

Quantitative Research Methods

JRSM 7080-001

Spring 2025

Class Meeting: Monday 5:30–8:30 p.m., MJ 106

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog 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.

Course overview

At its core, graduate study is research. To that end, this course develops the understanding and skills needed to conduct mass communication research. This course explores the three primary methods of quantitative research: content analysis, survey, and experiment. Students will learn the common scientific methods of inquiry. This graduate course lays a foundation to conduct a research project in either professional or academic settings.

Prerequisites

JRSM 7050

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Zhou, S., Beasley, B., & Sloan, W. D. (Eds.). (2023). *Research methods in communication*. Vision Press: Northport, Alabama.

APA Style Manual, 7th Edition.

Note: Several additional required readings are posted to Canvas each week.

Grading

A+: 97-100; A: 92-96.9; A-: 90-92.9

B+: 87-89.9; B: 82-86.9; B-: 80-82.9

C+: 77-79.9; C: 72-76.9; C-: 70-72.9

D+: 67-69.9; D: 60-66.9

F: Below 60

Grade Distribution

Assignment	Percent of grade
Discussions	10%
Journal Article Critiques	20%
Exams	20%
Assignments & Colloquium	20%
Research Paper	30%

Intellectual Property

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but the way they are described can.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

Plagiarism: From UofM student handbook

The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

AI/ChatGPT

You are permitted to use ChatGPT and other AI tools to assist you in gathering information, writing drafts, and revising your writing in this course. However, you are expected to include a disclosure statement at the end of your assignment describing which AI tool you used and how you used it. For example, "*ChatGPT was used to draft about 30% of this assignment and to provide revision assistance. AI-produced content was edited for accuracy and style.*" Be prepared to submit any prompts you used for assistance with your assignment as well as the original ChatGPT output and to be able to explain/show how you fact-checked and improved upon the AI’s work.

Attendance & Class conduct

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of each class session. Students are allowed three unexcused absences; after three, additional unexcused absences will drop the student’s final grade by one letter grade for each absence. Missing a total of seven classes will result in the student failing the course. University policy for excused absences apply to this course. Tardiness will not be tolerated. After two tardiness, one percentage point will be deducted from the student’s final grade for each additional tardy.

Students who attend graduate courses online meet in real time via the videoconferencing program Zoom and must plan to spend three hours a week in class, per class. Students will need an Internet connection, speakers and a mic (or a headset with a built-in mic). This form of instruction is referred to as synchronous and is the signature teaching method at the University of Memphis.

Online students must have a dedicated Internet connection with stable signal to support video conferencing. Students must be in a quiet place where they can fully participate in the courses. Zoom cameras must be turned on for the duration of the class period.

Mobile and electronic devices

The use of electronic devices is permitted, as this class focuses on technological tools. Mobile telephones must be turned to vibrate during class and should be used only for emergencies. Excessive text messaging will not be tolerated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communications. Assignments turned in late will be deducted a letter grade for each day late. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to or on the due date.

Assignments

This section is meant as a general guideline to the major assignments within the class. More detail will be provided in class and on Canvas. Deadlines are also listed in the Class Schedule. All work should be turned in via Canvas unless otherwise noted. All work is due at 11:59 p.m. CT on the Saturday of the week assigned, unless otherwise noted.

Discussions (10%)

Students will write a 250-word reaction to each week's readings on Canvas.

Journal Article Critique (10%)

Students will find a published, peer-reviewed journal article using each of the three methods we discuss in class. The instructor must approve the article before the student begins work. Student will read the article and write a 500-word critique of the article, with particular attention to the method addressed in the article. Articles should be drawn from journalism and mass communication journals, such as *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Mass Communication & Society*, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *New Media & Society* and others published by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication or the International Communication Association.

Exams (15%)

Midterm and final exams take 20% of the final grade.

Assignments (15%)

Assigned throughout the semester based on the topic under discussion. Some will be statistics related and others will be sampling technique related.

Research Project (50%)

Approximately 20-page research paper addressing a phenomenon in journalism and mass communications. Students must conduct original research for the paper.

Additional information about research paper

PROSPECTUS (1 to 3 pages double spaced)

1. Begin with a brief introduction that explains the journalism and mass communication

problem or phenomenon you are researching.

2. Write a very brief academic literature review about previous scholarship related to your subject. This brief literature review should support your argument and identify the scholarly gap that your study will answer (in-text citations and references are needed).
3. Propose your research questions or hypotheses at the very end of this prospectus. Make sure your research questions or hypotheses are clear. List them as RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 etc., or H1, H2, H3, H4 etc.

PROPOSAL

In total, your proposal should be about 8-10 pages long. It should include the following sections:

1. Begin with a brief introduction that explains the journalism and mass communication problem or phenomenon you are researching.
2. Write an academic literature review about previous scholarship related to your subject. Focus on journalism and mass communication journals, such as *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Mass Communication & Society*, *the Journal of Communication*, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *New Media & Society* and others published by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication or the International Communication Association. This brief literature review should support your argument and identify the scholarly gap that your study will answer (in-text citations and references are needed).
3. Propose your research questions or hypotheses at the very end of this prospectus. Make sure your research questions or hypotheses are clear with one question only. List them as RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 etc., or H1, H2, H3, H4 etc.
4. Write a methodology that explains the procedure for data collection, sampling, and analysis.
5. Any tools needed for data collection (questionnaire, code book, interview guide, etc.).

