

Syllabus for COMM 550:  
RESEARCH METHODS IN COMMUNICATION I  
Fall Semester 2002; Thursday 3:30-6:30, ASC 225  
Website URL: [http://learn.usc.edu/courses/comm\\_550\\_10412\\_003/](http://learn.usc.edu/courses/comm_550_10412_003/)

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Syllabus for COMM 550:  
RESEARCH METHODS IN COMMUNICATION I

Course Description

COMM 550, Research Methods in Communication I, is designed to introduce students to the basics of quantitative communication research. As such, it covers essential ideas in research design, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Related topics on validity, reliability, and ethical issues in conducting research on humans are also covered. A major portion of the class is devoted to a survey of univariate statistics, which includes topics on the nature of quantitative data, the logic of statistical inference, and various statistical tests such as analysis of variance, regression, nonparametric statistics, and time series analysis. A set of computer lab assignments will give students extensive opportunity to become familiar with the SPSS computer software package and experience at computing the various statistics reviewed in the class. Perhaps most important, each student will conduct a research project, putting into practice the design, instrumentation, and analysis skills acquired throughout the class. The written report will be prepared in accordance with the professional criteria specified in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) modified as necessary by the Information for Authors statement of a target journal. Thus, this course is designed to provide both a broad overview of the research process and practical experience in conducting research.

Texts

Required:

Green, S.B., & Salkind, N.J. (2003). Using SPSS for windows: Analyzing and understanding data (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. (ISBN 0-13-020840-X; ppk)

Kerlinger, F. N. , & Lee, H. (2000). Foundations of Behavioral Research (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) Harcourt. (ISBN: 0-15-507897-6, Hardcover)

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.). (2001). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association. (ISBN 1-55798-241-4, ppk)

Williams, F., & Monge, P. (2000). Reasoning with statistics: How to read quantitative research (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Harcourt College Publishers.

Recommended:

Minium, E. W., King, B. M., & Bear, G. (1993). Statistical reasoning in psychology and education (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Wiley.

Labs

There will be weekly labs covering the statistics and other topics in the class. You will learn to use the SPSS computer software package to analyze data. The introductory lab will not be graded. The remaining ten labs will be worth 2% each and must be successfully completed in order to receive a grade in the course. Labs turned in late will be eligible for only half credit.

Research Project

An important part of this course is designing and conducting a research project. This semester-long process is designed to give you personal experience in all the major components of doing research. As such, you will need to (1) learn a communication theory and the recent research pertaining to that theory, (2) generate new research questions or hypotheses, (3) design the study, (4) develop the research instruments, (5) gather the data, (6) analyze the results, and (7) write the research report.

Everyone will submit the paper in four sections: (1) Theory and hypotheses, (2) Method, (3) Results, and (4) Discussion. Human Subject forms must be properly completed and submitted to the Annenberg Delegated Institutional Review Board. Due dates are listed in the course outline. A fifteen minute presentation on your research is due on the last day of class, with the actual final paper due at the time of the Final Examination. Papers, including the separate sections, should be submitted electronically, preferably in Word 98 or 2000 format, or in rich text format if you use another word processing system.

Evaluation:

Your grade in this class will consist of four components as follows:

Research Paper:	35%
Research Paper Presentation	5%
Midterm Exam:	15%
Final Exam:	25%
Labs	20%

Academic Integrity

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, purchasing papers or other assignments, or any other form of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade in the course from the instructor and the School will recommend that the student be dismissed from the Communication program. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Course Outline

August 29

Introduction to the Class  
Overview of the Research Paper

September 5

Scientific inquiry, FBR, Cp. 1  
The process of research, RWS, Cps. 1,2  
Davis, M. S. (1971). That's interesting: Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology. *Philosophy of Social Science, 1*, 309-344.  
Pavitt, C. (1999). The third way: Scientific realism and communication theory. *Communication Theory, 9*, 162-188.  
PMAPA, Cps. 1 & 2  
Lab# 1: Overview of SPSS; USPSS Unit 1, 2, & 4: Getting Started with SPSS

September 12:

