

COMM 4393: Senior Communications Seminar

Instructor: Dr. Mu Hu

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Class meeting time: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 am. – 10:45 am.

Classroom: Madla 207

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday, 2:00 – 3:30 or by appointment.

Course Description

As the capstone course for communications majors, this course is designed to increase students' knowledge of the principles, objectives, and limitations of communication research, expose students to the logic of how people studying human communication come to make sense of what they observe, and provide opportunities for students to experience both the research and analysis processes and critique of prior research in the field of communication.

Learning objectives

By taking this course, students should be able to

- a) Examine the origins of modern social science perspectives on communication research;
- b) Develop and refine research interests;
- c) Develop the ability of critical thinking of prior literature and express ideas through scientific writing, formal presentations, and informal discussion;
- d) Understand fundamental key research methods and data analysis skills;
- e) Reflect on their own research, realize its limitations, and propose plans for future research;
- f) Improve library research skills.

Required textbooks

Wrench, J. S., Thomas-Maddox, C., Richmond, R. P., & McCroskey, J. C. (2018). *Quantitative research methods for communication* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press, ISBN: 978-0190861063.

Grade breakdown

A = 90% and above, B = 80% to 89%, C = 70% to 79%, D = 60% to 69%, F = 59% and below.

Grading

Participation in class discussion	30 points
Comprehension and analysis assignments (10 points each)	50 points
Midterm	50 points
Final	50 points
Total	180 points

Brief description of assignments

Comprehension and analysis assignments (10 points each)

Each student needs to submit five comprehension and analysis assignments. Each paper should be individual work. The page limit varies by individual assignments. You are required to use the content you've learned regarding different aspects and stages of communication research process and reflect upon and analyze various forms of communication research works assigned by the instructor. The purposes of these assignments are twofold. First, they are designed as tools to assess your understanding and application ability of the content that has been covered. Second, they can be used as devices for you to be familiar with and prepare for the midterm and the final. Detailed instructions will be given in class.

Requirements of assignments

All the assignments should be in word document format. For the assignments, you should include a cover page, with the title of the paper, your name, as well as the course name. Each paper should be carefully proofread and demonstrate a high level of competence in written communication. Please use double space, 1-inch margins, and 12-point Times New Roman font in your papers. Use proper APA citations. Have a reference page in APA format if needed. Details of the instructions will be given in class.

Tardiness Policy

Our class starts at 9:30 am. Please be in class on time. If you need to be late for class with legitimate reasons, please notify the instructor in advance, otherwise tardiness will negatively influence your participation grade.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. Missing class will negatively influence your participation grade. If you need to be absent from class with legitimate reasons, please notify the instructor in advance, otherwise absence will negatively influence your participation grade.

Participation Policy

Participation is a must in class. There are in-class discussions, assignments, and activities in almost all the class meetings. Your participation grade is decided by the quantity and quality of your contribution to the class discussions and activities. Missing class meetings means that you miss the class discussions and activities and therefore will negatively influence your participation grade.

If you don't get involved in class activities but instead do other things unrelated to class, you will be asked to leave the classroom immediately and receive a zero on your participation grade.

If you miss a class meeting (especially when the instructions of the assignments are given), it is your responsibility to find out what you miss. If you miss the class meeting(s) due to legitimate reasons, feel free to contact me. You are responsible for the loss of points for not knowing the instructions because of your absence.

Academic Misconduct Policy

Students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes

cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, multiple submissions, misrepresentation of academic records, facilitating academic dishonesty, unfair advantage, violating known safety requirements and ethical misconduct. This includes holding other students to the same standards and reporting any incidents of alleged violation of the honesty policy to the instructor involved or, if necessary, to the appropriate academic department head. All students are responsible for being familiar with the Academic Misconduct Policy, which may be found in the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook.

University policy prescribes serious consequences for acts of academic misconduct including, but not limited to, a grade of 'F' on the particular paper or assignment or a failing grade in the course. Also, a referral may be issued to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities where the sanctions can vary up to possible expulsion from the University. Considering the potential consequences of academic misconduct, it is obviously in students' best interests to avoid even the appearance of such behavior. If you are ever unclear whether a specific act might constitute academic misconduct, please contact your instructor for an assessment of the situation.

