Communication 340-001, Fall 2010
Quantitative Research Methods

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a general overview of the important components of social research. The primary goal of the course is solid understanding of the logic of social science research. The first third of the semester concentrates on defining research problems, research design (including sampling, measurement, and causal inference), and assessing research quality. These concepts are then illustrated through reviews of four research areas: survey research, evaluation research, qualitative studies, and content analysis. The last third of the semester focuses more on descriptive and inferential statistics, measures of association for categorical and continuous variables, and the language of data analysis. For those classes, we make use of **SPSS**, a PC program useful for learning statistics. Most topics are illustrated through class exercises and reading published articles, this year focusing on the influence of the media on children and other similar communication research topics. This course fulfills the undergraduate quantitative data analysis requirement.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Books (available in Penn Bookstore)
- Reinard, J.C. (2007). *Introduction to communication research* (4th. Ed). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Gonick, L., & Smith, W. (1993). *The Cartoon Guide to Statistics*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Optional Materials
- SPSS Software. In this course, you will be using SPSS to learn and conduct data analyses. Annenberg has arranged for a mobile computer lab for your use. We will use this mobile computer lab in class. Additionally, I will arrange a set of lab times in which you can come into Annenberg to work on your course assignments. If you do not wish to use the Annenberg mobile computer lab outside of class, or would like to purchase an individual copy of SPSS, you can purchase a 6-month license of SPSS for $35.00. For more information on purchasing the 6-month license, go to http://www.onthehub.com/.

Additional Readings
- Additional course readings will be made available on the course's Blackboard page.

COURSE POLICIES AND OTHER INFORMATION

Attendance
Attendance is required for this course. A portion of your grade is based on regular attendance and class participation. If you anticipate missing a lecture in its entirety or leaving a lecture early, please inform me ahead of time and arrange to speak with a fellow classmate about the material that you missed. Please know that not all lecture material is available on the lecture slides.

Readings and Assignments
- You are responsible for completing all reading and assignments prior to the class for which it is assigned. All assignments and due dates will be posted on the class blackboard site. The attached course calendar indicates an approximate timeline for each assignment, but the exact due dates may change as per our progress. Any changes will be announced in class and on blackboard.
- Make/keep a copy of anything that you submit.
- Late Assignments. Assignments are due at the **BEGINNING** of class. Any assignments received in the middle or after class, up to the beginning of the next class, will be marked as **LATE**. Every student is allowed **ONE** late assignment. No points will be deducted for first late assignment. All late assignments after the first one will receive zero (0) points.
- Group Assignments. Throughout the semester there will be a series of group exercises associated with the final group project (FGP). For each group exercise, please hand in **ONE** assignment per group with **ALL** the names of the group members **CLEARLY** indicated on the copy. All group members will receive the same grade.

Technology in the Classroom
Cell phones are a distraction both for me as well as for other students in the class. Please silence your cell phone and refrain from texting during class.

Like cell phones, laptops are frequently a distraction for students. However, some students are able to use their laptop efficiently for class note-taking. As such, you are permitted to bring your laptop to class providing that you are using it for note-taking or another acceptable classroom use. Please refrain from emailing, social networking, instant messaging, surfing the Internet, playing games, writing papers, doing homework, etc. during class time. Inappropriate uses will be noted and will impact your class participation grade.

Electronic Communication
This course has an accompanying Blackboard website (https://courseweb.library.upenn.edu). Please check this website frequently as all announcements, assignments, lectures, and additional readings will be posted.

In addition to posting all course information on the class website, my primary means of getting in touch with outside of regular class hours is email. It is important that you check your Penn email account regularly. If you do not use your Penn email address as your primary email account, please arrange to you have Penn email forwarded to your preferred account.

I respond to most email messages within 24 hours Monday- Friday. If there is an urgent situation that requires my immediate attention, please include the word "URGENT" in your subject line.

Academic Honesty
The University of Pennsylvania Academic Code of Integrity states: Any work that a student undertakes as part of progress toward a degree or certification must be the student's own, unless the relevant instructor specifies otherwise. Plagiarism, use or performance of another person's work, misconduct during an examination, prior possession of an examination, and submission of work previously used are violations of the Code. Any student who violates this code will receive zero points for the work in question and will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the Office of Student Conduct's web site and its various relevant links at www.upenn.edu/osc.

