

Most recently taught Fall 2003

Com 441: Introduction to Graduate Studies

Course Description

This course provides an orientation to scholarship in the field of communication and an introduction to research methods, primarily quantitative, qualitative, and rhetorical/critical methods. Projects emphasize a scholarly style of writing, including writing abstracts and producing a research proposal.

Objectives: After this course, the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a broad conceptual and theoretical understanding of the field of communication.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of three research methods (quantitative, qualitative, and textual analysis).
3. Write concise abstracts that summarize and critique communication research articles.
4. Produce a research proposal that includes an appropriate justification, review of literature, research questions and/or hypotheses, and proposes a research method.
5. Write in a scholarly style typical of communication journals.
6. Demonstrate understanding of the major professional organizations, conventions, and journals in the field of communication.

Expectations:

1. Attend every class meeting.
2. Come prepared by having read the assignments.
3. Actively participate in your education through discussion or other activities.
4. Have assignments ready to hand in at the beginning of the due date.

Specific Assignments (tentative):

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| 1. Three research article abstracts (directions follow) | 15% (5% each) |
| 2. Four mini-papers (revised for the final research proposal) | 25% |
| 3. A final revised research proposal | 25% |
| 4. Participation in class | 5% |
| 5. Journal, Dissertation, Theory and presentations | 15% |
| 6. A final examination | 15% |

Required Textbooks:

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American psychological association* (5th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Rubin, R. B., Rubin, A. M., & Piele, L. J. (2000). *Communication research: Strategies and sources* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Rudestam, K. E., & Newton, R. R. (2001). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Additional Readings:

A packet of articles for supplemental readings has been developed for this course. These may be checked out from the departmental office to make copies. The appropriate days for reading them are noted on the schedule below. It is possible that some adjustments may be made and additional articles may be added.

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is fundamental to graduate education. All members must be confident that each person's work has been honestly and responsibly acquired, developed, and presented. The academic community considers academic dishonesty a serious matter with serious consequences. In addition to the more blatant form of cheating or copying other people's work and presenting it as one's own, plagiarism is a common form of dishonesty. Plagiarism occurs when adequate citations and recognition are not given when using the ideas and words of others, whether paraphrasing or quoting directly. Intentional or excessive plagiarism can result in a failing grade on an assignment. When in doubt about plagiarism, consult the course instructor.

American Disabilities Act: If you have special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and need special arrangements for this class, contact your instructor or notify the Office of Disability Services, AO48 Brady Commons, 882-4696. Reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate your needs.

Tentative Course Schedule:

Week 1: Tuesday, August 26: Orientation to the class and program. APA Exercise.

Readings: None

Assignment: *In-class activity*

Week 2: Tuesday, September 2: Orientation to graduate work, field of communication, professional organizations, etc.

Readings: Rubin, Rubin, & Piele (RRP): Chapter 1.
Rudestam & Newton (RN): Chapter 9-10.
Powers, J.H. (1995). On the intellectual structure of the human communication discipline. *Communication Education*, 44, 191-222.

Assignment Due: Select Three Articles and Three Possible Topics; Dissertation Choice

Week 3: Tuesday, Sept 9: Topic Justification

Readings: RRP 2, 11, 12; RN: Chapters 1-2

Assignment Due: Abstract #1 due (bring all three articles)

Week 4: Tuesday, Sept 16: Library and Research Activities

Readings: RRP: Chapters 3-6;

Assignment Due: Topic Justification Due

Week 5: Tuesday, Sept 23: Communication Journals and Dissertation Reports

Readings: RRP Chapters 7 and 8

Assignment Due: Analysis of a Communication Journal and Dissertation Report

Week 6: Tuesday, Sept 30: Literature Review / Research Questions and Hypotheses

Readings: RN: Chapter 3 and 4; RRP: Chapter 9;

Assignment Due: Abstracts #2 and #3

Week 7: Tuesday, Oct 7: Major Theories and approaches

Assignment Due: Theory Report

Week 8: Tuesday, Oct 14: Topic 1: Interpersonal Communication

Readings: Hess, J.A. (2000). Maintaining nonvoluntary relationships with disliked partners: An investigation into the use of distancing behaviors. *Human Communication Research*, 26, 458-488.

Benoit, P.J. (1997). Cosmetic queens in pink Cadillacs: Recasting women's success in Mary Kay Cosmetics. In *Telling the success story: Acclaiming and disclaiming discourse* (pp. 77-110). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Smythe, M.J. (1995). Talking bodies: Body talk at Bodyworks. *Communication Studies*, 46, 245-260.

