

Marshall University

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| Course Title/Number | Communication Study and Research CMM 411/511 |
| Semester/Year | Fall 2014 |
| Days/Time | Wednesday, 4:00 – 6:20 pm |
| Location | Smith Hall 232 |
| Instructor | Stephen D. Cooper, Ph.D. |
| Office | Smith Hall 246 |
| Phone | (304) 696-2733 |
| E-Mail | coopers@marshall.edu |
| Office/Hours | Monday 12:00 - 1:30 pm & 3:30 – 5:00 pm Tuesday 2:00 – 5:00 pm Wednesday 12:00 - 1:30 pm Thursday 2:00 – 5:00 pm Other times by appointment. |
| University Policies | By enrolling in this course, you agree to the University Policies listed below. Please read the full text of each policy by going to www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs and clicking on “Marshall University Policies.” Or, you can access the policies directly by going to http://www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs/?page_id=802 Academic Dishonesty/ Excused Absence Policy for Undergraduates/ Computing Services Acceptable Use/ Inclement Weather/ Dead Week/ Students with Disabilities/ Academic Forgiveness/ Academic Probation and Suspension/ Academic Rights and Responsibilities of Students/ Affirmative Action/ Sexual Harassment |

Course Description, From the Catalog

Introduction to the advanced study of theory and research areas with emphasis on communication research methods and reporting. (PR: Senior majors in Communication Studies; CMM 303)

Course Philosophy, From the Instructor

Scholars around the world are busy churning out journal articles and reports of research into human communication. The federal government funds social science research extensively—and not *all* of it is pork! The mass media pump out a steady flow of reportorial bites of this flood of research. Advocacy groups seize on particular studies which support their agendas and tout those studies as definitive statements of the human condition—while disparaging other studies that don't support their politics.

What can a thinking person make of all this? When various studies report conflicting findings, how would you decide which are more believable than the others? On what basis do you decide which studies are worth taking seriously, and which deserve a “yeah, right, whatever” from you?

How do you handle it, when you read a study which contradicts your native sense of how the social world really is? Or when your own experiences in the social world are much different from the generalizations you read in academic texts?

Your ability to think critically and incisively is the key to your intellectual independence. To that end, this course offers you the opportunity to become a savvy consumer of research into human communication. We will examine four major research methodologies used in communication research, and the criteria appropriate for judging the merit of studies using those methods. Along the way you will gain familiarity with the scope and depth of scholarly work in this discipline.

Another goal of this course is to further develop your skills in analytical writing. This is a writing-intensive course. When you look over the course calendar, you'll notice a short written assignment almost every week. When you look over the grading system for this course, you'll notice grade points for those weekly assignments, and more points for a thing called “in-class memos.” Relax, and trust the Force. You'll do a good deal of writing in this course, and the writing will both help you master the material and refine in your writing skills.

If you feel a bit of anxiety about this aspect of the course, it's a sign you realize that analytical writing is a skill you need to work on! *Keep in mind that important opportunities often present themselves as challenges.* This course is a safe place for you to address that challenge; my advice is to go for it. The reward for you, the ability to produce analytical writing of professional quality, will last your entire lifetime

Program Student Learning Outcomes

1. Understand basic concepts associated with the primary theories of communication.
2. Write a clear, concise, and reasoned paper on topics dealing with the concepts of communication.
3. Understand the research literature underlying the discipline of communication.
4. Demonstrate speaking competencies by composing a message, provide ideas and information suitable to the theory and audience.
5. Basic understanding of the nature of scientific inquiry, as applied to human behavior.
6. Familiarity with the four research methods commonly used to study human communication behaviors.
7. Greater skill in analytical thinking and writing.
8. Demonstrate “sense-making,” the ability to apply knowledge to lived experience.

