



LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

School of Communication
COMM 403
Strategic Communication Research
Methods
Spring 2017

Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

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Office: CLC 620 (inside Lewis Library)

Office Hours: By Appointment Only – Online Appointments Available

Course Description: This course is designed to provide students with a critical framework for evaluating communication research and first-hand experience in the research process. Specifically, we will examine how research questions, originating from client-specific interests, are translated into a research project.

Course Outcomes: Students are expected to know how to read and evaluate a research study, select appropriate research questions, develop measurements, draw a sample, collect and analyze data and interpret the results. Additionally, students will learn to:

- Determine how to validate the quality of a research project or article
- Learn how to appropriately structure research questions
- Identify the appropriate tools when beginning an inquiry
- Select the appropriate methodology for primary research
- Build skills related to accessing and using information
- Appropriately communicate your findings in an honest and ethical manner

Course Design: The course will utilize lectures, guest speakers, readings, projects, and discussions. While graduate-level study is self-driven, the variety and combination of course components are devised to motivate students to engage in active learning. Students are expected to come to class prepared to participate in discussions. An important aspect of this course is the inquiry based learning model and group work. Every person in this class has something to teach you – you are expected to participate fully in all group work and in-class activities.

Required Text: No textbook is required for this course. Many readings will be assigned. All readings will be made available on Sakai, or on reserve at the Lewis Library. You may purchase any copies of texts you would not like to read at the library.

Grade Components:

Category	Percent Value	Total Points	Comments
Exam	25%	100 points	There will be 1 take home exam this semester. It will be a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and “scavenger hunt” style questions that will challenge your critical thinking skills. An exam review guide will be provided. This exam is open book, open note – but not a group project!
Participation	25%	Scale of 5 each week	<p>This class heavily relies on class participation. Each class is worth a total of 5 participation points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 point: attending class • 1 point: contributing meaningfully to the discussion • 1 point: completing all in class activities or group work • 2 points: completing all assignments each week <p>At the end of the semester - you will receive an average grade based on your participation.</p>
Group Work Grade	10%	15 points	No individual should be punished or rewarded based on the performance of the group. Your peers will evaluate your contributions and team work ethic throughout the semester on a scale of 15 points. The final grade will be worth 10% of your total course grade.
Literature Review	10%	100	Your semester long group project will be evaluated on a scale of 100. For a full breakdown of points, details, and requirements – see the Group Project handout on Sakai.
Research Proposal	10%	100	Before you can begin the final stages of your group project, you must submit a project proposal. For full details, see the Proposal handout on Sakai.
Original Research	10%	100	Create and conduct at least 2 original research projects (one qualitative, one quantitative) for your final project. An analysis must be performed on the results.
Final Presentation	10%	100	You must present your project to the class. Full details can be found in the Semester Project document on Sakai.

Course Policies

Attendance – Regular and **on time** attendance is essential for the educational process to work. Loyola University Chicago expects all students to attend every scheduled class on time. Exceptions may be made for University sponsored or work related activities, illness, or valid emergency situations. Any unexcused late arrivals and absences will result in a lower participation grade. Full participation points will not be awarded simply because you showed up – you are expected to come prepared, participate, and stay through the entire length of class.

Meeting Deadlines – Deadlines for all projects are firm. Any work turned in after the deadline will receive a one letter grade reduction for each week it is late, even if by one day.

Special Needs – Please give me written notice in the first week of class about any medical or other conditions that may interfere with your individual performance. Documentation may be required. Information about Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) can be found at <http://www.luc.edu/sswd/index.shtml>

Wellness Center – Students are urged to contact the Wellness Center for any physical or mental health issues. Visit <http://www.luc.edu/wellness/> if you have issues or concerns about you or someone you know.

Spelling & Grammar – All assignments must be typed (unless otherwise directed) and free of spelling and grammatical errors. Allow time for proofreading, editing, and revision. As a student in communication, you have a responsibility to pay close attention to details and if your work contains blatant errors, expect a grade deduction.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity – Any use in whole or in part of another person’s work or ideas constitutes plagiarism and will result in an automatic failure in this course. Details of the SOC policy on this issue will be given to students and they are expected to understand and follow the policy. Students should always ask questions if they are not sure about the policy rather than risking a failing grade. The policy can be found at: <http://www.luc.edu/soc/Policy.shtml>. Remember, integrity is one of the most important traits for success. You control your own honor and integrity.

Performance Evaluation and Grading

In addition to project specifics, evaluation of assignments will use this rubric to ensure clear/consistent grading.

Grade	Description
A range	Excellent analysis that critically examines topic; digs deep beneath the surface. Creative and innovative approach to the problem/question being considered. Outstanding content, clarity of writing and organization of research material. Sophisticated, appropriate use of language. Thorough research and documentation of ideas, arguments, and comments. Free of mistakes: no typos; no misspellings; no

	punctuation or grammatical glitches; no errors of fact. All the necessary details, documentation, quotes, citations, and specifics are there.
B range	Very good attempt to link analysis to class themes, but more connections could be made. Very good to excellent; above average work and research. Some improvement needed in content, clarity, organization, or documentation. Occasional typos or other glitches say more about the lack of close proofreading than failure to master the mechanics of spelling, punctuation, and grammar. More details, quotes, citations, or examples needed. Errors of fact (incorrect spelling of a title, reference name, source, or date, etc.) show inattention to detail/accuracy although content is above average.
C range	Average analysis that lacks clear connections to class themes. Average, acceptable writing and research that meets basic expectations. Needs much work on content, clarity, organization, and documentation. Although basic facts most likely are there, lacks elaborating and supporting documentation or quotes. Errors indicate need for improvement in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word usage: material was not proofread carefully. Errors of fact (incorrect spelling of a title, reference name, wrong source, date or page number, etc.) show inattention to detail and accuracy.
D range	Weak, unfocused work. Organization is below average, with numerous grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. Documentation and details are scanty or superfluous, with errors of fact. Paper may reflect a lack of understanding of the assignment or a lack of research effort.