Influenza Prevention and Preparedness
In accordance with guidelines from the University, if you experience flu-like symptoms, do not attend class until you are fever free for more than 24 hours. Please send an email or leave a phone message regarding your absence and we will work together for you to make up any assignments and class material. More instructions on what to do if you are feeling ill can be found here: http://www.upenn.edu/pennnews/flu/#students.

COURSE GRADING

Your course grade will be based on your performance on a variety of assignments, the final group project, the final exam, and your class participation. Each will be weighted according to the listed weights below. My grading system is a percentage system, I generally do not grade on a curve although adjustments to the final grades may be made if I feel necessary. The grading scale for this class is as follows: 93+ = A; 90 – 92 = A-; 87 – 89 = B+; 83 – 86 = B; 80 to 82 = B-; 77 – 79 = C+; 73 - 76 = C; 70 – 72 = C-; 67 – 69 = D+; 63 – 66 = D; Less than 63 = F.

Class Participation

To receive full credit for this portion of your grade, students are expected to attend class, actively contribute to the class discussions, complete class readings, hand in assignments on time, and contribute to group projects in a fair and equal manner.　5%

Weekly Assignments

Throughout the semester, there will be 7 individual assignments. Each assignment has a specific number of points allotted to it. The assignments are typically exercises or readings that correspond to the topic of instruction. In most instances, you will be given one week to complete an assignment.　50%

Final Group Project (FGP)

The final group project involves the design, implementation, analysis, and presentation of a research project. Each group will generate a research question and design a survey to collect data on their topic of interest. All members of the class will be each other's study population! More detail will be given later in the semester. Final group presentations will be given the last 2 days of class.　20%

Final Exam

There will be a take-home final exam at the end of the semester. The final exam requires students to apply concepts learned throughout the course to examples relevant to communication research. Exam material is based on lectures, readings, and assignments.　25%

Course Schedule / Information

Week	Date	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments
Week 1	**September 9**	Course Overview	None	None
Week 2	**September 14**	The Role of Research in Communication	Article: # 1 - 3	---
	September 16	Theory, Research Questions, and Hypotheses	Reinard: Ch. 3	Assign. 1: Distributed
Week 3	**September 21**	Theory, Research Questions, and Hypotheses	Reinard: Ch. 2	---
	September 23	Measurement	Reinard: Ch. 4 Article: # 4 - 6	Assign. 1:Due Assign.2: Distributed
Week 4	**September 28**	Sampling	Reinard: Ch. 11 G&S: pgs. 89-97	---
	September 30	Research Design, Part 1	Reinard: Ch. 10	Assign. 2:Due
Week 5	**October 5**	Research Design, Part 2		FGP: Distributed
	October 7	Research Design, Part 3		Assign.3: Distributed
Week 6	**October 12**	Fall Break, No Class		
	October 14	Survey Research	Reinard: Ch. 9 (up to p. 381) Article: # 7	Assign. 3:Due Assign. 4: Distributed
Week 7	**October 19**	~~Evaluation Research~~ Surveys & Review	~~Article: # 8 - 10~~	FGP: Task 1 Due
	October 21	Content Analysis	Reinard: Ch. 8 Article: # 11	Assign. 4:Due
Week 8	**October 26**	Qualitative Studies	Reinard: Ch. 7 Article: # 12 - 13	
	October 28	Descriptive Statistics, Part 1	Reinard: Ch. 12 (up to p. 472) G&S: Chs. 1 & 2 Article: # 14	Assign. 5: Distributed

