

COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

COMM 3020 : SPRING 2012 : DR. PAUL HUSSELBEE

Section 02 (CRN 13044), Tuesday and Thursday, 8:30 to 9:50 a.m., CN 221

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Course information page: <www.suu.edu/faculty/husselbee/courseinfo.html>

Office hours: Tuesday, 10 a.m. to noon; Wednesday, 11 a.m. to noon; Thursday, 10 a.m. to noon; or by appointment

If you have questions about the class and assignments, your best bet is to ask during class or catch me in the hall after class. If you need individual help or have questions about grades on assignments, you may send me an email message or visit my office during office hours. Based on federal law and privacy concerns, I do not email students' final semester grades, nor do I discuss students' grades with parents.

I do **not** have an open-door policy. Please respect office hours. If my office hours do not fit your schedule, please email me to request an appointment. In your message, do not ask, "When are you available?" Instead, provide a choice of three days and times when *you* are available. I will choose one that best fits my schedule. Thank you.

ABOUT THE CLASS

Description — This course focuses on empirical and critical methods appropriate for communication research. Topics will include scales and measurement, sampling, literature reviews, research ethics, basic statistical tools, and various research methods, including focus groups, surveys, content analysis and experiments.

Course Objectives — Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- ◆ Apply knowledge of basic statistics to homework assignments using IBM SPSS Statistics 19.0.
- ◆ Format research papers and references using APA Style.
- ◆ Explain the importance of ethical behavior in research involving human subjects.
- ◆ Show an understanding of the unacceptable nature of plagiarism in academic research.
- ◆ Select a valid research topic and pose meaningful research questions.
- ◆ Write a successful research proposal.
- ◆ Work as a member of a team to carry out a successful research project.

Required Reading — Three texts are required:

- ◆ Poindexter & McCombs, *Research in Mass Communication: A Practical Guide*, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000
- ◆ *Concise Rules of APA Style* (6th ed.), American Psychological Association, 2010
- ◆ Husselbee, *Statistical Analysis in Communication Research* (3rd ed.), SUN, 2012

The Poindexter and APA books may be purchased from the SUU Bookstore or from online book vendors; the statistics text is available only through the SUU Bookstore.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Overview — The course is divided into four parts. Part One, comprising the first three weeks of class, provides instruction in research foundations: APA Style, SPSS Statistics, research ethics, plagiarism, scales, measurement, validity, and reliability. Part Two consumes the next three weeks; it discusses how to select a research topic, developing good research questions, conducting library research, creating literature reviews, and sampling. In Part Three, we will spend four weeks discussing specific research methods: focus groups, content analysis, experiments, and surveys. Part Four occupies the final five weeks of class. It is devoted to writing a research proposal and conducting a group research project.

Preparation and Workload — This course assumes that you are a self-starter capable of independent thought and study. Please prepare for class by doing the reading before attending class. The assignments are scheduled in such a way that you should not have difficulty completing them in timely fashion. If you fall behind, catch up quickly so that (a) the workload doesn't become overwhelming, and (b) you don't continually lose points for late work. You may find yourself working more quickly than the assignment schedule. That is acceptable; however, please turn in assignments as scheduled, and invest enough time to do your best work on each assignment.

GRADING

Graded Activities — Graded activities and their point values are listed below. Due dates are provided as part of the Module Outline on the final page of the syllabus.

SPSS Statistics (8 assignments @ 25 points each).....	200 points
APA Style (homework)	50 points
Plagiarism (homework)	50 points
NIH Training Certificate	50 points
Topic and Research Question	50 points
Literature Review	100 points
Research Proposal	200 points
Group Research Paper	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Citizenship.....	100 points
Total	1,000 points

SPSS Statistics — During Week 1, we will introduce you to IBM SPSS Statistics, a powerful statistics software used frequently in the social sciences. SPSS is available in the Centrum Computer Lab. As part of class, we will cover sections of the statistics text and provide limited instruction on how to use SPSS. You will complete eight assignments using the software. The SPSS assignments are posted on Canvas.

APA Style (homework) — During Week 1, we will also discuss the importance of APA Style in social science research. For review purposes, we will post a PowerPoint Presentation on Canvas that explains how to properly format research papers and references. For this assignment, you will be given source information for a research paper. You will use it to create a title page and reference list that conform to APA Style.

