In the media and communication world, problems related to communication channels, institutions, content, professionalism and practice abound. Seeking solutions to these problems is a daily task in communication industries. Investigating communication problems involves a series of questions to help us arrive at the best methods for finding solutions. How can we learn about the ways in which communications media (press, broadcast, interactive, social media) work in a given context? How will we know what audiences are looking for or what they need or how they use media? What do we need to know to be able to improve or change mediated communication to make it more effective? How can we find out about meanings of ideas, events, and trends in the media?

Where would we begin to look for answers to these questions? In systematic and methodical research, the way it is done in both industry/professional and academic arenas. We will learn concepts, procedures, and application of various research methods to understand how we can approach communication problems related to media content, audiences, practice, and institutions. In learning research methods, we learn a certain logic that helps us to critically think through communication problems. It also enables us to investigate systematically and methodically what exactly the nature of the problem might be and suggest some possible solutions. To be able to achieve this, we will learn to question what we routinely read, hear, and see in the media, such as poll data, surveys, business reporting, consumer preferences, popularity ratings, representations of people and cultural identities in the media and so on. These methods can be applied to many communication and media-related professions such as journalism, public relations, or advertising, and also academic research for term papers and program projects (such as honors projects or theses). Therefore the objectives of this course are to:

1. understand and apply research concepts to analyze various issues and problems related to media content, production, and audiences
2. learn to “read” published research – that is, identify and explain the stated problems, key findings, and how solutions are suggested
3. understand the purposes, advantages, and limitations of various methodologies
4. work with various practical aspects of research, such as a basic understanding of common numerical information used in the media, constructing research instruments, writing a literature review with appropriate citing and reference practices, and developing a cogent research design.

Class materials

Required readings

Most readings will be made available on ICON as pdf files or links to journal articles and instructions for access will be provided. Although there is no packet planned at this time, if necessary, I may have a small course packet at Zephyr Copies. 124 E. Washington Street on August 23rd. (Phone: 319/ 351-3500). In that case, you will be informed in advance about the availability of the packet.

There is no textbook for this course.

Guest presentations

As and when it is possible to include more guest speakers, I will make the announcements in class and on ICON. Material from guest presentations will be included in the tests.
Student assessments

The point distribution is given below. The final letter grade for the course will be based upon the total number of points earned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Total points</th>
<th>Date due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Thurs. Oct. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test 2</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Nov. 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading a research article</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea and topic</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Oct. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a literature review</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing questions (problems), research design and method</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Nov. 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research instrument and Preliminary findings</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Nov. 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group project presentations</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Dec. 10, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper from the teamed project</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Dec. 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>--</td>
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</table>

Deadlines by calendar dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading a research article</td>
<td>Friday, <strong>Sept. 13</strong> (ICON)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea and topic</td>
<td>Friday, <strong>Oct. 4</strong> (ICON)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
<td>Thursday, <strong>Oct. 10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of literature</td>
<td>Friday, <strong>Oct. 18</strong> (ICON)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions, research design and method</td>
<td>Friday, <strong>Nov. 15</strong> (ICON)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test 2</td>
<td>Thursday, <strong>Nov. 21</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research instrument and preliminary findings</td>
<td>Sunday, <strong>Nov. 24</strong> (on ICON)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group project presentations</td>
<td>Tuesday <strong>Dec. 10</strong> and Thursday <strong>Dec. 12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project report due date</td>
<td>Monday <strong>Dec. 17</strong> (on ICON)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total points and final letter grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range in percentage</th>
<th>Range in points</th>
<th>Letter grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97-100%</td>
<td>485-500</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-96.9%</td>
<td>470-484.5</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93.9%</td>
<td>450-469.5</td>
<td>A -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89.9%</td>
<td>435-449.5</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84-86.9%</td>
<td>420-434.5</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-83.9%</td>
<td>400-419.5</td>
<td>B -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79.9%</td>
<td>385-399.5</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-76.9%</td>
<td>370-384.9</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-73.9%</td>
<td>350-369.5</td>
<td>C -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-69.9%</td>
<td>335-349.5</td>
<td>D +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-66.9%</td>
<td>320-334.5</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-63.9%</td>
<td>300-319.5</td>
<td>D -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.9% &lt;</td>
<td>299.5 &lt;</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade interpretations are as follows. Plus and minus signs indicate that the grade ranges within the set of criteria against the applicable letter grade.

