COMMUNICATION STUDIES 60193: Advanced Research Methods in Communication
Wednesdays, 2:00-4:40 PM, Moudy South 300, Class #33461

Course Syllabus, Spring Semester 2012

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Office Hours: MWF 8-10 AM and 11 AM-2 PM; by appointment

Required Text

All other readings (e.g., journal articles) are listed on the syllabus below and are available on the course eCollege site.

Course Description
“The quality of scientific knowledge is only as good as the scientific methods used to gain it.”
-- Todd Little, Professor of Quantitative Psychology, University of Kansas

In the communication discipline, quantitative research methods enjoy a rich heritage, vibrant present, and bright future. The chief strengths of quantitative research methods include the ability to compare and generalize across groups with exacting precision, removal of bias due to researcher subjectivity, summation of results across multiple studies (e.g., meta-analysis), and study replication. This course is all about equipping you with a set of quantitative tools that will allow you to seek knowledge—whether that knowledge is for formal theory-testing in academic contexts or practical application in professional contexts.

The chief goal of this course is to offer a practical (moreso than mathematical) understanding of quantitative research methods in the social sciences and, more specifically, within the communication discipline. As such, by the end of this course, you will be able to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course objective</th>
<th>How you’ll demonstrate it to me</th>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate a foundational understanding of basic statistical techniques (and attendant metatheoretical assumptions) used in the communication discipline.</td>
<td>Midterm and final exams</td>
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<td>Conduct elementary variable analyses using the SPSS software program.</td>
<td>Labs #1-4</td>
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<td>Develop theoretical models amenable to statistical analysis.</td>
<td>Lab #5</td>
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<td>Test basic multivariate statistical models using the SPSS software program.</td>
<td>Labs #6-9</td>
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COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES

1. **Class Attendance and Participation:** For all students, but especially graduate students, I expect punctual attendance and participation in all scheduled class sessions. This includes reading all course readings prior to class and bringing a copy of the readings with you. If you cannot attend a class session, please notify me as soon as you possibly can.

2. **Deadlines:** All work is due electronically (sent via e-mail attachment to a.ledbetter@tcu.edu) by the start of class on the designated due date. If a situation arises that hinders this, please contact me as soon as possible (ideally before the assignment is due). I reserve the right to deduct points if work is turned in late, and especially if you do not notify me beforehand.

3. **Ethical Conduct:** TCU’s mission is “to educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community.” The ideals of ethics and responsibility are completely incompatible with academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on tests, presenting someone else’s assignment or paper as your own work, and not documenting papers with the source of word-for-word or paraphrased material. You can find a more extensive definition of academic misconduct at Texas Christian University at http://www.catalog.tcu.edu/2009-2010/undergraduate/1411.htm.

   If you have questions concerning what constitutes academic dishonesty, please discuss this with me. Not knowing the definition of academic dishonesty does not excuse you from the consequences. **In this course, any form of academic misconduct will result in automatic failure (i.e., grade of “F”) for the relevant assignment(s) and recommendation to the academic dean that the offender be dropped immediately from the course with a grade of “F”**. TCU’s undergraduate and graduate catalogs provide information about appeal procedures in cases of alleged academic misconduct.

   I reserve the right to submit your work to turnitin.com (a plagiarism detection website) and use the site’s report when determining whether assignments are plagiarized.

4. **Obtaining Copies of PowerPoint Slides:** PowerPoint slides for each class session will be placed on Blackboard prior to the start of class. I fully intend that you will download them, keep them, and consult them in future projects. You also have my permission to freely (i.e., without cost to the recipient) redistribute, reuse, or modify them for your personal or instructional purposes (although some form of acknowledgment would be appreciated especially for the latter).

5. **Electronic Devices:** Use of electronic devices is encouraged in class, as long as you are using it in ways that enhance your learning or the learning of others. If your technology use interferes with classroom activity, I reserve the right to ask you to (a) cease your technology use and/or (b) leave the classroom.

