This is a graduate-level course required for the Master’s degree in Strategic Communication program.

Course description
This course will introduce you to methods and techniques used by media and communication industries to understand the public’s preferences and tastes on the one hand, and analyze media messages on the other. Reliable, valid, and responsibly gathered information derived from these methods typically drives dynamic communication campaigns, greater accuracy in targeting audiences for news and information, and contributes to eliciting desired attitude, opinion, and behavior change responses among the public. These methods are important for both information-based communication (such as news) and persuasive communication (such as public relations, media relations, social media communication for organizations, etc.), regardless of where they are housed – whether in media and communication industries, or communication units within other organizations, both non-profit and for-profit.

The objectives of this course are to:

1. Learn specific technical skills to read and question published research on poll data, survey reports, consumer preferences, etc.;
2. Accurately identify and articulate a research question worth pursuing in your workplace or other venue;
3. Select appropriate methods for finding answers to specific questions by learning the approach, features, purposes, advantages, and limitations of various research methods most commonly used in media industries;
4. Learn practical aspects of research, like developing a basic understanding of typical numerical information used in media research, constructing research instruments, summarizing and writing a cogent review of previously published research on a selected problem or question; and developing a coherent research design.
5. Integrate ethical research decisions and thoughtful research design to maximize credibility of findings.

Required Textbook:
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 online.

---

**Media/System Requirements**

Technical requirements for completing University of Iowa Distance and Online Education classes include:

- Student-provided personal computer.
- Computer with reliable Internet access. A wired Ethernet connection to the internet is very strongly suggested. Wireless and cellphone data connections may experience connection problems. Android and iOS operating systems are not fully supported at this time. See specific requirements on the Distance and Online Education Technical Requirements/Download page.
- While tablets, smartphones and other mobile devices may allow for some completion of coursework, they are not guaranteed to work in all areas. Please ensure you have a Windows or Mac based computer available to complete coursework in the event your selected mobile device does not meet the needs of the course.

Students who need assistive technologies will have different computer and technology requirements. Please check with your **Student Disability Services** to determine the requirements for the specific technologies needed to support your online classes.

For questions, with virtual classrooms (i.e. Zoom) or UICapture (Panopto), please contact **Continuing Education Technical Support** (319 335-3925).

Need help with ICON or your Hawkid? Please contact the **ITS Helpdesk** (319 384-HELP).

---

**Course Work**

This course consists of the following activities and assessments to assist you in achieving the course and modules objectives. The detailed course calendar provided in this syllabus groups readings by modules, but provides assignment and quiz reminders by date.

**Discussion posts – 4 @ 10 points, total 40 points; refer discussion post guidelines, or calendar in brief, or course calendar in syllabus for the deadlines and due dates**

- For this assignment, you will post responses for 4 topics, all based on course materials (readings, reports, video clips, etc.).
- For each post a prompt will be given to which you will write a short post in the discussion area on ICON.
Once you have posted your paragraph, you will be able to see others’ posts. Post one response to any of your classmates’ first post.

Discussion posts are not formal papers, so we will not follow a strict academic style of writing. But avoid slang and extreme colloquialisms unless you are “quoting” it from another source.

Details and due dates are available in the guidelines that will be posted for this assignment on ICON.

Article analyses – 2 @ 30 points, total 60 points; refer article analysis assignment guidelines, or calendar in brief, or course calendar in syllabus for the deadlines and due dates

- Two articles for identifying the research problem, methods used, application of the methods, findings, and lessons learned.
- Details and due date are available in the guidelines that will be posted for this assignment on ICON.

Research design assignment
Develop a research design for gathering baseline data for a new project, or evaluate an ongoing project. Inspiration for these projects could come from your current or past workplaces. (100 pts). In stages – various due dates. Final assignment due during finals week. Details and guidelines will be made available on ICON.

