

Communication 5040: Communication Research Methods  
 Spring 2018. Room: Coleman Hall 1731  
 T 7-9:30 p.m.

**Instructor:** Dr. Scott Walus  
**Email:** smwalus@eiu.edu

**Office:** 1810 Coleman Hall  
**Office Hours:** M 7-8 p.m.; T 6-7 p.m.;  
 W 10-11 a.m., 4:15-5:15 p.m.

### Required Texts:

Readings for the course are in PDF and supplied via USB drive in the beginning of the semester. Also, bring a notebook and writing utensil.

### Course Description:

This course examines the research paradigms of communication studies with a primary focus on qualitative, quantitative and critical research methodologies. Students will learn how a research paradigm influences the formation of research questions, study design, and how research is conducted. Students will actively implement concepts from various approaches utilized by scholars and practitioners in the field of Communication Studies.

### Course Objectives:

1. Demonstrate comprehension and knowledge of qualitative, quantitative and critical research methods in communication studies.
2. Construct research questions and implement appropriate methods to produce original research.
3. Critique scholarly materials, such as research articles.
4. Critically address various ethical concerns related to research.

### Criteria for Evaluation:

**Developing a Methodology (12 Points)** Throughout the semester in a series of six reports, you will write up a report on a section of your methodology. You will present it to the class and I will provide feedback on theoretical assumptions and logistics. During this, you will take notes and implement this feedback as part of the next project. These are worth two points each. Complete, thoughtful drafts receive full points.

**Identifying Communication Variables:** Identify, define, and operationalize two independent variables (communication elements), two intervening variables (channel, positionality, context), and two direct variables (effects and outcomes).

**RQs / Hypotheses / Guiding Queries:** Carefully articulate your research questions / hypotheses / guiding queries for your study in specific language. Additionally, posit the relationship and direction between the two and how it works. Include your revised communication variables on a separate first page.

**Sample Rationale and Protocol:** Articulate what phenomenon / population you are looking to represent with your sample in your study. Then, select a sampling strategy and articulate your logic and procedure of sampling in your study. Include your revised variables and research questions on two separate pages.

**Data Collection Rationale and Protocol:** First, describe what you are attempting to study and what specific data you need to do so. Then, select your method, demonstrate how it has access to

that data, and a protocol for how you collected data. Include your revised three prior assignments on separate pages.

**Data Analysis Rationale and Protocol:** First, describe what findings / relationships you are seeking from your data, then select data analysis techniques and map out how specifically you analyzed your data. Include your revised prior projects on separate pages.

**Validation / Assuring Quality Rationale and Protocol:** First articulate your position on what makes quality research, then select techniques of validation or assuring quality and articulate how you implemented them in your study. Include your revised prior projects on separate pages.

**Final Research Report (7 points):** In this report, you combine the final revised versions of all the previous writings and you articulate your profoundly profound findings from your research in claim / data / warrant form. Include a title page, abstract, and reference page.

**Brings (3 points):** Each class period has a “bring” listed under it with instructions. You should first read the readings for the week, and then engage with the “bring.” These “brings” are meant to promote your application and elaboration of these intriguing methodological constructs. There are 15 “brings” in total meaning five brings = one point. These must be in the format requested (ex: printing out the articles is not an option). They are due at the beginning of class and you must be present for the duration of the entire class to be eligible for credit.

**22 points total**

### General Grading Guidelines

Projects in the professional world do not receive partial credit. They are either of professional quality or not. However, projects of a professional quality seldom happen on a first draft. They nearly always require revisions that ultimately improve the project. The assessments in this class will mirror the professional world of mass communication.

- All assignments are assigned orally. (There is always substantial time for clarification in class.)
- You must have your project in class during the class that it is due or else you cannot make revisions, and therefore receive a zero. There is a five minute grace period in the beginning of class, after these five minutes, it will be considered late and therefore a zero.
- All projects must be in hard copy form (absolutely no digital copies will be accepted) in print form. Additionally, they must be properly fastened together (ex: staple, paper clip, folder) or else they will not be accepted (no a folded corner does not count, and no, I do not have a stapler. This is college, buy a stapler).
- There is only the score of full points or zero. The score of full points will be awarded to complete and throughout projects that thoughtfully meet all assigned criteria.
- If you get a zero, you have two weeks to revise it into a quality project that thoughtfully fulfills all criteria. If it meets the quality required, you receive full credit. I encourage you to discuss the revisions with me during office hours to assure that you earn the 100%. Additionally, just because you make revisions, does not guarantee points. The project has to be right. This can take one draft or four.
- I am on your team and will do everything I can to help you get the project to a polished level of quality. We serve the product, not our egos!