6. **Americans with Disabilities Act:** Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. If you require accommodations for a disability, please contact the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Center for Academic Services, located in Sadler Hall 11. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at 817-257-7486.
Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator. Guidelines for documentation may be found at http://www.acs.tcu.edu/DISABILITY.HTM.

Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible.

7. **Respect:** At all times, I expect that you will speak and act in a manner consistent with the ideals of collegiality and integrity that should (but, alas, do not always) characterize academic discussion.

**Course Assessment**

**Homework/Lab Exercises** (20 points each, 200 points total) – This is a research methods course—and methods can only be learned through practice. The homework/lab exercises form the heart of your learning in the course. The syllabus below lists the days that the labs are assigned, and each lab assignment sheet lists the day that the lab is due. I will offer quick feedback on your submitted labs, and you may resubmit each lab as many times as you like up until the due date.

**Midterm and Final Exams** (100 points each) – The exams are designed to help you review and apply key concepts in the course. You will be permitted to bring your class notes, the textbook, and course readings to the exam sessions.

**Grading Scale** – Overall, in graduate courses, I believe an ‘A’ should reflect outstanding work, a ‘B’ should reflect good/acceptable work, a ‘C’ should reflect problematic work, and (of course) an ‘F’ should reflect unacceptable work. When I assign your grade for this course, I will consider both the quantity/quality of your participation in class and the spirit of collegiality and respect you exhibit toward me and your colleagues. In addition to these, your point total will strongly guide grade assignment, with 360 or more points (90% and above) reflecting ‘A’-quality work, 320-359 points (80-89%) reflecting ‘B’-quality work, 280-319 (70-79%) reflecting ‘C’-quality work, and 279 points or below indicating ‘F’-quality work. To provide the most accurate assessment of your work, I will use the +/- system when grading (e.g., 83% as the cut-off for a B-, and 87% as the cut-off for a B+).
Tentative Course Schedule

January 18 (Week 1): Course introduction; Philosophical matters in quantitative research methods  
Assignment: Lab 0 (About Me)

January 25 (Week 2): Univariate statistics  
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 2

February 1 (Week 3): Introduction to SPSS  
We will meet in the computer lab.  
Assignment: Lab 1 (Descriptive Statistics)

February 8 (Week 4): Variables, validity, and reliability  
Assignment: Lab 2 (Managing Scales and Measuring Reliability)

February 15 (Week 5): Categorical X Continuous Bivariate Associations (*T*-tests)  
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 3  
Assignment: Lab 3 (*T*-tests)

February 22 (Week 6): Categorical X Categorical Bivariate Associations (Chi-square tests)  
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 8  

February 29 (Week 7): Continuous X Continuous Bivariate Associations (Correlations)  
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 9  
Assignment: Lab 4 (Chi-Square and Correlations)

March 7 (Week 8): Introduction to Model Building  
Assignment: Lab 5 (Drawing Pictures, Building Models)

March 14 (Week 9): Midterm Exam

March 21: SPRING BREAK (No class)

March 28 (Week 10): Model Building with Categorical Independent Variables: One-way and Factorial ANOVA  
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 5; Maxwell, S. E., & Delaney, H. D. (1990). *Designing experiments and analyzing data* (pp. 64-85). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth

Assignment: Lab 6 (One-way and Factorial ANOVA)

April 4 (Week 11): Model Building with Categorical Independent Variables: ANCOVA and MANOVA
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, chs. 6 & 7
Assignment: Lab 7 (Advanced ANOVA)

April 11 (Week 12): Model Building with Continuous Independent Variables: Regression
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 10

April 18 (Week 13): Model Building with Continuous Independent Variables: Regression (cont.)
Assignment: Lab 8 (Regression)

April 25 (Week 14): Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): An Inductive Quantitative Technique
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 11
Assignment: Lab 9 (EFA)

May 2 (Week 15): The Road Ahead

May 9 (3:00-5:30 PM): Final Exam