Course description
This course will introduce you to basic research methods and techniques used in media and communication industries to understand the public’s preferences and tastes on the one hand, and media messages on the other. These approaches help media and communication industries create more effective messages, whether they are informative (news) or persuasive (strategic communication) messages, in order to reach appropriate audiences. Learning the basics of research in the “real world” will also involve reading, evaluating, and generally working with academic research approaches and procedures that professional researchers in the industry typically use.

The objectives of this course are:

1. To question what we routinely read, hear, and see in the media such as poll data, survey reports, business reporting, or consumer preferences;
2. To identify, explain, and evaluate the stated problems, key findings, and suggested solutions (if provided) in published research (in popular media and industry or trade publications)
3. To select appropriate methods for finding answers to specific questions about media audiences by learning the approach, features, purposes, advantages, and limitations of various research methods most commonly used in media industries;
4. To gain an appreciation of the practical aspects of research, like developing a basic understanding of typical numerical information used in media research, constructing research instruments, understanding a coherent research design.

JMC Learning Outcomes
The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn a JMC degree. You can find more information about these learning outcomes here: [http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/assessment](http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/assessment). We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes.

Broadly speaking, the following outcomes apply to this course:

Law and ethics:
- Students will demonstrate an ability to anticipate and recognize ethical issues when they arise and to reason through them taking multiple perspectives and contexts into account.
• Students will demonstrate an ability to explain their ethical approaches and reasoning about a particular dilemma in terms that can be understood by a diverse group of people.

Media literacy:
• Students will develop critical thinking skills to analyze and interpret media messages through an understanding of media practices and institutions.

Writing and storytelling:
• Students will display the ability to access and analyze data, report facts accurately, research and edit information responsibly and in a manner commensurate with professional standards.

Textbook:
There is no prescribed textbook for this course. A variety of readings from academic, trade, industry, and other sources will be posted as PDF files or hyperlinks. Materials from guest lectures will be included in the tests.

Recommended (not required):
ISBN: Paperback: 9780226065663 ($12.96 on Amazon)

ICON
You are responsible for keeping up with course materials and any changes that may occur periodically by checking ICON regularly. We will use ICON extensively, including for exams.

Assignments / Grading

Discussion posts – 6 @ 25 points, total 150 points
• For this assignment, you will post responses for 6 topics, all based on course materials (readings, reports, guest presentations, etc.).
• For each post a prompt will be given to which you will post two to three paragraphs in the discussion area on ICON. Each of your posts should be presented as a mini paper in response to the prompt.
• You should then respond to one post in the spirit of discussion. For example, if I provide a prompt on the topic of sampling, your first post should be 2-3 paragraphs in length, presented as a mini paper. You should post one response to any of your classmates’ first post.
• Details will be discussed in class and posted on ICON
• Assigned throughout the semester – refer course calendar.

Article analyses – 2 @ 50 points, total 100 points
• Two articles for identifying the research problem, methods used, application of the methods, findings, and lessons learned.
• Details will be discussed in class and posted on ICON.
Exam 1 – 100 points
• Covers weeks 1-7, including readings, lecture, and guest presentations. The exam will be taken online on ICON. Details will be given in class.

Exam 2 – 100 points
• Covers from week 10 till semester end. The date for the final exam will be given by the Registrar’s office. This exam will be taken online on ICON on the Registrar’s designated date and time. Details will be given in class. It is your responsibility to ensure you are in a position to take the exam online on that date and time. This will mean ensuring you have access to Internet connection.

Attendance and Participation – 50 points
• Every student gets one “grace” absence. Each additional unexcused absence will result in an automatic 5-point deduction from your Participation and Attendance grade. For example, 3 unexcused absences will result in a maximum Attendance and Participation grade of 40/50.
  • Note: See attendance policy below.
• Your participation grade will reflect our assessment of your preparedness, cooperation, and contribution. While attendance means “showing up,” preparedness means completing the assigned readings and tasks on time, cooperation means working well with others, and contribution means adding value to class discussions and activities.

Total Points = 500

Grading Scale
The final grade is determined by the total number of points earned during the semester.

A+ 485-500 points  B+ 435-449  C+ 385-399  D+ 335-349
A  465-484  B  415-434  C  365-384  D  315-334
A- 450-464  B- 400-414  C- 350-364  D- 300-314
F  299 and below

Attendance Policy
Excused absences will be granted only if (a) you are missing class for a documented illness, mandatory religious obligation, or University-sponsored activity, (b) you email me prior to the start of the class period you are missing, AND (c) you provide official documentation within one week of the absence. In your email, include your date of absence and reason for absence.

Missed Class
If you miss class, it is your responsibility to learn what was covered that day and acquire notes from your fellow classmates. Please do not send the following emails:
  1. “What did I miss?”
  2. “Did I miss anything important?”
The answer to #1 is “Lots,” and the answer to #2 is “Yes.” I am happy to discuss course content during office hours, but I cannot cover the material with the same amount of detail as I can in class.

Late Policy
Assignments that are submitted late will face a 10 percent penalty per day late, beginning at the exact due date/time and including weekends and holidays. For example, an assignment that would have received a 93% if it were turned in on time will receive an 83% if submitted ten minutes late, 73% if submitted two days late, and so on.
Extra Credit

There is no guarantee but there may be limited extra credit opportunities during the semester. Students will be notified of these opportunities via email if such opportunities should come up. You should not anticipate (a) that extra credit assignments will be made available, and (b) that the amount of extra credit offered will be great enough to make a significant impact on your final grade.

