

Spring 2013
M & W 5:00pm – 6:30pm
Beck Hall - LIV

192:300 Communication Research

Professor: Matthew Weber, Ph.D.
Email: matthew.weber@rutgers.edu
Office Hours: M & W., 1pm – 2pm and by appointment.
Office: CI-206
Office phone: 848-932-8718

Teaching Assistants:

If your last name begins with letters between A and L, your TA will be:

Seol Ki

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2pm – 4pm
Location: Annex 301 (192 College Ave)

If your last name begins with letters between M and Z, your TA will be:

Lora Appel

Office Hours: Wednesday 12pm-2pm
Location: Annex 301 (192 College Ave)

All email correspondence must be sent to: comm300sp13@gmail.com

All course correspondence, including posted grades, announcements, additional readings, etc. will be posted on the Sakai website for this course.

[A] Course Overview

The purpose of this class is to introduce students to communication research methods, applications, and issues. The purpose of this class is to show students how to think about research, how to understand its purposes, and how it is used in our social worlds.

I know that this is the required course that strikes fear into the hearts of most undergraduates. It shouldn't. This class will not be scary or overwhelming as long as you are committed to keeping up with the pace and on top of the work. By the end of this class, you will better understand how research is conducted, how research results are used, and how to interrogate if those results are sound.

[B] Course Learning Goals & Objectives

1. To demystify the process of conducting communication research and the nature of research design and methods.
2. To understand the process of inquiry—how research projects are born, developed, and conducted.
3. To be able to critically analyze the statistics and ‘facts’ that are presented in our media, and by our friends, family, and teachers.
4. To appreciate how academic research, properly conducted, can be relevant to and inform the processes of our own lives and understandings of the world around us.

CORE CURRICULUM Objectives

Quantitative & Formal Reasoning (letters correspond with university CORE CURRICULUM objectives):

- w. Formulate, evaluate, and communicate conclusions and inferences from quantitative information.

Information Technology & Research:

- y. Employ current technologies to access information, to conduct research, and to communicate findings.

[C] Course Format

This is an upper division course, and therefore, I expect that you will come to class on time, having completed the assigned readings for that day. I also expect that you will be prepared to participate actively with questions, insights from the readings, and equally importantly, stories from your own life experiences. The class will be a mix of lecture, class discussion and group activities that will require your active participation in each class meeting.

Subject matter from the readings will be referenced and built upon, but lectures will also cover other material, which makes your attendance essential to successful learning. I consider material from class discussion to be an essential part of the learning experience.

[D] Course Readings

Required Texts:

Babbie, E. (2010). *The practice of social research* (12th ed). Wadsworth Publishing

- You can buy this text at the Rutgers bookstore and at all online booksellers. If you go to Wadsworth Publishing’s website, you can also buy this title as an online edition, which is significantly cheaper than a print version and is available to you instantly.
- This book is also on reserve all semester at Alexander Library.

- If you find that the 11th edition is available to you for a better price than the 12th edition, go ahead and buy it instead, but you will be responsible for identifying the correct page numbers for the readings.

Wilkins, K.G. (2011). *Questioning numbers: How to read and critique research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- This book is available at the Rutgers Bookstore, at Amazon, and at other online outlets as well.
- There is also a copy on reserve at Alexander Library.

Any additional readings listed will be available on Sakai under the Resources tab or are accessible at the web addresses supplied in the syllabus.

Writing Guides (always useful!):

- America Psychological Association (2011): Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Washington D.C. (APA Style Guide).
- Strunk W., and White, E.B., (1979). The Elements of Style. New York: Longman

Additional readings are posted online at the Sakai site, unless otherwise noted.

[E] Instructor Expectations, Requirements & Grading

You should expect to be challenged. To succeed in this class, you will be required to spend time developing your own interpretations of the readings that I will assign, and developing your own perspectives on the material we cover.

Attendance:

Students should make every effort to attend all lectures and class meetings. Attendance is more than just showing up. You are expected to be on time for class and to attend for the full class time. I also expect you to be courteous to your fellow students; this means turning your cell phones off (not mute, not silent, not vibrate).

Similarly, using computers to take notes in class is a privilege, not a right—if a student with a computer continuously shows signs of disengagement from the class, they will be asked to take notes by hand until the end of the semester.

If you miss class, you are responsible for getting course notes from your classmates—your professor and TAs will not provide you with notes. Likewise, you are responsible for completing all readings that are listed under the corresponding class day.

Two unexcused absences will be permitted over the course of the semester. If you

expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence (an email is automatically sent to me). Please note that reporting your absence via this system does NOT automatically excuse you from any due dates, quizzes, or exams (see the policy on late work below).

