

Research Methods :: JRMC 8010

Dr. Sweetser
Office: 223-C Journalism Building
Phone: 542-2409
Office hours: Monday. 1:15-2:15 p.m., Wed. 8 – 9 a.m. or by appointment (just e-mail or call!)
E-mail: sweetser@uga.edu
AOL Instant Messenger handle: ProfSweetser
Class: Wed. 9:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. in Grady College 205

The syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the professor may be necessary.

Class Lectures are the Property of the Professor

< Objectives >

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies of mass communication research, with emphasis on the research process, concepts and issues of research designs, and methods of data collection. Topics introduced include measurement, sampling, focus groups and interviewing, survey and experimental design, and data analysis.

< Texts >

Required:

- ◆ Frey, L.R., Botan, C.H., Kreps, G.L. (2000). Investigating Communication: An introduction to research methods (2nd edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- ◆ 2 course packs from Athens Blueprint (readings and research materials)

Recommended:

- ◆ Online resources for class: <http://delicious.com/kaye.sweetser/jrmc8010>
- ◆ Interpreting Communication Research: A Case Study Approach by L.R. Frey, C.H. Botan, P.G. Friedman, & G.L. Kreps (1992)
- ◆ American Psychological Association Style Guide
- ◆ Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics, 2nd edition by Neil J. Salkind
- ◆ Communication Research Measures: A Sourcebook by Rebecca Rubin, Philip Palmgreen and Howard Sypher
- ◆ Adventures in Social Science Research workbook by Earl Babbie, Fred Halley and Jeanne Zaino

< Students with Disabilities >

Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments is requested to speak with the Disability Resource Center and the professor as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. More information about the University's policy and procedures can be found at <http://www.dissvcs.uga.edu>.

< Grade >

This class employs multiple forms of evaluation to maximize the learning and evaluation experience while allowing for differences among learning types for students. All work will be evaluated based on the ability to meet the assignment objectives, clarity, professionalism, technical skill and quality. Exams, assignments or papers must be turned in must be handed in at the time the work is collected in class. Late work is not excepted, deadlines never extended. No exceptions.

<u>Graded Item</u>	<u>% Grade</u>
Essay Exam	35%
Research Proposal ^a	15%
Research Paper ^a	35%
Assignments	10%
Class Contribution	5%
	100%

^a Indicates item may be part of a group project. All group members get the same grade for their collective work.



All grades on assignments, projects and quizzes are based on the following +/- grading scale:

100 – 97% = A	86 – 89% = B+	76 – 79% = C+	66 – 69% = D+	below 59% = F
96 – 90% = A-	83 – 85% = B	73 – 75% = C	63 – 65% = D	
	80 – 82% = B-	70 – 72% = C-	60 – 62% = D-	

Please note that the professor does not “round up.” A student who scores 89.99 earned a “B+”; it takes a full 90 earned points to earn an “A-” in this course. Project, assignments or test scores will not be dropped or weighted. Ever.

Retain all graded materials; the professor will not keep a copy. Any student wishing to dispute a grade must have the graded material when pleading the case. Students are to keep track of their own grades and progress in the course. Grades will not be discussed via e-mail or the telephone. If a student has a question about a grade and would like to discuss it, then the student must meet with the professor in person. There are no exceptions to this policy. If a student believes there is a mistake with a grade then the student has the right to dispute a grade within 1 week of the assignment/test/project being returned; after one week all grades are final. No grade changes will be considered after this deadline. Dec. 2 is the deadline to reconcile errors/missing items.

All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Students are responsible to inform themselves about UGA standards before performing any academic work. Students who break the university's honor code, are found to be cheating or fraudulently use another student's ideas/work will fail this course. Find out more about academic honesty at UGA at <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm>.

< Project >

The capstone project in this class is for students to groups to design, execute and analyze data in a research study. All research projects using human subjects is to be first approved by the professor and then sent to the UGA IRB prior to beginning data collection. Students who wish to use human subjects should work ahead of the due dates on the syllabus. Each paper will be a short introduction touching on rationale, purpose and relevant theory; state research questions and/or hypotheses; a complete and descriptive methods section; analysis of results; and findings discussed. This paper and project is to be supervised by the professor, but the student/groups must actively seek her assistance for any roadblocks faced during the research journey. Graded items produced in the groups with multiple students mean that each student in that group gets the grade earned by that work. Students will have time to work on this throughout the semester, including during class. A project handout will provide further detail on the requirements. Students are required to present their project as a part of the project grade. The research paper is due Dec. 2, and presentations will occur that day in class. Students should dress appropriately. All students are required to attend class these days and those missing/late to class will lose points off final grade.

