



COURSE OVERVIEW

What is this class all about?

This course is about a way of understanding the world. You hear many claims every day, made in blogs, on TV, by your parents, and by your friends. This course is fundamentally about a way of understanding which claims and conclusions you can trust and of which ones you should be suspicious. At the end of this course, my ultimate goal is that you become critical consumers of scientific information.

Communication scholars try to understand ways humans use symbols to relay meaning and how people respond to those attempts. Therefore, communication scholars ask questions and gather information about (a) the nature of communication and (b) why communicative behaviors proceed in the manner in which they do. This course will lead you through the scientific process of discovery by formulating questions, building empirical arguments, generating predictions, developing appropriate methodology, interpreting data, and evaluating results. We will also talk

about the methods of communicating your scientific discoveries to a larger audience. In this course, we will take a post-positivistic approach to communication science – something that we will discuss during our first week.

It is important that you do not think of this as just a statistics course. After all, in communication, we don't use statistics just because they are fun...even though that may be true. This course will combine instruction and practice in both the methodology and analyses that communication scholars in this paradigm tend to employ. During these 10 weeks, you will start to think, write, and speak like a quantitative communication scholar.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of COMM 1, COMM 2, and at least 88 units (including courses in progress).

COMM 110

Quantitative Methods in Communication

Winter 2015 (Sec. 2)

Kenna Hall Room 107

TR 10:20am – 12:00pm

Class #14401

#SCUCOMM110

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:



Dr. Justin P. Boren
Assistant Professor
jboren@scu.edu
408-551-7057

Office Location: [Vari Hall Room 217](#)
Office Hours: T & Th 4pm – 5pm & by appt.
(Stop in or make an [appointment on Camino](#))
Skype: jpboren // twitter [@jborenSCU](#)

Required Course Material

1. Davis, C. S., Powell, H., & Lachlan, K. A. (2013). *Straight talk about communication research methods* (2nd Ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt.
2. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Edition
3. A Calculator with Square Root Function
4. Regular access to Camino

Course Assignments

Learning Preparation

Please make sure to stay on top of the readings, which are indicated in the class meeting schedule. There are also short videos on Camino that you should watch before class. These videos will focus on one particular concept from the lecture.

Per the university's undergraduate bulletin, each class unit should equal 3 hours of work both inside and outside of class (15 hours total each week for this course, which equals 12 hours per week outside of class!).

Examinations

There will be two exams this quarter. Exams will cover lecture material, in-class activities, and chapter readings. Make-up exams will be granted only for university approved excuses. The exams may include true/false, multiple-option, matching, short answer, calculations, and essay questions. Please note: if you arrive late on exam day after the first student has finished the exam, you will not be permitted to take it. Exams will be administered using Camino's examination system in-class.

Homework

Periodic homework will be assigned to facilitate learning about research methods. These assignments will require out-of-class work and may be the basis for in-class discussion and group activities. Please complete and upload homework before coming to class on the date listed on the syllabus. Students regularly say that these homework assignments helped them grasp course concepts more completely.

Peer Feedback

You will be asked to complete a peer review of one of your classmate's papers for Building Blocks I, II, and III. Detailed access information can be found on Camino. This project is designed to (a) give your classmates some additional feedback while they are waiting for their formal feedback from me and (b) gives you the perspective of reading other student work in the course. As a courtesy to your classmates (who are waiting on your feedback), you cannot submit your Peer feedback late.

Engaged Participation

This is an upper-division class, which means that you will need to do more than just attend class and serve in a passive role. Engagement includes positive attendance, participation in class discussions/activities, demonstrating that you have actively thought about the course material and concepts, and that you have contributed something interesting to our discussion. You will receive an evaluation on your active engagement in the class and may solicit feedback from me at any point.

Extra Credit Opportunities

Throughout the quarter I may offer some opportunities to earn a few extra points. You should not rely on the availability of these opportunities. Additionally, you should know that I do not offer extra credit to individual students, only to the entire class (in other words, please do not ask for extra credit designed just for you). Any extra credit will be posted to Camino and your maximum extra credit is limited to 2% of the total available class points.

