

CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCES SEMINAR

COMM 6220 : SPRING 2012 : DR. PAUL HUSSELBEE

Section 70I (CRN 13265), Distance Education via Canvas

Dr. Husselbee <husselbee@suu.edu> Office: 435/865-8556 Skype: utah_ref Twitter: @utah_ref
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, 11 a.m. to noon; or by appointment

If you have questions about the class and assignments, your best bet is to email me. If your question arises during office hours, send a Skype request and we'll chat face-to-face. If you're in town, you may also visit to ask questions during office hours. Be aware, however, that I do not provide private tutorials for distance-learning students on a regular basis. Part of the allure of distance education is the freedom of independent study, and you are expected to study and absorb the lecture material in the modules on your own.

ABOUT THE CLASS

Description — This course focuses on surveys, polls, and sampling procedures to generate information about targeted audiences and publics. Applications of select research methods such as ethnographic and demographic research and other methods will be used to describe mass audiences.

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

- ◆ Describe a variety of audience analysis techniques and explain how they are used in various communication-related professions.
- ◆ Explain the three-phase process of research and describe the role of survey research in that process.
- ◆ Explain and demonstrate the steps and procedures required to conduct a successful focus group.
- ◆ Explain and demonstrate the steps and procedures required to create a research questionnaire.
- ◆ Describe various sampling techniques used to select survey respondents, and explain the advantages and disadvantages of each technique.
- ◆ Enumerate and explain the steps used to train survey interviewers.
- ◆ Describe and explain the procedures used to collect, code, process and analyze survey data.
- ◆ Write a proposal demonstrating how to conduct a focus group.
- ◆ Work as a member of a team to conduct a public opinion poll.

Required Reading — Two 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

Both books are available at the SUU Bookstore <www.suu.edu/ss/bookstore/> or from online book vendors.

Please read assigned sections of the text before coming to class. If I get the sense that most students are skipping the reading, I will add a series of graded assignments that require you to write an abstract for each chapter of the text. The abstracts will require that you summarize the significance of each chapter in a single page. You don't want that, and neither do I, so please do the reading before class. ☺

WHAT TO EXPECT

Overview — The course is divided into 15 successive modules. Most of the modules include an assignment to read a chapter from the Poindexter & McCombs text. Each module is accompanied by a Power Point Presentation that presents an overview of text reading and other sources, as well as a discussion of specific areas of concern for audience-analysis research. This course assumes that you are a self-starter and a motivated learner. I will guide your study, but you must be an active learner, such that you teach yourself the nuances of research based on what you learn from reading and observation. You will apply what you learn by planning a focus group and working with others in the distance-education course to conduct a major public opinion poll. Part of this group project will include working together to construct a comprehensive report of the result, complete with recommendations.

GRADING

Graded Activities — Graded activities and their point values are listed below. Assessment will be based on individual and group work on two major research projects, performance on the final exam, and citizenship in the class throughout the semester.

Research Project I — Focus Group Proposal	150 points
Research Project II — Public Opinion Poll	
Group Grade: Overall Quality of the Poll/Report	50 points
Individual Grade: Participation and Contribution	100 points
Polling Questionnaire	100 points
Final Exam	50 points
Citizenship	50 points
Total	500 points

Research Projects — The first project is a focus group proposal, which requires that you prepare everything required to conduct a focus group and get it approved. The second project is a public opinion poll, which requires a group effort. Major projects in the “real world” typically include a healthy dose of teamwork, and the group project is designed to emulate that model. You will work with classmates to conduct a significant public opinion poll. For this project, you will receive two grades. The first grade is the group grade based on the overall quality of the project. The second grade will take into account your participation in the project, as well as the quality and quantity of your contribution. To encourage you to haul your fair share of the freight, the individual grade is worth twice as much as the group grade. Please participate enthusiastically and do a good job on your portion of the group project.

Overall, the research projects are worth 60 percent of your final grade. That’s 30 percent of the grade for each project. There is less “busy” work (no regular homework or weekly writing assignments) in this course than you may have had in previous distance-education courses, so the research projects are important to the final grade.

Polling Questionnaire — As we prepare for the group project, you will submit a polling questionnaire for a grade. The questionnaire will be accompanied by a brief paper in which you describe and justify your questions, explain how the data your questionnaire purports to collect will answer the research question(s), and offer recommendations for statistical analysis of that data.

