

716 Syllabus

JOMC 716 RESEARCH METHODS AND APPLICATIONS SYLLABUS

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Professor: Anne Johnston
 Office: 356 Carroll Hall. Phone: 919-962-4286
 Email: amjohnst@email.unc.edu



Knowledge of the logic, conduct and ethics of research is essential and empowering. Communication professionals have more research tools at their disposal than ever before, and they are under more pressure than ever to measure and evaluate the impact of communication products and services. This introduction to research methods and applications will help communication professionals make better and more informed decisions about why, how, when, and where to use research and what methods of research are appropriate given the compelling research challenge and resource opportunities and constraints (time and money). Through readings, discussions, activities, and papers, we will explore the premises, values, and limitations of research and the scientific method, critique qualitative and quantitative methods, and introduce ways to understand and critically interpret research results. This course provides both a broad overview of relevant research methods and practical experience in conducting research.

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- identify the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to research
- evaluate research studies in your areas of interest
- articulate a research problem and questions
- explain why particular research methods would answer the questions posed
- write a basic research proposal
- carry out a pilot study

Contacting me and turning in assignments

If you have questions or need help with the course assignments, please email me at the address listed above. If I don't respond to you within 48 hours during weekdays, please assume that I didn't receive your email, and email me again or call me at 919-962-4286. That's my office phone, and I check messages there frequently during weekdays. I would also be happy to set up an appointment to speak with you by phone, in person, or via online chat. When you email me, please put J716 at the beginning of the subject line. I check email daily from Monday morning until Friday afternoon. On weekends, (Internet service allowing!) I check my work email once...typically sometime Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon.

You will use the Assignments tool/area on the Sakai site to turn in the major papers and most of the assignments for the class. (I might sometimes ask you to email me class exercise materials....but I'll let you know if I want you to do this.) Anything you turn in should be in .doc or .docx format so that I can use the review/comment functions. If you email something to me, please put J716, your last name and what you're sending to me in the subject line. So something like this:

J716Johnston _research topic

The Honor Code

The Honor Code is, as always, in effect at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Read more at <http://honor.unc.edu/>

Required Textbooks

- Wimmer, R. D, & Dominick, J. R. (2014). *Mass media research: An introduction* (10th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth. (Referred to as W & D in schedule)

- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Other Required Readings

- Additional readings listed on your syllabus can be found by searching online, or they are on the Sakai site for the class. Please let Maggie Hutaff or me know if you have problems accessing this content.
- You will need access to an APA (American Psychological Association) style guide for your papers. Abbreviated guides are available online. Here is one <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Grades

Final graduate course grades are H, P, L, F. I will be using two types of grading in this course depending upon the assignment. Sometimes your assignments will be graded Pass/Fail. Failure to turn in any of these types of assignments will result in an L in the course. The two major papers in the course will be graded H, P, L, F. Failure to turn in either one of these papers will result in a F in the course. Late papers and late assignments are not accepted. If you are trying to understand what graduate grades mean, here's a general description.

- H means a truly outstanding performance in the class and on assignments.
- P is a good, solid performance overall in the class and on assignments.
- L is a performance in the class and on assignments that is below the acceptable level for graduate students. It means the student does not understand the course material very well, does not have a grasp of what is required in this area at the graduate level, is not participating in the class at the level expected of graduate students, or has not handed in all papers or participated in all assignments.
- F is failing. It is given rarely in the circumstance that a student has not handed in H, P, L graded assignments.

In the next section, I've indicated how the different course requirements will be graded and weighted in this course. Your grade, overall, is determined by: active participation in class, grades on assignments, and your work in relation to others.

Course Requirements - Overview

Assessment	Graded	Weight %
1. IRB certification.	Pass/Fail	5
2. Critique of either quantitative or qualitative digital communication/media research article in an academic journal	Pass/Fail	10
3. Discussion Forum	Pass/Fail	20
4. Paper 1: Introduction, Literature Review and Research Questions/Hypotheses	H, P, L, F	25
5. Paper 2: Final Research Proposal	H, P, L, F	30
6. Voicethread Report of Pilot Study	Pass/Fail	10

Course Requirements – Assessment Specifications

Before I give you specific requirements for these assignments, let me first give you my overall requirement for your participation in the course. Active participation is a given...an expectation...in any graduate level course. Participation to me means that you turn in all of the assignments, you keep up with the readings, you ask questions if you don't understand something, you stay in communication with me throughout the semester, you lead the online discussions when I've assigned you to do so, you provide a good summary and key insights for the module when I've assigned you to do so, and you

respond to your classmates' comments. Please feel free to go beyond what readings you have assigned here for information about a topic. That's what graduate students do. Of course you'll be doing that for your individual papers, but get into the habit of looking at other sources when you have questions about or want to make connections with the material you've been assigned to read. And if you find a good source, please share it with us all. One caution here: there's lots of material online about many of these topics, but they aren't always accurate or credible. Read with a critical eye...and please feel free to ask me (or post in the Discussion Forum) about your sources.

