

Mass Communication Research Methods

Journalism 7075 / 8075-01

Spring 2011

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COURSE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

CATALOG/COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Familiarization with content analysis, survey research, data analysis, and field studies as practiced by reporters, editors, and public relations decision makers; modern research techniques and class project using computer analysis.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR RESEARCH:

- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

PREREQUISITE:

Graduate status

COURSE TEXT AND READINGS:

Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2011). *Mass media research: An introduction*, 9th ed. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth. [e.g., www.ichapters.com]

Salkind, N. J. (2011). *Statistics for people who think they hate statistics*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. With SPSS disk is \$26 more, ISBN= 978-1-4129-5151-7. We have SPSS in the labs on campus. But, SPSS CD for \$26 is a great deal. Consider it.

APA Publication Manual, 6th ed. [Adopted by the journalism graduate faculty as your standard reference for style. The law and history courses will be exceptions.]

An APA 6th tutorial is at: <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>

Please read the assigned chapters **before** class. The instructor will distribute readings to supplement the text.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

Cognitive Objectives To Be Mastered (Ability To Explain, Analyze, Understand, Think Critically):

- Become aware of the process of social science and of the “tools” used in journalism/mass communication research.

- Critically evaluate the research work of others and propose research for yourself.
- Write a research proposal in academic style for a project, a thesis, or write an original research paper on a topic you negotiate with your instructor.
- Understand and apply basic statistical concepts to social science problems.
- Demonstrate your ability to work with survey data in SPSS.
- Propose statistical manipulation, where appropriate, of your own research.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR RESEARCH:

Awareness:

- Become aware of the process of social science.

Understanding:

- Understand where and how the “tools” of social science are correctly applied.
- Understand basic statistical concepts used in data manipulation and presentation.

Application:

- Select the most appropriate social science “tool” for your own research.
- Write three critical reviews of the work of others.
- Pass the statistics portion of periodic exams.
- Propose statistical manipulation, where appropriate, of your own research.

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

Exams. There will be two exams. These exams will test your comprehension of the material in the text, lectures, discussion, and handouts. The exams will contain essay, short answer, and discussion components.

GRADING:

First phase exam 23 %

Second phase exam (statistics) 23 %

Research proposal paper 30 %

Research proposal paper *parts* 12 %

Journal article reports (3 reports) 12 %

Number grades on tests and papers translate into these letter grades:

A 90.0 - 100

B 80.0 - 89.9

C 70.0 - 79.9

D 60.0 - 69.9

F below 60

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Overview. Whether a journalist writing a news story based on a public opinion survey, a public relations practitioner surveying the community prior to an information campaign, or an advertising executive trying to determine the effect of a commercial, today’s communication professional must understand communication research. In your career, you will probably have to commission research, do some of your own, or analyze and interpret research done by others.

Goals. This course introduces journalism graduate students to qualitative and quantitative social science research methods. In addition, you will be introduced to elementary data

analysis/statistical procedures with a statistics software program called SPSS. You will also read and apply the APA style manual.

Original research is at the heart of the graduate education experience. Those of you who plan to complete the six-credit **thesis** will develop (in this class) a research proposal in support of your likely thesis topic. Those who plan to do the three-hour **project** will develop (in this class) a research **proposal** in support of your project. We will study the different methods of mass communication research and consider which method is appropriate to the research questions you plan to address in your thesis, project, or at work.

This is not a course that you can take and forget. Mass communication research methods provides the foundation for your own research. The course introduces research strategies that you will use in other courses, in your *thesis* or *project*, and in your *profession*.

Mass communication research methods introduces several methods (or tools), as well as basic strategies in statistical analysis. However, in order to develop sophistication in a particular method or statistical procedure, you should take additional methods or statistics courses.

The formulas scattered throughout the textbook may trigger flashbacks to earlier math courses. Even if you barely squeezed through required math, you should have no trouble with the elementary statistics in this course. We will discuss when to apply certain statistical tests to data. You will use SPSS to perform statistical analysis in this class. The course assumes a familiarity with computer operations.

