

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE NUMBER	COMM 3341
SECTION	001
CLASS NAME	Research Methods
CLASSROOM	Madla 206
MEETING DAYS/TIMES	TR 11:00 AM–12:15 PM
TERM	Fall 2026 (August 24–December 11)
INSTRUCTOR	Dr. Brian Brantley
EMAIL	brian.brantley@tamusa.edu
OFFICE	CAB 319C
OFFICE PHONE	210-784-2214
OFFICE HOURS	TTh 8:30-9:15 AM, 12:30-1:30 PM, 3:30-4 PM

WHAT THIS CLASS ACTUALLY IS

Catalog Description — Students will learn basic social scientific methods in the context of communication research: Problem formation, hypothesis testing and theory building; fundamentals of measurement; research designs and approaches; data collection and analysis; and ethics in academic and professional applications. This class is a prerequisite for COMM 4393 — Senior Communication Seminar.

Course Objectives — By the end of this course, students should be able to do each of the following:

- Understand and explain the relationship between theory and research
- Describe and compare the predominant research methodologies in the intersecting fields of communication and media studies
- Define research and its associated purposes, principles, practices, and ethical issues at each phase
- Determine an appropriate methodology (theoretical framework + methods/procedures) for investigating a set of research questions

GETTING/KEEPING IN TOUCH

The best ways to get in touch with me are (1) talk to me in person during office hours and (2) through email (listed at the top of the page). DO NOT (repeat, DO NOT) try to get in touch with me through Blackboard Messaging. I don't ever check that, so let's just avoid that altogether.

REQUIRED TEXT

Quantitative Research Methods for Communication, by Jason S. Wrench, Candice Thomas-Maddox, Virginia Peck Richmond, and James C. McCroskey, fourth edition; published by Oxford University Press, ISBN: 9780190861063.

This will also be the required text for COMM 4393 — Senior Communication Seminar.

HOW THIS CLASS IS GOING TO WORK

Generally speaking (but not in every case), every chapter we cover will get about a week of coverage. The general pattern we'll follow is Day 1 will start with an introduction of core concepts, and Day 2 will put those concepts into practice — through an applied exercise, a workshop tied directly to the homework, or a structured discussion. The full breakdown of what happens each session is laid out in the Course Calendar below.

I strongly recommend that you read each chapter before we begin class discussion of it, as that will allow you to introduce yourselves to the course material as opposed to having me be the one who introduces it to you.

A large portion of your semester grade will (as you can see in the grade breakdown listed below) come from chapter assignments. What this means to you is that keeping up with these assignments is arguably the most important thing you can do this semester.

With this in mind, I would advise you very strongly to prioritize your various commitments so that you can submit all of your assigned work on time. Zeroes have a destructive impact on your overall grade.

GRADING

COMPONENT	WEIGHT
Homework Assignments	40%
Quizzes (4)	40%
Final Exam	20%

Homework Assignments (40%)

You will be assigned homework throughout the semester, tied to that week's chapter. Details will always be posted to Blackboard. Unless otherwise noted, assignments will be due by the Sunday after they are released to you.

Quizzes (40%)

You will take four (4) short quizzes over the course of the semester. These quizzes will be objective, timed, drawn from the reading, and administered through Blackboard. Each quiz will be open on the Thursday and Friday of the week in which it is assigned.

Final Exam (20%)

You will take a comprehensive final exam on Tuesday, December 8, 2026, from 12-1:50 PM. The exam will be administered in person in our regular classroom. I will provide Scantron sheets for you to use.

Use of Grammarly

For your Homework Assignments, you will be allowed to use Grammarly for Education in order to guide you in the writing process (but NOT as a substitute for doing the actual writing yourself). I will require you to submit each of these assignments as a Google Doc, so that I can look at your edit history and make sure you didn't (a) get some robot to do the writing for you and then (b) use the copy and paste functions to pretend like you did the writing yourself. You will also need to submit a list of the prompts that you used in your Grammarly interactions. Any violation of any of these terms on any assignment will result in a grade of zero for that assignment.

Grading Scale

GRADE	SCORE
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	0-59

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory for this class and all others in the Communication program. If you do miss a class, it is your responsibility to check Blackboard, find out about any assignments/due dates/handouts/announcements that were covered in the class(es) you missed, and make up any work you missed.