Below I've provided some details about specific course requirements.

1. IRB certification. (graded Pass/Fail)

You will need to complete the Institutional Review Board's certification process. This means you will do the CITI Online Course (CITI = Collaborative IRB Training Initiative) on the web [here](#). You will need to first Register/Create an Account, then indicate the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as your affiliation. The registration will take you through several screens. When you choose which one you want to complete, be sure to select the Social and Behavioral Research: Basic Course. Send me an email when you've completed the training. One caution here: This certification may take some time, so I recommend you try to do this in stages.

2. Critique of either quantitative or qualitative digital communication/media research article published in academic, scholarly journal (graded Pass/Fail)

You will find a published quantitative or a published qualitative digital communication/media research article in an academic journal (*such as Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*). You are welcome to use an article that you plan to use in your literature review and final paper. Please do not critique any of this course's required reading articles for this assignment. In one 4-page paper, you will critique the article using the information and guidelines provided in the document "Critiquing_Research_Academic_Journals" in the Assignments and Paper Guidelines folder under the Resources tool on the Sakai site.

I view this assignment as an indication of my success (or failure!) in explaining what should be included in any methods or procedures section in a quantitative or qualitative scholarly article...and how to critique those methods. You can't really fail this assignment; I may ask that you redo or rewrite parts of the assignment if they aren't on target.

3. Discussion Forum (graded Pass/Fail)

Below, I've detailed how the Discussion Forum work will be assigned to students during the semester and my expectations of your contributions. I will be organizing you into groups and assigning you to specific Discussion Forum tasks throughout the semester. These weekly discussion topics can be found in the Discussion Forum section on the Sakai site. CAUTION: Sakai will sometimes eat your posts. I recommend that you write your post (particularly if it's lengthy) in some word document and then copy/paste from word into Sakai. I have had it happen to me...and to several of my students. It's very frustrating, so I wanted to warn you about this.

I expect your participation to be **insightful, comprehensive, and regular**. Lack of participation in a graduate level class is simply not acceptable. Remember, the online discussion is analogous to class time. So a 3-credit course will require about 2.5 hours of online discussion time each week (reading the comments, posting comments, responding to comments). You are always welcome to add your personal experiences and use them to provide an understanding of the material we are reading in class. Let's try to avoid "binge posting" and have discussions take place over the course of the week.

My goal is to facilitate your discussions with each other. I will, of course, be present in the online discussions, but I won't be responding every day. In addition, I may sometimes respond to groups of posts and not necessarily to everyone's individual posts. If you have a specific question about something you don't understand about the readings or assignment and you would like it specifically answered by me, please email me. During the semester, you will also participate in class exercises designed to introduce and practice basic research design skills. You may, for example, be assigned to design, participate, or otherwise take a role in conducting rudimentary online focus groups, experiments and surveys. I expect you to participate in these exercises and hand in any materials associated with the exercises.

Please remember to read the Weekly Comments as well as all of the required readings (or view required links) before you do the Discussion Forum assignments.

During the course of the semester, you'll each be assigned to lead the online discussions during a couple of the modules, and everyone will be assigned to provide key insights for one week or module. I've provided more details below about how

this will be set up during the semester and about my expectations for your participation.

I. Participation in the Discussion Forum:

If I do not list a group in the Course Schedule for a particular week, then there are no set discussion leaders for that week. All students should follow the guidelines given in that week's Discussion Forum in responding to the discussion prompt. When a particular group is indicated during a week on the Course Schedule, those group members will lead the online discussion, and all other students will respond to the group leader posts. Students will be divided into groups, and **individual members of those groups** will be expected to lead the class in the posts and discussion of the modules. **You are not expected to collaborate with group members on this assignment**; your assignment to a group is just a way that I can organize class members for the semester.

