COMM 750 Research Methods II
Fall 2013

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Classroom: Innovation 330
Time: M 4:30 – 7:10 p.m.
Office Hour: M. T. 2:00 – 3:00 pm or by appointment

Course Description

Public data is an increasingly important source of information for communication scholars. Not only are large amounts of public data available to answer communication-related research questions, the costs of large-scale, valid data collection often prohibit scholars from deploying their own representative surveys. In this course, we will be focusing on developing the necessary skills especially suited to analyzing large amounts of survey data – whether collected on your own or downloaded from publically available sources. We will also be paying special attention to the unique methodological and theoretical concerns that arise when using public data, which often require special skills to productively engage with this data. This course is intended to help students develop the necessary skills to locate relevant data, analyze its utility, develop workable research questions and hypotheses, prepare the data for analysis, and analyze the data to answer their research questions and/or test their hypotheses. The final product of this course for each student will be a research report that is suitable for presentation at professional conferences and has potential for publication in academic journals.

Because most public data are large sample survey data, the training provided in this course will focus on correlational analysis, with particular emphasis on regression analyses. Other commonly used techniques – in particular, tests of mean comparison like t-tests, ANOVAs, and MANOVAs – are not within the scope of this class.

Textbook

Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS* (3rd Ed.). Sage.
http://www.uk.sagepub.com/field3e/default.htm

Additional Readings

Check out the following websites
http://www.icpsr.umich.edu.mutex.gmu.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/ (GMU has subscription)
http://www.norc.org/GSS+Website/
http://pewresearch.org/databank/datasets/
http://www.electionstudies.org/
http://hints.cancer.gov/
http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.mutex.gmu.edu/ (GMU has subscription)
http://www.ciser.cornell.edu/info/datasource.shtml
http://library.columbia.edu/indiv/dssc/data.html
http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/

Clarke, S. P., & Cossette, S. (2000). Secondary analysis: Theoretical, methodological, and practical considerations. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research, 32*, 109-129.

Jenkins-Guarnieri, M. A., Wright, S. L., & Johnson, B. (2013). Development and validation of a social media use integration scale. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 13,* 38-50.

Levine, T. R., Weber, R., Park, H. S., & Hullett, C. R. (2008). A communication researchers' guide to null hypothesis significance testing and alternatives. *Human Communication Research, 34,* 188-209.

Moeller, J., & de Vreese, C. (2013). The differential role of the media as an agent of political socialization in Europe. *European Journal of Communication, 28,* 309-325.

Nir. L. (2011). Disagreement and opposition in social networks: Does disagreement discourage turnout? *Political Studies, 59*, 674-692.

Nisbet, E. C., Hart, P. S., Myers, T., & Ellithorpe, M. (2013). Attitude change in competitive framing environments? Open-/Closed-mindness, framing effects, and climate change. *Journal of Communication,* online first.

Preacher, K. J., Rucker, D. D., & Hayes, A. F. (2007). Addressing moderated mediation hypotheses: Theory, methods, and prescriptions. *Multivariate Behavior Research, 42,* 185-227.

Scheuren, F. (2004). *What is a survey*. Retrieved from http://www.whatisasurvey.info/

Smith, E. (2008). Pitfalls and promises: The use of secondary data analysis in educational research. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 56*, 323-339.

Zukin, C. (2004). Sources of variation in published election polling: A primer.
http://www.aapor.org/Content/NavigationMenu/PollampSurveyFAQs/zukin_election_primer.pdf

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Course Requirements

The goal of this course is to give students the skills and confidence required for performing their own research analysis. More practically, the goal of this course is to help you produce a high quality research

manuscript, suitable for presentation at a conference and/or publication in a peer-reviewed journal. All the assignments and lectures in this course are designed to help you achieve this goal. The five main assignments are:

1. **Preliminary research plan**. This is not a written assignment. All you need to do is talk about your tentative research ideas in class and engage your classmates in brainstorming to help you refine the ideas. Before presenting to the class, you are expected to have a familiarity with the basic theoretical argument that you are making (e.g., you should understand which theories you hope to test and apply to your research questions) and to have done extensive data searching to find publically available data appropriate for your project. Be prepared to talk about the data you would like to use and how that shapes your research questions. This includes understanding how the data is collected (e.g., the quality of the data) and measurement of any key variables for your analysis.