Plagiarism (homework) — Week 2 covers research ethics and plagiarism. As part of the class, we will walk you through a document titled “A Primer on Plagiarism.” Based on what you learn, you will complete a detailed homework assignment in which you will demonstrate that you understand what constitutes plagiarism.

NIH Training Certificate — After Week 2 classes, you will go to the homepage of the National Institutes of Health and complete the self-paced training leading to human-subjects research certification. By submitting your certificate, you will demonstrate that you understand the responsibilities of researchers where human subjects are concerned. The URL is <<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>>.

Topic and Research Question(s) — Week 4 discusses how to select a research topic and developing research questions. This assignment requires that you select a topic that interests you, demonstrate that you have done preliminary research on that topic, created a list of potential research questions, and narrowed that list to one or two questions that will serve as the focus of your research proposal.

Literature Review — Week 5 covers potential sources of research information in our discipline and provides instruction in how to research and write a literature review. Using the topic and research question(s) you submitted for the previous assignment, you will conduct research on your topic, summarize and synthesize that research, and present a literature review that makes an argument for the importance of your proposed study.

Research Proposal — Week 11 discusses how to write research proposals. Using the topic, research question(s), and literature review you created earlier in the semester, you will select the most appropriate sampling and research method from the methods present in Weeks 6 through 10. Then you will write a detailed proposal that further explains and justifies your study.

Group Research Paper — Weeks 12 through 15 are devoted to carrying out a group research project and writing the research report. You will work in teams of four or five students and carry out a survey, content analysis or experiment. All students are expected to haul their fair share of the freight in the group project; students who fail to do so can expect their grades to be docked accordingly.

Final Exam — The exam is Tuesday, May 1, at 9 a.m. in CN 221. The exam is comprehensive; it will consist of true-false, multiple-choice, matching and essay questions. Early final exams are not permitted.

CLASS POLICIES

Deadlines — Deadlines are established for each assignment. An assignment not submitted by the deadline incurs an automatic, non-negotiable grade penalty of 10 percent. For every 24 hours that passes after the deadline, an additional 10 percent will be added to the grade penalty. Work submitted more than seven days after the deadline will not be accepted for a grade. The only exceptions to this rule are serious illness and family emergency. Excuses must be documented. I am the sole and final arbiter of what constitutes an “emergency.”

Citizenship — Respect for fellow students and for the professor is expected; rudeness is not tolerated. Rude behavior includes conversing with other students during class discussions, texting on their cell phones, and surfing the Internet or writing e-mail messages during class. Please turn off your computer monitors and close your laptops when class begins. Also, silence your cell phones when you enter the classroom; if you’re expecting a call that you must accept, please leave the room quietly and take the call in the hallway. Good citizenship will be noted and will enhance your final grade. Poor citizenship will have the opposite effect.

Cheating and Plagiarism — Cheating will result in a failing grade for the assignment in question and could result in harsher sanctions, including dismissal from the course with a failing grade. In this course, the most typical act of cheating is unauthorized collaboration with other students on statistics assignments. Don’t do it.

Any act of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course. Invariably, students caught plagiarizing justify themselves with excuses such as, “But I thought I cited it correctly,” or, “I didn’t know it was wrong.” Negligence and ignorance are not acceptable excuses. Please do your own thinking and your own writing.

The SUU Academic Integrity policy (discussed below) is clear that cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. The policy outlines possible sanctions for cheating and plagiarism, but leaves the disposition of individual cases to the discretion of the professor. I do not enjoy sanctioning cheaters, but I do not shirk the responsibility, either. Let’s work together to avoid these problems. If you have a question, please contact me via email or Skype.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity — Scholastic dishonesty will not be tolerated. You are expected to have read and understood the current issue of the student handbook (published by Student Services), which outlines students’ rights and responsibilities, and the intellectual property policy, for information about procedures and about what constitutes acceptable on-campus behavior. In addition, you should read the university policy on Academic Integrity, found at the following URL: <<http://www.suu.edu/pub/policies/pdf/PP633Academic.pdf>>.