Week	Date	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments
Week 9	**November 2**	Descriptive Statistics, Part 2	Reinard: Ch. 13 (pgs 489-492 only) Article: # 15	FGP: Task 2 Due
	November 4	Introduction to SPSS	None	
Week 10	**November 9**	Measures of Association: Categorical Data	Reinard: Ch. 14 (pgs 536-545)	FGP: Task 3 Due
	November 11	Measures of Association: Categorical Data		Assign. 5: Due Assign. 6: Distributed
Week 11	**November 16**	Class Cancelled: Use time to meet with group.		
	November 18	Survey Day! *(bring copies of survey to class to administer to classmates)*		
Week 12	**November 23**	Measures of Association: Continuous Data	Reinard: Ch. 13 (pgs 492-512 only)	Assign. 6: Due Assign. 7: Distributed
	November 25	**Happy Thanksgiving, No Class**		
Week 13	**November 30**	Measures of Association: Continuous Data	Reinard: Ch. 13 (pgs 472-485) G&S: pgs. 187-207	
	December 2	Final Exam Review		Assign. 7: Due
Week 14	**December 7**	Class Presentations	None	FGP: Presentation
	December 9	Class Presentations **Last Day of Class!**	None	FGP: Presentation
Week 15	**December 11 – 14**	*Reading Days*		
Week 16	**December 20**	**Take-Home Final Exam Due @ 2 PM**		

List of Additional Class Readings

Reading Number	Citation
1.	Johnson, S. (2005, April 24). Watching TV makes you smarter. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved September 6, 2010, from http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/24/magazine/24TV.html
2.	SKIM: Anderson, C. A., Berkowitz, L., Donnerstein, E., Huesmann, L. R., Johnson, J. D., Linz, D., et al. (2003). The Influence of Media Violence on Youth. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 4*(3), 81-110.
3.	SKIM: Freedman, J. L. (1984). Effect of television violence on aggressiveness. *Psychological Bulletin, 96*(2), 227-246.
4.	Swing, E. L., Gentile, D. A., Anderson, C.A. & Walsh, D.A. (2010). Television and video game exposure and the development of attention problems. *Pediatrics*.
5.	Ferguson, C.J. & Ceranoglu, T.A. (2010, July 8). Poor measurement, poor controls, and spurious results in Swing et al. (2010) [E-letter]. *Pediatrics.* Retrieved August 26, 2010 from http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/eletters/peds.2009-1508v1.
6.	Swing, E.L., Gentile, D.A., Anderson, C.A., & Walsh, D.A. (2010, July 19). Re: poor measurement, poor controls, and spurious results in Swing et al. (2010) [E-letter]. *Pediatrics.* Retrieved August 26, 2010 from http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/eletters/peds.2009-1508v1.
7.	Bleakley, A., Hennessy, M., Fishbein, M., & Jordan, A.B. (2009). How sources of sexual information relate to adolescents' beliefs about sex. *American Journal of Health Behaviors, 33*(1), 37-48.
8.	Farrelly, M.C., Healton, C.G., Davis, K.C., Messeri, P., Hersey, J.C., & Haviland, M.L. (2002). Getting to the truth: Evaluating national tobacco countermarking campaigns, *American Journal of Public Health, 92,* 901-907.
9.	Hornik, R. C. (2002). Epilogue: Evaluation design for public health communication programs. In R. C. Hornik (Ed.), *Public health communication: Evidence for behavior change* (pp. 385-405). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
10.	Fisch, S.M., Truglio, R.T., Cole, C. (1999). The impact of Sesame Street on preschool children: A review and synthesis of 30 years' research. *Media Psychology*, 1(2), 165-190.
11.	Kunkel, D., Farrar, K. M., Eyal, K., Biely, E., Donnerstein, E., & Rideout, V. (2007). Sexual Socialization Messages on Entertainment Television: Comparing Content Trends 1997-2002. *Media Psychology, 9*(3), 595 - 622.
12.	Jordan, A. B. (2004). The Three-Hour Rule and Educational Television for Children. *Popular Communication, 2*(2), 103 - 118.
13.	Jordan, A., Hersey, J. C., McDivitt, J. A., & Heitzler, C. (2006). Reducing children's television-viewing time: A qualitative study of parents and their children. *Pediatrics, 118*(5), 1303-1310.
14.	SKIM: Mlodinow, L. (2008). *The Drunkard's Walk*. New York: Pantheon Books. Chapter 7.
15.	Mlodinow, L. (2008). *The Drunkard's Walk*. New York: Pantheon Books. Chapter 8.