

CJT 665-001: Quantitative Methods in Communication Research

Fall 2016 ~ Section 001 is designed for Ph.D. students only

Tuesdays 2:00-4:45 p.m.

King Science and Engineering Library KL 213E

CANVAS Course Website: <https://uk.instructure.com/>

Communication research is **disciplined inquiry** that involves systematically studying how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media and reporting it so that others can potentially replicate the process.

Research must be conducted and reported so that its logical argument can be carefully examined; it does not depend on surface plausibility or the eloquence, status, or authority of its author, error is avoided; evidential test and verification are valued; the dispassionate search for truth is valued over ideology. Every piece of research or evaluation, whether naturalistic, experimental, survey, or historical must meet these standards to be considered **disciplined** (Smith, 1981, p. 585).

The best research is driven by **theory**, validates a theory, further explains a theory, challenges an existing theory, or aids in the creation of theory. Theoretically driven research is built on the results of previous researchers, and it provides a foundation for subsequent researchers. It is highly unlikely that any theory could be formulated, tested, and verified in one research study. Rather, theory is developed and tested over time. What we come to know as 'the theory' to explain some phenomenon is the result of many research studies and the efforts of many researchers (Keyton, 2010, pp. 8-9).

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This required graduate course is designed to provide doctoral students with a sophisticated understanding of the philosophy, theory, design, and analysis of quantitative communication research. As such, **the course focuses on the scientific method and approaches communication research as part of social science research to assist doctoral students in understanding the study and practice of quantitative behavioral research techniques that apply to communication.** Throughout the semester students are exposed to a variety of methodological designs and statistical procedures that will ultimately allow them to design, complete, and eventually publish the results from independent research projects.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the unique characteristics of quantitative research methodologies
2. Demonstrate understanding of research ethics.
3. Conceptualize an appropriate quantitative study.
4. Develop a sophisticated quantitative study with research questions, rationale, research design, recruitment, and data analysis
5. Operationalize a quantitative study based on conceptual and theoretical constructs and parameters
6. Select and conduct appropriate and accurate data analysis using SPSS
7. Write and revise original scholarly quantitative communication research.
8. Present engaging scholarly research

GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, students will:

1. Develop a solid core understanding of the concepts underlying the research endeavor.
2. Build an appreciation of the strengths and limitations of various designs and methods of quantitative communication research.
3. Develop the competencies to apply quantitative research methods to communication research problems.
4. Create an understanding of the connections between theory, methods, and the advancement of knowledge.

REQUIRED RESOURCES: TEXTBOOKS

Allen, M., Titsworth, S., & Hunt, S. K. (2009). *Quantitative research in communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage. ([Kindle Price \\$55.00](#))

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. ([Kindle Price \\$18.98](#))

Gliner, J. A., Morgan, G. A., & Leech, N. L. (2017). *Research methods in applied settings: An integrated approach to design and analysis* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge. ([Kindle Price \\$54.95](#))

Palant, J. (2016). *SPSS Survival Manual* (6th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge. ([Kindle Price \\$46.79](#))

In addition to the required textbooks and the 6th Edition of the Publication Manual of the APA, several **journal articles** and **book chapters** will also be required throughout the course. The articles and book chapters will provide exemplars for how to write quantitative research methods, results, and discussion sections of a research report. All readings will be available in PDF format and can be downloaded from the CJT 665 canvas shell. Finally, students are required to bring a **laptop with SPSS** capabilities to EVERY class. SPSS 23 is free for our graduate students and can be downloaded to a laptop from the UK Software Downloads Portal (<https://download.uky.edu/>). Finally, I will be providing **data sets** to use for the required problem sets through the canvas shell as the class progresses. Students are responsible for downloading the appropriate .sav files before the beginning of class.

