

Communications Research Methods (Quantitative)

Dr. Brett Sherrick
CIS 603 Section 320
Classroom: Reese Phifer 339

Office hours: TR 3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.
Office: Reese Phifer 484-A
Email: bisherrick@ua.edu

Course description:

This core doctoral-level course will introduce you to the basics of quantitative research in communications fields. This course emphasizes the value of systematic scientific research. It examines the common methods used in the processes of quantitative research in the communications fields.

Requirements:

Babbie, E. (2010). *The practice of social research* (14th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage.

Prerequisites:

This course has no prerequisites.

Learning objectives:

Learning objectives: By the conclusion of this course, you should be able to:

- Identify the basic assumptions and principles of scientific inquiry.
- Create scientific hypotheses and research questions.
- Determine and evaluate appropriate methods for addressing hypotheses and research questions.
- Measure concepts relevant to communication fields.
- Design and conduct quantitative research studies.
- Conduct basic statistical analyses of quantitative data.

Tentative Schedule:

The tentative schedule below provides an overview of the topics covered in this course and important checkpoints and deadlines for assignments. All readings should be completed before the class meeting on the dates identified. Babbie readings are from the required textbook. Other readings are available on Blackboard. Please note: for most weeks, you will also be required to read an article selected by a classmate; these articles will also be posted to Blackboard.

Due dates represent deadlines for specific assignments or components of assignments.

Checkpoints provide more general guidelines for your progress on those assignments, but do not require submission of specific work.

Aug. 29: Nature of scientific inquiry and syllabus

- Babbie: chapter 1

Sept. 5: Theory, hypotheses, and research questions

- Babbie: chapter 2
- Lang (2013)
- **Due**: proposed concept for explication and operationalization

Sept. 12: Ethics of social science research, IRB, and CITI training (**PH 341**)

- Babbie: chapter 3
- *Checkpoint*: form groups for final group project

Sept. 19: Research design and overview of methods

- Babbie: chapter 4
- Messing et al. (2016)

Sept. 26: Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement

- Babbie: chapter 5
- Oliver & Bartsch (2011)
- **Due**: initial proposal for final group project

Oct. 3: Sampling and surveys

- Babbie: chapter 7
- Babbie: chapter 9
- Garrett (2011)
- **Due**: explication and operationalization of a concept

Oct. 10: Content analyses

- Babbie: p. 323-334
- McMillan (2000)
- Parrott & Parrott (2015)
- *Checkpoint*: literature review for final group project

Oct. 17: Experiments

- Babbie: chapter 8
- *Checkpoint*: methods and IRB for final group project
- Hoewe & Hatemi (2017)

Oct. 24: MIDTERM EXAM

Oct. 31: Other quantitative methods

- Babbie: p. 334-341; p. 347-349
- Babbie: chapter 12
- Ferguson (2007)
- Ivory et al. (2014)

Nov. 7: Data analysis, part 1 (**PH 341**)

- Babbie: chapter 6
- Babbie: chapter 14

Nov. 14: Data analysis, part 2 (**PH 341**)

- Babbie: chapter 15
- Babbie: chapter 16
- *Checkpoint*: data for group final project

Nov. 21: Group meetings

- **Due**: first draft of final group project

Nov. 28: Common problems in social science research

- Aschwanden (2015)
- Nosek & Lakens (2014)
- Nosek et al. (2015)
- Vermeulen & Hartmann (2015)

Dec. 5: Reporting research, final presentations, and course wrap-up

- Babbie: chapter 17
- **Due**: group presentation of final group project

Dec. 13 (3:30-6:00 p.m.): FINAL EXAM

- **Due** (Dec. 14, 11:59 p.m.): Final group project

Assessment and evaluation:

Grading policies: It is your responsibility to check your grades throughout the semester. Possible errors must be reported to me within 10 days of being input to Blackboard. After this 10 day period, grades will be considered final.

Final grades are non-negotiable.

Grade categories: Your final grade will be determined by your work on the assignments listed below. Please see individual assignment documents on Blackboard for more information.

- Midterm exam: 15%
- Final exam: 15%
- Participation in class: 10%
- Explication and operationalization of a concept: 15%
- Final group project: 35%
- Article critiques: 10%

Final grade determination: Final grades will be converted to letter grades based on this scale:

Letter grade	Percentage
A	90-100
B	80-89.99
C	70-79.99
D	60-69.99
F	< 59.99

The University of Alabama does not recognize plus- and minus-grades for graduate-level courses.

Policy on missed exams and coursework: Work submitted after the relevant deadline will be penalized 10% per day late. When you submit late work, you must notify me via email that you are submitting the work.

The tentative schedule above will give you an idea of what is covered in each class session, but it is your responsibility to determine what material was covered in a class session that you missed.

