

# COMM 318 – Communication Research Methods

## Syllabus for Online Course in Fall 2019

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## Instructor Contact Information

Instructor: Jessica Fabbricatore  
Online Office Hours: Wednesday 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM | Sunday 10:00 AM —1:00 PM  
Phone: (304) 613-6730 (for quick questions)  
Direct Email: [fabbricatore\\_j@wvwc.edu](mailto:fabbricatore_j@wvwc.edu)

## Course Description

Introduction to communication research design and experimental, survey, field, and ethnographic methodologies. Students will analyze and critique theory, research methodology and design in published studies, and prepare an original research paper.

### Prerequisite

Junior with at least 12 hours in communication or permission of instructor.

## Required Materials

Treadwell, D. (2017). *Introducing communication research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

*Recommended:* American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*, sixth edition. Washington, DC: APA.

## Technical Requirements

1. Internet access with adequate bandwidth for viewing videos as well as uploading and downloading documents.
2. Installation and ability to use Microsoft Office programs: Word, Excel and PowerPoint.
3. Access to the school library's online database.

## Course Outcomes

Students completing this course successfully will be able to

1. Evaluate research from a variety of scholars in the communication field.
2. Create research questions and design a research study using the appropriate methods to answer those questions.
3. Identify and implement primary sources for communication scholarship.
4. Articulate through writing a research report for a variety of audiences.

## Nature of this course:

The activities in this course include textbook readings and mini tests, discussions surrounding concepts related to communication research, and completing a research project with a partner. I will include PowerPoints with each chapter. In the notes section of my PowerPoints, you might find supplemental information including actual notes and videos that will help drive the points home. When faced with a concept you do not understand, make your first step identifying all that you do know about the problem. Identify resources that can help you fill the gaps in

your understanding. These will include your text, your classmates, online academic support resources and your instructor. Many times as you try to put your understanding into writing, the light will dawn.

## Organization of Course:

The organization of this course is in modules. Each module has its own set of modular outcomes. Each module is located in a separate folder in the Content section of the course. To begin the course, go to the Content section at the left of the course home page. **Click on the Start Here folder.** This first folder sets the stage for the class and must be finished by end-of-day (11:59 PM) on the second day, August 27. Specific due dates for all remaining activities are specified within the instructions and also noted on the calendar for the course.

Module	Dates to Complete	Topics	Assignments Due
Start Here!	Aug. 26-27	Introduction to the course & the people in it	SMT DB
1	Aug. 26-31	Ch. 1- Getting Started: Possibilities and Decisions	DB   MT
2	Sept. 1-7	Ch. 2- What, Why, How? Reviewing APA	DB   MT <b>APA</b>
3	Sept. 8-14	Ch. 4- Reading, Recording, and Reviewing Research	DB   MT <b>Part I</b>
4	Sept. 15-21	Ch. 3- Ethics	DB   MT
5	Sept. 22-28	Ch. 5- Measurement	DB   MT
6	Sept. 29- Oct. 5	Ch. 8- Sampling	DB   MT
7	Oct. 6-12	Ch. 9- Surveys	DB   MT <b>Part II</b>
8	Oct. 13-19	Ch. 10- Experiments	DB   MT
9	Oct. 20-26	Ch. 11- Qualitative Research	DB   MT
10	Oct. 27- Nov. 2	Ch. 12- Content Analysis <b>(10/28- Last day to withdraw)</b>	DB   MT <b>Part III</b>
11	Nov. 3-9	Ch. 13- Rhetorical and Critical Analyses & More	DB   MT
12	Nov. 10-16	Ch. 14- Writing and Presenting Research	DB   MT
13	Nov. 17-23	Ch. 6- Summarizing Research Results	DB   MT <b>Part IV</b>
	Nov. 24-30	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	
14	Dec. 1-7	Ch. 7- Generalizing From Research Results	DB   MT
15	Dec. 8-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last day of classes: Wednesday, Dec. 11</li> <li>• Reading Day: Thursday, Dec. 12</li> <li>• <b>Research Translation Paper due Saturday, Dec. 14</b></li> </ul>	<b>RTP EVAL</b>

## Assignment Descriptions

**With the exception of the mini-tests and discussion posts, all assignments must be submitted as a Word document. Assignments submitted in any other format will not be graded (because I cannot open them), and will adhere to the late assignment policy. I'm looking at you, Mac users.**