Assignment Due: Literature Review, Research Questions, and Hypotheses Due

Week 9: Tuesday, Oct 21: T2: Political communication: Rhetorical Criticism/Textual Methods

Readings: McKinney, M.S., Dudash, E.A., & Hodgkinson, G. (2003). Viewer reaction to the presidential debates: Learning issue and image information. In L.L. Kaid, J.C. Tedesco, D.G. Bystrom, & M.S. McKinney (Eds.), *The millennium election: Communication in the 2000 campaigns* (pp. 43-58). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Benoit, W. L., & Harthcock, A. (1999). Functions of the Great Debates: Acclaims, attacks, and defense in the 1960 presidential debates. *Communication Monographs*, 66, 341-357.

Benoit, W. L. (1997b). Hugh Grant's image restoration discourse: An actor apologizes. *Communication Quarterly*, 45, 251-267.

Week 10: Tuesday, Oct 28 T3: Mass Communication and Quantitative Methods

Readings: Porter, M.J., Larson, D.L., Harthcock, A., & Berg-Nellis, K. (2002). Re(de)fining narrative events: Examining television narrative structure. *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, 30, 23-30.

Also be prepared to refer to the quantitative article you abstracted.

Week 11: Tuesday, Nov 4: T4: Organizational Communication and Qualitative Methods

Readings: Kramer, M.W., Dougherty, D.S., & Pierce, T.A. (in press) Communication during a corporate merger: A case of managing uncertainty during organizational change. *Human Communication Research*.

Dougherty, D.S. (2001). Sexual harassment as {dys}functional process: A feminists standpoint analysis. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 29, 372-402.

Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (pp. 1-34).

Also be prepared to refer to the qualitative article you abstracted.

Week 12: Tuesday, Nov 11: Writing the Methods, Results, and Discussion Chapters

Readings: RN: Chapter 5, 6, 7, 11

Be prepared to look at all three of your articles.

Week 13: Tuesday, Nov 18: Research Ethics and Institutional Review Boards (IRB)

Readings: RRP: Chapter 10; RN: Chapter 8, 12

Assignment Due: Research Methods Section

Week 14: Tuesday, Dec 2: Careers in the Academy & Beyond, Review, Course Evaluations

Readings:

Hickson, M.III., Stacks, D.W., and Bodon, J. (1999). The status of research productivity in communication: 1915-1995. *Communication Monographs*, 66, 178-197.

Hickson, M.III., Turner, J., and Bodon, J. (2003). Research productivity in communication: An analysis, 1996-2001. Manuscript submitted for publication (Author requests: Do not cite).

Musambira, G.W. (2000). Top convention paper productivity in the U.S.: Analysis of national communication association (NCA) and international communication association (ICA) awards 1994-1998. *Communication Education*, 49, 284-296.

Week 15: Tuesday, Dec 9: Final Examination

Week 16: Tuesday, Dec 16: Paper Presentations *Assignment: Complete Manuscript*

Three Articles and Three Possible Topics Assignment

This assignment involves two parts: finding three articles to work with this semester and finding three possible topics. You may combine the assignments, although it is not necessary.

Three Articles: First, go to the library and look for an example of each of three methods or type of research studies we will be examining this semester: Quantitative, qualitative, and textual analysis (critical/rhetorical/content). A quantitative study will usually have some tables and lots of numbers. A qualitative study will be more descriptive and lack almost any numbers. A textual analysis will analyze some “text,” perhaps a speech, a television program, or so forth and discuss rhetorical, critical, or content analysis as methods.

Be sure you select an article with data analysis in it, not a review, conceptual, or theoretical piece. Make sure it is an original study including analysis. If you have any questions, ask me. Don't worry if you make a mistake in your initial selection. This can be fixed later.

Use communication journals only for this assignment. Also, limit your search to 2000 or more recent. Keep looking until you find an example of each that you think is interesting and of generally good quality by your current criteria. You may change your mind later in the semester about its quality. While you may use an article you already read, you are encouraged to select something you have not read before.

You will be using these three article on and off throughout the semester. Pick something that is interesting to you. It may be that all three of these are related to a topic you are considering for your papers. It may be that each article represents a different topic you are considering.

Make copies of the three articles. Bring these articles to class each time until further notice.

Three Possible Topics: After you have looked for articles for a while, select three topics that you might consider doing your research proposal on for this class. Come to class with three distinctly different topics. The three topics could be within the same general area (all about rhetoric, or all about communicating emotions) and yet be quite distinct from each other, or they could be from quite different areas (one on interpersonal communication, one on health communication, etc.). Bring these topics to class and be prepared to talk about each of them.
DUE: September 2, 2003

Abstract Assignments

You will eventually do three abstracts of the three research articles. However, you will begin with one, receive feedback on it, and then do the other two. The three abstracts must be one of each of the three major research methodologies we examine in this course, a quantitative, a qualitative, and a textual method (critical, rhetorical, or content analysis). These should be the three articles you selected as part of the first assignment although you may change them.

Before writing the abstract, read the article carefully. If you have questions or do not understand something, try to find an answer. Use all of your available resources. These resources include you, books, peers, and professors.

Guidelines:

The abstract should generally be no longer than one page in length single-spaced using standard APA margins and fonts. If you feel you have written as precisely as you possibly can, maybe consider going on to a second page.