Course Project: Research Proposal

Building Block I: Idea Generation

In this first paper, you will generate some ideas and some broad communication-based questions that you would like to explore throughout the quarter. From there, you will use summarize and synthesize peer-reviewed research articles to help start building an argument that will carry you through the rest of the building blocks.

Building Block II: Focused Outline:

For this project, you will select a final topic area and research question. Using research, you will outline your rationale (a specific argument leading to some hypotheses). You will use the research to support your arguments. At the end of this paper, you will start to conceptualize and identify your independent and dependent variables.

Building Block III: From Outline to Argument -- the Rationale

For this phase, you will need to focus your topic even more and provide an in-depth rationale leading to specific hypotheses or research questions. Your paper will end with a paragraph-long description of a potential method. For most students, this is the most difficult part of the project, as it can be rather expansive. We will describe this phase in much more detail through the quarter. Think of this as a rough-draft for Building Block IV. However, it is very important that you spend a significant amount of time on this project and potentially spend some time talking over your ideas with me.

Building Block IV: Final Research Project Proposal

This is the final phase of the project and will be due at the end of the quarter. Based on your rationale and your hypotheses/research questions, you will propose a detailed methods section indicating the type of methods you will employ to test your hypotheses and you will provide a brief section on how you might hypothetically analyze that data (using various statistical tests, etc.). You will also have a chance to modify your BBIII project.

The main project this quarter will be the completion of a research proposal. The research proposal will be completed in stages called "Building Blocks." The final paper will include an introduction, research rationale, testable hypotheses, and a method section. Detailed instruction sheets are available on Camino (along with examples). Each paper should be formatted in APA 6th edition style and uploaded to Camino by the due date indicated on the syllabus.

Note: If you do not submit all four parts of this project, you will earn an "F" in the course, regardless of your total course grade.

Assignment Grading

Examinations (300 Points total)

- Exam #1 150 Points
- Exam #2 150 Points

Course Project (500 Points total)

- Building Block I 100 Points
- Building Block II 100 Points
- Building Block III 150 Points
- Building Block IV 150 Points

Miscellany (200 Points Total)

- Peer Review – BB I 10 Points
- Peer Review – BBII 10 Points
- Peer Review – BBIII 10 Points
- Homework (12 @ 10 pts.) 120 Points
- Attendance & Participation 50 Points

Total Points Possible: 1000

Final Grade Point Distribution

Grade	=	Point Breakdown	%
A	=	940 – 1000	94%
A-	=	900 – 939	90%
B+	=	880 – 899	88%
B	=	840 – 879	84%
B-	=	800 – 839	80%
C+	=	780 – 799	78%
C	=	740 – 779	74%
C-	=	700 – 739	70%
D	=	630 – 699	63%
D-	=	600 – 629	60%
F	=	599 & Below	59%

Note: Students who do not attend the first class period will be dropped from the class. After that, if you stop attending class you will earn the grade of "F" in the course (not an "NS"). I will not drop you from the class automatically, except on the first day.

Expectations for Graded Work

This is a general guide of what I consider when assigning a grade to your work. These descriptions are for your information and reference only and do not guarantee you a grade:

A: An "A" is earned for excellent or exceptional work. This not only includes completion of all assignments but also a superior understanding of the material through high quality writing, presentation, etc. Assignments which earn an A are very creative, apply material from the class in unique ways to demonstrate mastery of the information, and are very thoughtful. "A" work goes above & beyond the assignment requirements. Those students whose work is at a consistently higher caliber and they are vital members of the class discussion in this course are likely to receive an A.

B: A "B" is earned for good work. This includes completion of all requirements for that assignment and shows a very good understanding of the material. Assignments that earn a B are accurate, well thought-out, and reflective on the material in this course. Students who consistently attend and participate in class and whose work is at this level are likely to receive a B in the course.

C: A "C" is earned for average work. This includes completion of the basic requirements found in this syllabus or in individual assignment sheets. Students who receive a C on an assignment show understanding of the material and are generally thoughtful. Receiving a C also shows general competence in grammar, spelling, organization, & structure. Those students who meet all basic requirements for this course are likely to receive a C.