### Mini Tests:

The mini tests will be based on the assigned textbook readings and PowerPoints that correspond with the chapters. There will be one (1) mini test per chapter meaning there are a total of 14 mini tests (not including the syllabus mini test). These are due by Saturday at 11:59 pm of each module. I am not looking over your shoulder to determine if you are using your learning materials when you take your tests. The retrieval of information is what makes learning stick in the long term. Simply looking up, rereading notes, copying down definitions are all activities students do thinking that they are studying effectively. The key to helping yourself truly learn the material requires quizzing yourself—asking yourself to retrieve the information rather than taking the shortcut and looking it up. In other words, use the mini tests to determine areas in need of further effort. **LOOK BACK AT THE ANSWERS TO SEE WHAT YOU MISSED.**

### Discussion Board Guidelines:

Discussions are an important part of this course. A discussion board is the centerpiece of our activities within each of the modules. **THIS IS DIFFERENT THAN OTHER DISCUSSION BOARDS** (if you've taken my online classes). While there will be discussion questions each week, you will also have the opportunity to ask and/or answer clarifying questions. More details are on Blackboard.

Due Dates: Original posts are due each Wednesday by 11:59 pm. Responses to posts are due each Friday by 11:59 pm. After the due date for the initial blog post, there is a 48 hour period for responses. These dates are noted on the Blackboard calendar. My aim is to provide enough flexibility in the calendar to allow for your various schedules. At the same time, we have to keep up a certain pace to make certain that we work methodically through the assignments and avoid a pile-up of assignments at the end of the course. You can always make these posts sooner than the date due and even work ahead.

### Discussion Board Etiquette:

How you post a message to a topic is just as important as what you post. If your behavior does not follow the course etiquette standards stated below, the grade you receive for a posting may suffer.

- The instructor reserves the right to remove any discussion messages that display inappropriate language or content. Do not use offensive language.
- Rudeness or slamming will not be tolerated.
- Show respect for your fellow students, even if you disagree with something that was stated.
- Clearly state what you believe, even if it means that you're disagreeing with someone. Never, however, respond in anger – take care to discuss ideas, not the person.

### Grading:

Topic discussion posts will be graded during the week following the date that the discussions are due. 20 total points are possible for each discussion topic. You will post 1 original post and respond to at least 2 classmate's posts each week. The discussion topic will be provided in each module. In determining your grade, the following components are considered (see the Grading Rubric for Discussions at the end of the syllabus for a complete breakdown): critical analysis, relevance to post, contribution to learning community, quality of writing, timeliness.

To review your rubric once a grade has been entered, click “Tools” in the left column of the class page. Scroll down to “My Grades” (everything is in alphabetical order). Next, find the assignment you’re interested in viewing, then click “View Rubric.”

## Papers

### APA

There will be a brief APA assignment to review the basics of APA.

### Research Translation Paper (RTP)

One of the main objectives of this course is to develop and enhance your skills of reading empirical articles and then translating them for the public. In this paper, you will serve as the translator between the academic world and the “real” world. You will be required to summarize a journal article from a top journal from our field (list below) for a popular press research website such as Huffpost. More information will be provided on Blackboard.

### Research Proposal

Over the course of the semester, you (and a partner if you wish) will develop a research proposal. You will be responsible for the focus of the investigation and all procedures related to conceptualization, analysis, and write-up. The research proposal will contain a literature review, proposed method section, and a discussion of the anticipated results and potential implications of those findings. To complete this assignment there will be a number of benchmark assignments: 1) the topic proposal and annotated bibliography, 2) the literature review, 3) the proposed method section, and 4) the final complete research proposal.

Course Assessments	Points Per Assignment	Number of Assignments	Approx. % of Grade	Total Points
Syllabus Mini-test	10	1	1.5%	10
Discussion Board	20	14	47%	280
Mini-tests	10	14	23%	140
APA Assignment	10	1	1.5%	10
Research Translation Paper	60	1	10%	60
Research Proposal	100	1	17%	100
- Annotated Bibliography (I)	10			
- Lit Review (II)	20			
- Method (III)	20			
- Full Paper (IV)	50			
				<b>600</b>

Grade Distribution
A = 92.5-100%
A- = 89.5-92.49%
B+ = 86.5-89.49%
B = 82.5-86.49%
B- = 79.5-82.49%
C+ = 76.5-79.49%
C = 72.5-76.49%
C- = 69.5-72.49%
D+ = 66.5-69.49%
D = 62.5-66.49%
D- = 59.5-62.49%
F = 59% and below

Above is complete list of all required activities.