“A” range: The work is thorough, thoughtful, and well-written. It shows an excellent understanding of the subject matter.

“B” range: The work shows good efforts to understand the material and attempts to write well. Ideas could be better-developed, and in general, performance can be improved.

“C” range: Acceptable work, basic points are present. Considerably more thought and development of ideas needed.

“D” range: Barely passing material.

“F:” Failing grade.

Note: It is likely that grades may slip to lower brackets if penalties are applied – for example, late submissions, e-mail submissions, and so on. Further details on this follow.

**Grade of Incomplete:** As a policy, I do not give a grade of “Incomplete” except under extenuating circumstances, which I will first have to evaluate.

**Extra credit assignments:** There are no extra-credit assignments for the course.

**ICON**

We will use the course ICON for several things. The syllabus is now available on the course site. Announcements and updates on class procedures and activities, reminders, and class materials including the syllabus, reading guides, and assignment guidelines will be available on the class ICON. Once the course ICON is ready, you have to download reading guides from there. Lecture-discussion notes and classroom discussion material will not be available on ICON. You are responsible for checking ICON regularly to keep abreast of various updates. The material in the “Announcements” section will keep changing and it is easy to miss important information if you do not check regularly.
Class format
Lecture-discussions, guest speakers, in-class work such as student presentations in workshop sessions, short take-home assignments, and a teamed project. An important component of the class is the teamed research project. After the class roster settles (around the second week of classes), detailed information on the project will be provided.

The teamed project is a large part of the coursework this semester. It is intended to accustom you to working in teams in the “real world” (which is how the work is usually done). Interpersonal differences will have to be resolved among team members.

The Iowa Dozen Reminder: We will strive for all of the standards in the Iowa Dozen (uniquely developed for the UI School of Journalism and Mass Communication) applicable to this course. The complete list is given below and the standards applicable for this course are presented in bold font:

We learn to

1. Write correctly, clearly and well.
2. Conduct research and gather information responsibly.
3. Edit and evaluate carefully.
4. Use media technologies thoughtfully.
5. Apply statistical concepts accurately

We value

6. Free speech and First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups.
7. A diverse global community.
8. Creativity and independence.

We explore

10. Theories and concepts.
11. The history, structure and economy of media institutions
12. The role of media in shaping cultures.

Test and Assignments

Tests:
There are two tests for this course – one will be held on week 7 of the semester and the other, on the week before Thanksgiving. Study lists for the tests will be provided. The test format could include multiple choice questions, short answer questions, and possibly some other items that I will explain in class. Accuracy and precision in understanding and defining concepts and making distinctions, and methodically thinking through problems are important and will help you in this course.

Assignments:

Reading a research article: Part of learning to “do” research is to be able to read published research intelligently, to help make the research useful for your own purposes. Material and guidelines will be provided for this assignment.
Group research project:

This is a semester-long pilot project that will develop gradually into a study of your team’s choice. There are several steps involved and each step is a graded assignment. I will assign the teams after the second week of classes, when the class roster stabilizes. Because student “drops” continue into the semester, sometimes team composition may have to be changed later in the semester.

Research paper topic: Specifying a topic and having a plan to study it is like having a very helpful road map for a research project. Guidelines will be provided.

Literature review: You will be required to find sources for the research paper and develop a cohesive picture of the literature available in your chosen topic of research. Guidelines will be provided.

Research questions, design, and method: Your team will develop a design for your research project. Guidelines will be provided.

Research instrument and preliminary findings: You will work with the data you will have gathered and will show what they tell us about you’re the problems your project has raised. Guidelines will be provided.

Presentation: You will present your research at the end of the semester to the class. A schedule of presentation dates will be provided by the fourth week of classes.

Research paper: A research paper of about 8-10 pages is required. Page counts do not include the title page and references. Essentially, this is a coming together of all the previous pieces of the research project. Guidelines on how to integrate all the pieces will be given about this final paper produced by each team.