If you know you will be absent for several classes because of student athletics or ROTC, you must bring me a list of those dates with proper documentation in advance. Students missing more than an occasional class due to serious illness or serious personal circumstances should provide documentation to the Dean of Students (<http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu>) to authenticate the absences.

It is University policy to excuse without penalty students who are absent from class because of religious observance, and to allow the make-up of work missed because of such absence. However, students are required to let me know as soon as possible about necessary absences for religious observances. Students will be responsible for making up missed work by an amended due date or the work will be considered incomplete.

If you have questions or comments about any content we discuss in lecture, I encourage you to ask! Participation and questions are welcome. You are also encouraged to attend TA and professor office hours with any questions or concerns.

To pass this course, you are required to complete 3 in-class exams, the dates for which are listed later in this syllabus, participating in in-class activities, and completing 1 of 2 research assignments. You also have the option of completing an optional research proposal and extra credit if you choose to do so.

Please note that it is necessary to complete ALL required assignments and exams to pass the course. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade.

Evaluation Criteria:

In Class Exams

In class exams are primarily composed of multiple-choice questions, although each exam will also include some short answer questions.

All readings and class material are fair game for the corresponding exams. If there is material that was covered for Exam 1, but we continue to discuss the concepts during our class meetings before Exam 2, that material may be tested again in Exam 2. Other than those situations, the exams will not be cumulative.

To take a class exam, you will need to do the following:

1. Arrive on time. Failing to do so disrupts your classmates' concentration and negatively affects your own performance. Please note that any student who

- arrives to take the exam after the first student has left will not be allowed to take the exam.
2. Bring your RU ID. You will not be allowed to hand in your exam unless you have photo identification to confirm your identity as an enrolled student in this course.
 3. Arrive ready to take the exam. You will not be allowed to leave the room for bathroom breaks, a drink of water, or for similar reasons unless you have a condition that requires you to leave the room, which should be discussed with your professor or TA in advance.
 4. Turn your phone off, and place all your personal belongings except a pencil, pen and your RU ID in your zipped shut backpack or purse. Any students found with the following out of their bags—a mobile device, notes, or other materials that could have class content on them—will be at risk for suspicion of cheating.

Any student who the professor and TA find to be cheating will immediately be removed from the room and will be given an automatic F in the course.

Grading Policy:

Please note that it is necessary to complete ALL assignments and exams to pass the course.

Writing is a critical part of communication, and in order to be successful in this class it is important that you communicate in a clear and concise manner. Rutgers has a Writing Program where students can obtain help with writing skills and assignments: <http://plangere.rutgers.edu/index.html>. I encourage students to take advantage of these tutoring services before handing in written work.

Your grade in this course will be based on the following breakdown:

- In Class Exam 1: 250 points
- In Class Exam 2: 250 points
- In Class Exam 3: 250 points
- Assignments 150 points
- iClicker Participation: 100 points

Rutgers SCI allows the following standard grades: A, B+, B, C+, C, D and F. An F is used for failing work or for a student who has stopped attending class without formally withdrawing. Your final grade will be determined by summing your scores on all four exams completed over the course of the semester (with additional consideration based on completing the optional research proposal and/or extra credit). Final grades will be accorded on the following scale:

A: 90-100 %
B+: 87-89 %
B: 80-86.9 %
C+: 77-79 %
C: 70-76.8 %

D: 60-69.9 %
F: below 60 %

All grades are final. Please do not ask to have your grade changed for reasons other than mathematical error. Applying subjective standards after the fact invalidates the standards applied to the entire class and is unfair to every student.

What does an A mean? In order to receive an A on an assignment, I expect that you will have shown a clear understanding of key concepts associated with an assignment, and you have further added your own insight to the material. Assignments receiving an A will be generally free of grammatical errors, and show an advanced level of comprehension.

B work reflects a general understanding of core concepts, and basic application of material. B work will have some grammatical errors, but generally shows strong writing skills. Work receiving a C reflects a basic understanding of core concepts with minimal or inaccurate application; work receiving a C reflects passable writing skills.

A note on late assignments: ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS. I show up on time, and I expect you to show up on time as well. Late assignments will be docked one letter grade per day that the assignment is late. You are welcome to submit work in advance of class either in person, to my mailbox, or to my office.

Don't wait to the last minute to print your assignments!!!

A note on communication: Since much of your communication with me will be electronically this is a great opportunity for you to practice the art of communication via mediated forms.

- Emails must be sent to the class email address
- Emails for this class should always start with "COM 300:" as the beginning of the subject, and include your last name in the title.
- Sign your emails with your full name.
- Clearly indicate what your question is. The more relevant information you provide, the more helpful and timely my response can be.
- Use full sentences and proper grammar.

