities during or after the semester to enhance your final grade.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to be in class for each session. One unexcused absence will be allowed in this course without penalty. Each unexcused absence thereafter will result in lowering your final score by 20 points (out of 400 total). Refer to the University of South Carolina’s definition of an excused absence. If the total number of absences, including excused and unexcused, exceeds six days, your final grade will automatically turn into an F. To be excused, you must inform the instructor prior to missing the class. Otherwise, your absence will not be excused unless there is an adequate reason. You will need to bring an appropriate and DOCUMENTED excuse to be allowed to make up any missed assignment and to be excused. For example, a note merely stating that you have visited a doctor’s office will not be acceptable. Documentation alone does not mean your absence will be excused; the instructor will make the final decision of whether or not to excuse your absence. Your absence will not be excused after three days from the absence.

LATE ARRIVAL

Each class starts on time. Students are expected to come to class before the class begins. A late arrival of between 1-10 minutes will lower your final score 5 points (out of 400 total). A 11 or more-minutes will lower your score by 10 points.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSIONS

Unless stated otherwise, all assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late submissions will be penalized 10% of the maximum point, per day, with no submissions accepted after three days (including Saturdays and Sundays). Punctuation, grammar, spelling, page numbers, and physical appearance will be a grading criterion. Page numbers are required in all written assignments.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All assignments and examination work are expected to be the sole effort of the student/group submitting the work. Students are expected to follow the University of South Carolina Honor Code and they should expect that every instance of a suspected violation will be reported. Students found responsible for violations of the Code will be subject to academic penalties under the Code in addition to whatever disciplinary sanctions are applied. See information about academic integrity and sanctions (www.sa.sc.edu/academicintegrity/). Do not plagiarize. ALWAYS credit ideas to their sources. If there are five consecutive words identical to someone else's writing, then you are guilty of plagiarism unless you have cited the source in the text and listed it in the reference section. Credit direct quotations of three or more consecutive words to the source, using quotation marks around words that are in the original text, plus add the page number of all direct quotations. Paraphrases do not require page numbers but do require citing the source. "I didn't intend to plagiarize. I just don't know any better" cannot be an excuse.

POLICY FOR LATE ARRIVALS TO EXAMS

If you arrive after another student has already finished the exam and left, you will not be allowed to take the exam. You will have to make an arrangement to take a make-up exam. See policy regarding make-up exams. If you arrive late and are allowed to take the exam, you will receive only as much time is left in the exam period.

EXTRA CREDIT

There will be no extra credit work offered in this course. Instead, your energy should be focused on completing the required work in a thorough and thoughtful manner. Grades are earned and not given. Therefore, the instructor is NOT going to consider re-grading an assignment unless the original grading involved a mathematical error. This also applies to determining your final grade from the course. That is, the instructor is NOT going to give anyone an extra assignment or opportunity to enhance his or her grade.

MAKE-UP EXAMS

Students must have a valid and DOCUMENTED excuse and they must notify me 48 hours advance of the original exam to make up an exam. A valid and documented excuse is a current doctor's note that states

you are to be excused the date of the exam, a notice for jury duty, or a university-sponsored athletic event. If you are allowed to make up the exam, it may be an essay exam given at the instructor's convenience. If you miss an exam without notifying me in advance, no opportunity will be given to make up the exam, unless you have an appropriate and documented excuse. No make-up exam will be taken BEFORE the scheduled exam date.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

Students will not be penalized because of observance of religious beliefs. If you are not able to work on specific date, you can, of course, do the work any other day(s) prior to the assignment deadline. If this is not possible, speak with the instructor in advance. I tried not to schedule exams or assignment due dates on religious holidays, but if you have any concerns, please let me know.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

I greatly respect and encourage those of differing abilities to participate fully in this course. If you have a disability and need accommodations to fully participate in this course, contact the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC): https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_disability_resource_center/. One of the goals of this course is to create a community of students in which all engage freely in the discussion and exchange of ideas. Thus, if you have a disability needing an accommodation, please email me your disability accommodation notice from SDRC early in the semester, so that I will be able to assist you with this regard.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

This course fosters understanding of issues and perspectives in the context of domestic concerns about gender, race, ethnicity and gender identity, and communications across diverse cultures in a global society. The course also fosters a climate that is free of harassment and all forms of discrimination, accommodates the needs of those with disabilities, and values the contributions of all forms of diversity. As the Carolinian Creed states, "I will discourage bigotry, while striving to learn from differences in people, ideas and opinions."

COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENT

This schedule is subject to change as needed.

GRA = Group Research Assignment

Date	Subject	Assignments (Due at 10:05AM each day)
D01 01/11 (T)	Class Introduction - Introduce the course, instructor, and students - Go over the syllabus Group Research Project Talk - Each student will be assigned to a research group - Each group will be talking about their initial topic(s) and plan Talk about GRA1	

D02 01/13 (R)	Social Science Research (CH1) Quantitative Research (CH4) Continue to talk about your group project	- CH1/CH4
D03 01/18 (T)	Research Process (CH2) Research Process Discussion Questions - Students will be talking about the discussion questions	- CH2 - Scheufele et al. (2002) - Research Process Discussion Questions
D04 01/20 (R)	Research Talk (GRA1) Each group will be talking about their GRA1 Talk about GRA 2	- GRA1
D05 01/25 (T)	Measurement-I: Reliability and Validity (CH5) Meaning Analysis Exercise Political Knowledge Measures Using SPSS to Calculate Item Reliability	- CH5 - Concept Explication
D06 01/27 (R)	Measurement-II: Survey and Questionnaire (CH8) Discuss how to measure the concepts in your research	- CH8 - Survey Tips Booklet - 7 Tips for Writing Surveys
D07 02/01 (T)	Research Talk (GRA2) Each group will be talking about their GRA2 Talk about GRA3	- GRA2
D08 02/03 (R)	TBA	
D09 02/08 (T)	Research Ethics (CH3) IRB Process	- CH3 - IRB
D10 02/10 (R)	Research Talk (GRA3) Meeting with Group 1 I will be speaking with each group about their plan and GRA5 (not GRA4)	- GRA3
D11 02/15 (T)	Meeting with Group 2 (at 10:05) Meeting with Group 3 (at 10:45) I will be speaking with each group about their plan and GRA5 (not GRA4)	
D12 02/17 (R)	Workday (no class) Each group will be working together on GRA5 (not GRA4)	
D13 02/22 (T)	Research Talk (GRA5) Each group will be working together in class to craft a Qualtrics survey	- GRA5 (not GRA4)
D14 02/24 (R)	Finalize the survey questionnaire Talk about IRB submission Midterm Review	
D15 03/01 (T)	Review and pretest the survey together Submit IRB	- Qualtrics Survey (GRA6)
D16 03/03 (R)	Midterm	
D17 03/08 (T)	Spring Break (no class)	

D18 03/10 (R)	Spring Break (no class)	
D19 03/15 (T)	Sampling (CH6) Start running the survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH6 - What is margin of error? - RDD
D20 03/17 (R)	iMotion and Brandwatch Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TBA
D21 03/22 (T)	iMotion and Brandwatch Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TBA
D22 03/24 (R)	Descriptive and Inferential Statistics (CH9) Lab session SPSS practice for descriptive statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 22 surveys (GRA6) - CH9
D23 03/29 (T)	Testing for Differences and Relationships (CH10 & 11) Lab session SPSS practice for inferential statistics and hypothesis testing Talk about GRA4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH10 - CH11 - TBA
D24 03/31 (R)	Meeting with Group 1 I will be working with Group 1 on data analyses for their group research	
D25 04/05 (T)	Meeting with Group 2 I will be working with Group 2 on data analyses for their group research	
D26 04/07 (R)	Meeting with Group 3 I will be working with Group 3 on data analyses for their group research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GRA4
D27 04/12 (T)	Writing a Research Paper (CH13) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH3 - Discussion: Have students talk about what will be reported and discussed in each section of the final research paper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH13 - Kim (2008) - Writing a Research Paper: Read Kim 2008 and be ready to talk about the discussion questions in class
D28 04/14 (R)	Experiment (CH7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH7
D29 04/19 (T)	Workday (no class): I am going to make this class hour available for a meeting with any group(s) for questions about the research paper	
D30 04/21 (R)	Research Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PowerPoint presentation is required - Everybody in your group must participate - Each presentation will be 10-15 minutes Final Exam Review	
D31 05/03 (T)	Final Exam (9:00AM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group Research Paper (GRA7)

GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT (200 points total)

Contactless Human Interactions/Communications

Initial Research (100 points total)

Group Research Assignment 1 (20 points): Turn in a report on the following two topics:

In the Past (before the advances in digital communication technologies):

Telephone (landline), letters (mails), anything else?

