

COMM 4484-02-Mass Communications Research Methods
(Special Service-Learning/Community-Engaged Research Section)
Mondays/Wednesdays, 5:30 pm - 6:45 pm
Pafford Hall - Room 306
Spring Semester 2020

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Office Hours (Face to Face): Mondays/Wednesdays: 10:00 am - 11:00 am; 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm
Office Hours (Virtual): Tuesdays & Thursdays: 10:00 am - 11:30 am; 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm
(Or by appointment)

Overview

This course introduces you to concepts and practices used to gain a better understanding of media, communicators, audiences, and messages. The goal is for you to become not only a more informed media consumer, but also to develop research skills you can use in your professional life and your community.

While this course will reference a wide range of media technologies, it will highlight research applications for emerging digital and social media applications. These new media applications are increasingly integral across traditional media industries, such as journalism, public relations, television and radio, film and video production.

The course has two major parts: (1) an overview of the concepts and practices involved in conducting media research, and (2) an opportunity to apply those concepts and practices on a service-learning project with a real client.

You are responsible for learning all material presented in lectures and assigned content. I also expect you to complete assigned readings prior to class, and to be prepared to make informed contributions to discussions and in-class activities. Lectures will focus on central concepts in our assigned readings, and also will draw on information from additional sources. If you have questions at any point concerning course expectations or material, I encourage you to email or visit me during office hours.

Course Learning Objectives

- Identify and explain the role of research in mass media, public relations, and social media decision-making
- Explain the research process and define the elements of research
- Define major mass media research methods and explain similarities, differences, advantages, and disadvantages
- Understand the role of statistics and other analytical techniques and tools in the research

process

- Analyze the ethical responsibility of conducting research on and with community institutions and individuals
- Design, conduct, analyze and communicate community-engaged research
- Reflect on the process and significance of conducting research in collaboration with community organizations
- Reflect on one's own values and assumptions related to community issues and research processes

This course meets the following ACEJMC Standards

- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work (*ACEJMC SLO8*)
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve (*ACEJMC SLO9*)
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts (*AEJMC SLO11*)

Mass Communications Program Learning Outcomes

ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies: As a unit seeking accreditation from the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), the Department of Mass Communications is committed to preparing students with the requisite knowledge and skills to be successful in the media and communications industries after graduation. The Department has adopted as its degree program learning outcomes ACEJMC's 12 professional values and competencies that all graduates of an ACEJMC accredited program should be aware of and able to demonstrate as scholars and professionals in the discipline. These include the six (6) values and six (6) competencies listed below. For the detailed list of the ACEJMC professional values and competencies, see the [UWG Undergraduate Catalog](#) or [ACEJMC - Standard 2. Curriculum and Instruction](#).

Values:

1. Freedom of Speech
2. History
3. Diversity
4. Global Impact
5. Theory
6. Ethics

Competencies:

1. Think Critically & Creatively
2. Research & Evaluate
3. Write Effectively
4. Self-Evaluate
5. Apply Numbers & Statistics
6. Apply Technology



Required Course Materials

For this course you will need to purchase access to McGraw-Hill's Connect, rather than buying a textbook. Here is the Connect access code that you will purchase:

- Access Card For *Communication Research: Asking Questions, Finding Answers*, Joanne Keyton, ISBN 1260131009 (5th Edition.)

Here's how to purchase the access code/card:

Option 1: Purchase from Connect integrated in CourseDen

You can purchase Connect access through your CourseDen account. Login to the CourseDen, click on this course (COMM 4484-02), and then click on the McGraw-Hill Connect link, which will take you to the Connect registration page where you can follow the prompts.

At that time, you will need to do one of the following:

- Enter your access code
- Purchase access online
- Begin your 14-day Courtesy Access period

Please note: After you register, you will have the option to purchase a low-cost print version of the text through Connect. This is optional. If you choose to purchase a copy, a full-color, loose-leaf version will be shipped to you. You also will have the option through Connect to rent a bound version of the book.

Option 2: Purchase from the UWG bookstore, then access Connect through CourseDen

Purchase a Connect access card at the UWG bookstore. Use the access code that you are provided to register and enter your Connect access code through CourseDen.

