COMMUNICATION STUDIES 60193: Advanced Research Methods in Communication
Tuesdays, 2:00-4:40 PM, Moudy South 300, Class #30970

Course Syllabus, Spring Semester 2015

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Ledbetter
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Office Hours: TR 9:30-11:00 AM; W 9:00-10:00 AM; other times by appointment. When possible, please e-mail me in advance of your desired meeting time.

Required Text

Allen, M., Titsworth, S., & Hunt, S. K. (2009). Quantitative research in communication. Thousand
      Oaks, CA: Sage.

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, Texas Tech University*

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 is the second course in a two-course sequence. In the first course (COMM 60143), you learned about the philosophy of science, reliability, validity, sampling, ethics, and about different methods of gathering data, including surveys, experiments, and participant observation. In this course, you will learn what to do with quantitative data once you have it. 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:

Course objective	How you'll demonstrate it to me
Demonstrate a foundational understanding of basic statistical techniques (and attendant metatheoretical assumptions) used in the communication discipline.	Midterm and final exams
Conduct elementary variable analyses using the SPSS software program.	Labs #1-3

Develop theoretical models amenable to statistical analysis.	Lab #4
Test basic and advanced multivariate statistical models using the SPSS software program.	Labs #5-6 & #8-11
Learn how to design surveys using the Qualtrics web program to gather data.	Lab #7
If time permits, explore the R package as an alternative syntax-based method of statistical analysis.	Lab #12

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. **Academic Misconduct:** 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 misconduct. Academic misconduct 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. **Please also note that TCU's academic misconduct policy forbids submitting the same paper (or portions thereof) to multiple classes without prior instructor approval.** You can find a more extensive definition of academic misconduct at TCU in the Student Handbook, http://www.studenthandbook.tcu.edu/student_handbook.pdf. The master syllabus also contains information about what constitutes academic misconduct in this course and at TCU. In this course, paying money to another student currently in the course for information such as class notes, completed review sheets, and so forth is considered a form of academic misconduct. Taking photographs or videos of quiz or exam materials is also academic misconduct.

   If you have questions concerning what constitutes academic misconduct, please discuss this with me. Not knowing the definition of academic misconduct does not excuse you from the consequences. **In this course, any form of academic misconduct will result in <u>automatic failure</u> (i.e., grade of "F") for the relevant assignment(s) and <u>recommendation to the academic dean that the offender be dropped immediately from the course with a grade of "F". In a group project, all project members will, by default, receive the same penalty.</u>** 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. **SPSS:** This course heavily uses SPSS, the most popular statistical package in the social sciences (also popular among other users too). The advantage of the software is that it presents data in an

2

intuitive Excel-like fashion, and provides statistical tools through a relatively user-friendly interface. The disadvantage is that SPSS isn't cheap. Your options for access are:

- **Purchase the SPSS GradPack version:** Gives you a one-year license. Costs about $100 at http://studentdiscounts.com/. See also http://www-03.ibm.com/software/products/en/spss-stats-gradpack.
- **Use the Moudy South 3rd floor computer lab:** We have SPSS installed on the machines in the lab. The lab is open during the school day, although sometimes classes reserve it.
- **Use the library:** SPSS is installed on the Windows machines in the Information Commons in the Mary Couts Burnett Library.

5. **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).

6. **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.

7. **Communication with parents:** In high school, your parents had complete access to your academic record. As a college student (and for most of you, as legal adults), by federal law that is no longer the case. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA; also known as the Buckley Amendment), passed in 1974, requires that colleges and universities keep your academic records private, even from your parents, unless you give consent. For information on TCU's compliance with FERPA, and how to grant your parents or others access to your academic information, see http://www.reg.tcu.edu/privacy.asp.

Please also note that waiving FERPA restrictions for a parent (or another person) only means that a professor may discuss your grade with the parent—it does not require a professor to do so. As a general rule, I will not discuss your academic performance in this class with your parents or other individuals, even if you have waived your FERPA rights. You are an adult, and I believe that your personal growth as an adult will only occur as you take initiative and responsibility for your own academic career, including discussing concerns with me in a timely fashion. If you do have questions about your academic record in this class, of course I am more than happy to speak with you individually about them.

8. **Disability Statement:** Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 1010. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-6567.

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_documentation.asp.

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.

9. **TCU Campus Resources for Students:** Many resources exist on the TCU campus that may be helpful to students: Mary Couts Burnett Library (257-7117); Center for Academic Services (257-7486, Sadler Hall. 1022); the William L. Adams Writing Center (257-7221, Reed Hall 419); Student Development Services (257-7855, BLUU 2003); and Office of Religious & Spiritual Life (257-7830, Jarvis Hall), Campus Life (257-7926, Sadler Hall 2006), and the Counseling, Testing, and Mental Health Center (257-7863, Brown Lupton Health Center).