In this classroom, I expect that you will always produce your own, original work and that you will use outside sources in a scholarly, precise manner that adheres to APA guidelines. When you quote and paraphrase, you must always put words, phrases, and sentences that are not your own into quotation marks. In addition, you need to indicate the source of information at the end of the sentence in parentheses and at the end of your paper or presentation on a reference page. When you do not use quotation marks, parenthetical citations, and a reference page in this manner, then you ostensibly claim the work of others as your own; this action constitutes plagiarism. Please note that changing one word in a sentence does not mean that it's in your own words.

Sources that need to be used in a scholarly, precise manner include but are not limited to your textbook, any other books, websites, discussion boards, essays, journals, newspapers, magazines, and visual images. As a general rule, it is expected that you will not consult sources such as Cliffnotes or Sparknotes in this class if for no other reason than the fact that these sources over-generalize and often provide erroneous information.

All student papers and other written assignments are subject to analysis by anti-plagiarism software.

Absent/Late policy of assignments

You are required to take exams as scheduled and turn in all the assignments on the scheduled due dates. The assignments are due at 11:59 pm. of the due dates. Each assignment should be turned in via Dropbox in Blackboard. If you miss an assignment due date for some legitimate reasons (e.g., illness, death in the family), you are expected, if at all possible, to notify me via the contact information listed above of your situation prior to missing a scheduled exam or an assignment due date. If, for some legitimate reasons, you are not able to contact me prior to missing an exam or an assignment, you need to contact me within 24 hours after the missed scheduled test or assignment due date. Note that unless you are unconscious, kidnapped, incarcerated, or similarly incapacitated there is no excuse for not contacting me within 24 hours of missing a deadline.

An unexcused absence from an exam will result in a grade of zero. Late written assignments will be reduced by 20% per 24 hours they are late (note that weekend days are counted as late days). If an assignment is 72 hours or more late it will not be accepted.

If you are absent from class so that you fail to turn in an assignment or take an exam, the ONLY acceptable form of excuse is:

You must provide written confirmation of your excuse on an appropriate, official paper (e.g., a doctor's excuse on office letterhead or prescription pad).

If it is not provided, in a timely fashion (as described above), the excuse will not be accepted and the appropriate sanction will be applied.

Grade Grievance

Any grade grievance needs to be submitted to me in written form, including a print-out copy of the argument, the assignment or exam in question, and the evidence supporting your grievance.

Academic Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal anti-discrimination statutes that provide comprehensive civil rights protection for individuals with disabilities. Title II of the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that students with disabilities be guaranteed equal access to the learning environment through the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodations of their disability. If you have a disability that may require an accommodation, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is dss@tamusa.edu.

AI Use Policy

This class assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves individually. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

Academic Learning Center

All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center is an appointment based center where appointments are made through the Navigate platform. Students access Navigate through Jagwire in the Student Services tab. The Center is active on campus outreaching to students to highlight services offered. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu or calling (210)-784-1332. Appointments can also be made through JagWire under the services tab.

Counseling Resources

As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and/or negatively impact your daily functioning. If you or someone you know is experiencing life stressors, emotional difficulties, or mental health concerns at Texas A&M University – San Antonio, please contact the Student Counseling Center (SCC) located in Modular C, Room 166 (Rear entrance) or call 210-784-1331 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday – Friday. After-hours crisis support is available by calling 210-784-1331. Please contact UPD at 911 if harm to self or harm to others is imminent.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free, confidential (to the extent permitted by law), and are not part of a student's academic or university record. SCC provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information, please visit www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling

Emergency Preparedness

JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification system. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff, and faculty who are registered in JagE Alert, will have the option to receive a text message, email, and/or phone call with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>.

More information about Emergency Preparedness and the Emergency Response Guide can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/upd/index.html>.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance

According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Jaguar Writing Center

The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the student services tab. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at www.tamusa.edu/Writing-Center. The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing wldcc@tamusa.edu.

Meeting Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students (DOS@tamusa.edu) for support. In addition, you may notify the instructor if you are comfortable doing so.