Absences

Missing the equivalent of two weeks of class due to unexcused absences will reduce your final grade for the course by one full letter grade. Missing the equivalent of three weeks of class due to unexcused absences means that you cannot pass the course. Should this happen, you will (a) need to drop the course or (b) receive a failing grade. In a course like this one, six absences is the equivalent of missing three weeks of class.

- An excused absence is one in which you miss class either for a required activity or because of illness (excessive excused absences can also result in you not passing the class).
- An unexcused absence is any other absence.

Arriving on Time

This course begins at 11:00 AM every Tuesday and Thursday. If you arrive after attendance has been recorded, then you will be counted late for that class session.

Accumulated Lates

Three lates equals one absence. These add up more quickly than you'd think.

Classroom Distractions

If you're doing something in class that has nothing to do with what we're covering that day, then I'm likely to be distracted by what you're doing. If you distract me, I will ask you as politely as possible to stop. If you persist in the distracting behavior, then you will be removed from class for the remainder of that day's class.

Academic Integrity/Generative AI

Your instructor assumes that all work submitted by COMM 3341 students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups (as assigned by your instructor). 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.

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Academic Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Support Services in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210, or at (210) 784-1335 or visit <https://www.tamusa.edu/index.html> or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Learning Center

The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the Tools section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202.

Counseling/Mental Health 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 are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120. All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 (after-hours select option '2'). For more information and self-help resources, 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 will have the option to receive a text message or email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>. Download the SafeZone App for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance

According to 34 CFR 668.21 (U.S. Department of Education 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.

Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center

The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center supports graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Students can schedule appointments through JagWire under the Student Services tab. The Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. More information at <https://bit.ly/WLDCCenter>.

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. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to provide any resources they may possess.

Military Affairs

Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, any 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.va@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 the 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.

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 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. 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, gender expression, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units. 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 through the Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamusa.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students

Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status, to take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree program, limit their studies, participate in an alternative program, change their major, or refrain from joining or participating in any course, activity, or program. The university will provide reasonable accommodations related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child, which could include maintaining a safe distance from hazardous substances/areas/activities, excused absences for illness or medical appointments, modified due dates, rescheduled exams, a leave of absence, and access to instructional materials/recordings for excused absences. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with questions (titleix@tamusa.edu; 210-784-2061; CAB 439K). Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities

The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and

responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

Students' Rights

- A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
- 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, or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
- 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.
- Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

- A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty and administration.
- A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct, on our website, University Catalog and to comply with them, as well as federal, state, and local laws.
- A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
- A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide an environment for learning.
- A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notification.

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.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct.

IMPORTANT FALL 2026 DATES

(Added for this version — pulled from the official TAMU-SA Fall 2026 academic calendar. Cut this section if you'd rather not include it.)

DATE	EVENT
August 24	First class day
September 7	Labor Day Holiday — No classes
September 9	Census Date
October 5–October 16	Midterm grading period
November 13	Last day to drop with automatic “W”
November 25	Study day — No classes
November 26–November 28	Thanksgiving Holiday — No classes
December 4	Last day of scheduled classes
December 5–December 11	Final examinations
December 16	Grades due by noon

The complete academic calendar is available online at <https://catalog.tamusa.edu/undergraduate/academic-calendar/>.

COURSE CALENDAR

Homework is due by 11:59 PM the Sunday after it is assigned unless otherwise noted on Blackboard. Quizzes are open Thursday–Friday of the week listed.

