

COMM 3700: Empirical Research Methods in Communication

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Office Hours: Mondays from 9-10 and 11:20-12:20 *by appointment*
Meeting Time: MWF 10:20am to 11:10am
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A. Course Title

Empirical Research Methods in Communication

B. Course Description

This course examines the process of conducting communication research from a social scientific perspective. We will address the processes of advancing research questions, variable definition and measurement, sampling, survey research, experimental research, writing research reports, and hypothesis testing.

Successful completion of this course will help you become a savvy consumer of research, as well as provide you with the foundation necessary to conduct your own research. Even if you do not pursue a career in social science research, the skills that you acquire in this course will be useful in your career, in more advanced methods courses, and in everyday life.

C. Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and Cross-listings

STAT 2000 or STAT 2210. Please note that although this is not a statistics class (it is a *methods* class), you will be expected to have a basic understanding of hypothesis testing and research results.

D. Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This is an introduction to social science research methods for those who have little or no prior experience or course work in this area. It is designed to accomplish three inter-related goals:

- To introduce students to the process, basic concepts, logic, and techniques of social science research
- To provide students with a critical framework and a set of tools to examine communication problems and to evaluate various claims on communication processes and effects
- To offer students opportunities to gain insights into the research process by having hands-on experiences.

E. Topical Outline of the Course

- Introduction to the course; project workshop
- Nature of science and history
- Research reports, research questions, and hypotheses
- Operationalization and measurement
- Survey research
- Ethics and sampling
- Experimental research
- Quantitative data analysis

- Inferential statistics and participant observation
- Qualitative interviewing
- Reading and writing social scientific research

F. University Honor Code and Academic Honesty Policy

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University’s academic honesty policy, “A Culture of Honesty,” and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in “A Culture of Honesty” found at:

https://honesty.uga.edu/_resources/documents/UGA-AHPolicy-2022.pdf

Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor. The link to more detailed information about academic honesty can be found at:

<https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/>

Please be aware that dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of exams, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions.

G. Syllabus Statement

The course syllabus is a *general* plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

H. Principal Course Assignments

COMM 3700 – Spring 2023			
Day	Date	Chapter	Assignments & Announcements
WEEK 1			
M	9-Jan	Syllabus Review - Course Intro	
W	11-Jan	What is empirical research? (Ch. 1)	
F	13-Jan	Research Project & intro to team tasks	Last day for Drop/Add
WEEK 2			
M	16-Jan	NO CLASS – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	
W	18-Jan	Team Planning Day	
F	20-Jan	Library session	DUE: Contract

WEEK 3			
M	23-Jan	How to read research	
W	25-Jan	Paradigms & theories (Ch. 2)	
F	27-Jan	Paradigms & theories	
WEEK 4			
M	30-Jan	Research ethics (Ch. 3)	
W	1-Feb	Research ethics	
F	3-Feb	Team Project Workday	DUE: Team Task 1 by 11:59 PM
WEEK 5			
M	6-Feb	Variables, RQs, & hypotheses	
W	8-Feb	Variables, RQs, & hypotheses	
F	10-Feb	Conceptualization (in Ch. 5)	DUE: Homework 1 (Ethics) by 11:59 PM
WEEK 6			
M	13-Feb	<i>In class activity</i>	
W	15-Feb	Conceptualization	
F	17-Feb	Research design (Ch. 4)	

WEEK 7			
M	20-Feb	Research design	
W	22-Feb	Sampling (Ch. 7)	
F	24-Feb	Sampling	
WEEK 8			
M	27-Feb	Team Project Workday	DUE: Team Task 2 by 11:59 PM
W	1-Mar	Survey research (Ch. 9)	
R	2-Mar		Halfway through the Semester
F	3-Mar	Operationalization (in Ch. 5)	DUE: Homework 2 (Sampling) by 11:59 PM
WEEK 9			
M	6-Mar	Spring Break – No Classes	

