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:

1. To think critically about what we routinely read, hear, and see in the media such as poll data, survey reports, business reporting, or consumer preferences;
2. To accurately 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; in journals)
3. To 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. To apply appropriate research concepts to tackle questions related to media audiences and content;
5. To 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.

Required Textbook:
The textbook is available for purchase in the Iowa Hawk Shop (UI Bookstore) 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. (319-335-3179; M-F 8:00 am – 5:00 pm).

**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 [Distance and Online 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 @ 25 points, total 100 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 100-word post in the discussion area on ICON. Treat each post as a mini paper in response to the prompt. The writing in this first post should be formal, as you would write a paper for submission.
- Once you have posted your paragraph, you will be able to see others’ posts. Post one response to any of your classmates’ first post. This response to your classmate’s post can be informal in tone.
• Details and due dates are available in the guidelines that will be posted for this assignment on ICON.

Article analyses – 2 @ 25 points, total 50 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.

Quizzes – 4; total = 50 points; points will vary depending on the volume of material on which you will be quizzed. The points will be specified in the quiz.
• Quiz format – the expected format will be a combination of multiple choice and other items like true/false or match items.
• Quiz dates -- refer calendar in brief or course calendar in syllabus for the deadlines and due dates.

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 @ 25 = 100 points
Quizzes: 4; total = 50 points, distribution will vary according to the material on which you will be quizzed
Article analyses: 2 @ 25 points = 50 points
Research design assignment: 100 points (points will be distributed in stages)

Course total = 300 points

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% &lt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 a week of the submission.

Due Dates & Missed Deadlines
Please note that missing assignment or quiz deadlines because of illness, mandatory religious obligations, or other unavoidable circumstances will require documentation from credible sources within a week of resuming coursework in order to avoid grade penalties.

Late Submissions 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.

Since all submissions for the course are electronic, anything received after 10 minutes of the due date and time will be marked late.

Quizzes
Quizzes will have to be taken in the time window that I will specify for each quiz. The quiz will be open for certain dates. Once you begin taking the quiz, the time window will begin. For example, if I specify 30 minutes for a quiz that can be taken on Saturday, the quiz will be open the entire day. You can take the quiz at any time during that day but once you begin taking the quiz you will have 30 minutes to complete it after which the quiz will close. It cannot be reopened.

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)

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/
- 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 15th

1. Higgerson, Digital Journalism Trends – davidhigggerson 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 22nd and Week 3, January 29th**

4. Text, Chapter 2, First Decisions
7. Saldaña, chapter 1 – pdf on ICON

*Due on ICON: DP1 and response*

**Week 4, February 5th**

8. Treadwell, Chapter 4, You Could Look It Up
9. 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 12th**

1. Text, Ethics chapter – pdf on ICON
2. APA style – Purdue OWL guide
3a. Seven Sins of User Research (YouTube)
3b. Companion article with video (from Userfocus)

Due on ICON: Quiz 1

Research Design, Procedures, Considerations (Week 6)

Week 6, February 19th

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

Assigned: Research Design Assignment

Preparation for Quantitative Research

Week 7, February 26th

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. Raju, “Statistics…primer for media” (Journalists’ Resource)

Due on ICON: DP2 and response

Quantitative Research Methods

Week 8, March 5th, and week 9, March 19th

1. Text, Chapter 9, Surveys

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

Week of March 12th – Spring break!
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)

Due on ICON: Quiz 2

---

Preparation for Qualitative Research: Design, Procedures, Considerations

**Week 10, March 26th**

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 2nd, and week 12, April 9th**

Focus groups
1. Lenhart et al, Social media and romantic relationships (Pew study)


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: Quiz 3

---

Social Media and Strategic Communication Research
Week 13, April 16th, and week 14, April 23rd


*Due on ICON: Research protocol and checks assignment*


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

*Due on ICON: Quiz 4*

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

WEEK 15, Week of April 30th
Dedicated research week for completing the design project

Final design project due: Monday May 7th by 5 PM

Enjoy summer!
Teaching Policies & Resources — Syllabus Insert

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 https://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).

Accommodations for Disabilities
The University of Iowa is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (which includes but is not limited to mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related conditions). A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then contact the course instructor to make specific arrangements. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/ for information.

Nondiscrimination
The University of Iowa is committed to making class discussions inclusive and respectful of 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 in the bio sheets provided for the class and during introductions on the discussion space in ICON. It is important to be sensitive to online communication in this class because it is asynchronous, dependent to a large extent on written communication, and therefore we are unable to see each other and gauge non-verbal communication cues as well. 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, diversity@uiowa.edu, or visit diversity.uiowa.edu.

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).

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 Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.