D: A "D" is earned to below average work. This includes completion of assignments, but missing key elements of those assignments. Students who typically receive a D have failed to demonstrate basic competence of the ideas we discuss in class. Those students who regularly do less-than-average work, seldom attend or participate in class, or don't really care about this class are likely to receive a D

F: An "F" is given to poor or failing work. Students receiving an F have little grasp of the topic area, have not met the requirements for the assignments, are not attending or participating in class discussions, or don't care about this class. Receiving an F means that you have not fulfilled your obligations as a student in this course.

Course Policies

☑ Attendance & Excused Absences:

Research methods concepts and ideas can be somewhat difficult to grasp; therefore, attending class regularly will not only improve your grade but also your overall understanding of quantitative methods. Because I feel that attendance is such an important aspect of this class, you must be present each day the class meets. Missing more than 2 class days will result in a zero for participation and make you ineligible for extra credit. Missing 4 or more days of class will result in your final letter grade being reduced by one full grade. Missing 6 or more days of class will result in a failing grade in the class.

Absences are excused at my discretion and only under certain circumstances, such as having a note from a medical professional (i.e., physician or nurse practitioner) showing you have been ill, a documented family emergency (I will request documentation), or being away at a documented (and pre-approved) university-sanctioned event, such as competing for an SCU team. A medical appointment slip is NOT an acceptable reason for an excuse. Work-related absences and personal absences (such as family weddings) are also not acceptable excuses, so please plan accordingly. Make-up exams & times are only given when there are serious extenuating circumstances and when you can provide written documentation of those circumstances. You should notify me prior to the exam to secure permission for taking a make-up exam. If you are involved in a university-approved activity, (e.g., an athletic team or the speech team) you must provide me with a copy of your schedule at the beginning of the course. Under all circumstances, I ask that you maintain regular communication with me about your situations so that I can work with you, if possible.

Finally, please note the date and time of the final examination. I am unable to

accommodate changes of the time/date of the final exam.

😊 Participation:

Being actively engaged in the material will greatly assist your learning. To that end, this class includes a strong emphasis on participation. Your obligations are to attend and participate in the class. Please complete the assignments and read the textbook prior to attending each session. Bring your textbook to each class session. You will be qualitatively and quantitatively evaluated at the end of the quarter as to your active contribution to the course.

👏 Classroom Citizenship:

Our class starts on time, every day. Please do not arrive late to class. If you happen to be late, please make sure you do not interrupt the class. Habitual tardiness will factor negatively in your final participation/attendance grade. Please be respectful and courteous to the other students as well as the instructor (i.e. do not use cell phones, pagers, laptops, iPads, etc. during class without prior approval). I reserve the right to reduce your final course grade for disturbing the learning environment.

Work toward becoming a leader in this class. Classroom leadership involves the overall attitude you express: Your acceptance of alternative points of view on controversial issues (you do not have to agree, but you have to respect another's right to her/his point of view), providing relevant examples, and participation in activities and discussion. Constant moaning and groaning, doing non course-related work, text messaging, using other electronic devices during lecture, resistance to course activities, talking to your friends while others are speaking, falling asleep, arriving late to class, or continuously asking if we are going to get out early are examples of poor leadership and will result in a reduction of your participation grade.

🗨️ ADA Statement:

If you have a documented disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, www.scu.edu/disabilities, as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please initiate a conversation with me about your accommodations during my office hours within the first two weeks of class. Students who are pregnant and parenting may also be eligible for accommodations. Accommodations will only be provided after I have verification of your accommodations as approved by Disabilities Resources, and with sufficient lead time for me to arrange testing or other accommodations. For more information you may contact Disabilities Resources at [408-554-4109](tel:408-554-4109).

📄 Written Assignments:

All assignments must be typed, written in Times New Roman, 12 point font, 1" margins on all sides of your paper, black ink. You will submit all your assignments online using Camino. We will be using the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association 6th Edition* (APA) as our formatting guidelines for submission of all papers.