Grading Scale

(The grading policy is subject to change but it will be based on these guidelines.)

100-93% = A	87-83% = B	77-73% = C	67-63% = D
92-90% = A-	82-80% = B-	72-70% = C-	62-60% = D-
89-88% = B+	79-78% = C+	69-68% = D+	59% \geq = F

Tentative Schedule:

Week	Date	Topic	Homework Due
1	Jan 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to class • What is Research? • Introduction to Research Methods • Discussion of outside video and article • Primary vs. Secondary • Introduction to Research Questions 	<p>Watch video clip: Min 5-8 http://www.cc.com/full-episodes/uhvuk4/the-daily-show-with-trevor-noah-may-4--2016---bethany-cosentino-season-21-ep-21103</p> <p>Read this article on school lawsuits: http://www.marketwatch.com/story/at-itt-tech-a-greatest-hits-of-abuses-attorney-2016-01-21</p>
2	Jan 24	<p>Literature Reviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Searches • Anatomy of a Scholarly Source • Constructing a Literature Review • Research Questions 	<p>Read Chapter Five in Quantitative Research Methods for Communication – on reserve in the Lewis Library</p>
3	Jan 31	<p>Business & Market Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Research • Market Research 	<p>Read this case study first – focus on the 1st case, you can skim/skip the 2-5th companies: http://flagship.luc.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=9601185370&site=ehost-live</p> <p>THEN read this: http://flagship.luc.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=9607197709&site=ehost-live</p> <p>THEN this: http://flagship.luc.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=5666193&site=ehost-live</p>
4	Feb 7	<p>Government & Political Research</p>	<p>Explore the FOIA Website: https://www.foia.gov/about.html Read What is FOIA, How to Make a FOIA Request, Where to Make a FOIA Request,</p>

			<p>Additional Government Resources. Feel free to explore the other included topics.</p> <p>Social Science Data and the Shaping of National Policy: http://loyola-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/01LUC:Library_Collections:TN_sagej10.1177_0002716210372484</p>
5	Feb 14	Social Media	<p>Fame, Social Media Use, and Ethics: http://flagship.luc.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=98380499&site=ehost-live</p> <p>Zhuang, Ziqi. 2014. "The Importance of Citizen Journalists in New Media when Reporting on Catastrophes." Global Studies Journal 7, no. 3: 21-39. Academic Search Complete, EBSCO host (accessed August 15, 2016).</p> <p>Social Media Ethics in the Age of Documented Mischief: Sharp, C. (2015). SOCIAL MEDIA ETHICS IN THE AGE OF DOCUMENTED MISCHIEF. Gpsolo, 32(3), 50-53. Academic Search Complete.</p>
6	Feb 21	GIS & Mapping	<p>Geographic Information Systems: Their Use in Environmental Epidemiologic Research: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1470069/</p> <p>Explore the Website of a modern GIS software Business Solution: http://www.esri.com/industries/business</p> <p>Skim the article on historical applications on GIS: http://www.mdpi.com/2220-9964/3/4/1293/htm</p>
7	Feb 28	Ethics	<p>Read this article: http://flagship.luc.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1541546314?accountid=12163</p>

8	March 7	Spring Break – no class, no homework	
9	March 14	<p>Technical Aspects of Conducting Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variables • Reliability, Validity • Generalizability • Qualitative vs. Quantitative 	<p>Literature Reviews Due Chapter 2 of this book: Schwab, D. P. (2005). Research Methods for Organizational Studies. Mahwah, N.J.: Psychology Press. http://flagship.luc.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=119244&site=ehost-live</p>
10	March 21	<p>Qualitative Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnography • Interviewing 	<p>Qualitative Communication Research Methods: On Reserve at the Lewis Library- Chapters 5, 6, 7</p>
11	March 28	<p>Qualitative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups 	<p>Read: Focus group article on Trump/Clinton: http://flagship.luc.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1810502168?accountid=12163</p>
12	April 4	<p>Qualitative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image Analysis 	<p>Research Proposals Due – please ask for help on the quantitative sections if necessary.</p>
13	April 11	<p>Quantitative Surveys</p>	<p>Read the Qualtrics survey building article: https://www.qualtrics.com/support/research-resources/survey-basics/</p> <p>Watch the John Oliver Video on P-Hacking: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Rnq1NpHdmw</p> <p>Take home exams distributed</p>
14	April 18	<p>Quantitative: 3rd Party Data Experiments Studies</p>	<p>Take home exams due</p> <p>Read this article on a study regarding depression and social media use: http://www.futurity.org/social-media-depression-anxiety-1320622-2/</p>

			(OPTIONAL READING: you may also wish to read the full study, found here: http://loyola-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/01LUC:Library_Collections:TN_sciversesciencedirect_elsevierS0747-5632(16)30754-3)
15	April 25	Mixed Methods Content Analysis	
16	May 2	Final Presentations Using this Class on a Resume	Final presentations will be given in class this day. Please consult the Semester Project document for details.