At the top of the page, begin with a correct APA style citation of the article. Then there are two main parts to the abstract:

Part 1: Summary. You should summarize or "abstract" the article. This means putting into your own words the major points of the study. It should include something about the article's purpose, its research questions or hypotheses, its method, and its important findings. It should be clear from your summary what contribution the author(s) think they have made. Here are some other hints:

1. Do not use direct quotes unless they are absolutely essential, which they rarely are in an abstract. Perhaps something very, very brief.
2. Give enough detail so we may understand the summary and your evaluation, but do not report every "fact." For example, the sample size may typically be important, but not the respondents' ages and occupations. You do not need to list all the hypotheses or research questions, just their focus. Mentioning field notes were analyzed might be important, not the number of pages of notes.
3. Your summary should be in your words, not the words of the article abstract.
4. Try not to simply gloss over or skip what you don't understand. Ask for help.

Part 2: Evaluation. Evaluation includes noticing the **strengths**, as well as the weaknesses of the article. Too often we only focus on weaknesses. It seems unlikely that the article would have been published if it only had weaknesses. Some issues to consider might be the value of the topic, the appropriateness of the research questions, the value of the results, the appropriateness of the research methods, the clarity of the writing style, the logic of the research, and so forth. Not all of these apply to every article and there are other important criteria you might consider. Here are some other hints:

1. Do not focus on trite criticisms. For example, college students are frequently used and this may be a limitation, but it is not automatically a problem. Do not focus on this unless there is a reason that students' age is an important limitation given the study.
2. Give a balance between positive and negative remarks.
3. Do not blame the author(s) for your own lack of background in the topic. If you need to read something else (a theory or previous study) to evaluate the article, go read it.

FIRST ONE DUE: September 9, 2003

OTHER TWO DUE: September 30, 2003

Analysis of a Communication Journal

You will be involved in selecting one communication journal to examine for this activity. Here is what you are to do with it.

Examine a representative number of years of the journal beginning with its first year and ending in 2003. The idea is that you should briefly examine about 5 or 6 different years. For some journals every fourth year will be enough because the journal has not been around very long. For some every tenth year will be too often.

In the years that you examine, look at things like the following:

1. Frequent Topics
2. Research Methods
3. Authors, Editors, and university affiliations
4. Length of Articles
5. Writing style (use of citations, 1st or 3rd person, etc.)

As you examine the journal, try to answer questions like these:

1. Has the focus of the journal changed over the years it has been in print?
2. What seems to be the current focus of the journal?
3. What type of research would you submit to this journal?

After you have examined the journal, prepare a brief handout (probably one page, but no more than two pages) and be prepared to discuss it. Each presentation should take 6-8 minutes. We will discuss each journal after your presentation as time allows.

DATE DUE: September 23, 2003

Dissertation Critique

Each student will select a dissertation completed by graduate from the University of Missouri Department of Communication in the past 15 years, whose topic is in the area of research that interests you. To ensure variety, we will make certain that each of you has a unique dissertation. For September 2, come with a title of at least one dissertation you might examine.

In approximately three pages (APA format) you should provide an abstract/review of the study. This should be quite similar to the abstracts described earlier; it is just longer because there is more to summarize and critique. First, summarize the dissertation. Be sure to highlight the theoretical perspective grounding of the work, the method(s) including how the study was designed, and the key findings.

Then, your review should provide a critique of the study in terms of content and style of presentation. Specifically, do you feel this study provided valuable insight into a significant area

of communication research? What were the strengths of the study? What changes, in design and/or execution of the study, would you suggest? Was the work readable and understandable? Other criteria may apply depending on the nature of the dissertation.

In class provide a discussion of your review of the dissertation. This should last 7-10 minutes.

Dissertation Choice: September 2, 2003

Date Due: September 23, 2003

Theory Report Assignment

You will be given an opportunity to select a major communication theory to examine for this assignment. You are to become an expert on this theory.

To help you with this, you might start with a communication theory book or a textbook. This will most likely give you some of the major ideas of the theory and should direct you to the primary resources.

Eventually, you should do the following:

1. Read something from the major authors who developed or created the theory.
2. Read some of the current research that is based on the theory.

After doing that, you should prepare about a ten-minute presentation on the theory. You do not need to “lecture” for ten minutes. It may be a more interactive presentation if it seems appropriate. As part of your presentation, prepare a handout (no more than one page) that includes some of the major points of the theory and some of the important references.

Like an abstract, be sure that your presentation includes some evaluation of the theory. What are its strengths and what are its weaknesses? Where might it apply and where might it not be very helpful in explaining human communication? Be prepared to answer questions. Be willing to admit that you do not know something when you do not know. How long we discuss it will not be an indication of the merit of your presentation. Some theories provoke a lot of discussion while others do not.

DATE DUE: October 7, 2003