When you are in the group assigned to lead the online discussion for that week, your first post is due by the Saturday of that week at 11pm. (See the course schedule for specific dates.) Follow directions on the individual Discussion Forum assignments, but your posts should be substantive posts. A substantive post is one that answers the questions posed and does what the prompt asks of the discussion leaders. When you respond to the discussion prompts, be sure to **substantiate your answers** by making explicit connections to expert sources (i.e. the texts, readings, other credible sources you find in the course of your study). It is important for you to read and react to the course materials. You are welcome to also respond to any comments made by your classmates, but I am looking for original substantive posts during the week from you if you are in the group that's been assigned to lead the discussion.

When you are not in the group assigned to lead the online discussion for that week: Follow directions on the individual Discussion Forum assignments, but generally you are still expected to read the readings, make sure you understand the material and provide detailed responses to comments made by the discussion leaders. A detailed response is more than, "I agree." I expect you to add your insight to what the readings say or to what the group leaders have said; to add information from your personal experience; and/or to post information about a supplementary reading or link. By the way, you are always welcome to respond to any of your classmates' posts.

II. Providing Key Insights:

Starting with week (module) two, you will take turns in posting the module summary and the list of key insights. I will post a roster in the first days of class. When you are assigned to this, you will need to provide **a list of the key insights, points or take-aways** from the readings and from the points raised in the Discussion Forum for that week.

When assigned to this task, you will be responsible for posting (in the Discussion Forum set up for that week) the key insights on the final day of the module as determined in the class schedule. Please label or title this post, "Key Insights."

4. Paper 1: Introduction, Literature Review and Research Questions/Hypotheses (graded H, P, L, F)

You will submit an 10-12 page introduction to, literature review of and research questions/hypotheses for the area you would like to study (and plan to present in your research proposal). You should review at least 10 pieces of scholarly literature. At the end of the paper, be sure to include a reference list in APA style. You will include a revised version of this work in your final paper for the class: a research proposal. See information and guidelines provided in the document, Intro_Lit_Review_guidelines in the Assignment and Paper Guidelines folder under the Resources tool of the Sakai site.

5. Paper 2: Final Research Proposal

The proposal will include a title page, a revision of Paper 1 and a discussion of the research methods you plan to use. The methods section will explain, in detail, how you plan to study the problem you've proposed and how you will answer your research questions/test your hypotheses. The methods section should include what you think the limitations are to this method or study, how you plan to operationalize variables and definitions of terms or concepts. Include citations in the methods section that will help you use your methods. Include a reference list in APA style. The Research Proposal should be about 15-18 pages. See information and guidelines provided in the document, Final Proposal and Pilot Study guidelines in the Assignment and Paper Guidelines folder under the Resources tool of the Sakai site.

6. Report of Pilot Study(graded Pass/Fail)

Since research is easier said (and proposed) than done, each of you will try out your proposed study in some small, pilot version. We will talk more specifically about what this will mean for your individual project. I just want you to try to carry out some part of the study you've proposed. And since this is for class purposes only, you do not need to get IRB approval if you want to talk to human subjects. Provide a description of your pilot study, any findings, any coding or survey forms, and anything you learned that might change the way you would do your proposed study. You will provide a Voicethread presentation where you will report on the findings from your pilot study. See information and guidelines provided in the

document, Final Proposal and Pilot Study guidelines in the Assignment and Paper Guidelines folder under the Resources tool of the Sakai site.

NOTE: Ideally you will write your proposal, and then carry out your pilot study. You do not need to rewrite your proposal because of what you found in the pilot study.

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- *Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;*
- *Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;*
- *Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;*
- *Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;*
- *Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;*
- *Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;*
- *Think critically, creatively and independently;*
- *Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;*
- *Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;*
- *Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;*
- *Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;*
- *Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.*

Units requesting evaluation of a graduate program must also demonstrate how their master's graduates attain this additional core competency:

- *Contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.*

J 716 Course Schedule

- Each Week will cover one week of the semester. Weeks (**except for Week 1**) will go from Wednesday of one week to 9am Wednesday of the next. All times mentioned for this course or on the course schedule are in Eastern Standard Time (EST).