RECOMMENDED REFERENCE BOOKS

- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS Statistics* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [\[available through Amazon.com\]](#)
- Knapp, M. L., & Daly, J. A. (2004). *A guide to publishing in scholarly communication journals*. (3rd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Routledge. [\[available free through UK Libraries eBook Collection \(EBSCOhost\)\]](#)
- Morgan, S. E., Reichert, T., & Harrison, T. R. (2016). *From numbers to words: Reporting statistical results for the social sciences*. New York: Routledge. [\[available through Amazon.com\]](#)
- Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2002). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inferences* (2nd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin. [\[available through Amazon.com\]](#)
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2012). *Using multivariate statistics* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. [\[available through Amazon.com\]](#)

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

The method of instruction to be employed is based on the following assumptions:

- The major functions of an instructor are to: (a) identify appropriate course objectives, (b) communicate to students what and how they should learn, (c) motivate them to learn, (d) devise valid and reliable means for evaluating whether course objectives are achieved, (e) provide feedback, and (f) shape favorable attitudes toward the subject matter.
- The lecture method of dispensing information is for many of these purposes an inefficient method of instruction. Students can acquire information with a minimum of teacher direction and are usually more efficient learners when employing personal learning strategies. This course is designed as a seminar where discussion and student participation are required.
- Experiencing success in this course should shape favorable attitudes toward communication as a social science and the quantitative methods that currently advance the communication discipline.

Consistent with this rationale, you will be given considerable freedom to select what you will study, how you will study, and how your performance will be evaluated. At the same time, there will be assignments that are specified for all members of the class. Specific instructional strategies will include: (a) lectures and discussions by the instructor, members of the class, and guests; (b) required reading of assigned materials and the required reading of other materials; (c) in-class facilitation of course-related content; and (d) hands-on statistical application.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

Given the time constraints of this course and the IRB approval process, it is extremely difficult to complete an entire research project in one semester. However, it is critical that students demonstrate specific competencies associated with the conceptualization, planning and design, method, data collection, analysis and writing of a quantitative research study. This idea should be conceptualized and used as the basis for each assignment in this class that will scaffold you toward a complete research study. Students are strongly encouraged to complete the study and submit to both a conference and a journal.

IRB Certification (5%)

On the first day of class, you will submit your IRB completion certificate. IRB training can be completed by pointing your browser to: <https://www.citiprogram.org/>

Midterm Exam (Midterm 20%)

A take-home midterm examination will be provided on October 4, 2016. Students will be given two weeks to complete the exam that consists of a series of short answer and essay questions (based on class readings). The midterm exam will assess synthesis, application, and evaluation of foundational course content. The midterm examination is due on Wednesday, October 18, 2016.

Paper #1: Conceptualization and Hypothesis/Research Question Rationale (5%)

First, you will each individually conceptualize one of the variables of interest in your study in 1-2 paragraphs. Second, you will write another 1-2 paragraph rationale for either a research question or hypothesis that is posed in the study using your conceptualized variable. For a research question, a good rationale describes what is already known, highlights what is not known, and acknowledges that there is not enough information to develop a hypothesis. The rationale for a RQ should sound more exploratory in nature. For a hypothesis, you should review relevant literature that demonstrates what we already know while logically leading the reader/presenting an argument for your hypothesis. This assignment should be no more than 4-5 pages in length.

Paper #2: Operationalization Paper (5%)

Research and select a scale to measure each variable you have conceptualized in the previous assignment. Write about one page per scale defending the selection of this scale demonstrating that the operationalization matches your conceptualization (conceptual fit) and that the scale is reliable and valid. Include a copy of the scales with your paper. This assignment will be approximately 3-4 pages in length.

Paper #3: Preliminary Methods Paper (10%)

This paper will clearly **identify the final research questions and/or research hypotheses** as well as the **methodological design** of the study (**subjects, variables, measurement, detailed procedures**). You will provide precise information about the sampling and subjects as well as specific details of the **exact procedures** that will be followed. **IRB approval** may need to accompany the methods section. It is strongly recommended that students follow the organizational structure required by the Office of Research Integrity in their core application (e.g., background, objectives, study population, subject recruitment methods, research procedures). [For more information refer to: <http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/ExemptionCertificationApplication.htm> - Core] In addition, any and all specific instruments (e.g., survey questions) will be submitted as an appendix to the final written report. This paper will be approximately 5-6 pages in length.