Military Affairs

Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, about special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations). You are also encouraged to visit the Patriots' Casa in-person, Room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances

Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus

community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under A&M System policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

Respect for Diversity

We understand that our students represent diverse backgrounds and perspectives. When we are equity-minded, we are aware of differences and inequalities and are willing to discuss them so we can act to resolve them. The University is committed to building cultural competencies, or the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that enable individuals and organizations to acknowledge cultural differences and incorporate these differences in working with people from diverse cultures. Respecting and accepting people different than you is vital to your success in the classroom, on campus, and as a future professional in the global community. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- Share their unique experiences, values, and beliefs.
- Be open to the views of others.
- Honor the uniqueness of their colleagues.
- Value each other's opinions and communicate respectfully.
- Use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in this course and across the A&M-San Antonio community.

The Six-Drop Rule

Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality, diversity, pluralism, and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the university. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and other healthcare providers) are required to report information about such

discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about an incident of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331, Modular C.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities

The purpose of the following statement is to enumerate the essential provisions of students' freedoms and responsibilities to learn at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. All students are required to follow all policies and regulations as set forth by The Texas A&M University System, including the A&M-San Antonio Student Code of Conduct.

Students' Rights

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no university rule or procedure that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition, and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the university, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty and staff, and the administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted and compliant with the University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct, on our website, and in the University Catalog.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their University email for any updates or official University notifications.
6. We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation, or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS SEMINAR COURSE SCHEDULE

Alterations to this schedule due to unforeseen circumstances will be announced in class.

Week	Date	Topics	Assignments	Readings
1	8/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction 		
	8/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empirical Research 		Chapter 2
2	9/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Research: The Social Scientific Approach to Observe and Analyze Human Communication 		Chapter 1
	9/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues of Communication Research I: Research Ethics 		Chapter 3
3	9/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues of Communication Research II: Societal Restraints 		<p>“The Politics of Scientific Knowledge”</p> <p>https://oxfordre.com/communication/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-107?mediaType=Article</p>
	9/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different Methods of Communication Research: Quantitative Research, Qualitative Research, and Critical Research 		<p>Appendix A (of Textbook)</p> <p>https://learninglink.oup.com/access/wrench-4e-instructor-resources#tag_additional-chapters</p> <p>(Please scroll down to the middle of the page in order to see Appendix A)</p>
4	9/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different Areas of Communication Research 	Comprehension and analysis assignments 1 due	<p>International Communication Association (ICA)</p> <p>https://www.icahdq.org/page/div_igs</p> <p>National Communication Association (NCA)</p> <p>https://www.natcom.org/about-nca/membership-and-interest-groups/nca-interest-groups</p>

	9/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Process 		Chapter 4 and 5
5	9/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Article Structure 		Chapter 4 and 5
	9/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Resources (for Locating Prior Research) 	Comprehension and analysis assignments 2 due	Chapter 4 and 5
6	10/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate Research Questions and/or Hypotheses 		Chapter 13
	10/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study Planning: Guarantee Accurate and Reliable Research I 		Chapter 8, Chapter 12 (p.348-350, p.353-355)
7	10/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study Planning: Guarantee Accurate and Reliable Research II 		Chapter 8, Chapter 12 (p.348-350, p.353-355)
	10/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whom to Study 	Comprehension and analysis assignments 3 due	Chapter 12
8	10/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Midterm 		
	10/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operationalization 		Chapter 7
9	10/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depicting Characteristics 		Chapter 14
	10/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revealing Relationships at a Certain Moment 		Chapter 9
10	10/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discovering Changes Over Time 		Chapter 9
	10/31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing Causality I: Single Cause 		Chapter 11
11	11/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing Causality II: Two or More Causes 		Chapter 11
	11/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What (as opposed to Whether or How) I 	Comprehension and analysis assignments 4 due	Chapter 10
12	11/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What (as opposed to Whether or How) II 		Chapter 10

	11/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpreting Findings, Summarizing Limitations, and Proposing Future Research Directions 		Chapter 20
13	11/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presenting Research at Conferences 		Chapter 20
	11/21	No class meeting		
14	11/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitting Research Articles to Journals 	Comprehension and analysis assignments 5 due	Chapter 20
	11/28	No class meeting		
15	12/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizing Reviewers' Feedback 		Chapter 20
	12/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final 		