

SYLLABUS

MCMA 536

Media Content Analysis

Fall 2011

Prof. Lowry

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Note: Office hours end the last week of classes.

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Media Content Analysis

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1. Course Description

Overview of methods and problems of systematically analyzing mass media messages with critique of published studies. Experience in conducting a content analysis project on a topic of current scholarly significance in mass communication and media arts.

2. Course Objectives

The objectives for this course are straight-forward:

1. To develop a high level of knowledge of the theory and practice of content analysis research methods based upon the class lecture material and the excellent text.
2. To become skilled in writing critiques of content analysis papers or articles written by others.
3. To apply the theory and practice of content analysis research methods to an actual study intended for scholarly presentation.

3. Materials and Textbooks

Required Texts

- Riffe, Lacy, and Fico, Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research, 2nd ed., 2005
- Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th ed., 2010

4. Class Meetings and Attendance

Because important lecture information will be presented at each class meeting, it will be virtually impossible to do well in this course without regular attendance.

Regular and punctual attendance at classes is expected of all students at SIUC. Missing classes without a valid reason (e.g., personal illness, critical illness or death in the immediate family, or participation in an approved university activity) is unprofessional.

Each absence not handled in a professionally responsible manner (see separate sheet on professionalism) will lower your final course grade by one-third of a letter grade.

If you come to class after attendance has been taken, or leave before attendance has been taken, it is your responsibility to give the instructor a note so that your attendance can be properly recorded.

5. Procedures for Conducting Class

Approximately the first third of the course will be devoted to class lectures, reading and discussing the text, and writing three critiques of scholarly content analysis articles or papers. There will be one major exam after we have finished this portion of the course. For the remainder of course, there will be no more lectures and no more exams. All of our efforts will be devoted to "hands-on" content analysis research, with the goal of producing two or three papers to be submitted to scholarly conferences and/or journals. Students will work in teams for this portion of the course.

6. Grading Policy

The grading system in this course is based upon the system described in the SIUC Graduate Catalog:

A = work of <u>excellent</u> graduate-level quality	(90-100%)
B = work of <u>good</u> graduate-level quality	(80-89%)
C = work of <u>conditional</u> graduate-level quality	(70-79%)
D = work of <u>unsatisfactory</u> graduate-level quality	(60-69%)
F = failure	(0-59%)

"Excellence" in any area of human endeavor is, by definition, rare. If grades of "A" become common, then, by definition, they no longer represent excellence. Most people in the world, on most characteristics, are "Average." This applies to most professors as well as to most students. A grade of "F" does not necessarily represent "zero learning"; it represents a failure to demonstrate minimal graduate-level performance for the course in question.

The assignment of grades is a form of evaluation. And to evaluate someone or something is, by definition, to judge the worth of or to assign values to that person or thing. It should go without saying that it is exclusively the instructor's judgments and academic values which determine the dividing lines between "excellent," "good," "conditional," "unsatisfactory," and "failure." Evaluation always involves an element of human judgment; it must.

Final grades are of course final, just as the term indicates, and are not subject to negotiation.

7. Tests and Evaluations

<u>Research critiques</u> ---three written critiques of scholarly research reports. Must be typed, double-spaced, using APA style.	60 points
<u>Mid-term exam</u> ---	100 points
<u>Team project</u> ---	340 points
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TOTAL	500 points

Note: While the general plan of assignments above is not expected to change, it is possible that some changes will be made by the instructor as unforeseen problems or opportunities arise during the semester.

Class participation and professionalism---Regular, intelligent and constructive class discussion is highly encouraged. You will learn more and enjoy the course more if you are an active learner rather than a passive learner. Outstanding class discussion and professionalism (see separate sheet on professionalism) just might raise your final grade from a D+, C+ or B+ to the next higher grade.

8. General Class Policies

Deadlines: Journalism, advertising, public relations, and broadcasting are deadline-oriented professions. Unexcused late assignments in this course will receive half credit (which is an "F"). However, the following policy also applies:

A student who presents the instructor with an adequate and documented (i.e., written and verifiable, not oral) reason for an absence normally will be given an opportunity to make up the work missed if this is feasible. Adequate reasons involve circumstances beyond the student's control, such as personal illness, critical illness or death in the immediate family, or participation in an approved university activity.