There are several advantages to this grading process. First, it mirrors a professional environment, where your work is not complete until it is ready for the public. Secondly, it rewards good work with full credit. Remember, you start this (and every course) with zero points, and you must earn your way up Point Mountain. Third, it allows for revision, which is an invaluable skill and will motivate you to do quality work as you must stand by your work. The drafting process is an invaluable one. Unlike other classes “just getting it done” does not get you points; it must be right.

Note: The revision option does not apply to “brings.” These are all or nothing where full credit is awarded if you attend class that day (on time and for the full duration) and the “bring” contains all requested elements in a thoughtful manner.

### **General Grading Guidelines:**

Grades will be assigned as follows:

100-90% = A                      89-80% = B                      79-70% = C                      69-60% = D                      59- 0% = F

### **Attendance, late work, and two extension coupons:**

While there is no formal attendance policy in the course, you are required to be present on-time and for the duration of a class where an assignment is due or it will not be accepted. Let me reiterate, no late work is accepted in this course as it only leads to future problems. This includes “brings.” We spend each class discussing and unpacking media theories and concepts and the “bring” is meant to prime you for the discussion. They cannot be separated from one another and there are no exceptions.

That being said, life does happen sometimes. With this in mind, this syllabus includes two extension coupons that can be used on any assignment for any reason without any explanation needed. This coupon allows you an extension on any assignment (bring or project) until the next class period, and you still receive full points if you accomplish the assignment satisfactorily. Here is how to use the coupon:

- You may only use two coupons per semester. This system is meant to be flexible and to simplify life for both of us in the event that you miss class or cannot complete an assignment on time. By using these coupons, you will not ask me to accept any other late work this semester regardless of your circumstance. If you ask me to accept late work after using your coupons, the previous coupons will be considered null and void and you will receive zeros on those projects.
- These coupons can be used at any point in the semester through week 14. This means that coupons cannot be used in the final two weeks of the semester.
- Write your name on it and staple or paper clip it to your assignment. Folded over does not count and will not be accepted.
- If you miss a “bring,” you must talk to a classmate about the topic of the day and provide a 2-3 sentence summary of the discussion with the original “bring.”

### **Cell Phones & Digital Devices:**

Absolutely no cell phone / tablet / laptop / digital device usage is allowed in this class. Unless directly directed to use the device for in-class research or if you inform the professor about an urgent situation where someone will be contacting you, device usage is absolutely banned. This classroom is a space for complex thought and conversation. In order to have complex thought and conversation, you need to be present without disruption. This policy is supported by unequivocal data on the negative correlation between screens in the classroom and learning.

- A Massachusetts Institute of Technology study demonstrated that it is impossible for the brain to multi-tasking and any attempt to do so “ruins productivity, causes mistakes, and impedes creative thought.” Disrupting a thought process by checking digital content is not good for learning or the generation of new ideas.
- Multiple empirical studies have demonstrated that screens in the classroom diminish learning. A Princeton study demonstrated how taking notes on a laptop lowered comprehension of material and retention. Studies by Kaspersky found that the mere presence of a smart phone on a desk lowered test scores by 23%, causes “digital amnesia,” and makes employees 26% overall less productive at work.
- Checking your phone also makes class time emotionally less enjoyable. The National Institute of Health found that a rise in anxiety and stress is directly related to problematic cell phone usage. If

you believe you will have a difficult time abstaining from digital devices, you are not alone. A Baylor University study found that 60% of college students felt mentally and physically addicted to their cell phones.

In order to encourage a singular focus, I will not accept whatever assignment is due that day from you and you will receive a zero on it if you look at your digital device during class. This is any glance at a cell phone, tablet, or lap top. Notes should be taken by hand (and then transcribed later if you wish). There are no warnings. If you continue to look at the device, you will lose a previous “bring” point for each infraction. To add some spice to the equation, if I miss the infraction, and your classmate informs on you, he/she gets the “bring” point taken from you.

I run a classroom that places a premium on showing up and engaging with a topic. Under this system, conversations are more intriguing, students report a deeper understanding of material, and every class period goes by faster. “Be here now,” as there is no advantage to thinking about somewhere else that you are not.

### **Academic integrity:**

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU’s Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards. You are expected to write your own papers and generate your own answers on quizzes and exams. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Consequences of academic dishonesty range from failing of the course to expulsion from the university.

### **Students with disabilities:**

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

### **The Student Success Center:**

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/~success](http://www.eiu.edu/~success)) for assistance with time management, text taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581- 6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

### **Student Standards:**

All faculty in the Department of Communication Studies are expected to uphold the standards of good scholarship and we expect our students to do the same. Students earning a degree in Communication Studies will develop superior reasoning/critical thinking, argumentation, writing and presentational skills while also building comprehensive knowledge of their content area. Students in Communication Studies classes will be expected to read all assigned materials, write extensively, complete their own work, and engage in respectful interactions in the classroom. We, as a faculty, agree to hold our students to these standards.