Final Research Report (30%)

The final research report must include a title page, abstract, introduction, literature review/rationale, method, results, discussion, and conclusion. It must follow APA 6th edition and contain appropriate quantitative communication research conventions. Research reports must have a formal structure and be written in an impersonal (third-person) voice. First- and second-person voice should be avoided. The final page count should not exceed 25 pages.*

* Final page count does not include title page, abstract, references, or appendices.

Final Research Report Presentation (10%)

The final research report presentation should be presented to the entire class in a conference style presentation and should not exceed 10 minutes. The presentation should establish social significance, lead the audience through a logical rationale that builds to the research questions and/or hypotheses, presents the methods, and results, and stimulates discussion of limitations, future directions, and potential implications of the research. Each presentation will be followed by a question and answer session where the presenters should field at least 3 questions.

Statistical Problem Sets and Data Visualization (10%)

Four statistical problem sets and related data visualization assignments (4 X 25 points) will be completed during the month of October (and early November) and will include group differences tests (t tests, ANOVA, repeated measures) and tests of association (correlations and regression).

Attendance & Thoughtful In-Class Participation (5%)

Every student is required to read and critically process each of the required readings for the week and be prepared to actively participate in meaningful class discussions. In order to achieve the goals of the course, students must actively participate in the class discussions of required course material. Participation in class is one important key to learning the skills necessary to be a communication scholar. Your participation should always seek to improve on silence! Your comments, questions, and analysis during class discussion will be used to evaluate participation.

COURSE EVALUATION

I hope grades will not be emphasized in this course as the major reinforcement for which doctoral students are to strive. At the same time, I realize that grades do hold contingencies for you and, therefore, I will make every effort to be as objective, impartial, and fair as possible. In keeping with this goal, I solicit your involvement and feedback. **I do not believe in Incompletes—grades represent your work during the semester.**

When grading assignments and projects for a course, it is only possible to grade an actual product. Similarly, putting in a certain amount of time or “effort” on a project does not guarantee a high grade. Only meeting the established criteria can earn an acceptable grade (C). If you intend to earn higher than a C, then this will constitute above average (B) or excellent (A) work that exceeds expectations. Further, I do not GIVE grades, you EARN grades. Thus, do not ask me to bump a grade or offer extra credit to improve your grade.

Points will be distributed in the following manner:

Written Assignments

CITI Certification	50 points
Paper #1: Conceptualization, RQ, Rationale	50 points
Paper #2 Operationalization Description	50 points
Paper #3 Initial Methods	100 points
Midterm Examination	200 points
Statistical Problem Sets & Data Visualization (4 X 25)	100 points
Final Research Report	300 points

In-Class Presentations

Final Professional Conference Presentation	100 points
Attendance/In-class Participation	<u>50 points</u>

Total Points **1000 points**

Grades will be administered using the standard 90% = A, 80% = B, 70% = C. Specifically, 1000 – 900 = A, 899 - 800 = B, and 799 - 700 = C, Less than 700 = E.

EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

Attendance. You cannot do well in this class if you do not attend regularly. As such, attendance is mandatory. I expect that you will attend class and be on time for each session. If you have a problem, you should contact me before class begins. It is in your best interest to attend every class. Given the limited number of days we have to meet, there should be NO unexcused absences. You should be on time and stay for the entire class period. You may have one (1) excused absence. If you choose to use the excused absence you should give advance notice (at least 24 hours) through email.

Participation. You are expected to read all of the assigned readings prior to the beginning of class. Class discussions will extend information covered in the assigned readings. You are responsible for knowing this information to the extent that you are able to fully discuss it. You will engage fully in every discussion by demonstrating knowledge and critical thought about the readings and lecture materials, and by asking thought-provoking questions about the course content. Your classroom participation is valued and will benefit all of us. The participation expectations extend to the hands-on practice that will take place throughout the course on your personal laptops with SPSS.