RESEARCH PAPER

Build on your proposal and complete an original research project.

1. Your papers will be graded on content, including writing quality, comprehensiveness of research, adherence to complete and proper citation style, grammar, punctuation and spelling. All of these will be analyzed to determine a final paper grade.
2. Use third-person, active voice.
3. Within your paper, you will have sections on short introduction, short literature review, full method, full results, full discussion, full conclusion, and complete references.
4. Your written work will 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. By taking this course, you agree that your paper may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism.

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

Professional presentation of research paper in class. Students will prepare a 10-minute presentation and be prepared for question and answer.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: This schedule is subject to change based on the class situations. The professor reserves the right to change the schedule. Please get the updated details about assignments, reading materials, and related class materials from Canvas.

WEEK 2, January 27, Research fundamentals

Nature of scientific inquiry

WEEK 3, February 3, A review of methods

Content analysis, survey, experiment

WEEK 4, February 10, Conceptualization, Operationalization & Measurement.

Defining concepts. Research questions vs. Hypotheses. Scales. Variables.

WEEK 5, February 17, Sampling

Simple random sample. Stratified sample. Snowball. Convenience. Purposive. Central limit theorem. Sampling error. Confidence levels.

WEEK 6, February 24, Research practices

Institutional Review Board. Research ethics. Laws in research.

WEEK 7, March 3, Midterm exam (online)

WEEK 8, March 10, Spring Break

WEEK 9, March 17, Content Analysis

Selection. Coding. Reliability testing. Code books.

WEEK 10, March 24, Survey

Populations. Scales. Factor Analysis.

WEEK 11, March 31, Experiment

Setup. Organization. Analysis.

WEEK 12, April 7, Descriptive Statistics

Central tendency. Frequencies.

WEEK 13, April 14, Inferential Statistics
Chi Square, ANOVA, T-tests, Correlation.

WEEK 14, April 21, Analysis & Conclusions
Results. Discussions.

WEEK 15, April 28, Presentations, Papers due
10-minute presentations of research.

WEEK 16, May 5, Final Exam, Papers due

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

Portfolio requirement

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of your work. Portfolios begin in JRSM 3900/3905. The portfolio should contain samples of coursework and/or professional experiences and should develop as you build skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while you are enrolled in your capstone course.

You may use any type of web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system, but you are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace. It is also encouraged to purchase a URL if you plan to use the portfolio long term. You must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

You should have a professional email address you plan to use throughout your professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Professional social media links (minimum LinkedIn)

You may wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files or writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career you seek after graduation. Your portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

Email

You must have your UofM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you

are required to have all UofM emails forwarded to that account. Go to the [account management website](#) for information about implementing email forwarding. You are required to check your email daily.

Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

AI/Chat GPT

The use of artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others in Journalism & Strategic Media. Please refer to specific guidelines for this course in the course-specific part of the syllabus.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism & Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual tardiness.

Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (C-) in a class required by your program of study in Journalism & Strategic Media after three attempts will be dropped from the program.

You may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. Substantially reworking the original submission, or working with the same general idea, may be permissible upon discussion and with written approval from the professor of the current course.

Academic integrity

The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly and follow the policies stated in the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. If you need more information about the University policy on academic integrity visit the [Office of Student Accountability's website](#).

In addition to University-wide policies, the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on your own, as acts of cheating and punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, you are expected to comply with copyright and intellectual property laws and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas and to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. All creative work may be checked for policy adherence by the professor. The only exception to this policy is your online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo). By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted

according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

Online SETEs

You are encouraged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. If completed, once the instructor has posted final grades, you can immediately see that grade. To access evaluation forms, log in to MyMemphis; click the "Student Pages" dropdown menu and select "My Resources" and find the SETE evaluation forms; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and is appreciated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. Because Journalism & Strategic Media is a professional program, students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

You may be permitted to make up missing work if it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented.

AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. You are responsible for learning these rules and checking your work for errors.

Disability and accommodations

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Diversity and inclusivity

The Department of Journalism & Strategic Media values diversity in all its forms. Some of these forms include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. As such, students are expected to participate in fostering an inclusive environment that respects the differences of others.

Students are expected to approach their work through a diverse lens. Creating messages that resonate with diverse audiences requires an understanding of a variety of perspectives, which are carried out through multiple platforms, such as digital and traditional media outlets.

The department seeks to foster healthy and positive classroom discussions and experiences. As such, faculty and students are expected to remain respectful and professional at all times.

Weather policy

Always check with local media, the University of Memphis website and the LiveSafe App regarding inclement weather.

Student support

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, visit the Student Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php> or contact the Dean of Students Office at 901-678-2187, or in person in Suite 359 in the University Center for assistance. You may also talk with course instructors about the challenges you are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting you with campus or community support.