Today

Technology

Hardware:

Computers, Wireless technology (LTE, Wi-Fi), Internet, Mobiles, AI technology, Kiosks, **What else?**

Apps (Software... mostly web- or mobile-based):

Email, Texting, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), Multimedia or Instant Messaging Services (FaceTime, Google Duo), Video Conferencing (Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams), Doodle, Evite, Chatbots, **What else? How many people use these technologies? Do some research and find statistics.**

Applications

Personal communications in general:

emails, texting, social media, messaging services,

Remote/video conferencing

E-commerce (e.g., ordering food and purchasing merchandise online (or with an app)

Making a reservation or appointment:

haircut, doctor's appointment, travel appointment, Kiosks at McDonald's or airport

Online surveys (Qualtrics)

Customer services (online customer services):

real person or automated services (Chatbots)

Banking

What else? Do some research and find prominent applications with some descriptions/explanations.

Group Research Assignment 2 (30 points): Turn in a report on the following two topics:

Benefits and Drawbacks of the Technologies (perceived and actual)

Why do people like or don't like the technologies? What are the primary usages and gratifications? These will vary across different technologies:

Convenience

No boundaries/International Reach

Speed

Privacy and security (These can be both benefits and drawbacks)

Synchronicity, asynchronism

Technical complexity

Cost (low? high?)

Credibility (technical and other

Traceability (Records may remain somewhere... can be a pro or con)

Review the literature, like research papers, and find benefits and drawbacks. Explain why/how they should be considered as such.

Current Usage and Intention to Use the Technologies

Think about and design how to measure the behaviors and behavioral intentions. How often do people use each technology (e.g., “never” – “always”)? How willing are they to use the technologies or use them more often in the future (e.g., “not at all willing” – “very willing”)?

Review the literature, like research papers, and find some example measurement items to measure the usage and intention.

Group Research Assignment 3 (30 points): Turn in a report on the following topic:

Predictors of Frequent or Infrequent Usage:

Demographics:

age, income, education, gender, race, etc.

Anxiety with interacting with another person:

a nonacquaintance, new acquaintance, or stranger in particular

Communication skills and apprehension

Personality (extrovert vs. introvert)

Lack of trust in other people

Lack of trust (or low credibility) in technology (for a variety of reasons)

Safety concerns (e.g., COVID-19)

Familiarity with digital technology, technological knowledge, digital proficiency and competence

Language and cultural barriers

Review the literature, like research papers, and find potential predictors. Explain why/how they can be related with the usage (or behavioral intentions).

Group Research Assignment 4 (20 points): Turn in a report on the following topic:

Larger Social Consequences of the Transition to the Contactless Human Society

Positive and negative (unexpected) impacts of the transition to contactless human interactions?

Erosion of intimate human relationships? Are we getting closer to or isolated from each other?

Losing social interaction skills

Becoming increasingly uncomfortable with direct human interactions

Erosion of trust in other people

Enhanced work productivity

Cost savings

Decline in social activities and interactions

Review the literature, like research papers, and find potential social impacts and consequences

Running Your Group Research (100 points total)

Group Research Assignment 5 (20 points): Turn in a report on the following topic:

Identifying and Operationalizing the Key Concepts for Your Research:

- Think about what questions you want to answer from your research
- Identify the key concepts and define them (You must review the literature)
- Develop research questions and/or hypotheses
- Develop how to measure the key concepts (You must rely on the previous literature)

Group Research Assignment 6 (30 points): Turn in a report on the following topic:

Data Collection and Analyses

Survey

Each group will design survey questions to measure the key concepts, and the questions will be put into a formal online survey questionnaire. Qualtrics Survey will be used to craft and run the online survey. Each student is required to run a total of 22 surveys to receive full credit.

Data Analyses

Data collected from the Qualtrics survey will be analyzed as part of your final paper. The SPSS program will be used for the data analyses.

Group Research Assignment 7 (50 points): Turn in your final research paper:

The Final Research Paper

This is a written report of your research findings. The framework and format of the report will be discussed later.

***** Note: When you review the literature, you must use credible sources, such as research papers, news articles, government reports. You must add citations.***