🕒 **Office Hours:** Communication researchers have found a strong positive relationship between engaging in extra class communication and course grades. Therefore, I encourage you to visit my office as frequently as you like. I have established set times to assist you with course-related material. Office hours are available on a walk-in basis, but for ease of scheduling, I ask that you refer to the Camino calendar to block out an appointment time. I will be more than happy to review early drafts of any assignment during office hours. Just make sure you bring a draft copy of that assignment that we can make notes on.

Due Dates and Late Work

Certain course assignments can be turned in late, while others cannot. Assignments are by the date and time listed on this syllabus. Assignments will be considered "late" immediately following that due date/time.

- For the **Course Project**, your late work will result in a grade reduction of 20% for every calendar day that it is late (including the date that it was due). You will submit your course projects online through Camino. The last part of the course project (BBIV) cannot be turned in late under any circumstances.

- **Homework, In-class activities, and Peer feedback** can never be turned in late, regardless of the excuse. Homework is always submitted on-line and is late as soon as class starts. The peer review is also completed online.

- **Exams** cannot be completed late, with the exception of documented emergencies (see policy). With **prior** notice, we can work out most issues, but if you miss an exam without any notice, you will not be able to make it up.



Please note: Technological failures (**of any kind**) are not excused reasons to turn in a paper late. Please remember that technology has a tendency to fail during the most inopportune times (such as when you are using the computer). Therefore, backup your files! I suggest using a free automated online backup service, such as www.idrive.com or www.opendrive.com. Also, your SCU gmail account comes with space available to save and backup your work (google drive).



Source: freedigitalphotos.net

Academic Integrity

Santa Clara University and the Department of Communication are strong proponents of academic integrity. Thus, I expect that all of your work will be original and produced only by you. Therefore, any form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. For this class, there is a zero-tolerance policy for academic honesty violations. If you choose to violate university standards for academic integrity, you will be subject to a sanction at the instructor's discretion including failing the course. Plagiarism can be defined as using another's words, ideas, materials, or work without properly acknowledging and documenting the source. If you need a more detailed definition of plagiarism, I recommend visiting the following website:

<http://www.plagiarism.org/> The University has specific policies relating to academic integrity, which can be found here: <http://www.scu.edu/studentlife/resources/upload/Academic-Integrity-Protocol-Document.pdf> Please make sure to familiarize yourself with these policies & definitions.

You will submit an "academic integrity contract" during the first week of the class, indicating that you are aware of the policies related to academic integrity. I am unable to accept any of your written work until after that document has been signed and submitted.

© **Copyright Notice:** My lectures, notes, handouts, and displays are protected by state common law and federal copyright law. They are my own original expression and I've recorded them prior or during my lecture in order to ensure that I obtain copyright protection. Students are authorized to take notes in my class; however, this authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your own personal use and no other use – including distribution to others after the course. Consent for you to use any video or audio recording device in class shall be made on a case-by-case basis and you must obtain permission before doing so. If you are so authorized to record my lectures, you may not copy those recordings or any other material, provide copies of either to anyone else, or make a commercial use of them without prior permission from me. Any exceptions to this policy must be made by me in writing.

10 guiding rules for being a student in this course

1. Come to class, prepared and on-time every day.
2. Be respectful and let others talk without interruption, including me.
3. Read the assigned material before class starts.
4. Turn off your cell phones and other “noisy” devices.
5. Think about the material, ask questions during lectures, and reflect. If you have a question, ask it!
6. Don’t do work for other classes during our class time together.
7. Have an open mind.
8. Visit me in my office. Seriously.
9. Set expectations for yourself and seek to exceed those expectations.
10. Challenge yourself to avoid the temptation to use the lab computer for anything except course work – use the computer as a tool for your success.

How do I earn an “A” in this class?