Important: Please be aware that if you purchase or rent the physical version of this textbook, you **MUST** purchase Connect access to complete assignments related to each chapter. (ALERT: Access codes purchased from third party companies -- not McGraw-Hill or UWG Bookstore -- may have been used previously and, if so, will not operate properly.) **Failure to purchase Connect access due to financial or other considerations is not a justification for failing to complete LearnSmart assignments, nor is it a justification for late submission or extended deadlines for assignments.**

Overview of Service Learning and Role in Course

UWG's defines Service Learning as a structured teaching and learning strategy within a course that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and address community priorities. The instructor is equipped with knowledge and resources to ensure that:

- the need is identified by the community being served,
- students engage in critical reflection,

- the service is aligned with student learning outcomes for which the student receives academic credit, and
- it is a mutually beneficial partnership that balances student learning with service to the community.

Service learning is different than other forms of experiential education, such as internships, in that it:

- offers a balance between service and learning objectives
- places an emphasis on reciprocal learning
- increases and understanding of the context in which clinical and/or service work occurs;
- focuses on the development of civic skills;
- addresses community identified concerns; and
- involves community in the service learning design and implementation.

For your service-learning project in this course, students in the class will be divided into groups of 3 or 4 to work as a teams provide research services on different aspects of a research question identified collaboratively by a non-profit organization in our area and the class. The entire class will complete different aspects of a larger research project for the non-profit organization, providing support to each other to provide consulting services to the client. By the end of the course, you will have a collection of research analysis and writing that you can share with prospective employers.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Please carefully review your [student rights and responsibilities](#). This document contains important material pertaining to your rights and responsibilities in this class, including accessibility guidelines and the university honor code. Because the university updates these statements as federal, state, and accreditation standards change, you should review the information each semester.

Attendance/Participation

Since our class meetings will involve discussions of theories, strategies, and methods in the context of team projects, you are expected to attend every scheduled class session and be prepared for active participation in class. Each unexcused absence reduces your Participation/Attendance grade by 0.5% of the final grade. Whether or not you have an excused absence, you are responsible for accessing the information discussed in class. Class participation/attendance is worth up to **5% of your final grade**.

CourseDen

During the online component of the course, we will primarily use CourseDen *Discussions, Assignments, Quizzes, Email, and Grades* tools. I expect you to log in to CourseDen regularly throughout the week, but especially within 24 hours of each scheduled class session. For CourseDen assistance, including orientations and troubleshooting, I encourage you to reference the technical support resources at the bottom of your CourseDen homepage: [UWG Online Helpdesk Services](#) via email at online@westga.edu, or by phone at 678-839-6248.

The *Discussions* tab is where you will go for virtual classroom discussions.

The *Assignments* tab is where you will access your assignments for class, where you will submit

assignments to be graded, and where you will receive feedback.

Grades

You will use the *Grades* tab to view your grades in the class. I typically will post exam scores within three days of an exam. Grades for assignments related to projects typically will be posted within a week of deadlines.

Email

The *Email* tool allows the members of the class to exchange emails with each other, and to exchange emails with me. Each time you log in, it is important that you check *Email*, particularly for messages from me. **Do not send emails related to this course to my UWG email address (unless you cannot access CourseDen).**

ASSIGNMENTS

IRB CITI Training

All individuals engaged in research involving human participants must complete an educational program related to the responsible conduct of research prior to initiation of the project. UWG has selected the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) as the online educational training course providing information on the protection of human subjects in the format of instructional modules. You are required to successfully complete this training before you can begin work on the research project. There are no exceptions to this requirement. This training is worth **5% of your final grade**.

LearnSmart Assignments

For each assigned chapter, you will complete a LearnSmart assignment as we engage in class discussion on that chapter. The McGraw-Hill Higher Education website describes LearnSmart as follows:

LearnSmart is an interactive study tool that adaptively assesses students' skill and knowledge levels to track which topics students have mastered and which require further instruction and practice. Based upon student progress, it then adjusts the learning content based on their knowledge strengths and weaknesses, as well as their confidence level around that knowledge.

[As an] online study tool that maximizes time spent with your course textbook or eBook, LearnSmart tests your knowledge of key concepts and pinpoints the topics on which you need to focus your study time.

There are several tutorials available in Connect to assist you in getting familiar with this education resource. LearnSmart assignments are worth either **1% or 2%** of your grade, for a total of **15 percent** of your final grade over 12 assigned chapters during the semester.

Deadline for completion of each chapter's questions will be posted in LearnSmart and the course schedule.

Service-Learning Project Assignments

Research Project: Each project team will have a service-learning project that you will work on throughout the semester. This applied research project is an integral part of the course, and will involve require you to

apply various concepts and techniques that you are learning from the textbook and other resources. Components of the research project are listed below.

