

MCOM 6360: Mass Communication Research Methods

Instructor:	Nam Young Kim	Office Hours:	Tuesdays
Office:	329 Dan Rather Building		9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Phone:	936-294-4445		or others by appointment
E-mail:	nyk001@shsu.edu		

Course Information

Term: Fall, 2017

Course Number and Section: MCOM 6360-01

Credits: 3

Class Meets: Wednesdays 5:00 p.m. - 7:50 p.m.

Building and Room Number: The Woodlands Center, Room 334

Required Textbook

Mass Media Research: An Introduction

by Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick, Wadsworth Publishing, 9th edition, 201

This class is based on intensive readings. In addition to the chapters assigned in the textbook, some journal article readings that are accessible online will be assigned from time to time. You will be notified of these in class.

Catalogue Description & Course Objectives

Catalogue Description

MCOM 6360 is shed light on the foundations and applications of scientific research in the mass media. In this class, you will learn what purposes each research method may serve in mass communication research and practice and discuss the strengths and weakness of each research method. As well, you will learn how to select the appropriate method to investigate a certain research topic and how to develop the research in a proper manner. Audience research is a creative and complex process that, if done with care and concern, will prove to be a priceless asset outside of this classroom. We will divide the semester into three sections; the nature of social science research in general, quantitative methods (e.g., survey, experiment, and content analysis), and qualitative methods (e.g., focus group, in-depth interview). From this class, you will learn the essential terminology and concepts used in research methods, and have a fundamental understanding of how to conduct and evaluate research in the field of mass communication.

Course Purpose and Objectives

The specific objectives of this course are:

1. To understand scientific research methods and basic concepts of research evaluation;
2. To understand the strengths and weakness of the various research methods used in mass communication research;
3. To understand how to select the appropriate method to investigate a certain research question;
4. To learn how to design and conduct audience/mass communication research;
5. To learn how to interpret the meaning of numerical results.

As a result of successful completion of this course, your critical thinking and reasoning to see mass media research in terms of how it is done, how it could be done better, and how it can be done to answer specific questions will be enhanced. Therefore, you should be able to:

1. Conduct critical research as an individual and critically evaluate previous research in selected topics;
2. Develop a research proposal in which the problem, research questions, and hypotheses are clearly defined.

Course Requirements and Policy

Exams

There will be **ONE course exam (A CUMULATIVE FINAL EXAM)**. The date as well as time for this examination is non-negotiable. Make-up exams or assignments will be allowed only in the case of university-stipulated excused absences. Absence from any exams must be approved **prior to** taking the exam and written documentation must be provided. If adequate notification is not done before the scheduled exam time, a penalty of one full letter grade is applied to the subsequent make-up exam. For this exam, you are responsible for all assigned reading materials and class discussion of the topics.

Assignments

1. Discussion Leader (2)

Each week, one student will lead the class. You will serve as a discussion leader for **TWO non-consecutive weeks**. As a discussion leader, you will serve as the strategic communicator and discussant for a different topic for each of the two non-consecutive weeks. Discussion may be facilitated with a visual presentation of the assigned readings and any examples that are relevant to concepts/mass communication theories. Guidelines for this assignment will be explained during class time. Depending on the class topics, I will assign either additional textbook chapters or academic research articles to each discussion leader as supplementary readings.

You will be evaluated on your oral presentation of the assigned readings and examples, the quality of your discussion questions, and your facilitation of the discussion. You will develop a couple of discussion questions that are relevant and focused, make precise and direct references to the assigned course readings, and make connections between concepts or theories and research methods. All class members are expected and encouraged to contribute.

To receive full credit, you should send me your presentation file, handouts, or any other material that you use in facilitating the discussion so that I can post it to Blackboard for everyone to access anytime during the semester. You should send me these files via e-mail **by NOON ON TUESDAY** before the class meets.

2. Article Summary/Critique (1)

You will write a **TWO PAGE (single- spaced)** review of an academic journal article among the assigned readings. You will also be presenting your article review and critique in class on the dates you have signed up for. Please prepare for a presentation (not including discussion) using PowerPoint, Keynote, or Prezi. **For the week in which you lead discussion, you will not be required to present an article critique.**

Each critique will be graded on the following criteria: a) correct identification of concepts and statement of research question; b) description of methods used; c) interpretation of results; d) detailed methodological critiques of the study. Your written article critique is due **at NOON ON TUESDAY before the week's course meeting.**

3. Research Project (Individual Project)

The research project will be divided into **TWO PARTS: Concept Explication (Theoretical and Operational Definitions), and Research Proposal**. At the end of this semester, you are required to present your research proposal to the class.

To complete this assignment, you should develop your own research question and identify a concept within that research question that is enough to make it possible for a concept explication. To do this assignment, you need to find at least 20 relevant sources (e.g., academic journal articles or book chapters).

Then, you will conduct a meaning analysis of the key concept(s) that are included in your research question; this is **a concept explication**. To complete this part of the project, you need to identify as many **theoretical and operational definitions** as possible. Please use the sources you have identified to develop your understanding of the key concept(s).

Lastly, you will write a **research proposal** that explores one of the research topics that interests you or that may be relevant to your thesis. The research proposal should include the following: (a) a synthesis of the theory (or the theoretical concepts); (b) a discussion (review) of a recent study that tested the theory (or the theoretical concepts); (c) the research questions that you may plan to address in your thesis; and (d) a discussion of a specific research method to investigate the research questions (with operational definitions of the concepts).

