

Mass Communication Research Methods

JOUR 7075 / 8075 On Campus

Spring 2013

5:30 – 8:30 p.m. / Tuesdays / On Campus (MJ 106)

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COURSE 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.

PREREQUISITE:

Graduate status

COURSE TEXT AND READINGS:

Zhou, S., Sloan, W. D. (2011). *Research methods in communication*, 2nd ed. Northport, AL: Vision.

Salkind, N. J. (2011). *Statistics for people who think they hate statistics*, 4th. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. With SPSS disk is \$26 more, ISBN= 978-1-4129-5151-7. Great if you want your own copy of SPSS. We will have access to SPSS in the labs.

APA Publication Manual, 6th ed., Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association. [Adopted by the journalism graduate faculty as your standard reference for style. Some classes, including law and history courses will be exceptions.]
Tutorial 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.

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

Seminar

GRADING:

First phase exam	23 %
Second phase exam	23 %
Research proposal paper	30 %
Research proposal paper <i>parts</i>	12 %
Journal article reports (4% each)	12 %

I reserve the option to give quizzes if students are not prepared for class discussion.

Number grades on tests and quizzes 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 60.0

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:

Jan 22	Welcome. Using the library. <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The role of Theory in Research (by e-mail)▪ From theory to fact (by e-mail)▪ Four types of theory (by e-mail)▪ You can't prove a theory. . . . (by e-mail) <p>Readings: Zhou & Sloan chaps 4 - 6</p>
Jan 29	Introduction to mass communication research. Science and research. Historical research <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Excerpts from Cook & Campbell. Threats to Internal Validity (by e-mail)▪ Qs for all chapters (by e-mail)▪ APA Common mistakes (by e-mail)▪ Using Word 2007 and 2010 and APA (by e-mail) <p>Readings: Zhou & Sloan chaps 1 - 2 Salkind chaps 1 - 3 <i>APA</i> chap 1 - 2 Intro, Structure & Content</p>
Feb 5	Elements of research. Ethics. Triangulation. <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ethics of research (by e-mail)▪ Reliability and validity – target metaphor (by e-mail) <p>Readings: Zhou & Sloan Chaps 3, 7 Salkind Chap 4 - 5 <i>APA</i> chap 3 Writing</p> <p>Visit: Human subjects research Web site: irb.memphis.edu</p> <p>Activity: If you think you will be doing research using human subjects you should start working on the required tutorial over the next several weeks.</p>
Feb 12	Qualitative methods. Focus group simulation. <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Guide to conducting focus groups, from W&D 6th ed. (by-e-mail)▪ Phrases and probes for interviews and focus groups (by e-mail)▪ Evaluating research reports (by e-mail)▪ Research article critique – guide for assignments (by e-mail)▪ Reporting focus group results by Sinikas (by e-mail)▪ Focus group intro sheet example (by e-mail)▪ What it takes to make the grade (by e-mail)▪ Analyzing and interpreting qualitative data (by e-mail)▪ Who needs surveys when you can use social media? (by e-mail)

Readings: Zhou & Sloan Chap 18
Salkind chap 6
APA chap 4 – 5, Figures and Tables

- Feb 19 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
 - Running head in *APA* 6th and Word 2010

Readings: Zhou & Sloan Chaps 8, 10
Salkind chap 7
APA chap 6 – 7, Sources & References

- Feb 26 Surveys, cont. Think aloud protocol. Longitudinal research.
- Introductions for surveys (by e-mail)
 - Survey types and characteristics (by e-mail)
 - Scales for surveys (by e-mail)
 - key survey terms (by e-mail)
 - 20 Questions to ask about a poll (by e-mail)
 - Dillman on Surveys (by e-mail)
 - Critique this survey (by e-mail) Print and bring to class.
 - Statistical significance (by e-mail)

Readings: none

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

Mar 5 **Phase one exam over Z & S chaps 1 – 8, 10, 18; Salkind 1 – 7 (open book); plus notes and readings**

- Pitfalls to avoid in conducting and describing scholarly research (by e-mail)
 - Project or thesis kit (by e-mail)
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Mar 12 Spring Break

- Mar 19 Content Analysis. Content analysis simulation.
- Writing research reports (by e-mail)
 - Code book sample (by e-mail)

Readings: Zhou & Sloan Chap 9

Turn in: Survey research article critique

Mar 26 Experiments / Field Experiments. Hypothesis testing.

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

Readings: Zhou & Sloan Chap 11, 12
Salkind chaps 8 – 11, 13

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

Apr 2 Legal, History, Field Observations, Case Studies, Critical Studies

Readings: Zhou & Sloan chaps 14 – 16, 19

Turn in: Content analysis (in mass media) research article critique

Apr 9 Data entry from a survey. Cleaning data. Using SPSS.