Components of Research Project (percentages refer to portion of overall project percentage, not overall course grade)

- Organizational Needs Analysis and Report (5%)
- Journal Article/Literature Review Worksheet (10%)
 - Each individual team member analyzes a different journal article relevant to your team's topic
- Quantitative Research Design Worksheet (20%)
- Instrument Development (10%)
- Data Collection Report (10%)
- Analysis/Results Report (20%)
- Final Project Report Presentation to Community Partner Organization (10%)
- Final Project Report (15%)

Project Contributions (Peer/Self-Evaluation)

Each person on your team will evaluate themselves and their other team members on their contributions to the service learning team assignments. The evaluation form will be provided during the first week of the semester.

The grade on the Project Contributions component starts from a base percentage that is equal to that of your team's overall project grade. This percentage is then adjusted to reflect your individual contribution to the project. Thus, the average of the team members' Project Contribution grades (as a percentage) will equal the team's overall Project grade (as a percentage). This means that the Project Contribution average grade cannot be manipulated to artificially increase the team's average contribution grade above its overall Project grade.

For example:

- If a group of three team members earned an 80% grade on the Project, and all of the team members did equal work, based on their and the instructor's evaluations, then they each would get 8% of the 10% available on Project Contributions.
- If a group of three team members earned an 80% grade on the Project, and the team and self evaluations indicate that one person did significantly more than the others, that team member might earn 10% out of 10% for the Project Contribution score (or 100% of the possible points), while the other two team members might each earn 7% out of 10% (or 70% of possible points). The average of $100\% + 70\% + 70\% = 80\%$. The average of the 3 team members' Contribution scores must match the team's overall percentage score for the assignment.

Reflection Posts

The concept of Service Learning, at UWG and beyond, assumes that student learning occurs when meaningful community service is integrated with instruction and critical reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and address community priorities. You will engage in the process of reflection by answering designated questions at various points throughout the semester about your thoughts about specific components of the research project, and will post those reflections in the *Discussions* area on CourseDen. Your reflection posts collectively are worth a total of **10% of your final**

grade. Deadlines are available in the Course Schedule.

Statistics Worksheet

The ability to apply numbers and statistics is an important competency in contemporary society, and is increasingly important for media professionals in fields where analysis and interpretation of data is involved. This applies not only to traditional and new media environments themselves, but also in politics, business, health, education, and other contexts in which media professionals work, or with which they interact.

We will cover the basics of descriptive and inferential statistics in this course in relation to the service-learning project. In addition, you will have an opportunity to engage with statistics concepts in the LearnSmart assignments related to our readings from the Keyton text. However, I also will provide you with additional resources allowing you to practice and gain confidence in understanding how to apply statistics in real-world contexts. You will complete a statistics worksheet as one means to demonstrate your understanding of these concepts. More details will be provided later in the semester. This assignment will be worth **5% of your final grade.**

Late Work Policy

All assignments are due by the deadline date listed in the Course Schedule, unless other instructions are provided by the instructor. Guidelines for all assignments will be available at least two weeks before deadlines. Thus, there will be NO acceptance of unexcused late work. If your **team** fails to submit an assignment, **all members of your team** will receive zero points. Also, there will be no extensions of team assignments unless arrangements have been discussed and confirmed with the instructor prior to the missed deadline. Extensions for individual assignments are only considered with documentation submitted within a reasonable time after the deadline confirming an emergency situation outside your control (e.g., medical, legal, transportation emergency). Documentation will not be accepted that is submitted more than 24 hours after a deadline. NOTE: Please contact me immediately if there are issues with workload sharing among your team members, and keep in mind that each team member's contribution to the project components will be part of a self and peer evaluation at the conclusion of the project.

Evaluation

Assignments will be weighted as follows:

IRB CITI Training Certificate	5%
LearnSmart Assignments (12 assignments at 1% or 2% each)	15%
Community-Engaged Research Project (includes various components)	50%
Project Contributions - Peer/Self-Evaluations	10%
Reflection Posts (5 posts @ 2% each)	10%
Statistics Worksheet	5%
<u>Class Participation and Attendance</u>	<u>5%</u>
TOTAL	100%

Assignment and final grades will be based on the following percentage scale.

A	90% - higher
B	80% - 89%

C	70% - 79%
D	60% - 69%
F	59% - lower

In the interest of academic integrity and fairness, please note that at the end of the semester, I do not offer extra credit opportunities, since grades may already include extra credit for problematic exam questions and bonus exam questions.

I round up final grade percentages, so a final grade percentage of 89.50 would be rounded up to 90. However, a final grade percentage of 89.49 would NOT be rounded up. Each point on every assignment is important to your final grade percentage and final letter grade.

[END OF SYLLABUS]
[\[WEEKLY SCHEDULE\]](#)