

**COMM 400: Research Methods in Communication**  
**Fall 2014**  
**Dr. Melissa Broeckelman-Post**  
**George Mason University**

**TEXTBOOK:**

Wrench, J. S., Thomas-Maddox, C., Richmond, V. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (2013). *Quantitative research methods for communication: A hands-on approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0199931804

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

This course is designed to help students obtain the basic knowledge and fundamental skills of communication research. It provides a general survey of the social scientific methods communication researchers use to investigate human communication behaviors. Special attention is paid to issues such as sampling, measurement, design validity, and data analysis. Upon finishing this course, students will be expected to understand the general logic and basic process of communication research, and will be able to conduct their own communication research studies.

This course is a *Students as Scholars* inquiry-level course. This means that one of the goals of this course is that students will learn about the recursive process of scholarly inquiry. We expect that you will learn content and skills that will make you capable of evaluating scholarly work and will prepare you to conduct your own scholarly project. You can learn more about *Students as Scholars* at <http://oscar.gmu.edu/>.

By the end of this course, students should be able to

- Understand the role of research in communication studies.
- Identify basic principles involved in research design, sampling, data collection, and data analysis.
- Calculate scores needed for descriptive and inferential statistics procedures, including the following: measures of central tendency, probability, distribution, *t*-statistics, ANOVA, correlation, and regression.
- Articulate conclusions about how statistical results apply to everyday decision-making and what such results tell us about phenomena in the world around us.
- Describe ethical issues that must be attended to when conducting and presenting research.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

<b>Individual Assignments</b>	<b>600</b>
Homework (10 x 10pts each)	100
Annotated Bibliography	100
Midterm Exam	100
Final Exam	200
Group Evaluation	50
Research Participation (2x25pts)	50
<b>Group Assignments</b>	<b>400</b>
Group Research Question	10
Group Literature Review	100
Group Questionnaire	20
Group Data Analysis Plan	20
Group Presentation	50
Final Research Paper	200
<b>Total Points Possible</b>	<b>1000</b>

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

Week	Topic	Reading Due	Assignment due * = Submit online before class
1	Introduction to the Course		
	Introduction to Communication Research	Ch. 1	
2	<b>NO CLASS- LABOR DAY</b>		
	Empirical Research	Ch. 2	Homework 1: Pick a Theory
3	Qualitative Research	App. A	
	Research Ethics	Ch. 3	Homework 2: IRB Training
4	Searching for Previous Research and APA Style	Ch. 4	
	Research Structure and Literature Reviews	Ch. 5	Literature Search Due
5	Variables	Ch. 6	
	Descriptive Statistics	Ch. 7	Group Research Question Due
6	Measurement	Ch. 8	Homework 3: Descriptive Statistics
	Reliability and Validity	Ch. 9	
7	Survey Research	Ch. 10	Homework 4: Reliability and Validity

	Content Analysis	Ch. 11	Homework 5: Surveys Annotated Bibliography Due
8	<b>MIDTERM EXAM (Ch. 1-10)</b>		
	Experimental Design	Ch. 12	
9	Sampling Methods and Replication	Ch. 13	Group Literature Review
	Team Research Design Planning Day		
10	Hypothesis Testing	Ch. 14	Group questionnaire Due
	Chi-Square Test of Independence	Ch. 15	
11	Independent Samples <i>t</i> -Tests	Ch. 16	Homework 6: Chi-Square
	One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)	Ch. 17	Homework 7: <i>t</i> -Tests
12	Correlation	Ch. 18	Homework 8: ANOVA
	Regression	Ch. 19	Homework 9: Correlation
13	Group Data Compilation and Planning		Data Analysis Plan Due Homework 10: Regression
	Group Data Analysis Meetings		In-Class Data Workshops
14	Group Data Analysis Meetings		In-Class Data Workshops
	<b>NO CLASS- THANKSGIVING BREAK</b>		
15	Group Presentations		Group Presentation Due All Research Participation Due
	Group Presentations		Final Paper Due