Students often ask me how they can earn an “A” in the class. The university (see the student handbook) says that an “A” is reserved for “Excellent” work. In my view, that means that you should go exceed the assignment minimum requirements. Remember, just meeting assignment requirements is to be considered “acceptable” work (the grade of “C”). Here are some tips on pushing yourself toward earning an “A” (these are not guarantees, but are suggestions):

1. Read the course material before class starts. Every time. Don’t get behind in reading!
2. Write notes and questions to yourself in the margins of your text or in your notes.
3. Ask your questions in class at the appropriate time. If you still don’t understand, ask me after class or during office hours. Ask your classmates as well.
4. The students that earn the highest scores in the class are the same students that frequently come to office hours with questions about their projects. I would recommend coming to my office hours to talk about each phase of your project (at least 4 times).
5. Truly engage with the material. Think about how this material could apply to you now and in the future. When you think of those things, jot down those thoughts in your notes. Review those notes frequently.
6. Think of ways that you can go above and beyond the assignment requirements to truly set your paper apart and demonstrate your mastery of the concepts and material
7. Finally, review your prior written work and ask yourself “what else could I do to make this even better?” Then, implement those changes. Repeat this step at least once more.

Help & Resources

If you are feeling lost, overwhelmed, or just need some additional help in the class...

1. Make an appointment with me

You are welcome to setup an appointment with me during office hours (see Camino) or outside of those times. I am available in person, by e-mail, and can even setup a virtual meeting, if needed.

2. Visit the [HUB Writing Center](#)

The HUB Writing Center has Drop-in and appointment slots, visit them in Benson Room 22 or make an appointment on their website.

3. Use the Library Resources

Check out the library guide on Camino and consider discussing your project with our reference librarian, Paul Neuhaus (408-554-5431). Library help is available at any time the library is open.

4. Use the online resources

Make sure that you carefully look over the resources and links available on Camino – you’ll find many useful tools in developing your paper and in helping you out with homework. If you need APA help, use Purdue OWL’s site.

5. Feeling Stressed?

Listen to your body and your mind! If you need personalized counseling and/or psychological services, contact CAPS (Cowell Center) by phone: 408-554-4501. Professionals are available to help you and you can direct you to other resources. CAPS also offers a useful stress reduction program.

Tentative Class Schedule

Students are expected to read the chapters listed and complete all assignments. While I have done my best to make sure this schedule is accurate, please anticipate minor changes as we go through the class together.

Notes: Assigned readings are listed in **Green**, Homework in **Blue**, Assignments in **Red**.

Please make sure to check Camino before each class to watch the short “topic video” before each class

WEEK 1: Introduction to Quantitative Communication Research

Tue. 1/6 Introduction of the course, syllabus and classmate introductions
Lecture/Discussion: Introducing Communication Research
Complete First Module on Camino (Course Contract & Academic Integrity Contract)

Read: Chapters 1

Thu. 1/8 Introduction to Empirical Research
Lecture/Discussion: How do we know what we know about communication?

Due: Syllabus Survey & Academic Integrity Quiz

Read: Chapter 2

WEEK 2: Researching your Topic and Synthesizing Research

Tue. 1/13 Locating Research on a Topic
Lecture/Discussion: How to formulate a research proposal

Read: Chapter 3

Read: APA Manual Chapter 2 (pages 21-59)

Thu. 1/15 Writing a Literature Review & Using APA Style

Read: Chapter 4

Read: APA Manual pages 9 – 20

Homework #1 (Finding Research) Due

Assignment Discussion: Building Block II

Note: Please bring your APA Manuals with you to class

Building Block I Due by Friday January 16th at 5:00pm (to Camino)

Remember: Please see syllabus policy on late work.

WEEK 3: Ethics and Developing good Questions

Tue. 1/20 All things Ethics
Lecture/Discussion: Understanding Ethics in Research
Video: Historical Context of Ethics in Research
Lecture/Discussion: The Pitfalls of Plagiarism & Academic Dishonesty

Homework #2 (APA Style) Due

Read: Chapter 5

Thu. 1/22 Developing Questions and Predictions about Communication
Lecture/Discussion: Research Questions & Hypotheses
Lecture/Discussion: What is a Variable?