Grading Criteria
Discussion posts: 4 @ 10 = 40 points
Article analyses: 2 @ 30 points = 60 points
Research design assignment: 100 points (points will be distributed in stages)

Course total = 200 points

Grading Scale
The percentages represent a percentage of the course total. For example, 300 points, or 100%, would be an A+

A+ 97-100%   B+ 87-90%   C+ 77-80%   D+ 67-70%
A  93-96%      B  83-86%   C  73-76%   D  63-66%
A- 90-92%      B- 80-82%   C- 70-72%   D- 60-62%
         F  59% <

Course Policies

Communication Policy
- The primary tool that you will use to communicate with students is e-mail.
- Send your questions on the subject matter of the course and/or the assignments, or any personal concerns related to the course to me at sujatha-sosale@uiowa.edu
- You can reasonably expect a response within 24 hours of sending your query, except during weekends when it may take up to 48 hours.
- Check the ICON news area in the course homepage frequently for various announcements.
- I will provide feedback on assignment submissions only as needed, and I will do this as well as grade on average within about 10 days of the submission.
Due Dates & Missed Deadlines
Please note that if you are missing assignment deadlines because of illness, mandatory religious obligations, or other unavoidable circumstances, send me prior notification by e-mail, and provide documentation within a week of resuming work in order to avoid grade penalties.

Late Submissions Policy
Assignments that are submitted late will carry 2 points deduction per day late, beginning within 10 minutes of the due date/time and including weekends and holidays. Since all submissions for the course are electronic, anything received after 10 minutes of the due date and time will be marked late.

Extra Credit
This is a graduate-level course. There are no extra-credit assignments.

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

Netiquette
Students need to communicate with each other and their instructors appropriately when working online. Although it may not be intended, tone in communication is often read differently than when it is presented in the form of speech. For tips on "Netiquette" technique, go to: http://www.albion.com/netiquette/

A note on Academic Misconduct (http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code)
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. The University takes a very dim view of plagiarism, even if inadvertent, and the consequences are severe. Per policy, we are required to report academic misconduct to 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/
• Distance Education Library Services: http://guides.lib.uiowa.edu/distance
• 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 on the ICON opening page. Changes may involve change of dates and deadlines, additions and deletions of readings, etc.

Introduction to Strategic Communication Research, Basics (Weeks 1-4)

Week 1, January 14th

1. Higgerson, Digital Journalism Trends – davidhiggerson blog

2. Poindexter & McCombs chapter – pdf on ICON

3. Text, Chapter 1, Getting Started

Due on ICON: Bio sheet

Assigned: Article analyses assignment

Week 2, January 21st and Week 3, January 28th

4. Text, Chapter 2, First Decisions


6. https://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/culture/media-multitasking-platform-audience-research?utm_source=Journalist%2527s+Resource&utm_campaign=1b1948a141-2015_Sep_1_A_B_split3_24_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_12d86b1d6a-1b1948a141-78885370

7. Saldaña, chapter 1 -- pdf on ICON

Due on ICON: DP1 and response
Week 4, February 4th

6. Treadwell, Chapter 4, You Could Look It Up

7. Locke et al, Reading Research chapter – pdf on ICON

Practice articles for analysis
1. New Survey-Information Environment and the informed American (October 2016)–AP-NORC study press release

2. Anderson & Perrin (May 2017), Report on Technology Adoption Patterns (Pew study)

Due on ICON: Article analysis 1

Research Ethics and Common Oversights (Week 5)

Week 5, February 11th

1. Text, Ethics chapter

2. APA style – Purdue OWL guide

3a. Seven Sins of User Research (YouTube)

3b. Companion article with video (from Userfocus)

Research Design, Procedures, Considerations (Week 6)

Week 6, February 18th

1. Babbie, Chapter 4, Research Design – pdf on ICON

2. Watt and van den Berg reading, Research Procedures – pdf on ICON

3. Text, Chapter 8, Sampling

Due on ICON: Article Analysis 2
Preparation for Quantitative Research

**Week 7, February 25th**

1. Babbie, Chapter 5, Conceptualization, Operationalization, pp. 124-143 (stop before the section titled Levels of Measurement) – pdf on ICON.