W	8-Mar		
F	10-Mar		
WEEK 10			
M	13-Mar	Scales, items, and wording questions	"Firing" Deadline
W	15-Mar	Midterm Day 1 (Multiple choice)	
F	17-Mar	Midterm Day 2 (Short answer)	
WEEK 11			
M	20-Mar	Validity and reliability (Ch. 7)	
W	22-Mar	Validity and reliability	
R	23-Mar	Experimental research (Ch. 8)	Withdrawal Deadline
F	24-Mar	Experimental research	
WEEK 12			
M	27-Mar	Experimental research	
W	29-Mar	Team Project Workday	DUE: Team Task 3 by 11:59 PM
F	31-Mar	Content analysis (Ch. 14)	
WEEK 13			
M	3-Apr	Qualitative research	DUE: Homework 3 (Experiments) by 11:59 PM
W	5-Apr	Quantitative research (Ch. 10)	
F	7-Apr	Quantitative research	
WEEK 14			
M	10-Apr	Presentation workshop	DUE: Team Task 4 by 11:59 PM
W	12-Apr	Team Presentations	
F	14-Apr	Team Presentations	
WEEK 15			
M	17-Apr	Writing research for the public	DUE: Homework 4 (Field research) by 11:59 PM
W	19-Apr	Writing research for the public	

F	21-Apr	Team Project Workday	
WEEK 16			
M	24-Apr	Writing research for academics	DUE: Team Task 5 by 11:59 PM
W	26-Apr	Writing research for academics	
F	28-Apr	Final review and evaluations	DUE: Team evaluations & extra credit
WEEK 17			
M	1-May	Team Project Workday	DUE: Team Task 6 by 11:59 PM
T	2-May	Reading Day	
FINAL EXAM			
M	8-May	8:00am to 11:00am -- <i>Meet in our regular classroom</i>	

I. Specific Course Requirements for Grading Purposes

Your course will be based on a **1000-point scale** and will be determined by combining scores from the following sources:

Participation	25 pts
Homework (4)	160 pts
Exams (2)	400 pts
Team Task Assignments	375 pts
- Task 1 (25 pts)	
- Task 2 (50 pts)	
- Task 3 (75 pts)	
- Task 4 (75 pts)	
- Task 5 (100 pts)	
- Task 6 (50 pts)	
Team evaluations	40 pts
TOTAL	1000 pts

- **Participation (25 points):** Participation will be Criteria for Class Participation:
 - Contributions to class discussion and exercises that indicate that assignments have been read.
 - Involvement in in-class discussion groups/activities and always on task.
 - Promotion of a congenial and supportive classroom environment.
 - Quantity is considered, but quantity does not equal quality. To receive full credit for participation, you must actively participate in class discussions in a way that is relevant to the content.
 - Phone turn-in: you will sign-in your phone at the beginning of class
(Note: Just because you attend class does not mean you are participating.)

- **Homework (160 points):** You will individually complete 4 homework assignments throughout the semester. Each assignment is worth 40 points. Assignment due dates are noted on the course schedule by 11:59 PM on the day they are due unless otherwise noted. All homework assignments should be submitted in Word document format. *I do not accept hard copies or late homework assignments for any reason.*
- **Exams (400 pts):** This course has two exams—a midterm and a final. Each exam is designed to test your knowledge through the recall of information and application of course material. Study guides for exams will be provided prior to each exam. *If you are late to an exam, you will not have extra time to finish the exam beyond the regularly scheduled period.*
 - **Your midterm will occur over two days** and will cover the first half of the course material. Day one will be the *multiple-choice portion* of the exam and day two will be the *short answer/essay portion* of the exam. Each portion is worth 100 points, totaling 200 points for the entire midterm.
 - **Your final exam will take place during the final exam period** and will cover the second half of the course material. **The final exam is worth 200 points**. Your final exam is *not explicitly cumulative*. However, materials from the first half of the class will be *extremely helpful* for your final exam.
- **Team Task Assignments (375 pts):** Early in the semester, each student will be assigned to a team of **4-6 individuals**. Students will be polled at the beginning of the semester to determine if these assignments will be random or self-selected.