2. **Formal research proposal**. This is a 7- to 8-page written proposal for your research project. At this point, you should have had a clearly formulated research question based on careful consideration of both the existing literature and the available data. Spend 3-4 pages to build a theoretical rationale for your research question and/or hypotheses. This literature review should include citations from previous academic work, especially relevant published journal articles. Spend another 3-4 pages to describe and defend the data you have chosen to use. Be specific on what variables you will have at your disposal and why these variables and the way they are measured are suitable for answering your research question.

3. **Data analysis assignments**. These assignments are designed to give you an opportunity to practice the skills you will need for your own project. You may work either independently or in groups to perform the analyses, but you are expected to use your own language in your write-up. In other words, it may be helpful to work in groups to engage with the SPSS syntax, but you should use your own words in describing the procedures, the results, and the interpretation of the meaning of those results, even if you have worked with others to complete the analysis.

4. **Presentation**. The first outlet of scientific research is often professional conferences. Imagine that you are facing a highly learned audience at the National Communication Association annual conference (which may very likely be where your paper will end up!). Make a 12-minute presentation of your research and then take questions for 3-5 minutes.

5. **Final paper.** The final paper should be ready for conference submission. It should be prepared in accordance with the APA 6th edition requirements. The total length of the paper should not exceed 24 pages of text, not including references, tables, figures, and appendices.

Grading Breakdown

Each assignment will be graded on a 100-point scale, then multiplied by the appropriate percentage to contribute to your final grade in the course.

Preliminary research plan	10%
Research proposal	20%
Exercises	20%
Presentation	10%
Final paper	40%

Course Grades

A	93-100 %	= 93-100 Points
A-	90-92%	= 90-92.9 Points
B+	87-89%	= 87-89.9 Points
B	83-86%	= 83-86.9 Points
B-	80-82%	= 80-82.9 Points
C+	77-79%	=77-77.9 Points
C	70-79%	= 70-76.9 Points
F	LT 70%	<=69.9 Points

Course Schedule

Date	Topic/Assignments	Reading
Week 1 – Aug. 26	Introduction	Clarke & Cossett, 2000 Smith, 2008
Week 2 – Sept. 2	**NO CLASS – LABOR DAY**	
Week 3 – Sept. 9	Sources of public data	Field ch. 3 Review websites for secondary datasets
Week 4 – Sept. 16	Measurement basics *Preliminary research plan due and discussed in class*	Field ch. 1
Week 5 - Sept. 23	Survey and modeling basics	Field ch. 2; R4 Scheuren, 2004
Week 6 – Sept. 30	Data assumptions and correlation	Field ch. 5, 7 Levine et al., 2008
Week 7 – Oct. 7	Scale construction *Research proposal due and discussed in class* *Assignment #1 due*	Field ch. 17 Zukin, 2004
Week 8 – Oct. 14	Multiple regression *Assignment #2 due*	Field ch. 8, pp. 419-426. Jenkins-Guarnieri et al., 2013
Week 9 – Oct. 21	Logistic regression *Assignment #3 due*	Field ch. 19 Moeller & de Vreese, 2013
Week 10 – Oct. 28	Mediation and Moderation *Assignment #4 due*	Field, ch 10 Preacher et al., 2007 Nisbet et al., 2013
Week 11 – Nov. 4	Reporting analysis & special issues in survey data analysis *Assignment #5 due*	Eveland et al., 2005 Gil de Zuniga et al., 2012
Week 12 – Nov. 11	30-min one-on-one sessions	

Week 13 – Nov. 18	30-min one-on-one sessions	
Week 14 – Nov. 25	10-min one-on-one sessions	
Week 15 – Dec. 2	*Presentations*	
Dec. 16	*Final paper due (7:30 pm)*	

NOTES

As the instructor, I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus. Students will be given ample notice regarding any major changes to the course plan.

Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact the instructor as soon as possible so that the necessary accommodations can be made to ensure full participation and facilitate the student's educational opportunities. A Disability Support Services office is available on campus to assist students with special needs. If you have a disability or suspect you might have a disability, contact this office at 703-993-2474. If you have a disability that will require assistance, let your instructor know within the first two weeks of this course.