If a student has prior knowledge that he/she will miss certain classes, justification should be submitted to the instructor in advance of the absences.

Cheating and Plagiarism Policy: The University considers both cheating and plagiarism serious offenses. The minimum penalty for a student guilty of either dishonest act is a grade of "zero" for the assignment in question. The maximum penalty is dismissal from the University.

9. Regrading of Graded Assignments

If you believe that serious errors were made in the grading of any of your assignments, you have the right to ask that your assignment be regraded. At the same time, you should realize that grading errors can be made in either direction (too high or too low), and your new grade could be lower than your original grade--- or it could be higher or remain the same. This paragraph does not apply to mathematical errors made in adding points; those corrections will be made immediately, without regrading the assignment.

10. Syllabus Caveat

No syllabus can contain every possible detail, instruction, or requirement pertaining to a class; if it did, it would be as large as a textbook. Therefore, in addition to all of the instructions and requirements in the syllabus and the handout on professionalism, you are equally responsible for additional oral instructions and requirements given by the instructor in class.

Building Emergency Response Protocols for Syllabus University's Emergency Procedure Clause:

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC

Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on BERT's website at www.bert.siu.edu, Department of Public Safety's website www.dps.siu.edu (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guideline pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. **It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency.** The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

Disabled Students:

Instructors and students in the class will work together as a team to assist disabled students out of the building safely. Disabled students will stay with the instructor and communicate with the instructor what is the safest way to assist them.

Tornado: During the spring semester we have a **Storm Drill.**

Pick up your belongings and your instructor will lead you to a safe area of the basement. No one will be allowed to stay upstairs. Stay away from windows. The drill should not last more than 10 minutes. You must stay with your instructor so he/she can take roll calls. Students need to be **quiet in the basement** as the BERT members are listening to emergency instructions on handheld radios and cannot hear well in the basement.

Fire: During the fall semester we have a **Fire Drill.**

Pick up your belongings and your instructor will lead you to either the North or South parking lot depending on what part of the building your class is in. You must stay with your instructor so he/she can take roll calls. As soon as the building is all clear, you will be allowed to return to class.

These drills are to train instructors and the Building Emergency Response Team to get everyone to a safe place during an emergency.

Bomb Threat:

If someone calls in a bomb threat, class will be suspended and students will be asked to pick up their belongings, evacuate the building and leave the premises. Do not leave anything that is yours behind. We will not allow anyone back into the building until the police and bomb squad give us an all clear. **DO NOT USE YOUR CELL PHONES.** Some bombs are triggered by a cell phone signal.

Shooter in the Building:

When it is safe to leave, move to a safe area far from the building where the shooter is located. If you have any information about the shooter, please contact the police after you return home. If you cannot leave, go into a room, lock the door, turn out the lights, and if possible, cover the glass on the door. Silence all cell phones after you call the police and inform them of your location. Be quiet and wait for the police to arrive. The police are looking for one or more shooters, and they have no way of knowing if the shooter is in the room with you. For that reason, when the police enter the room, no one should have anything in his/her hands and each person **MUST** raise his/her hands above his/her head.

Earthquake:

In the event of an earthquake you are advised to take cover quickly under heavy furniture or near an interior wall, a corner, to avoid falling debris. Outside the building are trees and power lines and debris from the building itself that you will need to stay away from. In the building, large open areas like auditoriums are the most dangerous. Do not try to escape on a stairway or elevator. Do not hide under a stairway. We **do not** recommend that you stand in a doorway because the door could shut from the vibrations and crush your fingers trapping you there.

Women's Self-Defense Class:

For interested female students and female faculty and staff, the SIU Public Safety Department sets up free self-defense classes. The SIU Public Safety Department will be teaching this class. They teach a free class in the fall and spring at the Rec Center. In the fall you would register at the Rec Center for the Women's Self-Defense Class or RAD (Rape Aggression Defense) as it is sometimes called. If you have questions about registering for the class, you can send an email to lavong@siu.edu. LaVon is the contact in the Dean's Office in the Communications building that will assist you to try to find the class you need.