Official Excuses for Missing an Exam

Only officially documented and university-approved excuses are accepted for missed exams and assignments. All illness excuses must include a copy of a dated, medical receipt. Other accepted excuses include: (1) major religious holidays; (2) family deaths, although you must provide some form of proof; and (3) job interviews, although you must provide a copy of your letter of invitation from the prospective employer. Note that late course registration does not constitute a university-approved excuse. **There are no exceptions to this policy.**

If you have missed an exam for one of these reasons, it is your responsibility to contact one of the TAs as soon as possible to arrange for making up the missed work. By not making arrangements at the earliest possible opportunity, you are forfeiting your right to make up the work.

Questions/Review of Past Exams

If you wish to review your exam, we encourage you to do so. You will have to go to your TA's office hours, which are listed at the top of this syllabus (TA assignments correspond to the first letter of your last name: students with last names beginning with A to L will meet with Seol Ki, and those with last names beginning with M to Z will meet with Lora Appel).

If you think a question has been misgraded and you can make an academic argument for your claim based on class material, you may bring this up with your TA, who can make the evaluation. I will not review these claims unless your TA indicates that they would like my input or opinion, so please address these issues with your TA before coming to me.

Assignments: There are two required assignments that you must complete in order to pass this course. The first assignment deals with research design, and the second addresses surveys in research. Details for both will be posted closer to the assignment due date.

Assignment #1: Creating Research

Due: March 6

For this assignment, you will be asked to build a research example based on a current event. You will be asked to analyze the research that was conducted, formulate a research question and assess the reliability of the analysis.

Assignment #2: Qualitative Study

Due: April 24

TBD in Class

Extra Credit: Extra credit options can add to your final grade, and you can choose to do any or all of the extra credit options listed below, for a maximum of a 5% increase in your grade.

Extra Credit Options:

- 1. Creative Assignment.** Submit a video, comic strip, collection of photographs or drawings, piece of creative writing, or any other form of creative expression that illustrates an important concept(s) that we covered during class. I may present your creative piece in this class or other classes, and at some point in the future I may place it online or in a published document. When submitting your piece please indicate if you would like your name to be held confidential if it is presented in any of these venues.

Creative pieces may be submitted using your Sakai dropbox. If it is not possible to submit your piece using Sakai (for example, if it is a video and the file is too large to upload), you may submit it to me or your TA before or after a lecture, or during office hours. Creative pieces must be submitted on or before the last day of class, and there are no extensions. Depending on the quality of this assignment, your final grade may increase by a maximum of 2%.

- 2. Research participation.** Throughout the semester you will have the opportunity to be a participant in research projects conducted by Rutgers faculty and graduate students. You are under no obligation to participate in any of these projects. Except for the extra credit that you receive for participation in these projects, choosing to participate (or not participate) will in no way influence your grade in this course. Students who choose to participate will be treated the same as those who choose not to participate. For each project in which you volunteer to participate, you will receive a 1% increase to your final grade. You may participate in a maximum of three projects.

Students with Disabilities:

Rutgers University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of disability-related accommodation in this course, please tell me as soon as possible and contact the Office of Disability Services, 151 College Avenue, Suite 122, New Brunswick, NJ 08901, (848) 445-6800.

If you seek assistance due to a disability, it is your responsibility to make arrangements prior to any relevant assignments or exams.

Academic Integrity:

The consequences of academic dishonesty are very serious. Rutgers' academic integrity policy can be reviewed at

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/understand.shtml>

Academic integrity means, among other things, that you will:

- Develop and write all of your own assignments.
- Show in detail where the materials you use in your papers come from.
- Create citations whether you are paraphrasing authors or quoting them directly.
- Keep your eyes on your own work during exams.
- Not fabricate information or citation in your work.

If you are not sure about any issue related to plagiarism, please come to discuss it with me.

Technology in the Classroom: Multitasking in the classroom distracts from your ability to learn. There are numerous studies of college students that clearly establish this as fact.

I allow technology in the classroom if it is being used to further learning. You are welcome to bring you laptops to take notes (or iPads, etc). If you are using technology in the class, I expect that you will be paying attention to lecture. In order to insure this, I employ a variation of the Socratic method of teaching in order to check your comprehension of class discussion. If you are using technology during lecture, and do not appear to be paying attention, you will become a top candidate for the hotseat.

Mobile phones, however, are banned from the classroom. Mobile phones should be turned off at the beginning of lecture. If you are on your phone during class (texting, checking Facebook, etc.), you will (1) be warned and (2) subsequently asked to leave.