The table below shows how each student learning outcome will be practiced and assessed in the course.

| Course Outcomes | How Accomplished in this Course | How Evaluated in this Course | Program Outcomes | Degree Profile Outcomes |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Students will develop a basic understanding of the nature of scientific inquiry, as applied to human behavior. | Readings, lectures. | Midterm and final exams, term paper. | 5 | broad, integrative knowledge |
| Students will become familiar with the four research methods commonly used to study human communication behaviors. | Readings, lectures. | Midterm and final exams, term paper. | 6 | specialized knowledge |
| Students will develop a sense of the fundamental critical questions particular to each of those methods. | Readings, weekly assigned papers, class discussion. | Midterm and final exams, term paper. | 7 | specialized knowledge |

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| Students will become familiar with the format conventions of scholarly journal articles. | Readings and lectures | Midterm and final exams, term paper. | 3 | specialized knowledge |
| Students will develop greater skill in analytical thinking and writing. | Weekly reading assignments, weekly written assignments, lectures, discussions. | Term paper. | 7, 2 | analytic inquiry |

Required Texts, Additional Reading, and Other Materials

Frey, L. R., Botan, C. H., Friedman, P. G., & Kreps, G. L. (1992). *Interpreting communication research: A case study approach*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Eggenschwiler, J., & Biggs, E. D. (2001). *Writing: Grammar, Usage, and Style*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Recommended Materials

You'll need access to the APA Publication Manual, either the 5th or 6th edition. Feel free to drop by during office hours and look stuff up in my copy, but it can't leave the office.

You can probably get by well enough by hitting these web sites:

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

<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>

Course Requirements / Due Dates

See course schedule, below.

Course Grading

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| Weekly assignments, 10 @ 10 points each | 100 |
| In-class memos | in all: 50 |
| Quizzes | in all: 100 |
| Paper proposal | 50 |
| Draft of term paper | 50 |
| Term paper | 200 |
| Midterm exam | 100 |
| Final exam | 100 |
| Attendance | in all: 50 |

800 points are possible.

A = 720 or better

B = 640 - 719

C = 560 - 639

D = 480 – 559

F = fewer than 480

Grading Criteria for the Weekly Assignments

Each of the short written assignments is worth a maximum of 10 points toward your term grade. Here is how you can earn those points.

Writing mechanics: 3 points.

Includes spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation, word choice, general appearance of the page.

Relevance: 3 points.

How well does your paper address the question(s)?

Concepts: 4 points.

Did you use the textbook's concepts and terms skillfully?

Do yourself a big favor, and avoid using a thesaurus when you work on these assignments. The thesaurus makes it convenient and easy to totally screw up what you're

trying to say. The dictionary (not the thesaurus) is the right tool for clarifying your understanding of words.

A Useful Tip

Try this technique for reading course materials. It's probably different from what you're used to doing, but you might find it works better.

First browse the entire section you've been assigned. Let your eyes go where they want to: check out the headings, bold-faced terms, diagrams and figures, whatever paragraphs catch your attention. Don't make any marks in your book or take any notes at this point. Just get a sense of how the section is put together, and what the main ideas are.

Next, look for summary materials the book might include. There may be a chapter summary at the end. There may be a preview, or a bullet list of important ideas, or a glossary of key terms. Whatever forms the summary materials may be in, look them over carefully. Get a good feel for what the material covers.

Then read through the assignment in sequence. Highlight passages, make margin notes in the book, write things down in your notebook. Take your time with this reading, and let the familiarity you gained by browsing guide your highlighting and note taking. By all means, make marks in your book! You own it, and marking it up as you study will help you tremendously in learning the material.

Finally, jot down ideas or concepts you don't feel rock solid about understanding, after doing the reading. We'll spend a good deal of time in class talking about the concepts you identify as troublesome or confusing. Make some notes so that when I ask you what things from the reading need clarifying, we'll cover the ones that baffle you.

This four-step process won't require much more time, but I think you'll find you have a far better grasp of the material as a result. Try it and see.