A Note on Collaboration

Your final research project is collaborative. Each student on a research team is expected to complete a similar amount of work and to contribute equally to the final project. Each student will complete a self- and peer evaluation, describing this equality or the lack of it during the group’s work. For more information, see the assignment guidelines and the peer evaluation form that will be provided. Students who misrepresent themselves as equal partners in this collaborative project but who are actually letting others do the bulk of the work will be reported to the College for academic dishonesty. If you have questions, it is your responsibility to ask them.

Course policies and requirements

Assigned readings must be completed each week before coming to class.

Late submission and other policies on assignments:

- Almost all assignments will be submitted on ICON. Late submissions are recorded and course policies on late submissions will be applied.

- Late submissions, if not for emergency reasons, carry a penalty – see explanation below. If there is an emergency, you should see me about it – I will determine if it is indeed one (some reasons are obvious, others not so obvious, hence it is my responsibility to sort that out). Assignments will then have to be completed in a timely fashion - no later than a week after the due date.

Late submissions carry a penalty of one half letter grade for the assignment per working day, except in cases when there is an emergency (death in the family, severe illness, unforeseen circumstances such as automobile accidents), which has to be documented. You should check with me as soon as possible after the emergency situation to discuss documentation.
Academic dishonesty:
Plagiarism, unattributed duplication (know the difference between quotations and paraphrasing, cite work from sources other than your own), and fabrication are serious violations of academic honesty. The instructor is required to report any instance of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty will automatically lead to an “F” grade in the assignment, followed by further action by the instructor. To ensure that you do not engage in academic dishonesty even inadvertently (not considered an excuse), please refer the information at http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml (there is an “underscore” between the words academic and handbook in the URL). If you have questions about academic dishonesty such as plagiarism, duplication, or fabrication, it is your responsibility to ensure that you ask me prior to the assignment due date. If this is not done, then the submitted work with the plagiarized material will automatically be marked an “F” grade and further action will be taken.

Classroom conduct:
It is assumed that you will adopt a courteous and tolerant attitude toward your classmates and the instructor and be respectful of the diverse viewpoints necessary for a course of this nature. In addition to active and constructive participation, serve as an attentive and engaged audience for your classmates and instructor. Ensure that you come prepared (readings completed before class, assignments ready at beginning of class on due dates). Be on time and remain in class till the end of the class period. Avoid walking in and out of class frequently as this is disruptive of the concentration for both students and the instructor.

It is course policy that pagers, cell phones, e-mail, Facebook, and other personal electronic communication devices remain turned off when class is in session.

Attendance and absences:
Attendance in all sessions is required, as is participation in class. For absences, you should notify me well in advance except in emergencies like death in the family, in which case you should notify me at the earliest after the absence. Appropriate documents have to be provided for all absences within a time limit determined by the instructor. You can meet me during office hours or by appointment to discuss an absence.

Readings and preparation for the class:
Complete assigned readings prior to attending class. As a rule of thumb, double the course credit hours for weekly study and preparation time. For a three-credit course, plan on a weekly study time of six hours.

Other:
Depending upon the circumstances (pace and progress of the course, emergencies, unexpected guest lectures, etc.), I may modify the course calendar. Ensure that you have all guidelines, handouts, and be aware of changes to the readings, if any. It is your full responsibility to keep track of these changes, which will be announced both in class and on ICON.

Special needs
I would like to hear from anyone who has a disability which may require seating modifications or testing accommodations or accommodations of other class requirements, so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Please contact me during my office hours.

Meetings and consultations with the instructor
I check e-mail frequently, and especially during office hours. E-mail is the best way to reach me; my phone during office hours is the next best.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions regarding any aspect of the course—syllabus, term assignments, ideas for assignments, exams, what constitutes academic dishonesty, or any other issue related to
the course. Depending upon the nature of the question or problem, I may do one or more of three things—
ask you to check back with the syllabus (so consult it first before approaching me), discuss over e-mail, or
indicate that a meeting during office hours or by appointment may be best.

