

## **COMM 3341: Research Methods**

Instructor: Dr. Mu Hu

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Class time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30 am. – 10:45 am.

Classroom: Central Academic Building 218

Office location: Central Academic Building 319D

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00 am. – 12:30 pm.

### **Course Description**

In this course, students will be exposed to both classic and contemporary cutting-edge communication studies involving diverse research methods. Through a meticulous overview of these studies, students are expected to develop critical thinking abilities to evaluate the advantages and limitations of the research methods, understand the underlying logics of different traditions of academic inquiries, and the interdisciplinary nature of communication research throughout its developmental history.

### **Learning objectives**

- 1) Be familiar with the history and traditions of social scientific approaches to examine human communication.
- 2) Recognize the perspectives of historical and dialectical materialism in communication research.
- 3) Understand the risks academic inquiries have posed to human beings and the importance of research ethics.
- 4) Realize the advantages and limitations of different research methods and how they complement with each other to reveal the nature of human communication.
- 5) Grasp introductory and intermediate level data analysis skills.
- 6) Develop the capability of interpreting data analysis results and reading the interpretations of data analysis results.

### **Required Readings**

Scharrer, E., & Ramasubramanian, S. (Eds.) (2021). *Quantitative research methods in communication: The power of numbers for social justice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

### **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	20 points
Assignments (Nine assignments in total, and 10 points each)	90 points
Midterm	50 points
Final	50 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>210 points</b>

## **Brief description of assignments**

### **Assignments (10 points each)**

Each student should submit nine reading analysis papers. 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.

### **Assignment Policy**

You are expected to turn in all assignments on time. Each assignment should be turned in by 11:59 pm. on the due date in the Dropbox in Blackboard. 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.

Computer and/or printer problems are NOT valid excuses for late assignments, so please leave enough time for such problems just in case.

If you are asked to rewrite your paper, you need to turn in the rewritten paper at the beginning of the class meeting immediately after the class meeting when your original paper is given back. You can earn up to 75% of the full grade for the rewritten paper.

### **Tardiness Policy**

Our class starts at 9:30 am. on Mondays and Wednesdays. Please be in class on time. Tardiness without prior notice of legitimate reasons will negatively influence your participation grade.

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is mandatory. Missing class meetings without prior notice of legitimate reasons 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 (including but not limited to: disruptive talking, working on your homework, using cell phones for activities unrelated to class, and sleeping), 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 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](mailto: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](mailto:tutoring@tamusa.edu) or calling (210)-784-1332. Appointments can also be made through JagWire under the services tab.

### **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](http://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](http://www.tamusa.edu/Writing-Center). The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing [wldcc@tamusa.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Tentative Class Schedule** (Subject to change. Any change will be announced in class)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
January 22	Introduction		

January 27	The historical and global nature of human communication phenomena	Chapter 1	
January 29	The social scientific traditions and perspectives of communication research	Chapter 1	
February 3	Research ethics	Chapter 2	
February 5	Stages of a social scientific study on communication and its reflections in a research article		
February 10	Search previous research and library databases		
February 12	APA workshop		Summary of literature assignment
February 17	Conceptualization, operationalization, and measures	Chapter 3	
February 19	Conceptualization, operationalization, and measures (continued)	Chapter 3	APA in-text citation and reference assignment
February 24	Validity and reliability	Chapter 3	
February 26	Validity and reliability (continued)	Chapter 3	Conceptualization, operationalization, and measures assignment
March 3	Sampling	Chapter 4	
March 5	Survey	Chapter 5	Validity and reliability assignment
March 17	Survey (continued)	Chapter 5	
March 19	No class meeting		Midterm
March 24	Survey (continued)	Chapter 5	

March 26	Experiment	Chapter 6	Survey assignment
March 31	Experiment (continued)	Chapter 6	
April 2	Experiment (continued)	Chapter 6	
April 7	Content analysis	Chapter 7	Experiment assignment
April 9	Critical and cultural traditions and perspectives of communication research	Reading assigned	
April 14	Research and community	Chapter 11	
April 16	Research and community (continued)	Chapter 11	
April 21	Descriptive statistics	Chapter 8	
April 23	Hypothesis testing	Chapter 8	Descriptive statistics assignment
April 28	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Chapter 9	
April 30	Independent samples t-tests	Chapter 9	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) assignment
May 5	Summarizing and interpreting research findings, concluding limitations and proposing future research directions		Independent samples t-tests assignment

The final exam will be arranged in the final's week.