Semester Plan and Readings

Note: Readings and topics covered are subject to change at the instructor's discretion

Date	Topic & Reading
------	-----------------

Week 1:

Wed., 1/23:	Introductions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class introductions, review syllabus
-------------	--

Week 2:

Mon., 1/28:	Science & ways of knowing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 1: Human inquiry and science (pp. 1-30)
Wed., 1/30	Understanding research in society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Textbook: Ch 2: Elements of social theory ▪ Wilkins, Chapter 1: How to read and critique research (pp. 1-12)

Week 3:

Mon., 2/4:	Understanding how research gets done, and how it is designed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wilkins, Chapter 2: Why do research? Questioning the research context (pp. 13-22) ▪ Lehrer, J. The truth wears off (12/13/2010) & More thoughts on the decline effect (1/3/2011). <i>New Yorker Magazine</i> [Available online]
Wed., 2/6:	Ethics of doing research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Textbook: Chapter 3: The ethics and politics of social research (pp. 62-88)

Week 4:

Mon., 2/11:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Class
Wed., 2/13:	Ethics of doing research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Available online] Timeline of the Wakefield Scandal: Autism and the MMR vaccine

Week 5:

Mon., 2/18:	<p>Where good research starts: Who do you ask?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Textbook: Ch. 7: The logic of sampling (pp. 187-228)
Wed., 2/20:	<p>EXAM 1</p>

Week 6:

Mon., 2/25:	<p>Who do you ask, continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wilkins, Chapter 4: Who is the research about? Questioning selection strategies ▪ Luscombe, B. (2010, November 18). Who needs marriage? A changing institution. <i>Time Magazine</i>. [Available online]
Wed., 2/27:	<p>Where good research starts: Asking questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Textbook: Chapter 5: Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement (pp. 124-149) ▪ Wilkins, Chapter 5: What is the research about? Questioning key terms (pp. 47-56).

Week 7:

Mon., 3/4:	<p>How you ask questions: Surveys</p> <p>Textbook: Ch 9: Asking questions (pp. 253-294)</p>
Wed., 3/6:	<p>Guest Lecture – Research in Practice – Lora Appel</p>

Week 8:

Mon., 3/11:	<p>Survey questions, continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 4: Units of analysis (pp. 98-105); Ch. 6: Indices and scales (pp. 160-182) • Assignment 1 Due
Wed., 3/13:	<p>How do you design good research? Making valid claims and addressing threats to validity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Textbook: Ch. 5: Measurement validity and reliability (pp. 150-159); Ch. 4: Criteria for causation (pp. 94-99); Ch. 8: Threats to validity (pp. 240-244) ▪

Week 9:

Mon., 3/18:	Spring Break
Wed., 3/20:	Spring Break

Week 10:

Mon., 3/25:	Doing research in controlled conditions: Understanding experiments Textbook: Ch. 8: Experiments (pp. 230-252)
Wed., 3/27:	Understanding experiments, continued

Week 11:

Mon., 4/1:	EXAM 2
Wed., 4/3:	How do you start: Implementing research <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wilkins, Chapter 6: How was the research conducted? Questioning research implementation (pp. 57-72).

Week 12:

Mon., 4/8:	Researching with texts: Content analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Textbook: Ch. 11: Content analysis (pp. 331-361)
Wed., 4/10:	Content analysis, continued <i>See Jane</i> studies on gender representations in children's television [Available online]

Week 13:

Mon., 4/15:	<p>Other ways of knowing: Qualitative methods and mixed method designs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chapter 10: Qualitative field research (pp. 295-330)
Wed., 4/17:	<p>Now that you have data, what do you do with it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 14: Univariate analysis & descriptive variables (pp. 426-432) • Wilkins, Chapter 7: What do we know? Questioning analysis and interpretation (pp. 73-86).

Week 14:

Mon., 4/22:	<p>Now that you have data, what do you do with it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook: Ch. 13: Linking theory & analysis (pp. 394-399) • Carey, B. (2011, January 6). Journal's article on ESP is expected to prompt outrage. <i>New York Times</i>. [Available online]
Wed., 4/24:	<p>Research in Practice: Guest Lecture on Discourse Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment 2 Due

Week 15:

Mon., 4/29:	<p>What can you do with what you have found? Implications for the wider world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Roy, J.M. (2001). The power of outreach: Using communication research to help at risk youth. <i>Spectra</i> [Available online]. <p>Additional readings may be posted on Sakai under the Resources tab, marked as readings for Week 15.</p>
Wed., 5/1:	<p>Wrap up and review.</p>

Week 15:

Mon., 5/6:	<p>EXAM 3</p>
------------	----------------------