

MEJO 701: Strategic Communication Research Methods

Fall 2023
Monday & Wednesday, 9:30-10:45 am
CA 338

Instructor

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Course Description

The key to effective strategic communication is research. This course will teach you how to understand, evaluate, and conduct applied communication research. It will provide you with an understanding of the relationship between your research questions, study design, and data analysis, and the communication of these results to clients. You will learn how to interpret and use the results of social science research in professional work and evaluate the methodological choices in applied research.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Understand different qualitative and quantitative methods in strategic communication
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of these research methods and when best to apply them to client problems
- Explain when and how methods will answer certain client research problems and needs
- Create research plans, design research protocols, and collect data using these methods
- Analyze data that results from these research methods with the goal of gaining actionable consumer or organizational insights
- Apply research findings to solve real-world issues and client problems
- Better understand the diversity of consumers, voters, and publics.

ACEJMC Competencies

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies. This course is particularly relevant to the following competencies:

- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Think critically, creatively and independently
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
- Contribute to knowledge 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
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work

The full list of competencies is available here:

<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

Textbook and Readings

Jugenheimer, D.W., Bradley, S.D., Kelly, L.D., & Hudson, J.C. (2015). *Advertising and Public Relations Research, 2nd edition*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe. (Free e-textbook available through the Park Library <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/books/9781317507376>)

Supplemental readings will be available through Sakai.

Grades: The graduate scale (H, P, L, F) is in effect for all assignments for this seminar. Yes, it's a bit ambiguous, so here are the basic grading criteria I will follow:

- **H:** Mastery of course content at highest level; Outstanding attainment and truly outstanding performance in the class and on assignments.
- **P:** Strong performance overall in the class and on assignments; Solid attainment.
- **L:** Marginal attainment; Performance in the class and on assignments below the acceptable level for graduate students. Able to apply the material and extrapolate ideas in only some instances. May not be participating or handing in assignments on time.
- **F:** Failed performance; Unacceptable attainment. May be missing class, failing to read or engage with the material, or unwilling to apply the material.

Attendance

University Policy

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University approved absences:

- Authorized University activities

- Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)
- Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Please be aware that you are bound by the Honor Code when making a request for a University approved absence. (source: <http://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/>)

Class Policy

Instructors may work with students to meet attendance needs that do not fall within University approved absences. For situations when an absence is not University approved (e.g., a job interview or club activity), **you have upto two absences of this kind during a semester without penalty. Three absences or more will proportionately affect your participation grade.** Please communicate with me early about potential absences.

Honor Code

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Associate Dean of Graduate Studies or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Syllabus Changes

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

ARS

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

Counseling and Psychological Services

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

Title IX

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvscc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Policy On Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

Diversity Statement

I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve; I appreciate any suggestions. More broadly, our school has adopted diversity and inclusion [mission and vision statements](#) with accompanying goals. These complement the University policy on [prohibiting harassment and discrimination](#). In summary, UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies.

Mask Use

All enrolled students are required to follow the university guideline.

Professionalism

Graduate students must be professional in every sense. Professionalism in this course means:

- Attending class throughout the semester.
- Being prepared for class (including completion of readings and thoughtful ideas for class discussion)
- Treating classmates with respect during discussions and other interactions.
- Completing class and project assignments on time. Your grade will be reduced by 10 percent for each day it is late.

Accuracy

The value of your work and creativity are neutralized by errors. You will be graded down when your work contains factual errors, grammatical flaws and/or misspelled words. Refer to the latest edition of *American Psychological Association Manual* on all questions relating to correct style.

Form

Prepare all work as if it were to be submitted in a professional setting. No handwritten work will be accepted. Unless specified otherwise, all writing assignments should be (1) submitted on a letter-size (8 X 11 inch) paper, (2) prepared in a 12-point Times New Roman or 11-point Arial typeface, and (3) 1 inch margin for all sides.