Motivation

Your success in this course is in your own hands. As in so many other activities, your commitment to your own success is crucial. At one level, this is simple: come to class, be prepared for the class, and participate fully in the class. At a deeper level, this is complex: only you can promise you will do that, and then keep that promise to yourself.

Plagiarism

The explosive development of the World Wide Web has opened a great many wonderful opportunities to all of us. It has also made it easier than ever to misrepresent someone else's work as our own. When you're up against a deadline, you might be tempted to copy-and-paste from a journal article into your research paper. Like, into your term paper for this course...

Don't do it.

Plagiarism is a fool's shortcut. Not only do you cheat yourself of the opportunity to learn and grow, but you expose yourself to severe academic penalties.

Plagiarism is dishonest. There's a saying that sincerity inspires respect. Earn your self-respect through your own efforts.

Ground Rules, and Tough Love

Here's how to do well in this course: do the reading and writing assignments on schedule, and show up for class. I reserve the right to refuse written work after its due date. Blowing off a class will cost you the grade points for whatever activities we do that day. Worse than that, you'll also have missed out on the knowledge you would have acquired during our action-packed show.

That makes the attendance policy obvious: if you take this course, come to class.

That also makes the work ethic unambiguous: if you take this course, get the work done on time. If you do, you get the credit for it; if not, you don't. Ouch! Don't hurt yourself like that—K?

So much for the *tough* part. Here's the *love* part: if something is going on in your life that knocks you off your game, contact me before the deadline so we can work something out. Keep in mind, though, that missing a deadline and making lame excuses afterward just won't cut it. If you blow it, admit it—and get it right, the next time.

You can understand what I mean, then, by calling this *tough love*. I want you to do well in this course. *But if I were to let you get away with doing less than your best or to give you the impression that life is about just doing the minimum necessary to get by, I'd be devaluing you.* Again, sincerity inspires respect. I want to earn your respect, and I hope you want to earn mine.

Remember that you are a student at a first-class state university, and this is a professional context for all of us. Be sure the papers you turn in reflect your professionalism. All your written work must be typed, double spaced, with normal margins and font size. Be sure your name, the course number, and the assignment number are on the top of the page. Written work is *written* work; unless we make arrangements before the deadline passes, email is *not* acceptable as a way to submit an assignment.

When you're having trouble with an assignment, don't suffer in silence. Call me! That's what I'm here for. My office hours are listed on this syllabus, and we can meet other times by appointment.

Here's what it all comes down to:

My job is to create an environment in which you can succeed.

Your job is to succeed.

Course Schedule

August 27 Course Introduction

September 3 Approaches, Methods, and Goals of Research
Reading assignment for this class: the syllabus; pp. 1-20 of your textbook.

Writing assignment for this class (#1): Write a two-page essay explaining which of the four research methodologies described on pp. 6-7 strikes you as the best way to investigate human communication.

Be sure to say what you think "best" means in this context, and how the method you've chosen ranks as best in that regard. If you like, you could explain why the other three

methods are inferior. Mention any qualities of the methods you think are relevant here: practical, theoretical, ethical, or social.

September 10 Laboratory Experiments

Reading assignment for this class: pp. 21-54.

Writing assignment for this class (#2): pick any six of the critical questions about lab experiments on pp. 30-32, and apply them to the sample study in this chapter. Write about a paragraph for each of the questions. Use line numbers to refer to specific details in the study, as evidence to support your answers to the questions.

September 17 Field Experiments

Reading assignment for this class: pp. 55-84.

Writing assignment for this class (#3): pick any six of the critical questions about field experiments on pp. 60-61, and apply them to the sample study in this chapter. Write about a paragraph for each of the questions. Use line numbers to refer to specific details in the study, as evidence to support your answers to the questions.

September 24 Survey Questionnaires

Reading assignment for this class: pp. 85-124.