10. **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 (12 labs, 25 points each, 300 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* (typically the following Tuesday at noon). 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 (150 points each, 300 points total) – 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 540 or more points (90% and above) reflecting 'A'-quality work, 480-539 points (80-89%) reflecting 'B'-quality work, 420-479 (70-79%) reflecting 'C'-quality work, and 419 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 13 (Week 1): Course introduction: Introduction to foundational concepts and philosophical matters
Core Reading: Hawking, S. (1996). *The illustrated brief history of time* (ch. 4: pp. 68-81). New York: Bantam.
Assignment: Lab 0 (About Me)

January 20 (Week 2): A review of COMM 60143 and introduction to SPSS
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 1-2
Assignment: Lab 1 (Scales, Reliability, and Univariate Stats in SPSS)

January 27 (Week 3): Categorical X continuous bivariate associations (*T*-tests)
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 3

Research Example: Myers, S. A., & Glover, N. P. (2007). Emerging adults' use of relational maintenance behaviors with their parents. *Communication Research Reports, 24*, 257-264.
Assignment: Lab 2 (*T*-tests)

February 3 (Week 4): Categorical X categorical bivariate associations (Chi-square tests) & continuous X continuous bivariate associations (Correlations)
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 8-9
Research Example: Sherer, S. L., & Clark, R. A. (2009). Changes in teasing patterns form early adolescence to adolescence. *Communication Research Reports, 26*, 175-187.
Shimotsu, S., & Mottet, T. P. (2009). The relationships among perfectionism, communication apprehension, and temperament. *Communication Research Reports, 26*, 188-197.
Assignment: Lab 3 (Chi-Square and Correlations)

February 10 (Week 5): Introduction to model building
Assignment: Lab 4 (Drawing Pictures, Building Models)

February 17 (Week 6): Model building with categorical independent variables: One-way and factorial ANOVA
Core Reading: Please read PowerPoint slides 3-16 before class. We will discuss briefly, with particular emphasis on any questions you may have.
Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, chs. 4-5
Research Example: Sidelinger, R. J., Frisby, B. N., & McMullen, A. L. (2009). The decision to forgive: Sex, gender, and the likelihood to forgive partner transgressions. *Communication Studies, 60*, 164-179.
Assignment: Lab 5 (One-way and Factorial ANOVA)

February 24 (Week 7): Model building with categorical independent variables: ANCOVA and MANOVA
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, chs. 6-7
Research Example: Watson, S., DeJong, P. F., & Slack, J. L. (2009). Impact of racial attitudes on consumers' evaluations of black character advertisements: Does spokesperson skin color make a difference? *Communication Research Reports, 26*, 91-104.
Assignment: Lab 6 (Advanced ANOVA)

March 3 (Week 8): Midterm exam

March 10: SPRING BREAK (No class)

March 17 (Week 9): Introduction to Qualtrics
Assignment: Lab 7 (Qualtrics)

March 24 (Week 10): Model building with continuous independent variables: Regression
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 10
Research Example: Schrodt, P., Ledbetter, A. M., & Ohrt, J. K. (2007). Parental confirmation and affection as mediators of family communication patterns and children's mental well-being. *Journal of Family Communication, 7*, 23-46.
Assignment: Lab 8 (Regression)

March 31 (Week 11): Model building gets wackier: Statistical moderation
Research Example: Forsythe, K. E., & Ledbetter, A. M. (in press). Relational uncertainty, self-other inclusion, and communication satisfaction as predictors of friendship relational maintenance, and how equity changes the story. *Communication Studies*.
Assignment: Lab 9 (Moderation)

April 7 & 14 (Week 12 & 13): Model building gets wackier still: Statistical mediation
Core Reading: Hayes, A. F. (2009). Beyond Baron and Kenny: Statistical mediation analysis in the new millennium. *Communication Monographs, 76*, 408-420.
Research Example: Ellis, N. K., & Ledbetter, A. M. (in press). Why might distance make the heart grow fonder?: A relational turbulence model investigation of the maintenance of long distance and geographically close romantic relationships. *Communication Quarterly*.
Assignment: Lab 10 (Mediation)

April 21 (Week 14): Exploratory factor analysis (EFA): An inductive quantitative technique
Core Reading: Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, ch. 11
Research Example: Schrodt, P. (2006). Development and validation of the stepfamily life index. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 23*, 427-444.
Assignment: Lab 11 (EFA)

April 28 (Week 15): The road ahead

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