Course policies:

Attendance policy: You are expected to attend each and every class session. This is a graduate-level course that is driven by discussion, which means your presence and participation in class sessions is necessary for the course to operate. A portion of your final grade (10%) will be determined by your attendance and participation in class.

Participation in the class includes offering comments or questions during class discussions and being involved in other classroom activities, like in-class assignments or group sessions.

Attendance is crucial to this portion of your grade, but it is not the only factor. Simply coming to class does not warrant an A for participation. In sum, your attendance/participation grade will be determined by both your presence in class and your contributions to class.

Throughout the semester, you are allowed one absence for illness, travel, social events, etc. You are NOT required to discuss your one absence with the instructor. However, you will lose three points from your attendance/participation grade for every absence after your first absence. Also note that you will be credited with one absence for every third time you are late to class (i.e., miss the attendance call at the beginning of class).

Use of electronic devices: Electronic devices, including laptops, tablets, and smart phones, may be used during class sessions, provided their use is confined to and relevant to class activities. If your use of electronic devices proves to be a distraction to me or other students, or if I determine that you are using your devices for non-class purposes, you will be asked to stop using the devices during class.

A note on personal responsibility and etiquette: Your enrollment in this course is only possible because a group of individuals saw something of value in you and accepted you to this top-tier university. Please, honor that decision and live up to your potential. Be responsible for yourself, be kind and respectful to your classmates and to me, and take your work for this course seriously. Basically: don't be a jerk.

Academic integrity: All students in attendance at The University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University of Alabama expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. At the beginning of each semester and on examinations and projects, the professor, department, or division may require that each student sign the following Academic Honor Pledge: “I promise or affirm that I will not at any time be involved with cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or misrepresentation while enrolled as a student at The University of Alabama. I have read the Academic Honor Code, which explains disciplinary procedure resulting from the aforementioned. I understand that violation of this code will result in penalties as severe as indefinite suspension from the University.”

See the [Code of Student Conduct](#) for more information.

UAct: Ethical Community Statement: The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (<http://www.ua.edu/uact>) provides a list of reporting channels that can be used to report incidences of illegal discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, sexual violence, retaliation, threat assessment or fraud.

Disability statement: If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any course accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability, but have not contacted the Office of Disability Services, please call 348-4285 or visit 1000 Houser Hall to register for services. Students who may need

course adaptations because of a disability are welcome to make an appointment to see me during office hours. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services, 1000 Houser Hall, before receiving academic adjustments.

Cultural diversity statement: The University of Alabama and the College of Communication and Information Sciences are intentionally inclusive communities that strive to have faculty, staff, students and course instruction that reflect the diversity of our society. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, class, linguistic background, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, or physical ability.

Severe weather guidelines: The guiding principle at The University of Alabama is to promote the personal safety of our students, faculty and staff during severe weather events. It is impossible to develop policies which anticipate every weather-related emergency. These guidelines are intended to provide additional assistance for responding to severe weather on campus.

UA is a residential campus with many students living on or near campus. In general classes will remain in session until the National Weather Service issues safety warnings for the city of Tuscaloosa. Clearly, some students and faculty commute from adjacent counties. These counties may experience weather related problems not encountered in Tuscaloosa. Individuals should follow the advice of the National Weather Service for that area taking the necessary precautions to ensure personal safety. Whenever the National Weather Service and the Emergency Management Agency issue a warning, people in the path of the storm (tornado or severe thunderstorm) should take immediate lifesaving actions.

When West Alabama is under a severe weather advisory, conditions can change rapidly. It is imperative to get to where you can receive information from the [National Weather Service](#) and to follow the instructions provided. Personal safety should dictate the actions that faculty, staff and students take.

The Office of University Relations will disseminate the latest information regarding conditions on campus in the following ways:

- Weather advisory posted on the UA homepage
- Weather advisory sent out through UA Alerts to faculty, staff and students
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA at 90.7 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over Alabama Public Radio (WUAL) at 91.5 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA-TV/WUOA-TV, and on the website at <http://wvuatv.com/content/weather>. WVUA-TV Home Team Weather provides a free

service you can subscribe to which allows you to receive weather warnings for Tuscaloosa via e-mail or cell phone. Check <http://wvuatv.com/content/free-email-weather-alerts> for more details and to sign up for weather alerts.

In the case of a tornado warning (tornado has been sighted or detected by radar; sirens activated), all university activities are automatically suspended, including all classes and laboratories. If you are in a building, please move immediately to the lowest level and toward the center of the building away from windows (interior classrooms, offices, or corridors) and remain there until the tornado warning has expired. Classes in session when the tornado warning is issued can resume immediately after the warning has expired at the discretion of the instructor. Classes that have not yet begun will resume 30 minutes after the tornado warning has expired provided at least half of the class period remains.