COMM 5710/6710: QUANTITATIVE COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

Fall 2017
Tu 12:55-3:55 pm
LNCO 2950

Instructor
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Tu 10am-12pm or by appointment

Teaching Assistant
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LNCO  
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Course description:
This is an advanced course designed to provide the students with knowledge and skills of conducting quantitative communication research. It will focus on how to search for previous research, formulation of research questions and hypotheses, the primary communication research methods and their uses, descriptive and inferential statistical analyses of data, interpretation of statistical findings, and development of research paper. Exercises and assignments in the course will develop students’ ability to both consume and produce research.

In particular, the course is designed as a lab course in which you will have the opportunity to apply research and data analysis skills to accomplish a group-based research project. Part of the semester will focus on enhancing your understanding of communication research including the logic, conduct, and presentation of communication research. And part of the course time will be spent analyzing data using various software packages (with an emphasis on SPSS™), trying to make sense of output, and linking data to the hypotheses and research questions that they were supposed to test or answer. It is important to keep in mind that you will not learn much in this course, unless you actively engage in the material. It is therefore strongly recommended that you accomplish weekly assignment, try to rerun analyses that have been presented in class, or even try to prepare for class by running a few analyses ahead of time.

Some familiarity with key methods of data gathering (survey, content analysis, experiment, etc.) and introductory statics (univariate and multivariate) is expected. We will talk about many of the methods and statistical tools you will encounter, but not at an in-depth level. Thus, some previous undergraduate or graduate coursework in statistics and research methods is strongly advised. This course meets the University’s Quantitative Intensive (QI) designation. For more information about QI courses, see http://ugs.utah.edu/gen-ed-reqs/qi-courses.php.
Course objectives:
By the end of this course, students will:

• Understand the nature and construct of communication research.
• Sharpen their ability to read and understand social science research papers.
• Acquire an understanding of quantitative research methods and their applications.
• Propose and test their own research questions and hypotheses.
• Analyze existing data sets using appropriate statistical tools and software.
• Interpret and draw conclusions from descriptive and inferential statistics.
• Learn how to write a research paper in the field of communication using APA style.
• Develop a full research paper, including a literature review, methodology, data analysis, and discussions that can lead to publication in the future.
• Offer constructive peer feedback, and also implement peer feedback to improve upon their own work.
• Become conversant with publication criteria and publication outlets (i.e., journals, conference proceedings) in the field of communication.

Course Readings:

Required readings:

Several other required academic articles and readings will be available through the online system.

Recommended readings for students who need extra work to master statistics and SPSS:
- Palant, J. (2016) SPSS Survival Manual (Version 6). Open University Press. (This is the most recent version of this SPSS guide).

There are older versions (4th, 5th) of this guide that should cost less than the most recent version.

Other recommended overview books and manuals.
These should be your first stop when you are beginning to tackle a new analytic method or are looking for an introductory reading for a particular week.

Relevant sources:
- Research related classes and workshops @ Utah:
  https://eventregistration.tools.lib.utah.edu/
- Introduction to SPSS @ Syracuse:
  http://researchguides.library.syr.edu/content.php?pid=28994&sid=238665
- SPSS manuals @ IBM SPSS:

Software:
We will be using statistical software, SPSS, in this course. The software is available through remote software access and in the Knowledge Commons at Marriott Library on campus. You are required to have access to this software. You may also purchase SPSS from Software Licensing.

- Remote software access: http://www.lib.utah.edu/services/labs/remote-software/
- Knowledge Commons: http://www.lib.utah.edu/services/knowledge-commons/index.php
- Software Licensing: https://software-store.utah.edu/uofu/misc/osl/index.shop

Course requirements:
Grades in the class will be based on each of the following:
*denotes as group work

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>% Grade</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>2)</td>
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<td>7)</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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1. Keep in mind that **thoroughness** rather than length is important to the assignments.
2. Note: A maximum of 10 (points of) extra credits will be provided at the end of the semester. Students might earn the credits by participating in online research, talks, or symposium throughout the semester.

Course grading scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
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**Attendance and class participation (10%).** Unexcused absences will count against your participation grade. **Only one unexcused absence is allowed.** If you will be missing class for reasons beyond your control, let me know in advance. Also, you are expected to be an active participant in all class sessions. I will grade your class participation at the end of the semester.

**Journal article analysis (10%).** This assignment is intended to help you understand and evaluate communication research. Each student is expected to (1) select a **quantitative communication** research paper published in a peer-reviewed academic journal, (2) identify and evaluate aspects of the selected research article, and (3) write a 5-6 page (1500 – 1800 words) analysis.