Class Participation. An *education* is more than taking tests and getting a grade. In graduate seminars, your *informed input* is important. Please read, reflect and contribute to the discussion. At the end of the semester, you will present your research proposal to the class: what research questions you will address and how you will address them.

Journal Article Reports. Each student will locate three mass communication journal articles illustrative of the **particular methods** we are studying. Choose articles from journals that report academic research, e.g.,

- Journal of Advertising
- Journal of Advertising Research
- Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media
- Journal of Communication
- Journal of Public Relations Research
- Management Communication Quarterly
- Public Relations Journal (online)
- Public Relations Review
- Public Relations Quarterly
- Journalism Quarterly
- Newspaper Research Journal
- Journal of the Southern States Communication Association
- Corporate Reputation Review

The first article should report the results of a **survey**; the second, the results of a **content analysis**; and the third, an **experiment**.

For each article write a report showing that you understand the basic concepts of the **method**. I will give you a *Word* document with the format on it. Given the nature of this class, you will want

to focus on the research design. Consider *what* the author(s) looked for and *how* they got the answer. Please tell me whether it stands up to the standards you studied under that design. **Attach a copy of the article to your critique.** You will get it back.

Research Paper. The paper will be your *proposal* for some type of journalism/mass communication research. This is your opportunity to choose a topic (and appropriate method) that interests you and develop some sophistication in an area of research. This paper could be a preliminary *thesis proposal* or *project proposal*. This paper should be between **7 and 12 double-spaced**, typed pages (not including the cover page, references or attachments, e.g., draft surveys). Pretest any survey instrument you might propose. **You won't actually be carrying out the research in this class.**

If you absolutely, positively know you won't be writing a thesis or project, you may write an in-depth piece on a **measurement topic** appropriate to your area of study. The format may deviate from the one below. You must get your instructor's approval on the topic before proceeding.

The paper will consist of:

- Cover page (Use APA journal style)
- Introduction
- Literature review – what other studies have found about the issue or problem
- Hypotheses or research questions
- Method – including research questions or hypotheses. Include your instrument, code sheet and SPSS spreadsheet with variables at the top of the columns.
- References (Use APA outdent style)
- Appendices, e.g., surveys, cover letter for survey, instructions to participants in an experiment, interviewers guide, moderators guide for a focus group, draft code book for content analysis.

Turn in drafts for comments as shown on the semester plan. Include the **cover sheet**, **introduction** and **references** (or end notes, if applicable) with *each* submission to help orient me to what I am reading. Also include **revisions of previous sections** with the *current* section you are turning in. Previous sections will not be reevaluated.

Writing quality is important in journalism. Follow American Psychological Association style guide (6th edition). **Note your style version (6th) on the paper's cover sheet.**

Distributing materials. The Univ. of Memphis provides an easy way to distribute mail and documents to students registered in a class. They create a list using the U of M assigned e-mail addresses for each student. I intend to use that e-mail system.

JOUR 7075 / 8075 Journalism Research Methods Calendar

Jan 18 Welcome.

Syllabus

- The role of Theory in Research (by e-mail)
- From theory to fact (by e-mail)
- Four types of theory (by e-mail)

Jan 25 Introduction to mass communication research. Science and research.
Using the library.

- Excerpts from Cook & Campbell Threats to Internal Validity (by e-mail)
- Qs for all chapters (by e-mail)
- Library research notes (by e-mail)
- APA common mistakes (by e-mail)
- Word 2007 and APA (by e-mail)

Readings: *Wimmer & Dominick*, chap 1

Salkind chaps 1 – 3

APA chap 1- 2 Intro, Structure & Content

Feb 1 Elements of research. Ethics. Triangulation

- Ethics of research (by e-mail)
- Selecting a research topic (Fitch & Ferrier)
- Peter Bridson memo dtd 12/9/02 (handout in class)
- Reliability and validity -- Target Example (by e-mail)
- Informed consent form (by e-mail)

Readings: *Wimmer & Dominick*, chaps 2 – 3

Salkind chap 6

APA chap 3 Writing

Visit: Human subjects research Web site: irb.memphis.edu

Activity: Do IRB module. The link is on: <http://academics.memphis.edu/irb/resources.php> click on “click here”

Copy/paste the final screen that shows you completed the module. Save it. You will need it later should you need to file for an exemption.