Written Work. It is assumed that you have already developed good writing skills. You should be able to compose grammatically correct sentences, write well-developed paragraphs, and express your ideas in a well-organized, coherent manner. In addition, you should be able to use the APA (6th Edition) writing style and employ correct citation and notation. I expect that you have already developed a strong foundation in writing at this point in your academic career. However, as doctoral students, you are expected to demonstrate continued improvement of your writing skills. All written assignments must follow APA 6th Edition guidelines. The writing style, mechanics, and content are equally important.

Oral Presentations. Each doctoral student will be expected to present several brief progress reports as the semester progresses. Further, students are expected to present the final results of their quantitative communication research study to their peers on December 15, 2016 from 1:00 – 3:00 pm. Students should be able to extemporaneously present their ideas and research findings in a clear and concise manner that follows professional conference standards. The objective will be to not only create understanding with the audience, but also to demonstrate competence with research methods and show the relevance of the study. It is expected that presentations will NOT exceed 10 minutes and that they be rehearsed and include appropriate handouts. Slide decks are optional.

Analytical Skills. It is assumed that you have some background in empirical research methods that will allow you to analyze the research literature you will be reading on a weekly basis. If you feel that your background is lacking, please see me for suggested readings.

Assignment Submissions. All assignments should be submitted via Canvas Assignments. The assignment should be attached in a word file (.doc or docx only). You MUST confirm that the assignment was submitted and that it will open through the Canvas application. Any file that is attached, but unable to be opened, will be treated as if it were not submitted. All assignments will be due **BEFORE** class begins. All assignments should be proofread carefully before turning them in, and late work will result in a minimum reduction of a full letter grade for every day it is late. As a rule, late work will be reduced at least one letter grade. Excessively late work will not be accepted.

Academic Integrity. Examination answers and written work for this course must be the original work of the student. Any student guilty of knowingly using, or attempting to use another person's work will receive a grade of "E" for the course. Such conduct may also constitute grounds for dismissal from the University.

Special Problems. If you are disabled in anyway or have any type of health issue that may have an impact on either you or your classmates, please let me know before the second class period so accommodations can be made.

Fairness Policy. The University of Kentucky is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. UK does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, or disability. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

Student Behavior. You are expected to arrive to class on time and stay the entire time. We will maintain an open, yet respectful, and engaged classroom climate and culture. The respect should extend to those who are in the classroom (e.g., myself, other students) as well as those who are not a typical classroom member (e.g., other professors, guest speakers). A respectful and engage environment is one where electronic devices are put away and side conversations do not occur. Students who engage in disruptive behavior may be directed to leave the class for the remainder of the class period. Refer to the University of Kentucky's Code of Student Conduct for further information on prohibited conduct.

For the purposes of this graduate class, this policy on behavior must also extend to the electronic classroom on Canvas, or appropriate behaviors otherwise known as netiquette. Your interactions should remain professional and focused on learning without resorting to personal attacks, unsupported claims, or irrelevant conversations.

If you are ever uncomfortable or upset by something that occurs in the classroom or on Canvas, please see me as soon as possible so I can resolve the issue.

Plagiarism. Part II of Student Rights and Responsibilities (6.3.1; online at <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html>) states that all academic work, written or otherwise, submitted by students to their instructors or other academic supervisors, is expected to be the result of their own thought, research, or self-expression. In cases where students feel unsure about a question of plagiarism involving their work, they are obliged to consult their instructors on the matter before submission. When students submit work purporting to be their own, but which in any way borrows ideas, organization, wording or anything else from another source without appropriate acknowledgment of the fact, the students are guilty of plagiarism.

Plagiarism includes reproducing someone else's work, whether it be published article, chapter of a book, a paper from a friend or some file, or another source, including the Internet. Plagiarism also includes the practice of employing or allowing another person to alter or revise the work which a student submits as his/her own, whoever that other person may be. Plagiarism also includes using someone else's work during an oral presentation without properly citing that work in the form of an oral footnote.

Whenever you use outside sources or information, you must carefully acknowledge exactly what, where and how you have employed them. If the words of someone else are used, you must put quotation marks around the passage in question and add an appropriate indication of its origin. Plagiarism also includes making simple changes while leaving the organization, content and phraseology intact. However, nothing in these Rules shall apply to those ideas which are so generally and freely circulated as to be a part of the public domain.