Concepts and definitions, FBR, Cp. 3  
Levels of Measurement, RWS, Cp. 3, FBR, Cp. 26 – 28  
A Framework for Statistics: Monge, P. (1990). Theoretical and analytical issues in studying organizational processes. *Organization Science, 1*, 406-430.  
Distributions RWS, Cp. 4, FBR, Cp. 7,8  
Lab # 2: USPSS: Unit 5: Descriptive Statistics  
PMAPA, Cp. 3 (Pp. 77-122)

**Assignments Due:**

**Lab #1**

September 19:

Research Design, FBR, Cp. 18, 19  
Parameters, RWS, Cp. 5  
Lab #3 USPSS Unit3: Data Manipulation

**Assignments Due:**

**Lab #2**

September 26:

Quasi-experimental designs, FBR, Cp. 22  
Nonexperimental research, FBR, Cp 23  
Testing Hypotheses, RWS, Cp. 6, FBR, Cp. 2, 12  
Lab #4: Internal and External Validity & Generating Hypotheses for Your Research

**Assignments Due:**

**Lab #3**

October 3:

Laboratory Experiments, FBR, Cp. 24  
The  $t$  test, RWS, Cp. 7; FBR, Cp. 13;  
Lab #5: USPSS Unit 6: Hypotheses-Testing Using t-test  
PMAPA, Cp. 3 (Pp. 122-207)

**Assignments Due:**

**Lab # 4**

**Research paper Theory section (including hypotheses)**

October 10:

Survey research: FBR, Cp. 25  
Observational research: FBR, Cp. 31  
Analysis of Variance: RWS, Cp. 8; FBR, Cp. 13, 14  
Lab #6 USPSS Unit 7: Univariate Analysis of Variance  
PMAPA, Cp. 3 (Pp. 207-214); Cp. 4 (Pp. 215-281)

**Assignments Due**

**Lab #5**

October 17:

Ethical Issues in Research, FBR, Cp. 17  
Human Subjects, University Research Board Review Process  
PMAPA, Cp. 8 & Appendix C  
Factorial Analysis of Variance, RWS, Cp. 9  
Lab #7 Factorial Design and Developing Survey Instrument

**Assignment due:**

**Research paper Method section**

October 24

**Midterm Exam**

Nonparametric Tests, RWS, Cp. 10; FBR, Cp. 16  
Lab #8 USPSS Unit 10: Nonparametric Procedures

**Assignments Due:**

**Lab #6**

**Submit Annenberg Institutional Review Board forms**

October 31:

Reliability, FBR, Cp. 27  
Correlation, RWS, Cp. 11  
Exemplar: Moreland, R. L. and Myaskovsky, L. (2000). Exploring the performance benefits of group training: Transactive memory or improved communication. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 82, 1, pp. 117-133.  
Lab #9 USPSS Unit 8 (pp. 233-242): Correlation and Partial Correlation

**Assignments Due:**

**Lab #7 & #8**

November 7:

Writing the Research Report, APA Publication Manual; FBR, Appendix A  
Regression RWS, Cps 12 & 13, FBR, Cp. 32  
PMAPA, Cps. 5 & 6, Appendices A, B, D, & E  
Lab #10 USPSS Unit 8 (pp.243- 277): Bivariate Linear Regression and Multiple  
Regression  
Exemplar: Zhu, J. H., Milavsky, J. R., & Biswas, R. (1994). Do television  
debates affect image perception more than issue knowledge? A study for the  
first 1992 presidential debate. Human Communication Research, 20, 3, 302-  
333.

**Assignments Due:**

**Lab #9**

**Research paper Results section**

November 14:

Validity, FBR, Cp. 28  
Factor Analysis, RWS, Cps 15; FBR, Cp. 34  
Lab #11a USPSS Unit 9: Factor Loading and Reliability

**Assignments Due:**

**Lab #10**

November 21:

Time Series Analysis: RWS, Cps 16; FBR, Cp. 22  
Lab #11b: Time Series Analysis

Assignments Due:

**Research paper Discussion section**

November 28: Thanksgiving Recess

Enjoy!!

December 5:

**Presentations of Research Projects**

**Assignments Due:**

**Lab #11**

December 12:

**Final Exam**

**Final Research Papers**