Electronic Communication

As per university policy, you are responsible for all official correspondences sent to your University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu).

Academic Misconduct

Students are not allowed to collaborate with each other on course assignments and exams. Do not share your work with others or ask others to see their completed assignments – both are considered academic misconduct. If you need assistance on your work, please meet with your TA or course instructor. Clear evidence of academic misconduct will result in a failing grade for the assignment/exam and possibly the course. Per college policy, we are required to report academic misconduct the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

According to the University of Iowa Academic Policies, academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Using direct quotations without quotation marks and/or without crediting the source
- Paraphrasing information and ideas from sources without crediting the source
- Failing to provide adequate citations for material obtained through electronic research
- Downloading and submitting work from electronic databases without citation
- Submitting material created/written by someone else as one’s own, including purchased papers, artistic works, photography, and electronic media.

In short, plagiarism occurs whenever someone else’s work or idea is presented as your own. Students are responsible for understanding this policy. If you have questions, please ask your TA or course instructor for clarification.

Resources for Students

Students may find the University of Iowa’s Writing Center to be useful for this course as well as OWL; the Tutor Iowa site is also very valuable for students seeking extra help. In addition, the campus library is very accommodating to distance students.

- U of I Writing Center: http://writingcenter.uiowa.edu/
- The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL): https://owl.english.purdue.edu/
- Tutor Iowa: http://tutor.uiowa.edu/
- APA reference formatting style: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/
Course calendar

Note: This is a working calendar. Deviations may be necessary at times. It is the student’s responsibility to keep informed of the calendar at all times. Changes to the calendar, if any, will be announced in class and on the ICON opening page.

Week 1 – Introduction (This week – assigned – discussion posting 1)
Tuesday (1/19)
  Course introduction
  Reading: Higgerson, Digital Journalism Trends

Thursday (1/21)
  Readings: Porter, Late Night Ratings
  Nesmith, State coverage gets a boost
  Poindexter and McCombs chapter

Week 2 – Understanding published research (This week – assigned – article analysis assignment)
Tuesday (1/26)
  Practice article: Young, Millenial News Consumers
  Practice article: Perrin, Social media usage

Thursday (1/28)
  Readings: Treadwell, Reading Research
  Locke et al reading

Week 3 – Reading research, cont’d (This week – assigned – discussion posting 2)
Tuesday (2/2)

Thursday (2/4)
  Guest lecture

Week 4 – Research ethics and quality
Tuesday (2/9)
  Reading: Treadwell chapter on Ethics in Research
  Sumser, chapter 1

Thursday (2/11)
  Video and companion article: Travis, The seven deadly sins of user research

Week 5 – Introduction to quantitative research (This week – assigned – discussion posting 3)
Tuesday (2/16)
  Readings: Sumser, chapter 2
Thursday (2/18)

Week 6 – Introduction to qualitative research
Tuesday (2/23)
Reading: Saldaña, chapter 1

Thursday (2/25)
Readings: Cooper & Reimann, Understanding Users

Week 7 – Procedures in quantitative approaches
Tuesday (3/1)
Reading: Watt and van den Berg chapter (excerpt)

Thursday (3/3)
Complete Watt and van den Berg reading

Week 8 – Exam 1 week
Tuesday (3/8) Exam review, no class

Thursday (3/10)
Exam 1 online

SPRING BREAK (3/15 & 3/17)

Week 9 – Sampling and measurement (This week – assigned – discussion posting 4)
Tuesday (3/22)
Reading: Treadwell, chapter 8
Orlin, Headlines-from-a-mathematically-literate-world/

Thursday (3/24)
Readings: Treadwell, chapter 5
Raju, “Statistics…primer for media”

Week 10 – Surveys
Tuesday (3/29)
Guest lecture
Reading: Ferenstein, Surveys Q and A on Silicon Valley politics
Thursday (3/31)
Reading: Treadwell, Surveys

**Week 11 -- New Media Metrics** (This week – assigned – discussion posting 5)
Tuesday (4/5)
Reading: Anderson, Between creative and quantified audiences
Cherubini, When data drive the news

Thursday (4/7)
Reading: Havens, Media programming in an era of big data

**Week 12 -- Content analysis**
Tuesday (4/12)
Reading: Treadwell, Chapter 12, Content Analysis
Watt & van den Berg chapter (excerpt)

Thursday (4/14)
Readings: Mitchell & Barthel, Local news media ecosystems
Barthel, Q/A

**Week 13 -- Qualitative research**
Tuesday (4/19)
Reading: Cooper et al, Understanding Users

Thursday (4/21)
Reading: Saldaña, Qualitative research design

**Week 14 -- Focus groups, field research** (This week – assigned – Discussion posting 6)
Tuesday (4/26)
Reading: Lenhart et al, Social media and romantic relationships

Thursday (4/28)
Reading: Treadwell, chapter 10, Observation

**Week 15 -- Interviewing**
Tuesday (5/3)
Reading: Boyce & Neale: Conducting in-depth interviews

Thursday (5/5)
Wind up

FINAL EXAM DATE: TBA by the Registrar’s Office
Administrative Home
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Electronic Communication
University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11).

Accommodations for Disabilities
A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Honesty
All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

CLAS Final Examination Policies
The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

Understanding Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.
Reacting Safely to Severe Weather
In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.

*These CLAS policy and procedural statements have been summarized from the web pages of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and The University of Iowa Operations Manual.