Read: Chapter 6

Homework #3 (Ethical Context for Research) Due

Due: Peer Feedback for Building Block I (by 5:00pm)

WEEK 4: All about Variables & Measurement

Tue. 1/27 Measuring Variables
Lecture/Discussion: Defining your Variables Correctly
Lecture/Discussion: Scale Creation & Unit of Analysis
Homework #4 (Hypotheses and Research Questions) Due
Read: Chapter 7

Thu. 1/29 Reliability and Validity in Communication Research
Lecture/Discussion: The importance of designing valid research.
Lecture/Discussion: Measurement Reliability
Discussion: Answer Questions about the midterm Exam – review sheet is online.
Homework #5 (Variables & Conceptual/Operational Definitions) Due
Read: Chapter 9

WEEK 5: Exam #1 and Sampling

Tue. 2/3 **Exam #1 (Covering weeks 1 – 4)**
Note: once the exam is done, I will be available to discuss your papers. So, if you finish the exam early, please feel free to come back to class after the exam.

Thu. 2/5 Sampling and Hypothesis Testing
Lecture/Discussion: The importance of a good sample
Lecture/Discussion: Basics on how we test hypotheses
Homework #6 (Reliability and Validity) Due
Read: Chapter 8
Building Block II Due by Friday February 6th at 5:00pm (to Camino)

WEEK 6: Survey Designs

Tue. 2/10 Primary Method #1: Survey Design
Lecture/Discussion: How to measure attitudes using surveys
Lecture/Discussion: Designing a questionnaire or interview guide
Read: Chapter 10

Thu. 2/12 Survey Designs (continued)
Lecture/Discussion: Critiquing Survey Designs
In Class Group Activity on Surveys
Homework #7 (Survey Methods) Due
Due: Peer Feedback for Building Block II (by 5:00pm)

WEEK 7: Experimental Designs

- Tue. 2/17 Primary Method #2: Experimental Design
Lecture/Discussion: How to evaluate a cause-and-effect relationship
Lecture/Discussion: Benefits and Disadvantages of Experimental Design.
Read: Chapter 12
- Thu. 2/19 Experimental Designs (continued)
Lecture/Discussion: How to critique experiments
In-Class Activity: Designing an Experiment

WEEK 8: Content Analysis & Describing Data

- Tue. 2/24 Primary Method #3: Content Analysis
Lecture/Discussion: Designing a project using coding
Lecture/Discussion: Understanding Content Analysis Methods
In-class Activity: Intercoder Reliability
Read: Chapter 11
Homework #8 (Experiments) Due
- Thu. 2/26 I have my data...now what?
Introduction to Using the SPSS Environment
Lecture/Discussion: Hypothesis Review
Lecture/Discussion: How to Describe our Data
Homework #9 (Content Analysis) Due
Read: Pages 267-278
Building Block III Due by Friday February 27th at 5:00pm (to Camino)

WEEK 9: Analyzing Data & Testing Hypotheses

- Tue. 3/3 Thinking about Tests of Differences
Lecture/Discussion: Evaluating Research using Difference Tests
Read: Pages 279-288
Homework #10 (Describing Data) Due
- Thu. 3/5 In-class Group Activity, Workshop, and Catch up
Homework #11 (Testing Differences) Due
Due: Peer Feedback for Building Block III (by 5:00pm)

WEEK 10: Relationships & Final Thoughts

- Tue. 3/10 Thinking about Tests of Relationships
Lecture/Discussion: Evaluating Correlational Tests
Read: Pages 289-297
In Class Course Evaluations
- Thu. 3/12 Putting it all Together
Final Exam Review
Final Thoughts & Effect Sizes
Read: Pages 297-305
Homework #12 (Testing Relationships) Due
DUE: Building Block IV (Due Sunday March 15th by 11:59pm)
Note: We will setup a special (optional) group study session during week 10.
- Tue. 3/17 Final Exam at 9:10am – Same Classroom

Department and Course Learning Outcomes Map

Below is a summary of the key department learning outcomes that this course helps to fulfill. I have placed the course learning objectives under those learning outcomes and then have "mapped" the relationship between the course assignments and activities, course learning objectives, and the department learning objectives.