2. Text, chapter 5, Measurement

3. Statistics for media (Journalists’ Resource)

*Due on ICON: DP2 and response*

Quantitative Research Methods

**Week 8, March 4th, and Week 9, March 11th**

**Week of March 18th – Spring break!**

1. Text, Chapter 9, Surveys

2. Ferenstein, Surveys Q and A on Silicon Valley politics (from medium.com)

*Due on ICON: Research idea paper*

3. Text, Chapter 12, Content Analysis

4. Mitchell & Barthel, Local news media ecosystems (Pew research, fact tank)

5. Barthel, Q/A (Pew research, fact tank)

Preparation for Qualitative Research: Design, Procedures, Considerations

**Week 10, March 25th**

1. Saldaña, Chapter 4, Qualitative Research Design

2. Babbie, Chapter 10, Qualitative Field Research, pp. 295-303 – pdf on ICON

*Due on ICON: DP3 and response*
Qualitative Research Methods

Week 11, April 1st, and Week 12, April 8th

Focus groups
1. Lenhart et al, Social media and romantic relationships (Pew study)
   http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/01/social-media-and-romantic-relationships/
2. Text, Chapter 11 – Watching and Listening (Observation)

Due on ICON: Sample and methods assignment

3. Boyce & Neale: Conducting in-depth interviews (pathfinder.org)

Due on ICON: DP4 and response

Social Media and Strategic Communication Research

Week 13, April 15th, and week 14, April 22nd


Due on ICON: Research protocol and checks assignment

4. Cherubini (2014), When data drive the news (Mediashift article)

WEEK 15, Week of April 29th
Dedicated research week for completing the design project

Final design project due: Monday May 6th by 5 PM

***
Enjoy summer!

College Policies

As a registered student in a Distance and Online Education course through The University of Iowa, you are responsible for the college policies posted below.

**Academic Misconduct:** All forms of plagiarism and any other activities that result in a student presenting work that is not his or her own are academic fraud. All academic fraud is reported to the departmental DEO and then to the Associate Dean for the Office of Academic Programs and Student Development. All incidents of academic misconduct (plagiarism and cheating) will be subject to the rules and regulations of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences as defined and stated in section IX of the Academic Policies Handbook ([http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook](http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook)).

**Complaint Procedures:** If at any time you have concerns about this class or your performance in it, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you do not feel that your concern has been resolved satisfactorily, you may contact the Department Chair (contact information provided at the top of page one of this syllabus). If you still do not feel that your concern has been resolved satisfactorily, you may contact the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Office of Academic Programs and Student Development, 120 Schaeffer Hall, (319) 335-2633, clasps@uiowa.edu. All complaints must be made within six months of the incident. The College's complaint procedures are in section IX of the Academic Policies Handbook ([http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook](http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook)).

**Administrative Home of the Course:** The administrative home of this course is the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, which governs academic matters relating to the course such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, issues concerning academic fraud or academic probation, and how credits are applied for various graduation requirements. Different colleges might have different policies. If you have questions about these or other CLAS policies, contact your academic advisor or the Office of Academic Programs and Student Development, 120 Schaeffer Hall, (319) 335-2633, clasps@uiowa.edu. The CLAS Academic Policies Handbook also contains important CLAS academic policy: [http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook](http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook).

University Policies

As a registered student in a Distance and Online Education course through The University of Iowa, the following University policies apply to you.

**Special Modifications:** Subsequent to course enrollment, students needing accommodations should register with Student Disability Services, 3100 Burge Hall, (319) 335.1462, and obtain a Student Academic Accommodation Request (SAAR) form. The form will specify what course accommodations are judged reasonable for that student. The Division of Continuing Education is committed to both Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Section 508 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

**Understanding Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment is reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the University. It subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Visit this site for the Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator for definitions, assistance, and the full University policy.