### **Class Schedule:**

#### **Week 1 – What is Research?**

Introduction to course.

The value of research.

#### **Week 2 – Communication Process and Research**

Read: Heath & Bryant - “Anatomy of the Communication Process”

Hall - “Encoding / Decoding”

Frey et al. – “Interpreting Communication Research”

Bring: After reading about all the factors that go into the communication process, in bullet point form list out all of the areas of significance in the process (ex: source, channel, mode, etc.) and define each in practical terms. At the end, rank them in order of importance to the act of communication.

### **Week 3 – Variable Relationships & Effect Types**

Read: Heath & Bryant – “Persuasion: Concepts and Contexts”  
 Sparks - “A brief history of media effects research”  
 Stewart & Ward (in Bryant & Zillman) - “Media Effects on Advertising”

Bring: Compile a complete list of all the possible categories of effects from communication (ex: attitude, emotional, learning, etc.). Operationalize each of your dependent variables by including subcategories and an example of the effect and a communication element that could cause it.

Assign: “Identifying communication variables”

### **Week 4 – Independent & Intervening Variables**

Read: McGuire - “McGuire's classic input-output framework”  
 Press & Cole - “Working class women respond to television representations of abortion”  
 Kellner – “Cultural studies, multiculturalism, and media culture”

Bring: Compile a complete list of all the possible categories of communication independent variables (ex: message elements, channel / mode, source credibility, etc.). Compile the same list for intervening variables (ex: context, identity categories [age, gender, education level, etc.], prior experiences, mood, etc.). Operationalize each of your independent and intervening variables by including subcategories and an example of an effect and that each independent / intervening communication variable may cause.

### **Week 5 – Entering the Conversation**

An apt metaphor for the week from Kenneth Burke:

“Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.” (*Philosophy of Literary Form*, pp. 110-111)

Read: Rubin & Graham - “Measures of Interpersonal Communication”  
 Rubin & Perse - “Measures of Mass Communication”  
 Downs, DeWine, & Greenbaum “Measures of Organizational Communication”

Bring: In bullet points: 1. Identify your declared concentration (Strategic Communication, Media & Critical Studies, or Interpersonal Communication). 2. Looking at the readings: Identify three variables from your area that are interesting and one from each of the other two articles. For these five total variables, tell me in a sentence why they intrigue you. 3. Tell me what is the topic of the conversation in grad school that you are entering.

Assign: RQs / hypotheses / guiding queries  
 Due: Identifying communication variables

**Week 6 – Research Design & Generating Questions**

Read: Creswell - “A framework for research”

Creswell - “The purpose statement”

Creswell - “Research questions & hypotheses”

Bring: Take a visit over to Communication & Mass Media Complete through EIU's library web site. Browse for some articles about your “topic of conversation” and find and print out the article with the most intriguing set of research questions / hypotheses / guiding queries. On the back, write out three elements that you enjoyed about reading that article. Also, after you read the Creswell chapters, fill in the two “Research Mad Libs” in the “Purpose Statement” chapter on pages 90 and 96 (note: 96 and 97 are switched in order).

Assign: Sample rationale and protocol.

**Week 7 - Sampling**

Read: Deacon et al. - “Selecting and sampling”

Corbin & Strauss - “Theoretical sampling”

Babbie - “The Logic of Sampling”

Bring: Take a visit over to Communication & Mass Media Complete (or another peripheral communication database like JSTOR or PsychInfo if you choose) through EIU's library web site. Browse for some articles about your “topic of conversation” and find and print out the two articles with the best sampling techniques. One should be an impressive large sample and one should be a fascinating smaller sample. On the back, write out three elements that you enjoyed about reading each article.

Assign: Data collection rationale and protocol.

Due: RQs / hypotheses / guiding queries

**Week 8 - Textual Analysis**

Read: Frey et al. - “Textual Analysis”

Mika “Semiotics in commercials”

Deacon et al. – “Counting Contents”

Bring: In the communication databases, find and print out two studies about the same communication text / genre (broadly defined). One should be a textual analysis (with an articulated and one should be a content analysis (complete with a form of the code book). Compare them to each other, and on the back of each, list out three elements that each executed better than the other and three elements that were lacking for each.

**Week 9 - Experiments & Surveys**

Read: Creswell - “Quantitative Methods”

Frey et al. - “Experimental research”

Frey et al. - “Survey Research”

Babbie - “Criteria of measurement quality”

Bring: In the databases, find and print out a great experiment in your chosen area of communication. It should have intriguing operationalization of at least one variable and overall good internal / external validity. On the back of the article, list out the independent, dependent, and intervening variables and how they operationalized / measured each. Then, find and print an article that used quality survey research about the same area of communication. On the back of this article, in bullet points write out what we now know because of each study (the different types of knowledge) and what the next logical study should be.