Together, teams will propose a research project to examine an important issue about **communication in close relationships** (more details in class). This proposal will be developed over the semester through a series of **Team Task Assignments**, which will focus on the steps through the process of conducting and presenting research. The point distribution for each assignment is as follows: **Task 1—25 points; Task 2—50 points; Task 3—75 points; Task 4—75 points; Task 5—100 points; Task 6—50 points**

Grades on all Team Task Assignments will be **awarded as a team, not as individuals**. It is the **team's responsibility** to ensure that the assignments are completed and submitted on time. Due dates are noted on the course schedule, and the majority of team task assignments will be due on eLC by 11:59 PM on the day they are due—exceptions are noted in the course schedule. All Team Task Assignments should be shared as a Google Doc with the instructor (jess.fabbricatore@gmail.com) AND submitted in Word document format. *I do not accept hard copies or late Team Task assignments for any reason.*

- **APA STYLE:** All written work that communication scholars submit to their colleagues (in the form of journal articles, conference papers, etc.) must be written in accordance to the most recent guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA). Given that you are communication scholars, this standard also holds for most written work submitted for this class. Team tasks must be completed in APA style complete with title pages, abstracts, and reference sections when appropriate. Homework assignments need not be in APA style. The directions for a given assignment will specify if your assignment needs to be in APA style. Papers that do not adhere to these criteria will lose considerable points.

- **Teammate Evaluations (40 points):** Team members will have the opportunity to evaluate each other's performance at the end of the semester. These evaluations will be completely anonymous, and your teammates' evaluations of your contribution to the final paper and presentations will be worth **40 points**.
 - **"Firing" Teammates:** Unfortunately, some team members are better than others. If one member consistently demonstrates a lack of dedication to the team (by not attending meetings, not doing the required work, or turning in unacceptable work on behalf of the group), the other members have the right to "fire" that member up until the 10th week of classes (March 13th).
 - Firing involves a 2-step process:
 - The team (**in consultation with the instructor**) gives the errant member a warning and that teammate must negotiate with the group how he or she is going to be a better teammate, and if the member continues to act dissatisfactory, that individual will be fired from the group by the instructor
 - If you are fired, you forfeit all team benefits associated with completing the team assignments, presentations and final paper as a group. You will have to turn in individual assignments (including the research project) from the point of firing on. **Bad teammates usually show their tendencies early**, so let a problematic group member know that their behavior is not acceptable early on, rather than waiting until week 10.
- **Extra credit (up to 10 points):** You may earn up to **10 points** of extra credit towards your final point total by participating in Department of Communication Studies-sponsored research. I will alert students via email when these opportunities are available. Research opportunity availability is limited and first-come, first-serve. Participation in each study, regardless of type, will offer **5 points** of extra credit unless otherwise indicated by the instructor.

J. Grading Policy

You may earn a possible 900 points in this class. Your final letter grade will reflect this distribution:

A	837-900	C+	693-719
A-	810-836	C	657-692
B+	783-809	C-	630-656
B	747-782	D	540-629
B-	720-746	F	000-539

Merely meeting the requirements of an assignment does not guarantee an A grade. I go by the following guidelines when assigning grades:

A	Outstanding work that exceeds all assignment requirements
B	Very good work in most areas and exceeds some assignment requirements
C	Average work and that generally meets the minimum expectations of the assignment
D	Work that does not sufficiently meet all of the minimum expectations of the assignment
F	Work that fails to meet any of the assignment requirements

Note about final grades: Your final grade is final. No extra credit beyond what is described in this syllabus will be provided. Adjustments will be made only in the case of a mathematical error. **Final point totals will NOT be rounded up under any circumstances.**

K. Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is essential for success in this course. However, I understand that circumstances sometimes occur out of our control. Therefore, you are allowed **three (3) absences** for this course without penalty. Any absences unexcused after the allotted 3 freebies will result in a 10-point deduction from your final point total. **Do not come to class if you are sick**—please view these 3 days as your “sick” days. If you miss class, you are expected to get the notes from one of your classmates. The only excused absences are for absences resulting from participation at a University sanctioned event as an official representative of the University or for classes missed in observance of a religious holiday. All exceptions for a religious holiday and for participation in University-sanctioned events must be approved at least one week in advance by the instructor. Exceptions will also be made for COVID-19 quarantine requirements documented through Student Care and Outreach. Office hours will not be an opportunity to review a lecture material that you have missed, nor will I provide lecture notes via email.