Weeks/Topics	Dates and Assignments	Assignments Due
I. Overview: An introduction to the research process		
Week 1 Introduction and Overview	Tuesday, August 19 – Wednesday, August 27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check Week 1 (under Resources/Week by Week) on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week. Try out VoiceThread and take 2 minutes (max) to introduce yourselves. 	Due 8/27 at 9am Discussion Forum Voicethread introduction
Week 2 Applications of Research	Wednesday, August 27 – Wednesday, Sept. 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check Week 2 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week 	Due 9/3 at 9am Discussion Forum Key insights (check roster)
Week 3 Ethics, the IRB and critiquing research	Wednesday, Sept. 3 – Wednesday, Sept. 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check Week 3 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week Group 1 leads Discussion Forum Group 1 members: Post #1 due by 11pm, Saturday, September 6th 	Due 9/10 at 9am Discussion Forum Key insights (check roster) Use the Sakai Assignments tool to submit your tentative research topic
Week 4 Defining your study	Wednesday, Sept. 10 – Wednesday, Sept. 17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check Week 4 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week 	Due 9/17 at 9am Discussion Forum Key insights (check roster) IRB certification (email me when you've completed this.)

II. Quantitative Methods		
Week 5 Fundamental Elements and Issues	Wednesday, Sept. 17 – Wednesday, Sept. 24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check Week 5 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week • Group 2 leads Discussion Forum • Group 2 members: Post #1 due by 11pm, Saturday, September 20th 	Due 9/24 at 9am Discussion Forum Key insights (check roster)
Week 6 Content Analysis	Wednesday, Sept. 24 – Wednesday, Oct. 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check Week 6 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week • Group 3 leads Discussion Forum • Group 3 members: Post #1 due by 11pm, Saturday, September 27th 	Due 10/1 at 9am Discussion Forum Paper 1: Intro, lit review, RQs/Hs
Week 7 Survey Research	Wednesday, Oct. 1 – Wednesday, Oct. 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check Week 7 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week • Group 4 leads Discussion Forum • Group 4 members: one of your posts must be posted by 11pm, Saturday, October 4th • <i>Please email media use questions (3 closed-ended and 1 open-ended) for the class survey by Monday, October 6th.</i> 	Due 10/8 at 9am Discussion Forum Key insights (check roster)
Week 8 Experiments	Wednesday, Oct. 8 – Wednesday, Oct. 15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check Week 8 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week • Group 1 leads Discussion Forum • Group 1 members: one of your posts must be posted by 11pm, Saturday, October 11th 	Due 10/16 at 9am Discussion Forum Key insights (check roster)
Week 9 Data analysis	Wednesday, Oct. 15 – Wednesday, Oct. 22 <i>(UNC fall break is Thursday & Friday, October 16-17)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check Week 9 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week 	Due 10/22 at 9am Discussion Forum (Note: shortened assignment because of two-day break.)
III. Qualitative Methods		
Week 10	Wednesday, Oct. 22 – Wednesday, Oct. 29	Due 10/29 at 9am

Qualitative Methods– Fundamentals Elements and Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check Week 10 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week • Group 2 leads Discussion Forum • Group 2 members: one of your posts must be posted by 11pm, Saturday, October 25th 	Discussion Forum Key insights (check roster)
Week 11 Focus Groups and In-depth Interviews	<p>Wednesday, Oct. 29 – Wednesday, Nov. 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check Week 11 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week • Group 3 leads Discussion Forum • Group 3 members: Post #1 due by 11pm, Saturday, November 1st 	<p>Due 11/5 at 9am</p> Discussion Forum Key insights (check roster)
Week 12 Field observations, Ethnography, and In-depth Interviews	<p>Wednesday, Nov. 5 – Wednesday, Nov. 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check Week 12 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week • Group 4 leads Discussion Forum • Group 4 members: one of your posts must be posted by 11pm, Saturday, November 8th 	<p>Due 11/12 at 9am</p> Discussion Forum Key insights (check roster)
Week 13 Data collection and analysis in qualitative research	<p>Wednesday, Nov. 12 – Wednesday, Nov. 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check Week 13 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week 	<p>Due 11/19 at 9am</p> Discussion Forum Critique of quantitative or qualitative scholarly research article
Week 14 Case studies and mixed methods	<p>Wednesday, Nov. 19 – Wednesday, Nov 26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check Week 14 on Sakai site for specific readings and instructions for this week 	<p>Due 11/26 at 9am</p> Discussion Forum
Week 15	<p>Wednesday, Nov. 26 – Wednesday, Dec. 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Happy Thanksgiving! UNC break is Nov. 26th-28th</p>	
Mon., Dec. 8th noon	Paper 2 (Research Proposal) is due.	Paper 2: Research Proposal due
Fri., Dec. 12 th noon	Report of Pilot Study: VoiceThread presentation	Report of Pilot Study due