WEEK	DATE	CLASS FOCUS	HOMEWORK / QUIZ DUE
1	Tue 8/25	Intro to Course — syllabus walkthrough, course rhythm; icebreaker: students bank a communication research question	—
1	Thu 8/27	Ch. 1 — Origins and Development of Communication Research; empirical vs. humanistic/critical inquiry; small-group study-title sort	—
2	Tue 9/1	Complete Ch. 1 discussion; Begin Ch. 2 — Empirical Research: the empirical research cycle	—
2	Thu 9/3	Ch. 2 continued — walk a published study through the empirical research cycle as a class	HW Ch. 1 & Ch. 2 due Sun 9/6
3	Tue 9/8	Ch. 3 — Research Ethics: Belmont Report principles, informed consent basics	—
3	Thu 9/10	Ch. 3 continued — The IRB Process in Practice: review categories, common issues; small-group scenario activity	HW Ch. 3 due Sun 9/13
4	Tue 9/15	Ch. 4 — Finding and Evaluating Sources: databases, source credibility, primary vs. secondary sources	—
4	Thu 9/17	Ch. 4 continued — APA Style Mechanics workshop; students build reference entries from Tuesday's sources	HW Ch. 4 due Sun 9/20
5	Tue 9/22	Ch. 5 — What a Literature Review Does: synthesis vs. summary, strong/weak examples	—
5	Thu 9/24	Ch. 5 continued — Building a Literature Review workshop: draft an in-class synthesis paragraph	HW Ch. 5 due Sun 9/27; QUIZ 1 open Thu 9/24–Fri 9/25 (Ch. 1–2)
6	Tue 9/29	Ch. 6 — Variables: IV/DV, moderating/mediating, operational definitions	—
6	Thu 10/1	Ch. 6 continued — Identifying variables in research question stems; pair-share practice	HW Ch. 6 due Sun 10/4
7	Tue 10/6	Ch. 7 — Levels of Measurement: nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio	—
7	Thu 10/8	Ch. 7 continued — Building a Measurement Instrument: model scale walkthrough, in-class drafting with peer feedback	HW Ch. 7 due Sun 10/11
8	Tue 10/13	Ch. 8 — Reliability: test-retest, internal consistency, inter-rater reliability	—
8	Thu 10/15	Ch. 8 continued — Validity: face, content, construct, criterion; “bad measure” discussion	HW Ch. 8 due Sun 10/18; QUIZ 2 open Thu 10/15–Fri 10/16 (Ch. 3–5)
9	Tue 10/20	Ch. 9 (Part 1) — Survey Design Fundamentals: question wording, order effects, response scales	—

WEEK	DATE	CLASS FOCUS	HOMEWORK / QUIZ DUE
9	Thu 10/22	Ch. 9 continued — Sampling: probability vs. non-probability, sample size logic; critique a flawed poll	HW Ch. 9 (Part 1) due Sun 10/25
10	Tue 10/27	Ch. 9 (Part 2) — Administering and Analyzing Surveys: distribution modes, response rates	—
10	Thu 10/29	Ch. 9 continued — Full Survey Draft Workshop with structured peer review	HW Ch. 9 (Part 2) due Sun 11/1
11	Tue 11/3	Ch. 10 (Part 1) — What Content Analysis Is: manifest vs. latent content, unit of analysis	—
11	Thu 11/5	Ch. 10 continued — Building a Coding Scheme: model walkthrough, in-class drafting	HW Ch. 10 (Part 1) due Sun 11/8
12	Tue 11/10	Ch. 10 (Part 2) — Intercode Reliability: percent agreement, why single-coder analysis is a validity problem	—
12	Thu 11/12	Ch. 10 continued — Applying the Coding Scheme: paired live intercode comparison	HW Ch. 10 (Part 2) due Sun 11/15
13	Tue 11/17	Ch. 11 (Part 1) — Logic of Experimentation: manipulation, control, random assignment	—
13	Thu 11/19	Ch. 11 continued — Experimental Designs: between/within-subjects, factorial; internal vs. external validity discussion	HW Ch. 11 (Part 1) due Sun 11/22; QUIZ 3 open Thu 11/19–Fri 11/20 (Ch. 6–8)
14	Tue 11/24 & Thu 11/26	THANKSGIVING WEEK — NO CLASS	—
15	Tue 12/1	Ch. 11 (Part 2) — Confounds and Controls: extraneous variables, randomization, matching	—
15	Thu 12/3	Course Synthesis — whole-course review tying theory → question → ethics → design → measurement → analysis together; open Q&A	QUIZ 4 open Thu 12/3–Fri 12/4 (Ch. 9–11)
16	Finals Week	FINAL EXAM — comprehensive, in class (date/time to be confirmed once the university's final exam schedule is published; finals run Dec. 5–11)	—