

**Communication 102
Empirical Research Methods
Winter 2012**

Meeting Days	Monday & Wednesday
Meeting Time	10am to 11:50am
Meeting Location	Wellman 202
Instructor	Mikayla Jenkins
Office	363 Kerr Hall
Email	mhughes@ucdavis.edu
Office Hours	Wednesday 2pm to 3pm Thursday 12pm to 1pm Or by appointment

Please do not see office hours exclusively as a time to address problems with the course. You can use them to clarify points you do not understand, to get additional readings, or to talk about the subject matter in relation to your interests. You do not need a crisis to make productive use of these hours.

Please do not view my office hours as the only time to seek me out. If you wish, I am more than willing to meet at alternate times. The most efficient way to reach me is by email.

Goal

The primary goal of the course is to provide students with a general understanding of the methods employed in the social scientific investigation of communication. This goal will be achieved by providing students with an overview of several topics that are essential to the endeavor of conducting empirical communication research. Topics covered in this course include measurement, types of relationships, survey construction, and experimental design. A secondary goal of the course is to encourage students to become more savvy consumers of research.

Required Text and Readings

Babbie, E. (2010). *The Basics of Social Research*. (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Booth-Butterfield, M.E., & Jordan, F. (1989). Communication adaptation among racially homogenous and heterogeneous groups. *The Southern Communication Journal*, 54, 253-272. (PDF file to be posted on Smart Site)

McCornack, S.A., & Levine, T.R.(1990). When lovers become leery: The

relationship between suspicion and accuracy in detecting deception. Communication Monographs, 57, 219-230. (PDF file to be posted on Smart Site)

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Students' grades will be based on their performance on 2 equally weighted non cumulative exams, a short paper, and a group research project. Grades will be assigned based on a curve applied to the sum of your test scores, short paper scores, and group research project points. Consistent with department policy, the instructor will curve to a 2.7 GPA. Although the curve will be based on total points earned, after the first exam you will be given a tentative estimate of your grade. In addition, there may be opportunities to earn extra credit points by participating as a research subject. If made available, extra credit will be added after the curve has been applied.

Exams

Each exam will consist of 50 questions. Question items will consist of multiple-choice and true-false items. Bring a #2 pencil and a Scantron to class on all exam days. Students can earn a maximum of 100 points on each exam.

Short paper

Students are expected to complete the short paper individually. The paper, "Identifying Variables and Relationships," should be about 2 to 3 pages in length, is worth a maximum of 40 points, and is due on February 6th. For this paper, students will read McCornack and Levine (1990), briefly summarize the article, and identify several elements (e.g., types of variables and relationships) present in the article.

Group research project

Students are to design and conduct a small research project. In addition, each group will be expected to turn in a research paper based on the data collected from their study. A description of possible research projects will be provided by the instructor. If a group would like to select a topic that is not one of the project options provided by the instructor, then the group must obtain instructor approval. Papers based on topics that are not instructor approved will not be accepted.

The paper will be the culmination of several steps, which are to be completed over the duration of the term. Students are expected to form groups and select a topic by January 20th. Groups that provide group member and topic information by the designated due date will receive 3 points toward their group research project grade. Additionally, each group must enter their data into a program for analysis (e.g., Excel). Each group must send a copy of the data file to the instructor by March 5th. Groups that turn in their data file by the due date will receive 7 points toward their group research project grade. The research paper is due on March 16th and is worth a possible 100 points. Specific guidelines for the research paper will be provided in a separate document. Overall, including the research paper, the group research project is worth a maximum of 110 points.

All group members will receive the same grade for their project. The instructor does reserve the right to weight individual group members' scores based on their contribution to the project if it comes to her attention that the distribution of labor in a particular group has not been equitable.

Policy

Attendance is optional. However, class attendance is usually positively correlated with course performance. If students, for any reason, miss class, it is their responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate.

Generally, I do not give make-up exams. I do understand, however, that in rare cases circumstances may arise that may cause you to miss an exam. If such an occasion does arise, then it is your responsibility to contact me and make a request. Requests for make-up exams must occur before the regularly scheduled exam period. Also, requests must be supported by documentation substantiating your reason for missing the exam. If you do not make a request you will receive a zero on the exam.

Late short papers will not be accepted after the start of lecture on February 8th because the assignment will be talked about in lecture and discussion sections. For each day late, 10% of the total possible grade for the paper will be deducted.

If caught engaging in academic dishonest behavior during an exam, you will receive a zero grade for the exam.

Tentative Course Schedule

(cancellations and other schedule adjustments will be announced in lecture)

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC AND ASSIGNED READING</u>
Jan 9 th	Lecture 1 Introduction Chapter 1
Jan 11 th	Lecture 2 Essential scientific vocabulary Chapter 2
Jan 16 th	NO CLASS
Jan 18 th	Lecture 3 Conceptual definitions & Measurement Chapter 5
<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC AND ASSIGNED READING</u>
Jan 23 rd	Lecture 4 Measurement Chapter 6

Jan 25 th	Lecture 5 Measurement <i>Group names and topic due</i>
Jan 30 th	Lecture 6 Framing Hypotheses, Types of relationships, & Causation The Logic of Nomothetic Explanation, pp 97-100; Units of Analysis, pp 101-107; The Time Dimension, 109-115
Feb 1 st	Lecture 7 Observational Research Chapter 10
Feb 6 th	Lecture 8 Surveys Chapter 9 <i>"Identifying Variables and Relationships" paper due</i>
Feb 8 th	Review for Exam 1
Feb 13 th	Exam 1 Covers lectures 1-8
Feb 15 th	Lecture 9 Sampling Chapter 7
Feb 20 th	NO CLASS
Feb 22 nd	Lecture 10 Experimental Design Chapter 8
Feb 27 th	Lecture 11 Experimental Design
Feb 29 th	Lecture 12 Experimental Design Read Booth-Butterfield and Jordan PDF
<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC AND ASSIGNED READING</u>
Mar 5 th	Lecture 13 Additional Methods of Data Collection Chapters 11 and 12 <i>Data for group project due</i>

Mar 7 th	Lecture 14 Statistics Chapter 14
Mar 12 th	Lecture 15 Statistics
Mar 14 th	Lecture 16 Ethics Chapter 3 <u>Group research paper due March 16th</u>
Mar 19 th	Review for Exam 2
Mar 21st Wednesday 1pm	Final (Exam 2) Covers lectures 9 -16