

Greenlee School of Journalism & Communication
Communication Research Methods, JLMC 502

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Daniela Dimitrova

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Office Hours: M & W 3–4 p.m. and by appointment

MEETING TIME AND PLACE

M & W 4:10 – 6:30 p.m. 008 Hamilton Hall

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this course is to enable you to become competent researchers and more critical consumers of research results. The course provides an overview of all mainstream research methods with a focus on those most commonly used in the humanities and social sciences. Among the methodologies we will cover are surveys, content analyses, case studies, experiments and longitudinal research designs. You will learn how to identify a research problem, select an appropriate method to study the problem, conceptualize and operationalize relevant variables, and measure those variables. The final part of the course will be devoted to methods of statistical analysis, including how to do basic descriptive and inferential statistics. The course is designed to help you prepare for your thesis or creative component.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this class you will be able to:

- (1) Identify communication problems and conceptualize and design appropriate research methods to study those problems;
- (2) Evaluate and critique communication research done by others;
- (3) Apply basic statistical tests and procedures;
- (4) Understand how to conduct ethical research;
- (5) Plan and carry out your own research projects.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:

Roger D. Wimmer & Joseph R. Dominick, *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*, 10th Edition, Wadsworth Publishing.

RECOMMENDED BOOK:

Patten, Mildred L. (2014). *Understanding Research Methods: An Overview of the Essentials*, 9th Edition. Pyrczak Publishing.

Supplementary readings that highlight the methodologies, concepts, statistical procedures and analyses, and research-related issues will also be made available.

In an effort to cover a full range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, other faculty/ guest specialists will be invited to make presentations, pending availability.

SPSS manuals are for sale at the ISU bookstore. You should invest in these if you know you will be doing quantitative analysis for your thesis. It might also be helpful to purchase a writing guide or hire an editor for the thesis/creative component.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This is a discussion-based, graduate-level seminar. Please come prepared to discuss the assigned readings and share your opinions. Each student will be responsible for being the in-class discussion leader for a specific class period where s/he will summarize the assigned reading(s), find additional related readings and design an in-class activity for the students.

Exams: There are two non-cumulative in-class exams during the semester based on the readings, lectures, and class discussions. The exams will include short-answer and essay-type questions and test your understanding of class concepts and appropriate methodologies and your ability to apply them to specific cases. Attending class and participating in class discussions will be essential for your success.

Article Critique: Students will critique an assigned article or book chapter. This written assignment should be 2-3 pages long and offer a critical analysis of the selected reading. You will need to bring a printed copy of your article critique to class.

Research Proposal: The final product of this course is a well-developed research proposal. A major portion of class sessions is devoted to ongoing discussions of thesis and creative component proposals, in the presentation of these proposals, and student critiques of ongoing projects. In this manner, the course serves as a forum for working out individual problems. Your proposal must state specific hypotheses or research questions, briefly outline the theoretical foundation of your inquiry, explain the data gathering method *in detail*, and describe how the data will be analyzed.

Proposal Critique: You will exchange a final draft of your research or creative project proposal with a classmate who is expected to critique the proposal based on principles learned in class. This 2-3 page critique will be graded.

GRADING

Article Critique	10%
Discussion Leader	10%
Proposal Critique	10%
Research Proposal	20%
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%

STYLE

There are many style formats, and different journals subscribe to one form or another. For uniformity, we will adopt the latest version as specified by the American Psychological Association (APA) as the standard style for all written assignments in this class. Assignments that do not conform to APA style will not be graded.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

All work presented in class must be your own. Cheating in any form will not be tolerated in this class. This applies to all content you turn in as your own as well as to all written work. Each student is expected to do his or her own work. Any deviation from this policy will be considered grounds for failure in the class. In other words, if cheating occurs it will result in an "F" for the course. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, you must ask me before you turn your work in. For more details on academic dishonesty contact the office of Student Services.

The departmental policy states: "*Plagiarism, literary or artistic theft, occurs when the work or actual words of another person or persons are presented as one's own (that is, without attribution, quotations, or rewriting).* Any provable instance will be cause for disciplinary action by both the professor in the course and the University, as described in the ISU Information Handbook. A suitable sanction for wholesale appropriation of material from another source without attribution to that source would be immediate dismissal from the course."

CREATING A GOOD LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

General: You are expected to come to class on time and notify me ahead of time if you will miss class. You are expected to complete the required readings **prior** to the lecture and are encouraged to ask questions, respond to lectures, actively participate in class, and think critically about assigned readings.

Participation: Although this class is a lecture course it is designed to encourage discussion, exchange and even debate. Your instructor will introduce specific discussion topics, but each student is expected to contribute his/her perspective on these issues and introduce topics of interest and significance related to communication research methods.

Respect: Your classmates will be making presentations in class. You are expected to be respectful, helpful and constructive in your comments.

Inclusiveness: Every attempt is made to make all JLMC courses non-sexist and multicultural in content. Should the instructor fail to meet this goal, please visit with me or the Department Executive Officer.

In class: Please note that **no food or drink** is permitted in the classroom. Please turn off all cell phones, beepers, alarms, etc. before entering the classroom.

Stop by: Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the class. I am available to meet during office hours or, if those don't work, we can schedule an appointment at another time.

Students with Disabilities: I will make special arrangements as needed for students with disabilities. Please let me know of such needs at the **beginning** of the semester.