Assessment of the questionnaire assignment will be based on the quality and justification of your questions, as well as the design of your questionnaire. We will use students’ questionnaires to construct the overall group questionnaire; you will receive extra credit for every question we adopt from your individual questionnaire. The polling questionnaire is worth 20 percent of your semester grade.

Final Exam — The comprehensive final exam will consist of 10 matching, 20 true-false and 20 multiple-choice questions. Anything in the textbook or discussed in module presentations is fair game for the final exam. Your study guide for the exam is the notes you’ve taken and your experiences working on two research projects. Overall, the final exam is worth 10 percent of your semester grade. The exam will be available on Canvas on Tuesday, May 1, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is due by 5 p.m. No early final exams will be given.

Assessment Philosophy — Employers in the real world don’t care how hard you try if you can’t get the job done. My assessment philosophy mirrors this attitude; grading is based on performance rather than effort. If you’re unhappy with the assessment, improve the performance. Remember, this is your ball game; I just keep the score.

Grading Scale — Grades on individual assignments and the final semester grade are based on this scale:

A 94.0-100.0%	B+ 87.0-89.9%	C+ 77.0-79.9%	F 73.9 or below
A- 90.0- 93.9%	B 80.0-86.9%	C- 74.0-76.9%	

Computing Your Semester Grade — Semester grades will be assigned based on the number of points you earn in proportion to the number of points possible. Thus, a student who earns 432 points of the 500 points possible would figure his or her grade like this:

$$\frac{432}{500} = .864$$

Using the grading scale outlined above, you will see that the student in question earned a B in the class. Please note that I do not round up when computing semester grades. ☺

CLASS POLICIES

Citizenship — Respect for fellow students and for the professor is expected; rudeness is not tolerated. In a distance-learning section, the rudest behavior of all includes failure to communicate with classmates or the professor about the status of projects or deadlines. It may also include failure to participate in class discussions on Canvas. Finally, it includes repeated failure to meet deadlines and repeated requests for extended deadlines and special favors not available to others in the class. In the past, I have not included citizenship grades in distance-learning courses, but given experiences with some students in recent semesters, I have elected to add a citizenship component this semester to encourage students to show some consideration for fellow students and for the professor. Please be a good citizen by cooperating with classmates, participating in class discussions, and meeting deadlines. Good citizenship will be noted and will enhance your final grade. Poor citizenship will have the opposite effect.

Deadlines — Our business lives and dies with deadlines; this class is no different. 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.”

Plagiarism — 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>>.

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

Module	Date	Curriculum	Reading
1	Jan. 9-13	Introduction to Audience Analysis	P&M, pp. 6-17, 343-367
2	Jan. 16-20	Conducting Focus Groups	P&M, pp. 239-267
3	Jan. 23-27	The Pre-Research Phase Meet the Client: Focus Group	P&M, pp. 23-32
4	Jan. 30-Feb. 3	The Research Phase Group Project I: Focus Group	P&M, pp. 33-54
5	Feb. 6-10	Constructing the Survey Questionnaire Group Project I: Focus Group	P&M, pp. 57-77
6	Feb. 13-17	Sampling: Selecting Survey Respondents Group Project I: Focus Group	P&M, pp. 79-96
7	Feb. 20-24	Training Interviewers and Collecting Data Group Project I: Focus Group	P&M, pp. 99-111
8	Feb. 27-March 2	Coding and Processing Data Group Project I: Focus Group	P&M, pp. 112-125
9	March 5-9	Data Analysis Group Project I: Focus Group	P&M, pp. 127-152
10	March 19-23	Reporting Survey/Focus Group Results The Post-Research Phase Group Project I: Focus Group	P&M, pp. 154-173 P&M, pp. 175-180
11	March 26-30	Surveying Consumers and Voters Group Project I: Report to the Client	P&M, pp. 281-282
12	April 2-6	Introduction to Qualtrics Group Project II: Public Opinion Poll	
13	April 9-13	Intercepts: Man-on-the-Street Surveys Group Project II: Public Opinion Poll	P&M, pp. 275-279
14	April 16-20	Ethnographic Research Group Project II: Public Opinion Poll	P&M, pp. 290-291
15	April 23-26	Group Project II: Public Opinion Poll	
—	Tuesday, May 1	Final Exam, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Canvas Exam is due at 5 p.m.	