**Statistical and SPSS-based assignments (25%; 5% of each assignment).** These assignments provide students the opportunity to master statistical tools and the use of SPSS to answer research questions. In addition to providing written responses to each question, each student should also turn in SPSS syntax and output for each assignment. Accuracy, readability, and thoroughness are among the key evaluative criteria.

**Research paper draft (30%).** What you have learned in the previous assignments will culminate in a group research paper based on quantitative data analysis. Specifically, this will include outlining a problem and its relevance for a specific discipline, translating the problem into research questions and testable hypotheses, developing measures, and providing an analytic answer. The purpose of the assignment is to give you time to work through your research proposal ideas before the final paper deadline. To help you develop a full research paper, each student group will work on the four assignments step by step:

**A. Proposal, bibliography, and data set (5%):** This assignment includes 
(1) a 3-5-page (1000 - 1500 words) proposal outlining (i) your research topic or proposed research problem(s), (ii) what you already know about the topic, (iii) what questions are unanswered, (iv) 3-5 keywords that you use to conduct literature search, (iv) intended use of a database (ICPSR, any other online data set, etc.), and (v) dependent and independent variables you plan to use from the data set. You are expected to briefly introduce your research proposal in class. Ref.: Figure 4.1 Research Planning Worksheet (Wrench et al., 2016). 
(2) an annotated bibliography using a minimum of 10 research articles focusing on a communication topic of your choice. The articles listed in the bibliography should be in APA styles. The annotated bibliography is designed to assist you in gathering research material for the literature review and final course research paper.

**B. Literature review section and methods section (10%):** This part consists 
(1) a 5-8-page (1500 – 2500 words) paper (i) providing a simple background of the research problem, (ii) detailing review of literature on a topic of your choice and approved by the instructor based on feedback received for assignment, and (iii) proposing research questions and/or hypotheses that you are intended to examine. A minimum of 10 communication (empirical/conceptual) research articles is required.

(2) a 2-3-page (750 – 1000 words) paper outlining (i) the research method (e.g., instrumentation, sampling procedure, description of subjects, name of the
database source) you will use for further data analysis, (ii) detailed
descriptions of variables (e.g., mean, S.D., instrument) that will be included in
further analysis, and (iii) specify the type of descriptive and inferential
statistical analyses your group plans to conduct (e.g., T-test, ANOVA,
regression). All relevant SPSS syntax and outputs should also be submitted.

**C. Results section (data analysis) (10%):** For this assignment, each group is
expected to submit a (i) 2-3-page (750 – 1000 words) paper presenting the results
of data analysis, with the results organized around the research questions and/or
hypotheses (see Assignment B.), (ii) tables and graphs that organize data in a
more readable way (tables and graphs are not counted toward the 2-3 page
paper), and (iii) all relevant SPSS syntax and outputs from data analyses.

**D. Discussion section (5%):** Each student group will write a 5-8-page (1500 – 2500
words) paper including (i) a discussion of results, (ii) implications of findings, (iii)
limitations, and (iv) future research.

**Final research paper (10%):** Each group submits a 15-20-page final research paper based
on the research paper draft and feedback from the instructor. The final paper should include
(i) a title, (ii) an abstract, (iii) 5-6 keywords, (iv) an introduction to the communication topic
being examined (to include a discussion of the author’s investment in the topic), (v) a
review of literature (using a minimum of 10 scholarly articles) with stated research
questions and/or hypotheses, (vi) description of the research method and data, (vii)
descriptive and inferential statistical analyses of results (with tables and graphs), and (viii) a
discussion section (to include a discussion of findings and implication, limitations, and
future research). A reference page will accompany the final paper and will be in APA format.
Incorporation of instructor’s feedback from previous assignments will be a key evaluation
criterion.

**Final paper presentation (10%):** This includes a group work and an individual assignment.
A. Group presentation (5%): Each student group will deliver a 10-minute presentation
of the research paper during the last week of classes.
B. Peer feedback (5%): Each student will serve as a discussant for one of your fellow
student groups. You need to provide an informed 1-2 page (300-500 words)
written feedback and oral critiques in class for the assigned group. Like all
academic discourse, this feedback should be based on evidence and information
rather than normative views and opinions.

**Peer evaluation (5%):** Each member of the student group will evaluate other team
members’ overall contribution of efforts to all group-based assignments. Extremely low
score given by other members might lead to deduction of points from previous assignments.

All written assignments in this class should be formatted using 12-point font (Arial, Helvetica,
or Times New Roman) and double line spacing, and follow APA citation style. Please make
sure that all of your assignments live up to minimal professional standards, i.e., are stapled,
have cover pages, page numbers, etc. Also, in addition to your formal paper and
assignments, please submit *all SPSS syntax* you used to prepare the data (data cleaning,
index construction, reliability and validity tests, inferential tests, etc.), and *all relevant SPSS
output.*
Course Policies:

Attendance
Attendance is mandatory and will be taken in the beginning of each class. You are allowed one unexcused absence during the semester. Additional absences will only be excused in the case of emergency situations beyond your control, and only if you provide appropriate documentation. Your participation grade will be lowered by 10% for each unexcused absence.