L. Required Textbook and Instructional Materials

Babbie, E. (2017). The basics of social research (7th Ed.). Belmont, CA: Cengage.

*I strongly suggest you rent this book. If you surf around, you can find decent rental options (e.g., chegg) OR you can use the older PDF version I posted to eLC.

ELC Website

All course material is located on the eLearning Commons (eLC) site for the course (<https://uga.view.usg.edu>). The site will also be used for announcements, answering and asking questions. **NOTE: Have eLC notifications forwarded to your preferred account.** Click on your name. Select: “Notifications” from the menu. Select: “Change your email settings”.

M. Policy for Make-up Exams

This course does not accept late work or assignments under any circumstances. If you know you are going to miss a class session, it is your responsibility to make sure that you turn in any work due that class session prior to class and catch up on any notifications of assigned work you may have missed.

Make-up assignments or examinations are never given for personal reasons (work, airline tickets, vacation, etc.). Make-up assignments and examination for full credit are allowed as excused absences with proper documentation in the following circumstances:

- Absence due to a University-sanctioned event. **Prior notice and documentation are required as soon as possible.**
- Absence due to an emergency that has been documented through Student Affairs. **Confirmation through this source is required.**
- Absence due to illness or medical emergency that has been verified in writing by a physician. The note does not have to list specifics but must state that the professional believes you are not well enough to attend class. **I have the final say in if the circumstances are extenuating enough to warrant a make-up.**
- Absence in observance of a religious holiday in which ample prior notice is given.

N. Accommodation Policy

Students with learning disabilities who may require accommodations should contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC: <https://teton.accessiblelearning.com/UGA/>). Accommodations will be

determined on a case-by-case basis according to each student's individual needs and documentation. **Please speak with me the first week of class if you have any accommodations that you require so we can work out a plan together.**

O. Grade Appeals Process

Occasionally, students are unsatisfied with some dimensions of the course. If you have a concern at any time during the course, please come speak with me directly either during office hours or by appointment. Please come talk with me if you have a concern; I want to work with you to resolve it.

You have the right to inquire about a grade, as careful consideration of one's graded work facilitates useful and meaningful discussions about assignments. You are encouraged to take action if you believe an assignment was graded inaccurately. Here are the bases for an appeal.

Appealing an Assignment Grade

If you are appealing a grade, I require you to wait a minimum of 24 hours after receiving your assignment grade before addressing your concern either in person or via email. Department policy requires you to make the grade appeal in writing to me. Prepare and submit **a typed essay within one week** of when the assignment was returned in class or online. Appeals should be founded on the bases for appeals noted below. Type an essay that cites which of the four bases of appeals you are using for your appeal, the grade received, and the grade you believe should have been received, and then cite class material to convincingly argue for why the assignment should be re-evaluated. If the appeal is accepted, I will re-grade the assignment. Re-grading may have one of three outcomes: (1) grade is upheld (remains the same); (2) grade is lowered, or (3) grade is raised. **No grade appeals will be considered after the one-week deadline.** It is the student's responsibility to submit the necessary appeal documentation if the argument is to be considered.

Bases for Appeals: Grade appeals must be based on one or more of the following issues:

1. *Inaccurate evaluation or grade calculation:* Such appeals must demonstrate that the instructor inaccurately graded one or more assignments and/or made a clerical error in calculating the graded work.
2. *Discrimination:* Appeals based on discrimination must demonstrate that the instructor treated a student differently in assigning grades than she treated other students in a similar circumstance. The different treatment must have resulted in the student being assigned a lower grade than would have been assigned if the student were treated similarly.
3. *Failure to follow course policies:* Such appeals must demonstrate that the instructor failed to follow written or orally communicated policies related to grading for the course. The student must demonstrate that the instructor's failure to follow one or more course policies resulted in a lower grade than would have been assigned had policies been followed.
4. *Failure to follow published university policies:* Such appeals must demonstrate that the instructor failed to follow published University policies related to instruction and/or grading and that the instructor's failure adversely affected the student's grade.

