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, and writing to effectively communicate research procedures and findings.

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). 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 and course materials:

Required Textbook:
ISBN-10: 1483379418

The textbook is available for purchase in the Iowa Hawk Shop (UI Bookstore -- 319-335-3179; M-F 8:00 am – 5:00 pm) located in the Iowa Memorial Union. It is also available online. New, used, and e-book copies are available. The Hawk Shop website also suggests alternate sources for purchasing or renting the book.

Other materials:
In addition to the textbook a variety of readings is prescribed for the course. They are specified in the course calendar further down in the syllabus, and posted on ICON either in the form of chapters and articles, or links through which the readings can be accessed.

ICON
You are responsible for keeping up with course materials and any changes that may occur periodically by checking ICON regularly.

Assignments / Grading

Discussion posts – 4, total of 20 points (points may differ)
• For this assignment, you will post responses for 4 topics, all based on course materials (readings, reports, guest presentations, etc.).
• For each post a prompt will be given to which you will post your response in the discussion area on ICON. Once you submit your post, you will be able to see others’ posts in the discussion area.
• You should then respond to at least one post by a classmate in the spirit of discussion.
• Details will be discussed in class and posted on ICON
• Assigned throughout the semester – refer assignment guidelines and calendar document on ICON.
Article analyses – 2 @ 15 points, total 30 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 – 50 points
• Covers weeks 1-5, including readings, lecture, and guest presentations. The exam will be taken online on ICON. Details will be given in class.

Exam 2 – 50 points
• Covers weeks 7-10 till semester end.

Exam 3 – 50 points
• Covers weeks 12-15 – scheduled as the final exam. The date for the final exam will be given by the Registrar’s office.

Group presentation – 30 points
• Guidelines and calendar will be given for this assignment

In-class participation – 20 points
• Your in-class participation grade will reflect the instructor’s assessment of your preparedness, cooperation, and contribution. 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. There are no points given for attendance. There are penalty points for absences – see under Course Policies below.

Total Points = 250

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

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97-100%</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>F</td>
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Policy on late submission of assignments
Meet deadlines. Ensure you have successfully uploaded assignments to ICON before the deadline. A delay past 10 minutes of the deadline will begin accruing late submission penalty points. For each late day, including weekends and holidays, and starting 10 minutes past the submission time on ICON two points will be deducted. After day 5 I will stop accepting late assignments and the missed assignment will be assigned 0 points.

If you miss an assignment deadline or an exam without prior notification due to an emergency, you will need to provide credible documentation for the absence within one week of the due date.

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.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance Policy**

Past four (4) absences, further absences will result in a deduction of three (3) points from the course total per absence. 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 notification to me, include your date of absence and reason for absence; provide the documentation separately, in hard copy format.

**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.” Arrange to get notes for the missed class from your classmates.

**Electronic Communication**

As per university policy, you are responsible for all official correspondences sent to your @uiowa.edu email. Please check regularly for emails from me. ICON announcements and discussion boards will also be used as the official communication medium for this class. You will need to check regularly and keep up to date with course changes and developments. You will need to submit ICON for submission of assignments. Assignments should be submitted and will be accepted as Microsoft Word documents only. I will not accept assignments via e-mail.

If you need to get in touch with me by e-mail send it directly to me at sujatha-sosale@uiowa.edu, **not** through ICON. I will communicate individually with you through your uiowa.edu address. Occasionally I may use the group e-mail on ICON to make some announcements. Announcements are posted in the Announcements page on the course ICON.

**No-screen policy**

Unless used for a specific in-class assignment, students should turn off screens and use pen/pencil and paper for taking notes. Make it a habit of putting away your phones and closing social media pages when the class session starts. Research has shown that this traditional form of notetaking is still the most effective one for learning. Parallely, research has shown that use of laptop, tablet, and cell phone in the classroom when class is in session results in lower grades because these devices become barriers to interacting with the material, the instructor, and other factors that enhance learning in the classroom.

**Academic Misconduct**

The assignments for this course will require you to read carefully and convey in your own words your understanding of the material. Appropriate citing and quoting practices should be followed. Plagiarism, even if inadvertent, will not be tolerated. 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.
- Submitting material in part or whole from one’s own previous work or work in other classes

In short, plagiarism occurs whenever someone else’s work or idea is presented as your own, or when your own work in other classes in the past or present is presented as work done for this course in this term. Students are responsible for understanding this policy. For full information see http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code

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/
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. Some adjustments may be made in the calendar to accommodate unexpected guest presentation opportunities.