Writing assignment for this class (#4): pick any six of the critical questions about surveys, in general, on pp. 88-89 or survey questionnaires, in particular, on pp. 96-97, and apply them to the sample study in this chapter. Write about a paragraph for each of the questions. Use line numbers to refer to specific details in the study, as evidence to support your answers to the questions.

October 1 Survey Interviews

Reading assignment for this class: read pp. 125-160.

Writing assignment for this class (#5): pick any six of the critical questions about surveys, in general, on pp. 88-89 or survey interviews, in particular, on pp. 129-130, and apply them to the sample study in this chapter. Write about a paragraph for each of the questions. Keep using line numbers to refer to specific details in the study.

October 8 The Dreaded Midterm Exam

Reading assignment for this class: prepare for the midterm. Reread your textbook, review your notes, and come see me if I can help clarify any of the material for you.

October 15 Term Paper Workshop

Reading assignment for this class: spend a full two hours browsing Eggenschwiler and Biggs. Don't try to read through it from front to back; that's not enough time. Skip around, and stop to read those passages which most apply to the mistakes you tend to make in your own writing. Highlight or tab those passages, so you can easily refer to them as you work on your term paper in the coming weeks.

Writing assignment for this class: write a two page proposal describing the research question about human communication which you plan to investigate for your term paper. State the question clearly, describe your personal motivation for the inquiry, say why you think other people might find it of interest, and include a bibliography of at least three scholarly articles relevant to your question. Be sure to use paragraph breaks to set off the different elements of your proposal.

You need to decide on your RQ now. Come and see me before this class if I can be of help to you. Don't suffer in silence—and don't come to this class empty-handed. Git R Done, K?

October 22 Content Analysis

Reading assignment for this class: pp. 161-165 and 194-218.

Writing assignment for this class (#6): pick any six of the critical questions about textual analysis, in general, on p. 164 or content analysis, in particular, on p. 199, and apply them to the sample study in this chapter. Write about a paragraph for each of the questions. Use line numbers to refer to specific details in the study.



Get rolling on your term paper! There are deadlines coming up...

October 29 Interaction Analysis

Reading assignment for this class: pp. 219-245.

Writing assignment for this class (#7): pick any six of the critical questions about textual analysis, in general, on p. 164 or interaction analysis, in particular, on pp. 224-225, and apply them to the sample study in this chapter. Write about a paragraph for each of the questions. Use line numbers to refer to specific details in the study.

November 5 Rhetorical Criticism

Reading assignment for this class: pp. 167-193.

Writing assignment for this class (#8): pick any six of the critical questions about textual analysis, in general, on p. 164 or rhetorical criticism, in particular, on pp. 171-172, and apply them to the sample study in this chapter. Write about a paragraph for each of the questions. Use line numbers to refer to specific details in the study.



Keep your term paper moving along! You need to have a draft done for the next class.

November 12 Ethnographic Observation

Reading assignment for this class: pp. 247-284.

Writing assignment for this class (#9): pick any six of the critical questions about ethnographic observation on pp. 260-262, and apply them to the sample study in this chapter. Write about a paragraph for each of the questions. Use line numbers to refer to specific details in the study.

Writing assignment for this class: turn in the draft of your term paper. (Yeah, it's a work in progress, but it should at least look like a term paper by this point. Get all your headings and subheadings in place, definitely!) I'll give it back to you at the next class, with helpful comments. The more complete this draft is, the better position you'll be in as the due date for the final version nears...

November 19 Ethnographic Interviews

Reading assignment for this class: p. 285-311, on ethnographic interviews.

Writing assignment for this class (#10): pick any six of the critical questions about ethnographic interviews on pp. 291-293, and apply them to the sample study in this chapter. Write about a paragraph for each of the questions. Use line numbers to refer to specific details in the study.

☺ **Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours!**

December 3

Review Session; Hail and Farewell

 ***Put your term paper in my mailbox no later than December 5!***

December 10

The Dreaded Final Exam

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