Appealing Course Grade

If you are dissatisfied with the **course grade** at the end of the semester you may choose to appeal to the Communication Studies Department Head, Dr. Peter O'Connell (poconnell@uga.edu). The appeal should also be typed and include the following elements:

- Student name and mailing address,
- The class name, term class was completed, instructor's name

- Grade received
- The appeal should make an argument, based on one or more of the issues presented in the Basis for Appeals indicating why the grade received should be changed.
- The appeal should request a specific remedy (i.e. indicate the grade the student believes to be appropriate).

If the grade dispute is not resolved to your satisfaction, you may appeal the grade to the Academic Standards Committee of the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences:

http://www.franklin.uga.edu/students/student_appeal_guidelines.php.

P. Emergency Preparedness

In case of emergency, call 911 immediately.

If the fire alarm sounds, we will exit the building and reassemble in front of the main entrance of the building where I will make sure everyone has exited. Do not use the elevators and notify others as you leave. If there is a tornado warning, we will move to the shelter located on the ground floor of the building. Again, I will account for everyone. If you have special circumstances that I need to be aware of in case of an emergency, please speak to me during the first week of class. If you have concerns about other emergencies, please speak to me and also check the website of the Office of Emergency Preparedness at: <http://www.prepare.uga.edu>

Q. Well-being, Mental Health, and Student Support

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu/>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

UGA has several resources to support your well-being and mental health: <https://well-being.uga.edu/>

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) is your go-to, on-campus resource for emotional, social, and behavioral-health support: <https://caps.uga.edu/>, TAO Online Support (<https://caps.uga.edu/tao/>), 24/7 support at 706-542-2273. For crisis support: <https://healthcenter.uga.edu/emergencies/>.

The University Health Center offers FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians or health educators: <https://healthcenter.uga.edu/bewelluga/>

R. Electronic Devices

No electronic devices (e.g., phones, iPads, laptops, etc.) are allowed. Exceptions will only be made for DRC-required devices. Please allow everyone to make the most of his/her learning experience by **turning off** any devices that can be heard by others. You will find that your focus on class material (and your grade) will be greatly diminished if you allow yourself to “multi-task” like this. I will ask you to leave if you are using your phone or other devices.

S. The 24-hour Rule

Experience indicates careful consideration and reflection of one’s graded work facilitates meaningful discussion. Thus, students must wait 24 hours after receipt of a graded assignment before

contacting us (in person, via email, or telephone) with questions or comments concerning a grade. This gives students time to think through their questions and increases students' objectivity.

T. Email Etiquette

Email etiquette is essential when initiating or responding to communication with an instructor; thus, I advise that you treat all of your emails as the professional communication that they are. When sending an email, please bear in mind that a polite and specific message is likely to result in a more timely and detailed response from the instructor. Thus, please follow some common courtesies:

You are required to send a message **through your UGA account.**

Include the **subject of your message:** For example: "Regarding COMM 3700"

In the **body of your message:**

- a. Address the recipient of your message (e.g., "Hello Ms. Fabbricatore,") "Hey" or no salutation is not acceptable.
- b. Clearly state your question using complete sentences and proper grammar.
- c. State your name, break out section time, and contact information at the end of the message. Please provide this information so that we can properly respond to your message.

Please allow 48 hours for a response. If you have not received a response in this time period, please email again.

U. Class GroupMe

If you have a quick question that may also help the rest of the class, I have set up a class GroupMe. I will be checking this GroupMe daily if there are any questions, and I encourage student responses to questions. I will additionally be sending out brief reminders about due dates and assignments via GroupMe.

- Use the following link to join the GroupMe:
https://groupme.com/join_group/91103529/qZHw2HW1
- GroupMe can be downloaded as an app on most smartphones and accessed via desktop, as well.
- I will send out a GroupMe for each team as well. **Teams should communicate through GroupMe exclusively to discuss the project.**