< Assignments >

There are several assignments in this class. Beyond the day-to-day assignments that are given, there are graded items that can be done at the students leisure throughout the semester.

- ◆ **Journal article analysis.** Each student must sign up to analyze 1 journal article throughout the semester. Students cannot switch the days that they select in the beginning of the semester. The analysis can be no longer than 1 page, double spaced with 1" margins all around at 12-point Times New Roman font. The analysis models the illustrative studies found in the Frey et al. (1992) supplemental reading (not the text book), but focuses on analyzing the actual method employed & the authors' communication of the method in the article.
- ◆ **Research colloquium.** Sometime during the semester (but before October 30), each student must attend the research colloquium at Grady College, or similar such research presentation event (must be approved by the professor). Each student is to write up a summary of the research (theory, method, findings, presentation ability) to be turned in no later than the beginning of class on November 4. The summary write up should focus only on one research project (if there were many at the event), and be no longer than 1 page, double spaced with 1" margins all around at 12-point Times New Roman font.



< Tentative Reading Schedule >

Students are expected to have finished the day's readings before coming to class. Extra readings and assignments may be administered at any time. This schedule is subject to change at professor's discretion.

August 19

Frey et al. (2000), chapters 1-2

August 26: Research projects & ethics

Complete CITI training (turn printed transcript/certificate in at beginning of class)

Neuman, W., Davidson, R., Joo, S., Park, Y. and Williams, A. E. (2007, May). The seven deadly sins of communication research. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, San Francisco, CA. http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p168205_index.html

September 2: Measurement, variables & design

Frey et al. (2000), chapters 4-5 (up to sampling)

Potter, J.W., Levine-Donnerstein, D. (1999). Rethinking validity and reliability in content analysis. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 27, 258- 284.

* Lowry, D. T. (1985). Establishing construct validity of the Hayakawa-Lowry news bias categories. *Journalism Quarterly*, 62 (3), 573-580.

Podsakoff, P.M., & Organ, D.W. (1986). Self-reports in organization research: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Management*, 12 (4), 531-544.

September 9: Sampling

Frey et al. (2000), chapter 5 (sampling through end of chapter)

* Johnson, T., & Kaye, B. (2004). Wag the blog: How reliance on traditional media and the Internet influence credibility perceptions of Weblogs among blog users. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81 (3), 622-642.

September 16: Research project

September 23: Naturalistic inquiry

Frey et al. (2000), chapter 10

Acosta-Alzuru, Carolina (2005). Home is where my heart is: Reflections on doing research in my native country. *Popular Communication*, 3(3), 181-193.

* Everbach, T. (2006). The culture of a women-led newspaper: An ethnographic study of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 83 (3), 477-493.

September 30: Experimental design

Frey et al. (2000), chapter 7

* Iyengar, S. (2002, June). Experimental designs for political communication research: From shopping malls to the Internet. Paper presented to Workshop in Mass Media Economics, London. Available: <http://pcl.stanford.edu/common/docs/research/iyengar/2002/expdes2002.pdf>

October 7: Textual analysis

Frey et al. (2000), chapter 9

Kaid, L.L. & Johnston Wadsworth, A. (1989). "Content analysis."

* Althaus, S.L., Edy, J.A., Phalen, P.F. (2002). Using the Vanderbilt television abstracts to track broadcast news content: Possibilities and pitfalls. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 46(3), 473-492.



McMillan, S.J. (2000). The microscope and the moving target: The challenge of applying content analysis to the World Wide Web. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77 (1), 80 – 98.

October 14: Survey

Frey et al. (2000), chapter 8

* Porter, S.R., & Whitcomb, M.E. (2003). The impact of contact type on web survey response rates. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 67, 579-588.

Macias, W., Springston, J.K., Weaver Lariscy, R.A., Neustifter, B. (2008). A 13-year content analysis of survey methodology in communication related journals. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 30 (1), 81-96.

October 21: Essay exam

October 28: Research project

November 4: Data analysis

Frey et al. (2000), chapters 11-12

November 11: Data analysis

Frey et al. (2000), chapter 13

November 18: Data analysis

Frey et al., chapter 14

November 25: Thanksgiving break – travel safely.

December 2: Presentations

Note: no one is permitted to be late or absent for any part of class this day. Lateness or absence will result in grade penalty

* Analysis article option – remember students cannot switch days nor can they do two analyses in the same week.