To calculate your grade, divide the number of points you have by the total number of points in the class. Percentages will only be rounded at .50.

## Expectations

### Time

While the organization and the actual activities of this course may be different for a session offered during a regular semester, the expected learning outcomes and the time commitment required to meet those outcomes is the same. This is a full semester course being taught completely online. This means that all the time you would normally spend in class meetings. To be successful in this course, you should plan to allot 3-4 hours per week for "in-class" time which does not include reading the textbook or completing assignments. **I strongly recommend setting aside the same one or two time slots each week to treat as your class time in the same location.**

### Communication

You are expected to communicate respectfully. Using formal English. Texting short-cuts not acceptable. Emoticons may be used to help convey feelings, but they are not a substitutes for clearly written statements. Because I will be eight hours away, the best way to reach me is by email. We can arrange a time to connect by phone, or by video conference if you want to talk through some particular aspect of the course. I will monitor my email daily up until 8:30 (EST) at night. If I receive an email from you, you can expect a response within 48 hours. It may be sooner if received during online office hours. If a question is asked that is answered in the syllabus or on Blackboard, I reserve the right to not respond, or reply with "Please see the syllabus."

### Reading

There will be a significant amount of reading in this course. Some the reading will be in the assigned textbook, but some may require you to read an article online. When you are reading these materials, you are expected to connect the information read to concepts we are discussing and things you already know. You will be expected to demonstrate your understanding through mini tests and discussion boards. There will be no videos of lectures.

### Academic Integrity

Academic integrity violations (including cheating, plagiarism, and facilitating either) are serious matters and will not be tolerated. See the West Virginia Wesleyan College Student Handbook for further discussion. Any violations of academic integrity in will result in, at minimum, failure of the assignment and likely failure in the course. All incidents are reported to the Dean of the College. **MAKE SURE YOU CITE ALL OF YOUR WORK.**

### Recording Policy

Each assignment will be explained in detail on Blackboard. For both of the presentations, you will be required to assemble your own audience. This audience can be composed of colleagues at work, church members, civic groups, fraternity or sorority members, family, or friends. **All audiences must be comprised at least 5 people. Failure to assemble an audience that meets this criterion will result in a reduction equal to 30% of the total points the assignment is worth (equivalent to a 3 letter grade deduction).** Additionally, if you fail to film your audience in the prescribed manner **(a single, continuous video that 1) includes both your audience and you during the full speech OR 2) that pans from the audience to you at the beginning of the speech and back to the audience at the end of the speech with no camera stops in between)** the 30% penalty will be assessed since I have no way of verifying the presence of the audience.

### Late Policy

You will notice that there are generally two due dates for each week: Wednesday and Saturday (see course schedule for more information). You are expected to turn in assignments and deliver/upload your speeches on time. In order to remove any potential confusion about deadlines, please note that all deadlines for your assignments and class work will be in adherence to Eastern Standard Time (EST). **There are no exceptions. Computer or equipment failure/access is not an excuse.** If you fail to deliver a speech on time, you will receive a ZERO on that assignment. Not feeling well and lack of preparation are not excuses to miss a speech. Late posts or responses are accounted for within the grading rubric for the discussion board because late posts have an effect

on the ability of your peers to finish their assignments. Other late assignments will lose 10% each day late, and will never be accepted after five days past the due date.

Allowances may be made based on the following criteria:

- Serious illness or injury resulting in an emergency visit to a physician or hospital that is accompanied by a valid, signed doctor's note or other official medical document, and results in the student's physical inability to complete weekly assignments.
- Absence due to death of a family member.

In order for allowances to be made, you must notify me of your personal situation well in advance. For a grief-related allowance, you should notify me as soon as you become aware of the situation. For a serious medical situation that leaves you unable to satisfactorily complete coursework, you must notify me as soon as physically possible. If you wait until the end of the semester to notify me of a problem that arose earlier in the semester, no accommodations can be retroactively made to help you work through that situation.

## Student Support

I realize that a variety of academic and non-academic issues may arise during the time of this course. What follows are brief descriptions of the types of support available to you during the semester. More details and specific resources can be found in the Student Support course link at the left. It is just below the Content course link.