Complaints and grievances

If you have problems with any aspect of the course, please bring them to my attention at the earliest. Talk to
me during office hours. I can then take appropriate measures to address the situation. If the problem is not
resolved to your satisfaction, you can contact Professor Julie Andsager, Director, School of Journalism and
Mass Communication, at 319/ 335-3486 or julie-andsager@uiowa.edu and pursue the matter further.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Important Policies and Procedures

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.

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
correspondence (Operations Manual, III.15.2. Scroll down to k.11).

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

Academic Honesty
All students taking CLAS courses 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

CLAS Final Examination Policies
The date and time of every final examination is announced by the Registrar generally by the tenth day of
classes. 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. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time,
and place of the 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

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 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.
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

COURSE CALENDAR

Note: The calendar provides a general plan of materials for the course; deviations may necessary. It is the student's full responsibility to keep informed of the correct schedule. If there is a reading change, it will be posted on ICON.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings, guest presentations, other</th>
<th>Important dates – tests, assignments, other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Week 1: Aug. 27, 29**  
Introduction | Course introduction  
Poindexter and McCombs, introductory chapter  
Treadwell chapter 1 |  |
| **Week 2, Sept. 3, 5**  
Reading research: Identifying problem-solving in the literature | Locke et al – How to select and read research reports – reading packet | Sept. 5 – submit bio-sheets in ICON dropbox – biosheets posted under Content |
| **Week 3, Sept. 10, 12**  
Approaches to studying problems through research: Social science methods | Sumser – chapter 1 ICON  
Treadwell TBA | Sept. 13 – Individual assignment on reading a research article due – each student submits in ICON dropbox |
| **Week 4, Sept. 17, 19**  
Social science methods cont’d; Qualitative methods | Sumser – Chapter 2 ICON  
Morse and Richards – qualitative methods introduction - lecture  
**Short guest lecture by bibliographer this week TBC**  
Get acquainted with group members |  |
| **Week 5, Sept. 24, 26**  
Research procedures | Workshop session -- the group research idea  
Rubin et al – all chapters in the reading packet (bibliography, access, tools, sources)  
Watt and van den Berg: Research | Sept. 24 – Your team should come to class prepared to present your idea at the workshop on this date |
| Week 6, Oct. 1, 3 | Selecting objects for study | Watt and van den Berg: Research procedures cont’d  
Treadwell, chapter 7 Sampling | Oct. 4 – Research idea written assignment due – one copy for each team, in ICON dropbox |
| Week 7, Oct. 8, 10 | Wind up, first test | AAPOR guidelines for journalists  
Oct. 8 – wind up  
Oct. 10 – first test | Oct. 10 – First test |
| Week 8, Oct. 15, 17 | Measurement | Treadwell, chapter 5 Measurement | Oct. 18 – Teams should submit the literature review assignment (no workshop for this assignment). – one submission per team in ICON dropbox |
| Week 9, Oct. 22, 24 | Measurement and social media research | Readings TBA | |
| Week 10, Nov. 5, 7 | Qualitative research | Treadwell chapter 8, Surveys  
Treadwell chapter 10, Observation | Nov. 7 – Teams come prepared to class with a draft of focused research questions |
| Week 11, Nov. 12, 14 | In-class workshops | Oct. 30 Workshop for design and method  
Nov. 1 – Workshop for crafting research instrument | Nov. 12 Teams come prepared to class with a draft of design and method  
Nov. 14 -- Teams should come to class with a draft of the instrument prepared  
Nov. 15 -- Research questions, design and method written assignment due; each team to drop a copy in ICON dropbox |
| Week 12, Nov. 19, 21 | Test 2 | Wrap up  
Nov. 21 test 2 | Nov. 24 – Research instrument and preliminary findings written assignments due  
Team upload copy to ICON dropbox (one paper per team) |
<p>| Week 13, Nov. 26, 28 | | Thanksgiving week, no classes | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 14, Dec. 3, 5</strong></td>
<td>Pilot data collection, in-office instructor consultations</td>
<td>Dec. 5 – Test 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 15, Dec. 10, 12</strong></td>
<td>Project presentations</td>
<td>All final projects (one per team), and individual peer evaluations due Monday Dec. 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 16, Dec. 17, 19</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have a wonderful holiday season!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have a wonderful holiday season!