**Week 1 – Introduction**

**Tuesday (1/15)**
Course introduction
Higgerson, Digital Journalism Trends – link on ICON

**Thursday (1/17)**
Poindexter and McCombs chapter – pdf on ICON

Text, Chapter 1, Getting Started

**Week 2 – Introduction, continued**

**Tuesday (1/22)**
Chapters 1 and 2 – pdf on ICON

**Thursday (1/24)**
Saldaña, chapter 1 – pdf on ICON

Video clips on ICON

*Due on ICON: Bio sheet*

**Week 3 – Reading and understanding published research**

**Tuesday (1/29)**
Treadwell, Chapter 4, You Could Look It Up

Locke et al, Reading Research chapter – pdf on ICON

**Thursday (1/31)**

**Practice articles for analysis**

New Survey-Information Environment and the informed American (October 2016)—AP-NORC study press release
Anderson & Perrin (May 2017), Report on Technology Adoption Patterns (Pew study)


**Week 4 – Research ethics and quality**

**Tuesday (2/5)**

Text chapter on Ethics in Research

APA style – Purdue OWL guide (link on ICON)

**Thursday (2/7)**

Video link on ICON

And companion article link on ICON

Due on ICON: Article analysis 1

**Week 5 – Exam 1**

**Tuesday (2/12)**

Exam 1 review

**Thursday (2/14)**

Exam 2 review

**Week 6 – Preliminary considerations and procedures**

**Tuesday (2/12)**

Watt & van den Berg reading, Research Procedures – pdf on ICON


**Thursday (2/14)**

Watt & van den Berg

Due on ICON: Article analysis 2

**Week 7 – Preparation for quantitative research**

**Tuesday (2/26)**

Text, chapter 8, Sampling

**Thursday (2/28)**

Text, chapter 5, Measurement
Journalists’ Resource article (link on ICON)

**Week 8 – Surveys, content analysis**

**Tuesday (3/5)**

Text, chapter 9, Surveys

Ferenstein, Surveys Q and A on Silicon Valley politics (link on ICON)

**Thursday (3/7)**

Text, chapter 12, Content analysis

Mitchell & Barthel, Local news media ecosystems (link on ICON)

**Week 9 – Preparation for qualitative research: Design, procedures, considerations**

**Tuesday (3/12)**

Saldana, chapter 4, Qualitative Research Design (pdf on ICON)

**Thursday (3/14)**

Babbie, Chapter 10, Qualitative Field Research, pp 295-303 (pdf on ICON)


SPRING BREAK! (3/19 & 3/21)

**Week 10 – Exam 2**

**Tuesday (4/2)**

Wind up, Exam 2 review

**Thursday (4/4)**

Exam 2

**Week 11 – Focus groups, observation, interviews**

**Tuesday (3/26)**

Focus groups

Lenhart et al, Social media and romantic relationships (Pew study)

Text, Chapter 11, Watching and Listening (Observation)

**Thursday (3/28)**

Text, chapter 11

Boyce & Neale: Conducting in-depth interviews (link on ICON)
**Week 12 – Social Media and Audience Analysis**

**Tuesday (4/9)**

**Thursday (4/11)**

**Week 13 – Social media and audience analysis**

**Tuesday (4/16)**
Reading TBA

**Thursday (4/18)**
Group project meeting

**Week 14 – Social media and audience analysis**

**Tuesday (4/23)**
Reading and/or guest lecture TBA

**Thursday (4/25)**
Group project meeting

**Week 15**

**Tuesday (4/30)**
Group presentations

**Thursday (5/2)**
Group presentations

FINAL EXAM DATE: TBA by the Registrar’s Office

Enjoy Summer!
CLAS Teaching Policies & Resources

Administrative Home
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other policies. These policies vary by college (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook).

Electronic Communication
Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

Accommodations for Disabilities
UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student should then discuss accommodations with the course instructor (https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/).

Nondiscrimination in the Classroom
UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity at diversity@uiowa.edu or diversity.uiowa.edu.

Academic Integrity
All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address.

CLAS Final Examination Policies
The final exam schedule for each semester is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this final exam information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals. (https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-examination-policies/)

Making a Complaint
Students with a complaint should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the departmental executive officer (DEO), also known as the Chair. Students may then bring the concern to CLAS (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities).

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 must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, definitions, and the full University policy, see https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/.