

Quantitative Research Methods

SP 521: Graduate Course
Spring 2008, Four credits

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Office Hours:
T and TH 1-3 p.m.
& by appointment Mondays

Required Reading & Texts

The Practice of Social Research
Earl Babbie
Wadsworth (Belmont, California)

Explication
Steve Chaffee
Sage
(PSU Bookstore)

Course Packet
(Additional fee required)
Copy Center

Statistics pamphlet (PSU bookstore)

Recommended Texts

APA Style Manual

Writing Literature Reviews, J. Galvan, Pryzak Press

Course Description

Quantitative methods provides an examination of the methods of empirical research in communication. Emphasis is principally upon issues, theories and assumptions surrounding research; understanding selected research designs; and developing concept explications, operationalizations, research questions and hypotheses. Students will also be introduced to data collection and analysis, rationale of statistical and parametric methods, results interpretation, and writing reports of completed research.

Students who have a basic understanding of statistics will be best prepared for the course.

Course Objectives

The objective is to offer an introduction to the methods used in social science research.

Successful students will gain an understanding in:

1. Knowledge of the fundamentals of social science research methods including
 - a. Types of methods used
 - b. Why and when methods are used
 - c. Specific terminology used in research
2. Ability to identify and define methods and efficacy of methods
 - a. Gain insight into current research practices in communication
3. Gain insight into the relationship of communication theory with communication research methods
4. Become conversant with conceptualization and operationalization, key components of communication research
5. Understand how to develop research questions and hypotheses
6. Comprehend methods
 - a. Learn how to discuss and interpret methods
 - b. Learn how to compare and contrast methods
7. Apply methods

- a. Understand which methods are appropriate for which questions
- b. Learn how to evaluate appropriateness of different methods

Class Issues

Students will arrive on time. The course is designed with one 30-minute dinner break so that students can eat supper.

No food is allowed in class, but drinks are permitted.

Philosophy & Expectations

My philosophy is that your learning is an intersection of reading the materials, actively participating in class discussion, listening to lectures and presentations, and attending to social issues that are relevant to the studies.

I encourage participation and discussion based on knowledge you have gleaned attending class.

Class attendance is mandatory. Class discussions foster learning that is not necessarily covered in the readings but will be included in the tests. Professors differ in their approach to class attendance, so let me be clear: attendance and active participation are expected and required.

This is particularly important in view we have 10 class sessions only. Students unable to attend will find their final grades affected by their absences.

My expectation is that you are thoroughly engaged in class: that you come to each class prepared, enthusiastic, ready and open to learning.

A word about deadlines. Homework, papers and assignments are due on the dates outlined in the Syllabus. **There is no provision for late papers.** My philosophy is that you have been given these deadlines with ample time to plan effectively. Tests cannot be taken after they are administered.

Writing & Presentation. My expectation is that your work will be error-free, clean, written in excellent English style and grammatically correct. You are required to use the stylistic guidelines of your discipline (APA style).

I encourage you to use the required paper-writing manual for writing papers: indeed, you should own a copy of the APA manual.

Homework Testing & Papers

Each week you will be required to complete and hand in homework assignments (these vary each week). You should always keep a copy of your homework in your files. Abstract each reading assignment and bring to class.

Tests

One midterm test is scheduled.

The test is specifically geared to measure your understanding of the concepts covered in class. Much of this involves definition and application of terms. The test is closed book unless noted. **Make-up tests are not provided.** In the extraordinary circumstances that a crisis beyond your control prevents you from taking the test, you are required to inform the professor as soon as possible. In addition, your absence must be documented *in writing* to the satisfaction of the professor.

Papers

Three paper assignments are required, the **Concept Explanation**, the **Concept Operationalization**, and the **proposed methodology**.

A Note about Email

You are encouraged to contact the professor via e-mail whenever you have questions or comments, but please note that e-mail is not an acceptable method for turning in papers or projects for this class. All students are required to hand in assignments on the dates required, in person.

Special Circumstances

Students with documented **disabilities** who need accommodation must contact Disability Services for Students for assistance and inform the professor the first week of class in order to receive accommodation.

Students who are requesting to be excused from class because of a **religious** or personal circumstance must let the professor know the first week of class.

Inform the professor of any anticipated absence due to special circumstances. Documentation will be required.

Grading Policies

	<u>Points</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Homework	150	15%
Test	150	15%
Conceptualization	300	30%
Operationalization	200	20%
Methodology	200	20%
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	1000 points	100%

My Policy

Courses and professors vary, so please be mindful that the grading requirements for this course will vary from other courses you are taking. Great care is taken in the course to ensure fairness in grading.

The grading policy also ensures that grades are fair. Grading is based on objective, quantifiable methods. In the rare case when a grade is disputed, students must deliver a written report with justification to the professor within a week's time.

About homework

Students will be awarded full credit for turning in complete and acceptable homework on time. Remember to keep a copy of each assignment you turn in: it may not be returned to you.

Final Grading Assessment

A	950-1000 points
A-	930-949
B+	910-929
B	870-909
B-	840-869
C+	800-839
C	750-799
C-	720-749
D+	690-719
D	630-689
D-	600-629

Ethical Issues

Group work.

You are welcome to conduct homework assignments with other members of the class, and collaborate in full cooperative spirit (although every student must turn in their own assignments).

While you may also work with classmates on the explanation, operationalization and methods assignments, each student will have her/his own unique concept. Also, the papers must be the individual student's work---the paper itself cannot be collaborative. In sum, the 3 papers must be created and written by the individual student author---you.

All papers turned in for the class must be the result of your original work in this class specifically: you are not permitted to hand in an assignment you wrote for another class. Similarly you are not permitted to use assignment for this class for any other class unless the professor of that class specifically gives you permission to do so.

Working Schedule*

Quantitative Research Methods

Week One

April 4

Overview

Methods and Patterns

Read Babbie Chapters 1 & 2.

Find on the Internet a personality test to complete. You may choose a fanciful one, such as LOTR or Sex in the City. Be prepared to bring to class your analysis. Then take a free Myers-Briggs test, such as the one at Humanetrics,

<http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes1.htm>

Week Two

April 11

General Terms & Issues

Discuss Babbie Chapters 1 and 2. Bring abstracts.

Hand in and discuss personality-type tests.

Think about topics for concepts, constructs.

Homework: Read the Chaffee article and abstract