Feb 8 Qualitative methods. Focus group simulation.

Focus group simulation.

- Guide to conducting focus groups (by-e-mail)
- Phrases and probes for interviews and focus groups (by e-mail)
- Evaluating research reports (by e-mail)
- Research article critique sheet – guide for assignments (by e-mail)
- Reporting focus group results by Sinikas (by e-mail)

Readings: *Wimmer & Doninick*, chap 5

Salkind chaps 4 – 5

APA chap 4 - 5 Figures and Tables

Feb 15 Sampling and surveys.

- Total Error (by e-mail)
- How big a sample do I need? (by e-mail)
- Sample size – Keywords # 54 (by e-mail)
- Excel worksheet for samples (by e-mail)
- Telephone research guide (by e-mail)
- Sample grad student papers (by e-mail) sent separately

Readings: *Wimmer & Dominick* chaps 4, 7

Salkind chap 7

APA chap 6 - 7 Sources & References

Other SPSS articles are at: www.spss.com/tech/stat/Articles.htm

Feb 22 Surveys, cont. Think aloud protocol.

- Introductions for surveys (by e-mail)
- Survey tips [pdf file] (by e-mail)
- Survey types and characteristics (by e-mail)
- Scales for surveys
- Key survey terms
- 20 Questions to ask about a poll
- Dillman on surveys
- Critique this survey (by e-mail)

Turn in: Cover, Introduction, and references for semester paper (from semester paper)

Mar 1 **Phase one exam over W&D chaps 1 – 5, 7** (closed book); **Salkind 1 – 7**, (open book and notes); **plus notes and readings**

Mar 8 Spring Break

Mar 15 Longitudinal research.

Readings: *Wimmer & Dominick* chap 8

Turn in: **Survey research article critique**

Mar 22 Content Analysis. Content analysis simulation.

- Writing research reports (by e-mail)
- Code book sample (by e-mail)

Readings: *Wimmer & Dominick* chap 6

Turn in: **“Literature Review” part of your paper. Include revised cover, intro and references.**

Mar 29 Experiments / Field Experiments.

- Power handout (by e-mail)
- Statistical significance (by e-mail)
- Pitfalls to avoid in conducting and describing scholarly research (by e-mail)

Readings: *Wimmer & Dominick* chap 9

Salkind chaps 8 – 12

Turn in: **Content analysis research article critique**

Apr 5 Statistics. Hypothesis testing.

- Approaches to research: Sample problems (by e-mail) We will cover in class.

Readings: *Wimmer & Dominick* chaps 10 – 12. Chapter 10 is for review. *Salkind* may be easier to understand on this topic.

Chap 10-12 repeats material you have read in *Salkind*. Just for review.

Salkind chaps 13 - 16

Turn in: **“Hypotheses/research questions” (with associated theoretical and operational definitions) and “method” part of your paper. Attach all previous parts (as revised) to keep it all in context.**

Apr 12 Coding sheets. Using SPSS. Data entry from a survey.

- SPSS variable view (by e-mail)
- Variable view worksheet (by e-mail)
- SPSS and Stats Guide (by e-mail)
- IMAX survey and data

Readings: *Salkind* chaps 17 - 19

Turn in: **Experiment research article critique**

Apr 19 Using SPSS. Exercises with SPSS. Practice survey and data set.

- IMAX survey and data files (or other survey and data file)
- Interpreting crosstab tables (by e-mail)

Readings: *Salkind* chaps 20 – 21, App. A

Apr 26 **Second phase exam over W&D Chaps 6, 8 – 12; Salkind 6, 8 – 16; plus notes and readings. You will work a problem with a survey, data set and SPSS.**

May 3 Students present papers.