### Withdrawing

Throughout the duration of the semester, you can email the professor and the registrar when you want to withdraw. The add/drop period is during the first week of the semester. If you want to withdraw from the class after that period, you will need to retrieve a withdraw form from the registrar, fill it out, and return it to the registrar.

### Special Learning Needs

If you have a physical, medical, psychological, or learning disability that is going to or require accommodation, please let me know immediately. More information is found in the Academic Support and the Accessibility folders in the Student Support course link at the left.

### Library

The WWWC Library offers information resources for students at all levels and all disciplines. Library resources are a key component of academic success. Google and Wikipedia as research tools will not lead to acceptable research assignments, papers, or presentations. The library's reference and instructional staff is available by phone, by email, by text, and via reference chat on the library homepage to assist students with research inquiries. Starting place for accessing library resources is [here](#).

### Technical Support

Use the "Technical Support" folder for computer or internet issues. If you cannot find the answer to your issue, contact the HelpDesk. Their contact information can be found [here](#). For troubleshooting and information in general about Blackboard, follow this [link](#) or click the "Help with Blackboard" link in column on the left-hand side of our class.

### Personal Support

Should you become overwhelmed during this course, there are a variety of avenues for working through this difficulty. Feel free to contact me by email or telephone. Also, at the Student Support course link at the left side of each page, you can find a folder titled "Personal Support." In that folder you have contact information for

advisors who can help you. There are also a variety of links to guidance and practices which may help you manage this demanding period of time.

#### Institutional Policies

The Student Handbook is here along with direct links to the institutional policies on non-discrimination, students with disabilities and academic integrity.

#### The College's Policy Regarding Students with Disabilities

West Virginia Wesleyan College ensures that no qualified person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied access to, excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of any program or activity operated by the College or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities. The College shall make reasonable accommodations to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified student with a disability to enable the qualified student with the disability to have equal access to educational opportunities, programs and activities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 [29 U.S.C. 794(a)] and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) [42 U.S.C. § 12101, et seq.].

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements, according to our Student Handbook <http://www.wvwc.edu/MCEUploads/PDFs/Life%20@%20WVWC/Campus%20Life/student-handbook-15-16.pdf>, with the Director of the Learning Center (473-8499).

#### Statement of Social Justice/ Non-Discrimination Policy

The College fully subscribes to the development of individuals as worthy persons who should be nurtured to their fullest potential regardless of race, color, creed, religion, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, genetic predisposition, national or ethnic origin, or physical or mental disability. I concur with the College's commitment to social justice and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and nondiscrimination. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.



Grading Rubric for Discussions

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Critical Analysis</b>	<b>Relevance to Post</b>	<b>Contribution to Learning Community</b>	<b>Quality of Writing</b>	<b>Timeliness</b>
<b>Exemplary (4 points)</b>	Response goes beyond the understanding of the content and includes relevant information from outside sources to support the main points.	Post is relevant to the discussion content and discusses other outside sources relevant to the content.	Attempts to motivate further discussion beyond the required participation. Interacts freely.	Free of grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors. Writing style promotes communication.	Original posts are added during the first half of the discussion period.
<b>Proficient (3 points)</b>	Response indicates an understanding of the content including concepts and terminology. Proper citation.	Post is related to the content of the discussion content.	Responses contribute to the discussion by asking related questions, elaborating on relevant topics discussed in post, or making an educated oppositional statement.	Mostly free of grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors. Writing style mostly promotes communication.	Original posts are present, but may have been posted during the last half of the discussion period.
<b>Limited (2 points)</b>	Response does not go beyond summarizing the reading. Little or no reference to outside sources or relevant current applications. Incorrect or no citations.	Responses mention the reading, but does not discuss any points from the reading. Response is short and/or irrelevant to the post.	Responses sometimes contribute to the discussion by asking related questions, elaborating on relevant topics discussed in post, or making an educated oppositional statement.	Some grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors.	Original posts are added at the last minute, leaving no time for classmates to respond.
<b>Incorrect (1 point)</b>	Little or no evidence that the readings were completed or understood.	Response is all opinion-based or anecdotal evidence. Does not reference the content.	Feedback is irrelevant or says something along the lines of, "I agree with her."	Use of texting/informal language; several grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors.	Post is made after the deadline
<b>Unacceptable (0 points)</b>	No post.	No post.	No feedback to fellow student.	No post.	No post.