Following the planned schedule on the syllabus, I will provide more detailed information on this research project in class. Please respect and follow the guidelines to successfully complete your theory project

Attendance Policy & Participation Expectation

Attendance in this class is extremely important, and therefore it is expected that you will attend every class. If you miss class, you will not do well in this course. More than **ONE unexcused absence** will result in deduction of one letter grade. If you have an emergency and must miss a class, please contact me beforehand. You will be responsible for getting notes and other materials if you miss class. The Student Handbook states that regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student at SHSU, and that it is expected that each faculty member will keep a record of student attendance.

40 points are built into the course for class attendance and participation. This is a graduate class, so you need to be an active part of your own education through meaningful contributions to class discussion. The responsibility of every student in this class is to prepare for class by reading the weekly assigned readings and come prepared to discuss all reading materials. If you are not completing the readings or are not spending enough time with them to engage in class discussion, it will show in class and will be reflected in your participation score.

Evaluation Criteria

Your grade in this course will be based on the following criteria:	<u>Points</u>
Final Exam	120 points
Discussion Leader (2) (40 points each)	80 points
Article Critique & Presentation	20 points
Attendance & Participation	40 points
Research Project (Total)	140 points
1. Concept Explication	60 points
2. Research Proposal & Presentation	80 points
Total	400 points

- Your final course grade will be determined by the following scale:

360 - 400 points	90% - 100%	A
320 - 359 points	80% - 89%	B
280 - 319 points	70% - 79%	C
240 - 279 points	60% - 69%	D
239 points and below	59% and below	F

NOTE: Keep checking your grades until you get your final grade on Blackboard. I do not believe that e-mail is the proper venue for discussing grades, so emails received for this purpose will not be responded to. If you have a concern or a question, please make an appointment during office hours to talk with me.

Grade Appeals

I do not discuss individual grades in class. Students will have **ONE WEEK** following the posting of a grade to discuss points you believe you should have earned. In order to contest a grade, student should provide some written justification as to why the grade is incorrect. I will not entertain concerns about a grade on an exam after this period has elapsed. After the one-week period, the grade will be final. But, you can come by my office during my office hours and look at the graded exams or assignments any time throughout the semester.

Class Expectations

Diligent reading and active participations are expected of all students. Please remember that the final exam content will come from class lectures and discussions. In addition, if you miss an assignment deadline because you are absent, you will not be allowed a make-up unless your absence is due to a university-sanctioned reason. **Please prepare for the class, make an effort to be on time, and be active in the class.**

Class Etiquette

Please turn off your cell phones before class. I expect each class member to be respectful of others. **Disrespecting your fellow classmates or your professor will not be tolerated. If you need to leave early due to reasonable excuses, please notify me in advance.** You may take notes on and work on a computer unless, based on the instructor's evaluation, the computer becomes a distraction during class. **I expect you to be respectful of our learning environment by being attentive and engaged—not selfish.**

IRB Certification and Research Participation

To conduct your research project, you should complete Human Subject Training. Each team member must have submitted a properly completed NIH Ethics Certification Form. We will learn about the ethical issues and human protections in this class, and this IRB training will extend your understanding about these research ethics. Please complete the IRB training via <https://www.citiprogram.org/> and submit your printed certification to me before the specified deadline. **Submitting IRB certification is MANDATORY, not optional.**

University Policies Regarding Academic Classes

Support for Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of SHSU that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to contact the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at the Counseling Center, to register with the SHSU Counseling Center, and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this course. All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach and to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. Students are encouraged to review the university's policy on academic dishonesty.

Plagiarized assignments will not be accepted. For the sake of clarity, the definition of plagiarism is followed: Plagiarism occurs when one person claims credit for another person's work. It is a form of intellectual dishonesty that is treated with great severity by professionals and by the university. Students are encouraged to review the university's policy on plagiarism. Students should be certain they understand the manner of plagiarism: 1) A paper using quotes without quotation marks and attribution is plagiarized. But plagiarism is more than unrecognized quotes; 2) Conclusions that are not the student's own conclusion, information that is not common knowledge and specific facts must be attributed: tell who said it and cite or footnote it, even if this information is not a direct quote.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20...." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.

Visitors in the Classroom

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

NOTE: TOPICS TO BE FOLLOWED, SOME ANNOUNCED CHANGES MAY OCCUR THROUGHOUT SEMESTER; AND YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL ANNOUNCED CHANGES!

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading</i>
Week 1	
August 23 rd Course Introduction	
Week 2	
August 30 th An Introduction to Social Science Research	<i>Mass Media Research: CH1</i>
Week 3	
September 6 th Elements of Research	<i>Mass Media Research: CH2</i>
Week 4	
September 13 th Elements of Research	<i>Mass Media Research: CH2, CH3</i>
Week 5	
September 20 th Sampling	<i>Mass Media Research: CH4</i>
Week 6	
September 27 th Survey	<i>Mass Media Research: CH7</i>
Week 7	
October 4 th Individual Meeting with Dr. Kim	
Week 8	
October 11 th Experimental Research	<i>Mass Media Research: CH 9</i> <u>CONCEPT EXPLICATION DUE</u>
Week 9	
October 18 th Content Analysis	<i>Mass Media Research: CH 6</i>
Week 10	
October 25 th Qualitative Research Methods	<i>Mass Media Research: CH 5</i>
Week 11	
November 1 st Qualitative Research Methods	<i>Mass Media Research: CH 5</i>
Week 12	
November 8 th Descriptive Statistics	<i>Mass Media Research: CH 10</i>
Week 13	
November 15 th Inferential Statistics	<i>Mass Media Research: CH 11</i>
Week 14	
November 22 nd Hypothesis Testing	<i>Mass Media Research: CH 11</i>
Week 15	
November 29 th RESEARCH PRESENTATION	<u>FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE</u>
Week 16	
December 6th FINAL EXAM (Wednesday, 5:00 P.M – 7:50 P.M)	