Late assignments
Time management is an important skill to be developed in this course. Late assignments will only be accepted if submitted within three days of the deadline, and will receive a 10% penalty for each day of lateness. Exceptions from the penalty rule will be made only if you have obtained prior approval from me, or in the case of an unforeseen emergency. Appropriate documentation will be necessary in both cases. For assignments due during class time (i.e., presentation, verbal feedback), lateness will not be accepted.

Computers & Cell phones
You are welcome to use the desktop and your laptops or tablets during class for note-taking, referencing the readings, researching class material, or using SPSS software. Please refrain from non-class-related uses. Please switch off your cell phones for the duration of class.

Other important information:
University ADA policy: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you need such accommodation in this class, please provide reasonable prior notice to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 801-581-5020 (V/TDD), http://disability.utah.edu/

University Accommodations: http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php (See Section Q)

Academic Integrity: Academic misconduct will be punished to the fullest extent possible. Anyone found guilty of academic misconduct should expect to fail the entire course. In addition, cheating or plagiarizing on assignments, papers or projects in this class may result in any other penalties deemed appropriate by the university. See http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html

Semester calendar: http://registrar.utah.edu/academic-calendars/fall2017.php
## Class schedule

The following outline is subject to modification in line with class progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Group Project</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/22</td>
<td>Introduction to course and communication research; Guest speaker: Stephanie Shiver (Office of Undergraduate Research)</td>
<td>Kumar: Chapters 1, 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8/29</td>
<td>Part 1: Key elements of a research paper I</td>
<td>Wrench et al.: Chapter 5; Spartz, Su, Griffin, Brossard, &amp; Dunwoody (2017)</td>
<td>Personal research interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/5</td>
<td>Key elements of a research paper II</td>
<td>Kumar: Chapters 3, 4 and 6; Wrench et al.: Chapter 4</td>
<td>*Group Assignment</td>
<td>IRB Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9/19</td>
<td>Part 2: Research methods</td>
<td>Wrench et al.: Chapters 9, 10, 11</td>
<td>A. Proposal, bibliography, and data set</td>
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<td>Part 3: Data analysis using SPSS I (basics of SPSS, descriptive statistics, frequency table, simple recoding)</td>
<td>Wrench et al.: Chapters 6, 15</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>9/26</td>
<td>Data analysis using SPSS II</td>
<td>Wrench et al.: Chapters 14, 16, 19; Su, Akin, Brossard, Scheufele, &amp; Xenos (2015)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>10/3</td>
<td>Hypothesis testing + SPSS II</td>
<td>Wrench et al.: Chapters 22</td>
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<td></td>
<td>WORK ON GROUP PROJECT - METHODS (E.G., SURVEY DESIGN; DATASET CHOICES)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>FALL BREAK: NO CLASS</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10/17</td>
<td>SPSS: Indices / Scales / Reliability and validity testing</td>
<td>Wrench et al.: Chapters 7, 8; Binder et al. (2012)</td>
<td>B. Literature review and Methods section</td>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10/24</td>
<td>SPSS: Factor analysis</td>
<td>Costello.,&amp; Osborne (2005); Kiousis (2004); Saiti &amp; Fassoulis (2012)</td>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>10/31</td>
<td>SPSS: T-test / ANOVA I</td>
<td>Wrench et al.: Chapters 17, 18</td>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>SPSS: T-test / ANOVA II</td>
<td>Wrench et al.: Chapter 20; Ho, Brossard, &amp; Scheufele (2008)</td>
<td>D. Results section (data analysis)</td>
<td>Assignment 4</td>
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<td>WORK ON GROUP PROJECT - DATA ANALYSIS</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11/14</td>
<td>SPSS: Linear regression</td>
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<td>Assignment 4</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>11/21</td>
<td>NO CLASS (WORK ON GROUP PROJECT)</td>
<td>Wrench et al.: Chapter 22</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>11/28</td>
<td>Review of SPSS data analysis Part 4: Presenting research and Wrap-up: Overview of the final paper, final presentation, and roles of discussants</td>
<td>E. Discussion section</td>
<td>Assignment 5</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>12/5</td>
<td>Final presentation</td>
<td>Paper feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>12/12</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS</strong></td>
<td>Final paper (Dec. 12)</td>
<td>Peer evaluation (Dec. 15)</td>
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**Readings:**