PERSONAL NOTE

I'm looking forward to having you in class and getting to know you as we work through our semester together. It is my hope that you will leave this seminar with an exposure to the knowledge claims, theoretical explanations, and quantitative research methodologies that will allow you to become a stronger doctoral student at the University of Kentucky. To see that the course objectives are met, I'm committed to quality teaching. Class time will be well organized, fully interactive, relevant, and intellectually stimulating. I need you to commit to the course as well. Come to class having read and reflected on the week's readings. I also encourage you to write down questions that you would like to discuss during class sessions as you work through the readings. If there is anything I can do to make this course more relevant to you, your work, and/or your research interests, please let me know. I encourage you to take advantage of my office hours and email. I have an open door policy and I'm willing to help.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE: ***SUBJECT TO REVISION***

Week	Date	Conceptual Areas/Topics	Readings/Assignments
1	8/30/2016	Introductions, Expectations, Foundations, and Research Ethics: Definitions, Purposes, and Dimensions of Research; Confusing Terms; Research Ethics	GML <u>Ch. 1</u> (pp. 3-20; 478-481; 482-504); and <u>Ch. 14</u> (pp. 234-256) ATH <u>Ch. 1</u> (pp. 1-16) CITI Certification; SPSS Download
2	9/06/2016	Conceptualizing Communication Research: Variables, Research Questions, and Hypotheses; Planning a Quantitative Research Project; Using Statistics in Communication Research	GML <u>Ch. 2</u> (pp. 21-36); and <u>Ch. 3</u> (pp. 37-55; p. 113; <u>Appendix D:</u> (pp. 505-555) ATH <u>Ch. 2</u> (pp. 17-31) PALLANT PART ONE (Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-3)
3	9/13/2016	Planning and Designing Communication Research: Internal Validity; Sampling and External Validity; Measurement and Descriptive Statistics; Data Cleaning	GML <u>Ch. 8</u> (pp. 120-134); and <u>Ch. 9</u> (pp. 135-160); and <u>Ch. 10</u> (pp. 161-181); PALLANT PART TWO (Chapters 4 and 5) TF Ch. 4 (pp. 60-116 from Canvas)
4	9/20/2016	Measurement Reliability; Measurement Validity; Threats to Validity	GML <u>Ch. 11</u> (pp. 182-199); and <u>Ch.12</u> (pp. 200-215); PALLANT PART THREE (Chapters 6-10) Paper #1 Due: Rationale, Conceptualization, RQ
5	9/27/2016	Quantitative Methodologies for Conducting Communication Research: Types of Data Collection Techniques; Research Approaches; Randomized Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs; Single Subject Designs	GML <u>Ch. 13</u> (pp. 216-233); and <u>Ch. 4</u> (pp. 56-68); and <u>Ch. 5</u> (pp. 69-88); and <u>Ch. 6</u> (pp. 89-105); SCC Ch. 4 (pp. 103-134); and Ch. 8 (pp. 246-278) both chapters available in Canvas Shell (Files/Handouts/Week 05)
6	10/04/2016	Non-experimental Approaches and Designs; Survey Research Design, Types of Data Collection Techniques; Practical Issues in Data Collection and Coding;	GML <u>Ch. 7</u> (pp. 106-119); and <u>Ch. 15</u> (pp. 257-278); FBK Ch. 8 (pp. 198–224) Available in Canvas Shell (Files/Handouts/Week 06) Paper #2 Due: Operationalization of Research Variables Midterm Exam Provided