Turn in: **Semester paper due – all parts.**

Notes:

1. We may change the syllabus by mutual agreement.
2. Full credit can be given only to assignments turned in on time (or earlier).

OTHER RESOURCES YOU MAY WANT TO CONSULT

Statistics

SPSS Website www.spss.com/tech/stat/Articles.htm [see especially their articles on survey methods]

www.spss.com/academic

<http://insideout.spss.com/> [SPSS blog]

Statistics website at www.statistics.com

davidmlane.com/hyperstat/index.html

Warner, R. M. (2008). *Applied statistics*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Repositories for social science survey questions

Social science archives www.icpsr.umich.edu/gss
www.irss.unc.edu/data_archive

American Assn. for
Public Opinion Research www.aapor.org [see: “response rate calculator” under Survey Methods.
Lots of links in Resources on the Web, also under Survey Methods.]

Roper Center www.ropercenter.uconn.edu

Public Opinion Lab felix.iupui.edu [see: Completed Studies – results available from some
studies.
see: Links – useful references in many areas.]

National Survey www.wisc.edu/uwsc [see: Projects – actual Qs in national survey since 1988]

Style Guides (cheap, but far from complete). Recommended only until you get your copy of the APA manual.

Electronic citations
APA www.apa.org

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

<http://www.psywww.com/resource/APA%20Research%20Style%20Crib%20Sheet.htm>

References for writing proposals

Bui, Y. N. (2009). *How to write a master's thesis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Krathwohl, D. R. (1988). *How to prepare a research proposal: Guidelines for funding and dissertations in the social and behavioral sciences*. 3rd ed. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Leedy, P. D. (2004). *Practical research planning and design*, 8th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Locke, L. F., Spirduso, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2000). *Proposals that work*, 4th ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. [www.sagepub.com]

Ogden, E. H. (1993). *Completing your doctorate dissertation or master's thesis in two semesters or less*, 2nd ed. Lancaster, PA: Technomic.

Content Analysis

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Fico, F. G. (1998). *Analyzing media messages: Using content analysis in research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Intercoder reliability. <http://astro.temple.edu/~lombard/reliability/>

Content Analysis Web Sites (some with sample code books)

www.temple.edu/sct/mmc/reliability [excellent on intercoder reliability]

<http://astro.temple.edu/~lombard/reliability/> [intercoder reliability]

academic.csuohio.edu/kneuendorf/content [to get software for intercoder reliability, click on PRAM]

Palo Alto Research Center
www2.parc.com/istl/groups/qca/demos.html

www.car.ua.edu

Qualitative Research

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Survey Sites and References

Survey Monkey.com The journalism department has an account. Ask (Dr. Fischer) for User Name and Password.

Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS). Apply to have them gather data for you via Internet or phone (national sample).
www.experimentcentral.org

Free survey hosting for students (not sponsored research)
questionpro.com

“Think aloud” protocol. See: S. Presser et al. (2004). Methods for testing and evaluating survey questions. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 68(1), pp. 109-131.

Internet surveys, free or very inexpensive for students. The department has a subscription for 2007. surveymonkey.com

History as a tool

Galgano, Michael J, J. Chris Arnt, & Raymond M. Hyser (2008). *Doing History*. Boston: Thompson.

Legal research as a tool

Other “tools”

www.ets.org/testcoll Database of scales, inventories, surveys and such used in research articles

Directory of Unpublished Experimental Mental Models. Index of more than 1,700 unpublished instruments. Available in McWherter Library. [2009]

Other special Web sites / Print resources

Communication Studies Resources
www.uiowa.edu/~commstud/resources

First Amendment Handbook
www.rcfp.org/handbook/index.html

Freedom Forum
www.freedomforum.org

History of the Mass Media in the United States. P92.U5 H55 1998 [check for newer ver.]

journalism.org

Media and Communication Studies
www.aber.ac.uk/media

Museum of Broadcast Communications Encyclopedia of Television. 2000 is latest. PN1992.18 .M874 1997.