Evaluation*Participation (20%)*

- IRB (5%)
All students will complete the IRB certification process. This means that you will do the CITI Program Ethics IRB Training course linked from UNC IRB's website and upload a copy of the certification to the course's Sakai site. This certification may take some time, so it may be helpful to do it in stages. The course is available online here:
<http://research.unc.edu/human-research-ethics/getting-started/training>
- Class Participation & Attendance (15%)
This is a discussion-based course. To promote interesting and insightful discussion, you must be prepared to discuss the assigned reading. Class discussion points will be based on voluntary actions, such as offering your thoughts or asking questions. So, do the reading and be prepared to answer questions. Negative participation, i.e., non-active participation, distracting others, or not treating the course or others with respect will result in a loss of points.

Assignments (60%)

- **Content Analysis (20%)**
You will be tasked with examining the content data related to a client of your choosing. The goal of this assignment is to better understand content analysis including social media content.
- **Interview (20%)**
You will do a 30-minute interview with 2 people of your choosing. The interviews can be done digitally. You will analyze your data to pull out meaningful insights.
- **Survey/Experiment (20%)**
You will design your own survey or experiment.

Final Exam (20%)

The final exam will require you to pull together all you have learned this semester. You will be asked to demonstrate your knowledge of the primary and secondary methods we have learned. The final exam might include multiple choice, short answer, or essay questions.

Course Schedule

The following is a tentative outline of topics over the course of the semester and is subject to change.

Week	Date	Content	Readings	Due
1	Aug 21	Course overview		
	Aug 23	Intro to AD & PR research	Ch 1-4 & 35	
2	Aug 28	Intro continued	Ch 1-4 & 35	
	Aug 30	Secondary research <i>Choose your client and research topic</i>	Ch 5	
3	Sep 4	Labor Day-No class		
	Sep 6	Library Resources for Secondary Research	Review library guide	
4	Sep 11	<i>In-class: Work on secondary research exercise</i>		
	Sep 13	Content analysis	Ch 11	
5	Sep 18	Social media analytics		
	Sep 20	<i>In-class: Work on content analysis</i>		
6	Sep 25	Well-being Day-No class		
	Sep 27	Intro to qualitative research, Research ethics, informed consent	Ch 9, 14, 37	

7	Oct 2	Focus groups	Ch 10	Content analysis assignment
	Oct 4	Interviews <i>Prep for interviews</i>	Ch 12	
8	Oct 9	<i>In-class: Take turns conducting interviews and being interviewed</i>		Interview protocol draft
	Oct 11	<i>Out-of-class work: interviews and transcripts</i>		
9	Oct 16	Analyzing Qualitative Data	Ch 15	Interview transcript draft
	Oct 18	<i>In-class: Work on interview data analysis</i>		
10	Oct 23	Measurement scale	Ch 18	
	Oct 25	Intro to sampling	Ch 32	
11	Oct 30	Sampling Techniques & Survey	Ch 17, 23	Interview assignment
	Nov 1	Survey design <i>Brainstorm survey questions</i>	Ch 19, 21	
12	Nov 6	Survey design with Qualtrics <i>Design your survey using Qualtrics</i>	Ch 16	
	Nov 8	Experiment <i>Brainstorm a simple experiment</i>	Ch 24 & 25	IRB certification
13	Nov 13	Experiment design <i>Design a simple experiment through Qualtrics</i>	Ch 26	
	Nov 15	<i>In-class: Refine survey/experiment design</i>		
14	Nov 20	Mapping Techniques	Ch 31	
	Nov 22	Thanksgiving-No class		
15	Nov 27	Quantitative data analysis	Ch 32 & 33	
	Nov 29	Testing relationship	Ch 33	
16	Dec 4	<i>In-class: Survey data analysis</i>		Survey/Exprt assignment
	Dec 6	Exam review		
17	Dec 12	Final Exam: 4 pm		