

COM 531: Communication Research Methods Fall 2012

Location of Class Meeting: The Woodlands Center

Class Meeting Time: Wednesdays, 6:00-8:50pm

Instructor: Dr. Shuangyue (Shaun) Zhang

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Phone: (936) 294-1835

Office Hours: By Appointment

REQUIRED READINGS

Baxter, L. A., & Babbie, E. (2004). *The basics of communication research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Additional required readings will be posted on Blackboards.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course provides an introduction to the concepts, methods, and tools by which communication research is designed, conducted, interpreted, and evaluated. The primary goals of this class are to help you acquire the necessary knowledge to understand and conduct communication research. The following objectives will help you reach these goals: (1) master the concepts and vocabulary of communication research – and be able to use this language appropriately; (2) become an intelligent consumer of research – able to read, understand, explain and critically evaluate research reported in scholarly journals, and (3) develop the skills necessary for conducting reliable and valid communication research – with an emphasis on surveys, experiments, and content analysis. We make no assumptions about previous work in statistics. Fear of mathematics is not a barrier to success in this class.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Exams (40% of Grade)

There will be two equally weighted exams: a midterm and a final. The exams are not cumulative. Format of the exams will be discussed during class.

Take-Home Assignments (30% of Grade)

There will three assignments in this class. Assignments will be distributed one week before they are due. Specific requirements and instructions will be discussed when the assignments are distributed in class.

Final Paper (25% of Grade)

In your Advanced Interpersonal Communication class, you will be asked to write a literature review that may lead to research questions or hypotheses. The final paper in this study asks you to

design a quantitative study to test those research questions or hypotheses. General guidelines of this paper will be distributed to you at least four weeks before it is due.

Class Participation (5% of Grade)

You are expected to finish required readings for each class and to engage in class discussions. You will be evaluated based on your contribution to class discussions and the general learning environment.

Grade Scale

[Final Grades Based on Percentages]

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
59 or lower	E

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance

Although formal attendance won't be taken, students are expected to attend each class meeting. You will have points deducted from the participation portion of your grade for any absences.

Late or Missed Assignments & Missed Exams

For each day an assignment is late, there will be a deduction in your grade, and an assignment cannot be accepted **more than 48 hours after it is due**. Unless otherwise notified, assignments should not be handed in electronically. No make up exam will be given. If existing engagements conflicts with exam dates specified in the syllabus, notify the professor by the end of the second week of class to see if something can be worked out. Otherwise, you will be expected to take the exams as scheduled. **The only exceptions to these rules are tragic, extraordinary, and totally unforeseen personal circumstances that are convincingly documented no later than 24 hours after the due date.**

Written Work

Students are expected to use correct spelling and grammar for all assignments and the final paper. All submitted work must be typed. Proofread your work at least twice before you turn it in.

Academic Dishonesty:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected 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.

Americans with Disability Act:

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University 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 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.

Religious Holidays

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. 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. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Visitors in the Classroom

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

This policy is not intended to discourage the occasional visiting of classes by responsible persons. Obviously, however, the visiting of a particular class should be occasional and not regular, and it should in no way constitute interference with registered members of the class or the educational process.

Instructor Evaluation

Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

Tentative Weekly Schedules

Week	Topics	Readings	What's DUE
1. Aug 29	Course Introduction	Chapter 1	
2. Sept 5	Logical Foundations of Communication Research	Chapters 2 & 3	
3. Sept 12	Theoretical Models: Conceptualizing Relationships among Variables/ Ethics	Chapters 4 & 5	
4. Sept 17	Conceptualization and Operationalization	Chapter 6 Assignment #1 to be distributed	
5. Sept 26	Sampling and Generalization	Chapter 7	Assignment #1
6. Oct 3	Basics of Survey Methodology	Chapter 8 Study guide of Exam #1 to be distributed	
7. Oct 10	Exam One		
8. Oct 17	Experiments	Chapter 9	
9. Oct 24	Content Analysis	Chapter 10 Assignment #2 to be distributed	
10. Oct 31	Basics of Quantitative Analysis	Chapter 11	Assignment #2
11. Nov 7	Inferential Statistics	Chapter 12 Assignment #3 to be distributed	
12. Nov 14	No Class, NCA		
13. Nov 21	No Class, Thanksgiving		
14. Nov 28	Qualitative Research (Part 1)	Chapters 13 & 14	Assignment #3
15. Dec 5	Qualitative Research (Part 2)	Chapters 15 & 16	
16. Dec 12	Exam Two		Final Paper