7	10/11/2016	<p>Data Analysis and Interpretation: Descriptive vs. Inferential Statistics; Making Inferences from Sample Data; Evidence-Based Approach; Nonparametric tests (Chi-square test); Analyzing Group Differences I: (t tests)</p>	<p>GML <u>Ch. 16</u> (pp. 279-301); and <u>Ch. 17</u> (pp. 302-317); ATH <u>Ch. 3</u> (pp. 35-43); and <u>Appendix A</u> (pp. 227-228); and <u>Ch. 8</u> (pp. 125-137); and <u>Appendix B</u> (pp. 229-230) PALLANT PART FIVE (Chapters 16-17)</p> <p>Statistical Problem Sets and Data Visualization #1</p>
8	10/18/2016	<p>Analyzing Group Differences II: ANOVA, Factorial ANOVA, ANCOVA, MANOVA, MANCOVA, Repeated Measures</p>	<p>GML <u>Ch. 18</u> (pp. 318-333); and <u>Ch. 19</u> (pp. 334-349); and <u>Ch. 20</u> (pp. 350-368); and <u>Ch. 22</u> (pp. 386-397) ATH <u>Ch. 4</u> (pp. 51-67); and <u>Appendix C</u> (pp. 231-234); and <u>Ch. 5</u> (pp. 71-87); and <u>Ch. 6</u> (pp. 91-106); and <u>Ch. 7</u> (pp. 107-124) PALLANT PART FIVE (Chapters 18-22)</p> <p>Statistical Problem Sets and Data Visualization #2 Midterm Exam DUE</p>
9	10/25/2016	<p>Analyzing Relationships Between Variables, Simple Bivariate Correlations, Regression, Multiple Regression (Stepwise, Hierarchical, and Logistic), Factor Analysis</p>	<p>GML <u>Ch. 21</u> (pp. 369-385); and <u>Ch. 22</u> (pp. 386-414); ATH <u>Ch. 9</u> (pp. 139-154); and <u>Appendix D</u> (pp. 235-236); and <u>Ch. 10</u> (pp. 155-174); and <u>Ch. 11</u> (pp. 175-196); PALLANT PART FOUR (Chapters 11-15)</p> <p>Statistical Problem Sets and Data Visualization #3</p>
10	11/01/2016	<p>Evaluating Research Validity; Evaluating Research for Evidence-Based Practice; Introduction to Advanced Modeling Techniques (SEM, HLM, Meta-Analysis)</p>	<p>ATH <u>Ch. 12</u> (pp. 197-212); and <u>Ch. 13</u> (pp. 213-225);</p> <p>GML <u>Ch. 23</u> (pp. 415-432); and <u>Ch. 24</u> (pp. 433-445); and <u>Appendix E</u> (pp. 556-558); and and <u>Ch. 25</u> (pp. 446-474)</p> <p>Statistical Problem Sets and Data Visualization #4</p>

11	11/08/2016 ELECTION DAY	National Communication Association Conference	No class. Academic Holiday. NCA in Philadelphia, PA 11/10 -11/13
12	11/15/2016	Reconceptualizing Communication Research Writing the Research Report I; Discussing Research Findings; Presenting Results Visually; Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions	GML Ch. 26 (pp. 456-474); and Appendix F (pp. 559-565); Appendix G (pp 566-570) APA Ch. 2 (pp. 21-59)
13	11/22/2016	Writing the Research Report II	Paper #3 DUE
14	11/29/2016	Delivering Engaging Research Presentations; Presenting Results Visually Doctoral Student Data Analysis	
15	12/06/2016	In-class Work Day; Data Analysis	
16	12/15/2016 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Final Presentations	Final Research Report DUE Final paper must include: Introduction, Rationale, Literature Review, RQs/RHs, Method, Results, Discussion (Limitations, Implications, Future Research), Conclusion, References, and Appendices

CJT 665 ORIGINAL QUANTITATIVE COMMUNICATION RESEARCH REPORT

The major project in CJT 665 is to write an original communication research report. The entire project asks you to examine a particular aspect of communication within a specific context, to review how communication theory has been used in previous scholarly studies and then to **design and carry out your own original quantitative communication research study**. While you are welcome to use an existing data set, you must conceptualize, plan and design, determine appropriate methods, analyze and interpret results, and reconceptualize the results in a meaningful discussion that follows the proper conventions of a final quantitative communication research report

You will construct an actual research study that will be completed by the end of the semester. This project requires each student to conduct an original communication study and write a 20-25 page research paper. Your task is to address a significant communication problem, topic, or issue and design original communication research. Students generally feel most comfortable using survey research, but any of the quantitative methods we discuss during the course can be used—assuming the method is appropriate for the research questions/hypotheses posed.