Social Science Network
www.socialpsychology.org

Public Affairs Video Archives. Purdue Univ.
pava.purdue.edu

Thesis Ideas

What others are doing for their thesis or dissertation? This is a great place to look for comprehensive lit reviews.

www.aejmc.org/abstracts/index.html

U of M Web survey hosting.
Visit the Office for Institutional Research. Admin, room 411, 678-2231.
Darla Keel at dfulton@memphis.edu

Links to Associations for submitting papers

www.scca.net/links/index.php

Model Outline for Thesis and Project Proposals

This model applies to empirical (quantitative and qualitative), historical, and legal research. You will prepare a proposal for an empirical piece in Journalism Research Methods class and you will have the opportunity to prepare a legal proposal in your graduate law class. Here are the parts.

Introduction

- introduce topic and why it is worth studying
- introduce (briefly) prior research and/or theoretical framework
- state purpose of the research. [This is a preview of what will follow.]

Literature Review (This is an abbreviated form of your final lit review.)

- outline the theory guiding your research (if thesis). Prior research, if project.
- discussion of **studies** dealing with your *content* area
- discussion of **issues** relating to your *method*
- **summarize** and show how your proposal answers a novel question, resolves a point in dispute, or fills in a missing piece of the puzzle.

Hypotheses or Research Questions

- tie lit review to hypotheses / research questions
- explicitly state your research questions and/or hypotheses
- provide theoretical and operational definitions of key terms/variables

Method

- the method(s) should help you answer your research questions/hypotheses. This is your general approach. (attach survey instruments, if appropriate, as an appendix)
- what data will you collect?
- define population and justify sampling method and sample size (if survey or content analysis used). Representative of the population? Explain.
- refer to procedures and instruments. Attach copies of instruments (including cover letters in the appendices. The first one mentioned in your paper is appendix A.
- talk about the validity of what you propose. How will you ensure a **quality** study?
- discuss ethical treatment of subjects, if used.
- proposed statistics (if appropriate) and who will help you. What coding method will you use?
- resources
 - **time line** (mention general time frame and attach time line as an appendix)
 - **costs**, if any
 - other resources, e.g., people to make phone calls, help with focus groups, and how you will handle this
 - consent forms (if needed, in appendix)
 - IRB application (if needed, in appendix)
 - copy of all instruments or study protocol.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

EMAIL:

You must have your UM email account activated. If you are using another provider such as Google, you are required to have your UM email forwarded to that account. Go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UM email. You are required to

check your email daily. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the University.

CELLPHONES:

You must turn them off during class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements, which are acceptable to your professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence due to illness or other catastrophic emergency such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). This is a professional program for journalists who are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. If you have some problem making it to class on time make arrangements to fix the problem or consider taking another class. You should consider this class your "job" in the educational process and be on time just as you would elsewhere.

CHEATING:

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, or a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. That may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the university.

"Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all." (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

Academic Integrity and Student Conduct:

Expectations for academic integrity and student conduct are described in detail on the website of the Office of Student Judicial and Ethical Affairs (<http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs>). Please take a look, in particular, at the sections about "Academic Dishonesty," "Student Code of Conduct and Responsibilities," and "Disruptive Behaviors." I will expect students to be aware of these guidelines and to conduct themselves accordingly. [Univ. Policy]

Intellectual Property Protection

Lectures, including PowerPoint slides, given/shown in this course are the property of the instructor and the University of Memphis. Class lectures may not be recorded in any form without the prior permission of the instructor and any guest lecturers that may speak in the class. Recordings, including class notes, may not be used for commercial purposes.

ONLINE SETEs:

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this Once your instructor has posted your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that

class. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and email password; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at (901) 678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation. Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- Awareness: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- Understanding: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.

- Application: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.