Research Methods in Communication

Sample Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Kylene Wesner
Office: BLTN 310
Office Hours: MW 12:20-3; F 11:10-2:50 or by appt.
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Required Text:

Required Technology
eCampus – http://ecampus.tamu.edu

Why Research Methods?
- Results from a 2013 survey by the Association of Colleges and universities, "It Takes More Than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success" (April, 2013) (http://www.aacu.org/leap/public-opinion-research)
- More than 75% of employers say they want more emphasis on 5 key areas including: critical thinking, complex problem-solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world settings.
- Employers endorse several educational practices as potentially helpful in preparing college students for workplace success. These include practices that require students to a) conduct research and use evidence-based analysis; b) gain in-depth knowledge in the major and analytic, problem solving and communication skills; and c) apply their learning in real-world settings.

Purpose: This is a hybrid course where presentation of content is online and in class. In class meetings will also be used for the discussion of material, case study analysis, and group project work. The purpose of this course is to obtain an understanding of communication research methods and to gain experience successfully conducting communication-related research.

Learning Objectives: At the completion of this course, students will be able to:
- articulate various approaches to conducting communication research
- perform informed, critical analysis of research reports
- demonstrate sufficient knowledge of research methods such that he or she can conduct research using a variety of methods (library research, interviews, focus groups, surveys, observation, and experimentation)
- successfully perform simple statistical analyses related to correlations and differences among groups
- design, conduct, and evaluate a media campaign or multimedia experiment using multiple research methods
Grades

In-Class Exams (300 total points) - 150 pts for each exam
Thorough preparation for each exam is necessary if you want to do well in this class, not studying for one exam and doing poorly can be detrimental to your final grade. You MUST work hard every day. You will earn your grade, you are not owed or entitled to a grade. If you are truly concerned about your grade in this class then you will come to class having read the material every day, take excellent notes, and will ask questions if you have them. Please note: all material covered in the assigned readings is “fair game”, even if we do not talk about it in class.

Online Quizzes (110 total points) – 10 pts per quiz
There will be a total of 11 online quizzes. Quizzes will be located on eCampus and open on Wednesdays at 12:30pm and will close on Sunday night at 11:59pm. There will not be a quiz every week, but most weeks. So make sure to check eCampus regularly. Do not wait until the last minute to take your quiz, as technical difficulties can ensue and will prevent you from being able to complete it on time. Failure to remember to take one of these quizzes means you earn a 0 for that quiz and cannot be made up.

Group Activities (60 total points)
At the beginning of the semester you will sign up in a group of 5 (4 if there is not enough) via eCampus. You will select a group leader, who is responsible for submitting assignments, verifying group members’ attendance and participation, and serves as the contact point for the professor. At least one person in your group should have a laptop or tablet that they bring to class with them in order for the group to work on the group assignments while in class. Throughout the semester there will be randomly assigned in-class activities, which you will complete in your group and then submit via eCampus by the end of class. You must be present in class at the time these activities occur to earn points and the assignments will be graded, it is not just a completion grade. There may also be one or two activities that require work outside of the classroom. The assignments will also vary in the amount of points for each assignment.

Honors Student Project & Presentation (100 points)
Honors students will work in groups and conduct their own research project throughout the semester and then present their research to the class at the end of the semester. More details will be provided on eCampus.

Ideas Related to Grading

Grades for exams will be posted to eCampus within 48 hours of taking the exam. You will have 1 week from the exam grades have been posted to come to my office and review your exam if you have questions and would like to look over it.

If you have a question about an item on the exam you will have to make an argument as to why the answer you chose should be considered correct and you must back up your argument with evidence from the book and/or your notes, so bring them with you. I will not be answering questions like “Well why is this answer x and not y?” The test questions come from information in the book and lecture notes so if you look at those sources you will be able to answer that question yourself. Self-reflection and learning are valuable parts of the learning process.

Grading Scale for Final Grade: A = 423-470; B = 376-422; C = 329-375; D = 282-328; F = 281 or less