**Week 10 - Interviews & Focus Groups**

Read: Creswell - "Qualitative procedure"  
 Deacon et al. - "Asking Questions"  
 Ruddock "Audience research and cultural studies"  
 Jhally & Lewis - "Enlightened racism"

Bring: Through the databases, locate and print a study that takes a unique approach to interviewing (ex: location, priming materials, role of the researcher, etc.). On the back write out three useful things you learned about interviewing and how you might integrate it into your own study. Next, locate and print a study that uses focus group data. This article should feature an intriguing structure to the focus groups (either in the protocol or in the groups themselves). On the back write out three useful things you learned about focus groups and how you might integrate it into your own study.

### **Week 11 - Ethnography / Observation & Creative Methods**

Read: Frey et al - "Naturalistic Inquiry"  
 Hebdige - "Style as homology and signifying practice"  
 Awan & Gauntlett - "Creative and visual methods in audience research"

Bring: Go through the databases and find and print an exceptional naturalistic study (ethnographic methods with an observation component. Be sure that there is a strong method section) about a communication phenomenon which interests you. On the back, write three elements from this method that would improve your own data collection. Next, find the wildest and most intriguing method of data collection you can find. On the back, tell the type of knowledge that it accesses and where this method ranks compared to the data collection methods of the previous four weeks.

Assign: Data analysis rationale and protocol.  
 Due: Sample rationale and protocol.

### **Week 12 - Analyzing Data**

Read: Deacon et al. - "Handling Numbers"  
 Lindlof & Taylor - "Qualitative analysis and interpretation"  
 Corbin & Strauss - "Introduction to context, process, & theoretical integration"

Bring: Find and print an article about a communication element that interest you that has the most clearly reported quantitative data. On the back, list three of the elements that make it so clear and easy to understand. Next, find and print an article about the same communication element that makes absolutely profound usage of qualitative data. On the back of the sheet list out three elements that make it so profound.

Due: Data collection rationale and protocol.

### **Week 13 – Drawing Conclusions / The Write Up**

Read: Creswell - "Writing strategies & ethical considerations"  
 Babbie - "Reading & writing social research"  
 Ang - "Dallas and the ideology of mass culture"

Bring: Find and print an article about your communication "topic of conversation" that pushed beyond the obvious and went far into the profound through its conclusions. Pay attention to the writing style and how the author links claims to data to warrants. This article should serve as an inspirational piece that you read before you draw your conclusions. On the back of the article, note three things that inspire you about the author's writing style / conclusion drawing.

Assign: Validation / assuring quality rationale and protocol.

**Week 14 – Assuring Quality / Validating / Verifying**

Read: Corbin & Strauss - “Criteria for evaluation”  
Miles & Huberman - “Drawing and verifying conclusions”

Bring: Go through the databases, locate and print a study that implemented strong and creative methods of verification / validation / assuring quality. On the back of the article, write out how you could implement this method into your work, both during the collection of data as well as after it.

Due: Data analysis rationale and protocol.

**Week 15 – In-Class Data Analysis & Refinement**

Bring: Your complete data set (transcripts / spreadsheets / typed observation notes / creative methods) as well as your developmental memos / notes. We will be spending the duration of the class period fine-tuning conclusions, looking for relationships in the data, and overall refining your study.

Due: Validation / assuring quality rationale and protocol.

**Week 16 – Presenting Findings**

May 1 (Tuesday) from 7:30-9:30 p.m. as scheduled by the university.

Bring: A polished presentation of your profoundly profound findings.

Due: Final copy of research report



**This coupon entitles \_\_\_\_\_ to turn in any one assignment the next class period of CMN \_\_\_\_\_ for literally any reason. This includes all excused or unexcused reasons including, but certainly not limited to: illness, alarm clock malfunction, oversleeping, leaving for vacation, printer malfunction, funerals, weddings, "just totally spacing on it," work issues, computer explosions, not understanding an assignment, exhaustion, vehicle malfunction, or literally any reason. This coupon provides you with an extension to do the assignment (from "brings" to major projects) without question or judgment. This coupon must be attached to the late assignment.**

### **EXTENSION COUPON**

**Usage Notes: There is an absolute limit of two extensions per semester.**

**Additional requests result in the voiding of all coupons. If you choose to use this coupon on a typically unexcused reason and then you have a family emergency / illness / some other typically excused reason, you are out of luck. Use these wisely.**

**Restrictions: Non-transferrable. Not valid after Week 14. Individual use only.**

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