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

Readings: *Salkind* chaps 6, 12, 14, 16

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

Apr 16 SPSS Demo. IMAX survey/data

- Instructions for IMAX data set (by e-mail)
- Interpreting crosstab tables (by e-mail)

Readings: *Salkind* chap 15, 20, App. A

Turn in: Experiment research article critique

Apr 23 Work on your own.

Apr 30 **Second phase exam over Z & S chaps 9, 11–12, 14-16, 19; Salkind 6, 8 – 16 plus notes and readings. You will work a problem with a survey, data set and SPSS.**

May 7 Individual Reports in class

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).

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR 7075 / 8075:

- 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.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 7075 / 8075.

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.

Performance Standards To Be Met (Demonstrable Skills, Abilities, Techniques, Applied Competencies):

- Participate in a focus group
- Write a proposal for a thesis or project, or write a paper on one of the methods studied in class.
- Clean, analyze and interpret data in SPSS
- Demonstrate knowledge of principles on periodic tests.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 7075 / 8075.

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.
- Write a research proposal for your own research.

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.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

E-MAIL:

You must have your UM e-mail account activated. If you are using another provider such as Google, you are required to have your UM e-mail forwarded to that account. Go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UM e-mail. You are required to check your e-mail 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 course. 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 the Office for Disability Services at (901) 678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

INSTRUCTOR’S WELCOME

OVERVIEW:

Whether a journalist writing a news story based on a public opinion survey, a public relations practitioner surveying the community prior to a public 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 textbooks 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 your own copy of SPSS to analyze data sets. The course assumes only a basic understanding of 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 Review
- Public Relations Journal (online)
- Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly
- Newspaper Research Journal
- Journal of the Southern States Communication Association
- Corporate Reputation Review
- Media Psychology
- International Journal of Strategic Communication

The first article should report the results of a **survey**; the second, the results of a **content analysis** (in mass media); 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** (not a link to the Website). Pdf is fine.

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 15 double-spaced**, typed pages (not including the cover page, references and appendices, 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 thesis 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. Previous sections will not be reevaluated.

Writing quality is important in journalism. Follow your American Psychological Association (APA) style guide (6th ed.). **Note this style version (APA 6th) on the paper's cover sheet.** An APA 6th tutorial is at: <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>

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.

ATTENDANCE:

Journalism Department policy requires attendance at all classes. **Your grade will be adversely affected by absences.** Plan to join the online discussion sessions. The discussions will be archived for later review.

This is a professional program for journalists who are expected to understand, and comply with, deadlines. All assignments are due at or before the start of class on the day assigned.

PASSING DOCUMENTS AND NOTES:

I will use the U of Memphis e-mail list for the class. I will return papers and tests by regular mail. **Please send me an e-mail indicating your preferred postal mailing address.**

OTHR SOURCES YOU MAY WANT TO CONSULT

Case Studies

Tuten, T. L. (2011). Field Observations and case studies. In S. Zhou & S. Sloan (Eds.), *Research methods in communication* (pp. 265-271). Northport, AL: Vision Press.

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.

Content Analysis Web Sites (with sample code books)

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

academic.csuohio.edu/kneuendorf/content

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

www.car.ua.edu

Effect Size www.researchconsultation.com/how-to-calculate-effect-size-help.asp

www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002182.htm

www.wilderdom.com/research/effectsizes.html

Historical Research

Galgano, M. J., Arnt, J. C., & Hyser, R. M. (2008). *Doing history*. Boston, MA: Thompson.

Sloan, W. D. (2001). Historical methods. In S. Zhou & S. Sloan (Eds.), *Research methods in communication* (pp. 245-264). Northport, AL: Vision Press.

Legal Methods

Burriss, L. L. (2011). Legal methods. In S. Zhou & S. Sloan (Eds.), *Research methods in communication* (pp. 227-244). Northport, AL: Vision Press.

Links to Associations for submitting papers

www.ssca.net/links/index.php

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. 2000 is latest. P92.U5 H55 1998
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

Power

www.researchconsultation.com/power-analysis-sample-size-calculation-help.asp

Q Method

www.qmethod.org

Watts, S., & Stenner, P. (2012). *Doing Q methodological research: Theory, method and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Qualitative Reserch

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

Replication

Thompson, B. (1994). The pivotal role of replication in psychological research: Empirically evaluating the replicability of sample results. *Journal of Personality*, 62(2), xx-xx.

Repositories for social science 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]

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 Sage.	www.statistics.com davidmlane.com/hyperstat/index.html www.seeingstatistics.com Warner, R. M. (2008). <i>Applied statistics</i> . Los Angeles:

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>

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

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

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

Writing Proposals

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

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.

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, and how you propose to safeguard the collected data.
- 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.