Students with Disabilities — SUU complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations, or auxiliary aids must contact the Southern Utah University Coordinator of Services for Students Disabilities (SSD) in Room 206F of the Sharwan Smith Center. The phone number is 435/865-8022. SSD determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of services.

Emergency Management — In case of emergency, the University’s Emergency Notification System will be activated. Students are encouraged to maintain updated contact information using the link on the homepage of the *mySUU* portal. Also, please become familiar with the Emergency Response Protocols posted in each classroom. Detailed information about SUU’s emergency management plan can be found at <www.suu.edu/emergency>.

HEOA Compliance — Sharing of copyrighted material through peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing, except as provided under U.S. copyright law, is illegal. Detailed information about the SUU policy on peer-to-peer file sharing is available at <<http://www.suu.edu/it/p2p-student-notice.html>>.

ABOUT THE PROFESSOR

Dr. Husselbee began working as a sportswriter at *The Observer* in his hometown, La Grande, Ore., in 1978. He has been a reporter and editor at newspapers in Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Texas. He has also worked for the Associated Press in Ohio and Utah. He left the newsroom in 1992 to pursue a career in higher education. He taught at Brigham Young University and Ohio University while in graduate school. He also taught at Dixie State College and Lamar University before coming to SUU in August 2000.



The Fine Print — Other than policies on grading, deadlines, makeup work and attendance, any information in this syllabus is subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Week	Dates	Curriculum	Reading
1	Jan. 10, 12	Foundations: Syllabus; Introduction to Research; APA Style; and IBM SPSS Statistics	Syllabus APA, pp. 178, 188, 197, 215-234
2	Jan. 17, 19	Research Ethics and Plagiarism Due Jan. 19: APA Style (homework)	Handout 1
3	Jan. 24, 26	Scales & Measurement, Validity & Reliability Stats: Levels of Measurement Due Jan. 24: Plagiarism Assignment	Handout 2 Huss, pp. 3-24
4	Jan. 31, Feb. 2	Selecting a Topic and Asking a Research Question Statistics: Central Tendency Due Jan. 31: SPSS Assignment 1 Due Feb. 1: NIH training certificate	Handout 3 Huss, pp. 41-54
5	Feb. 7, 9	Research Sources and Literature Reviews Statistics: Variation Due Feb. 7: SPSS Assignment 2 Due Feb. 9: Topic/Research Question	Handout 4 Huss, pp. 55-64
6	Feb. 14, 16	Sampling Statistics: Standard Scores Due Feb. 14: SPSS Assignment 3	P&M, pp. 78-96 Huss, pp. 65-78
7	Feb. 21, 23	Focus Groups Statistics: Graphing Data, Sampling Error, Confidence Intervals, and Hypothesis Testing Due Feb. 21: SPSS Assignment 4, Literature Review Due Feb. 23: Literature Review	P&M, pp. 239-271 Huss, pp. 25-39 Huss, pp. 79-108
8	Feb. 28, March 1	Content Analysis Statistics: Correlation Due Feb. 28: SPSS Assignment 5	P&M, pp. 185-213 Huss, pp. 163-173
9	March 6, 8	Experiments Statistics: <i>t</i> Tests Due March 6: SPSS Assignment 6	P&M, pp. 215-237 Huss, pp. 111-118 Huss, pp. 123-130
10	March 20, 22	Surveys Statistics: Cross-tabulation and Chi-square Due March 20: SPSS Assignment 7	P&M, pp. 56-77 P&M, pp. 98-126 Huss, pp. 189-203
11	March 27, 29	Research Proposals Due March 27: SPSS Assignment 8	Handout 5
12	April 3, 5	Group Research Projects Due April 3: Research Proposal	
13	April 10, 12	Group Research Projects	
14	April 17, 19	Group Research Projects	
15	April 24, 26	Group Research Projects Research Presentations Due April 26: Final Paper	

Reading Assignments include all handouts and ancillary materials provided on Canvas. Readings are assigned in the right column above. Textbooks are designated as follows: APA = *Concise Rules of APA Style*; P&M = *Research in Mass Communication* by Poindexter & McCombs; and Huss = *Statistical Analysis in Communication Research* by Husselbee.