The term project for this course consists of a research report focused upon a communication research topic of the student's choosing and approved in advance by the instructor (no later than **September 16, 2015**). The student is expected and encouraged to devote to the term project approximately half of the time s/he spends on the seminar. **The methods must be quantitative (e.g., experimental research or survey research).**

While there are no hard and fast rules governing the form and content of a research report, they normally contain five major sections:

1. **Problem.** The problem section of a research report contains the theoretical and empirical rationale for conducting the research and a statement of the research problem.
 - A. Rationale. The rationale sets forth the reasons for conducting a given research project. One's "reasons" normally grow out of relevant theory underlying the research problem and research findings bearing directly on the proposed research. Thus, the rationale section is a theoretical and empirical discussion. It should read like a good argument leading unequivocally to the problem to be investigated.
 - B. The Problem Statement. The research problem is framed either as an hypothesis or a research question.
2. **Method.** The section on method describes the researcher's strategy for gathering data, along with all required supporting materials and measuring instruments. Moreover, it specifies the analytical/statistical methods that are suitable for testing the hypotheses and questions selected. The following five kinds of information typically appear in a proposal's method section.
 - A. Research Design. This subsection describes in detail the nature of the chosen research plan, whether an an experiment, a survey, a textual analysis, or an ethnography. The researcher should specify why the chosen design is an appropriate mechanism for testing the research hypotheses.

B. Variable Specification. This subsection details the conceptual and operational definitions of all pertinent variables, including any independent and dependent variables. Additionally, the researcher should discuss procedures for certifying the validity and reliability of all variables. Finally, the means for controlling any potentially confounding effects should be described.

C. Elements and Sampling Method. The number and pertinent characteristics of the proposed study's elements or units of analysis are identified next. Elements include any individuals who will serve as research participants in the proposed project as well as communication artifacts (television programs, films, public speeches, conversational episodes) that are targeted for study. Additionally, the sampling method used to secure a sample (typically, a representative sample) of the elements must be specified and its appropriateness defended.

D. Procedure. This subsection describes the researcher's plan for conducting the proposed research, including any cover story and debriefing materials to be used, instructions to be given to research participants, and the setting and time frame for the research. In general, it is a step-by-step narrative detailing how the researcher will administer the proposed research from initiation to completion.

E. Data Analysis. This final subsection describes any statistical procedures the researcher will use to analyze results, including the specific statistical tests to be performed. If one's data are narrative rather than numerical, all descriptive, inferential, interpretative, and critical tools should be detailed. The subsection concludes with a statement indicating why the chosen data analytical methods will provide an adequate test of one's hypotheses, research questions, or general research aims.

3. **Results**. The results section of the research report clearly presents the statistical/descriptive results that answer the research questions and/or clearly provides the results of the hypothesis tests. Do not explain or provide implications of the findings in the results section – this information is provided in the implications section of the discussion part of the paper. While the results section may be relatively short, it must be written using appropriate language, rules, and social science conventions. All SPSS statistical output must also be included as part of the appendices.

4. **Discussion**. This section of the research report is divided into three specific parts and consists of 1) an insightful discussion of the implications of your results, 2) a thoughtful discussion of the limitations associated with your study, and 3) a meaningful discussion of directions for future research.

A. Implications. This subsection interprets the meaning of the findings as they relate to theory, previous research, and expectations.

B. Limitations. This subsection identifies limitations of the research due to internal as well as external validity threats.

C. Directions for Future Research. This subsection identifies meaningful directions for future research

5. **Conclusion and References.** The final section of the research report provides a summary of the conclusions and generally refers back to arguments advanced in the introduction. In addition, the final section includes an APA reference list as well as an Appendix that will include complete measurement instruments (demographic questions, survey, scales, etc.) and the SPSS analysis from the results.

The final paper is due on December 15, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. I do not believe in Incompletes. While the content of your final research project is the most important concern, I value close attention to matters of spelling, grammar, and form. Avoid the use of first and second person. I will expect you to use the guidelines contained in APA, 6th edition.