

MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS (3 SCH)
MCOM 350 Fall 2016
UC 230 T/R 1:30-2:45 PM

Instructor: ELLS **E-mail:** kevin.ells@tamut.edu **Telephone:** (903) 223-3040
Office: UC 209 **Office Hours:** M 11-11:30, 2:30-3; TR 10-10:45; 10-15 min. after each class

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a detailed examination of resource evaluation and research skills essential in mass communication fields such as journalism and marketing. Students learn essential quantitative and qualitative research methods and consider ethical issues in communication research in a face-to-face seminar with regularly scheduled meetings twice per week.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Kovacs & Rosenstiel, *Blur: How to Know What's True in an Age of Information Overload* (2011), ISBN: 978-1608193011

Treadwell, D.F., *Introducing Communication Research: Paths of Inquiry* 3rd Edition (2016), ISBN: 978-1483379418

Shop for used or rented editions at Alibris, Amazon, Chegg, eBay, or Fetchbook.Info

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completion of MCOM 350, students should have the ability to:

- Assess credibility of evidence and reliability of sources for any information or proposition propagated in media of mass communication
- Align communication research questions with appropriate research methods, whether qualitative, quantitative, historical, or critical
- Demonstrate facility with fundamental skills set of qualitative research
- Evaluate visual displays and written reports of quantitative research for plausibility and rigor
- Write a research proposal appropriate to a specific mass communication field, such as public relations, advertising, broadcasting, or social marketing.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

1000 points available. Those who complete a full research paper may add up to 10% to the final score for the course.

COURSE REQUIREMENT	POINTS
Midterm exam	200
Assignments & worksheets	300
Research proposal	300
Final exam	200
Full research paper?	[100]
Total	1000

GRADING SCALE

The Deans' Council has established a University-wide Common Grading Scale to be used in ALL courses effective Fall 2010:

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

EXAMS (2 x 200 POINTS)

Each exam will comprise objective (matching, multiple-choice, true/false) and subjective (short-answer) items. Exams will test recollection (definitions, terminology) and interpretation (data examples, case studies).

ASSIGNMENTS/STATISTICAL WORKSHEETS (300 POINTS)

Completed in class individually, or in groups. Assignment/worksheet may require outside work to be turned in at the next class meeting.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL (300 POINTS)

Students may expand on a previous communication research paper by completing a formal methods section, deciding on a methodology best suited to address questions arising from a literature review. OR a student may write a research proposal in a format expected in a particular mass communication profession (such as advertising, broadcasting, or design). Proposals will be written in APA format, including a reference list, an abstract, and a title page complete with running heads, abstract, body, and references list. Proposals will be uploaded to Blackboard and a hard copy will be submitted in class.

PARTICIPATION POLICY

Be here. In order for you to get the most out of this class, attendance is vital.

Read. Have all reading assignments completed **before** class.

Discuss. Be ready to discuss readings and assignments as an individual and as a member of a group.

COURSE ETIQUETTE

- **Turn off all cellular phones and beepers during class. Phones or pagers active for family or medical reasons must be set to silent or vibrate, and if you take a call, you must leave the class, and catch up later.**
- **Speak of people in class or outside it as individuals deserving courtesy, respect, and the benefit of the doubt—not as competitors, or as representatives of identifiable group**

MISSED ASSIGNMENTS

Students are provided a course calendar showing each exam and research proposal due dates at the beginning of the semester and are expected to adhere to these dates/times. Students will not be able to make up any missed assignments/statistical worksheets, exams, or research proposal without a compelling reason.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic honesty is required of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and undocumented use of materials from any source constitute academic dishonesty and may be grounds for a grade of 'F' in the course and/or disciplinary actions. For additional information, see the university catalog.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Texas A&M University - Texarkana, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, may request reasonable accommodations through the Texas A&M University-Texarkana Disability Services Offices by calling 903-223-3062. Thereafter, any student requesting such accommodation should meet with his/her Lab Instructor to discuss any accommodations or special needs. *This should be done at the beginning of the semester because retroactive accommodations will not be given.*

A&M-TEXARKANA EMAIL ADDRESS

Upon application to Texas A&M University-Texarkana an individual will be assigned an A&M-Texarkana email account. This email account will be used to deliver official university correspondence. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via the university email account and is expected to check the official A&M-Texarkana email account on a frequent and consistent basis. Faculty and students are required to utilize the university email account when communicating about coursework.

DROP POLICY

To drop this course after the census date, a student must complete a Drop/Withdrawal Request Form, obtained in the Registrar's Office, or found the University website (<http://tamut.edu/Student-Support/Registrar/Dropping.html>). The student must submit the signed and completed form to the instructor of each course indicated on the form to be dropped for his/her signature. The signature is not an "approval" to drop, but rather confirmation that the student has discussed the drop/withdrawal with the faculty member. The form must be submitted to the Registrar's office for processing in person, by email (Registrar@tamut.edu), regular mail (7101 University Ave., Texarkana, TX 75503) or fax (903-223-3140). Drop/withdraw forms missing any of the required information will not be accepted by the Registrar's Office for processing. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the form is completed properly before submission. If a student stops participating in class (attending and submitting assignments) but does not complete and submit the drop/withdrawal form, a final grade based on work completed as outlined in the syllabus will be assigned.

STUDENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Solutions to common problems and FAQ's for your web-enhanced and web courses are found at this link: <http://www.tamut.edu/Training/Student%20Training/index.html>

- If you cannot find your resolution there, you can send in a support request detailing your specific problem here: <http://www.tamut.edu/techde/support.htm>

- Blackboard Helpdesk contacts (office hours are: Monday - Friday, 8:00a to 5:00p)

Julia Allen (main contact) 903-223-3154 julia.allen@tamut.edu

Nikki Thomson (alternate) 903-223-3083 nikki.thomson@tamut.edu

Jayson Ferguson (alternate) 903-223-3105 jayson.ferguson@tamut.edu

Week	Dates	Topics	Chapters
1	Aug 23-25	Introductions, journalisms, sources	<i>Blur</i> 1-3
2	Aug 30-Sep 1	Testing and critiquing evidence; reading for completeness, bias, and credibility	<i>Blur</i> 4-8
3	Sep 6-8	Perceptual biases, statistical illusions	<i>Blur</i> 9-end
4	Sep 13-15	Communication research inside the university and out	Treadwell, 1-2
5	Sep 20-22	Principles of quantitative research and stats checking	Treadwell, 5 & 8
6	Sep 27-29	Principles of qualitative research and interviewing	Treadwell, 11
7	Oct 4-6	Analyzing language, rhetoric, and style	Treadwell, 13
8	Oct 11-13	Mid-term exam and review	
9	Oct 18-20	Descriptive statistics: demographics, counting things	Treadwell, 6
10	Oct 25-27	Inferring aspects of populations from samples	Treadwell, 7
11	Nov 1-3	Inference Method #1 (on the job): Surveys	Treadwell, 9
12	Nov 8-10	Inference Method #2 (grad school): Experiments	Treadwell, 10
13	Nov 15-17	Inference method #3: Content Analysis (counting words, crunching numbers)	Treadwell, 12
14	Nov 22-24	Present research proposals; Give Thanks	
15	Nov 29-Dec 1	Wrap up; ethics of/and academic research	Treadwell, 3-4
16	Sat., Dec. 3	Final exam: 10:30-12:30	Treadwell

Assignments and schedule may be modified at the discretion of the professor or according to the needs of the students, but all material listed will be covered.