

# COM 295: Research Methods in Communication

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Student Consultation Hours: T 10-11, W 10-12  
Office Location: CSS 149

## Course Materials:

**Textbook:** Merrigan, G. & Huston, C.L. (2015). *Communication Research Methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) New York: Oxford University Press.

**Supplies:** I encourage all students to set up cloud storage or other back up storage. You never know when the technology gods will strike against you. Please bring relevant materials to class each day (textbook, articles, etc). In class exams will require a laptop or tablet.

## Course Overview:

Welcome to Research Methods! This class will provide an introduction to the methods used to conduct communication research. This class will help you become a more knowledgeable consumer of information and research. You will develop skills in finding, analyzing, and presenting information and be exposed to the vast field of communication research. Through class discussions, readings, lectures, and exercises, you will explore communication research methods.

*Catalogue Description:* Introduces the fundamentals of communication research. Topics include the scientific method, quantitative and qualitative approaches, research ethics, hypothesis testing, measurement issues, survey design, data analysis, and more.

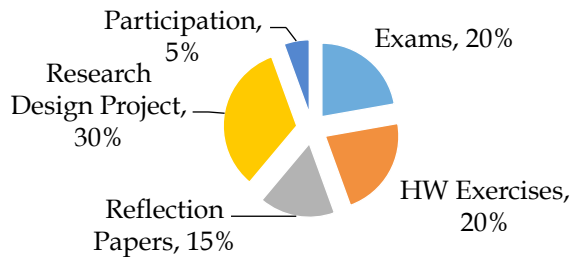
## Course Goals/Objectives:

- Develop an understanding of key methodologies.  
*You'll learn the vocabulary to help you read, analyze, and design research. You will also be able to explain the elements of research and specific methodologies.*
- Become critical consumers of communication research.  
*Students will learn skills to locate, cite, and organize research studies, especially scholarly journal articles. You will practice reading and evaluating communication research, while exploring the relevance and trustworthiness of research in scholarly and popular media sources.*
- Understand the ethical dimensions of social research  
*We all need to be aware of the ethical implications of conducting research and working with human participants, so we'll learn the history of ethics in research and develop skills needed to make ethical choices in research.*
- Develop an understanding of research design  
*Our end goal is to practice designing a research study of our own. We will consider the fundamental goals and questions of each methodology, choose an appropriate method based on your interests and questions, and design an 'ideal' research study.*

## Grading

A significant amount of your grade will be based on your original work and your participation during class. You are welcome to consult with me any time during the semester about your grade. I enforce a 24hr rule: You must wait at least 24 hours after receiving a grade before consulting with me. Think of it as time to get your thoughts together so we can have the most productive conversation possible. NOTE: Incomplete grades are only offered under serious circumstances and require a formal contract request.

### Assignments:



Exams	20%
HW Exercises	20%
Reflection papers	15%
Research design project Topic Proposal Annotated Bib (ungraded draft) Design Proposal w/Bib Presentation	30%
Participation	5%

*Keep track of your points throughout the semester. You should also save assignments for use in your portfolio in Comm 480 ☺. In fact, it is wise to save all your assignments just in case you want to make use of them in future portfolios for classes or jobs.*

### Grading Scale

A	94-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%	F ≤ 59%
A-	90-93%	B	84-86%	C	74-76%	D	64-66%	
		B-	80-83%	C-	70-73%	D-	60-63%	

### Attendance/Participation:

What you will take away from this course (transferable skills, knowledge, interesting information) is based on your willingness to be critically and creatively engaged with the material. Participation means having completed the readings/assignments as well as being able to ask questions, make comments, and demonstrate that you have engaged with or given thought to the material of the day. Present yourself and your work in a professional manner. I will evaluate your participation largely by your active and thoughtful contributions in class. Thus, I expect you to be in class regularly

## Course Policies

### *Absences:*

Of course, there are circumstances that may prevent you from attending class. Each student is allowed 1 penalty-free absence. Use this responsibly; reserve these for illness, personal emergencies, and the like. If you are ill, please do not attend class; just get some rest. **Each absence over will reduce your final grade by 10%.** Remember, of course, that is your responsibility to get any missed information or assignments. Form relationships with other students in the course so you have someone to check in with regarding notes and announcements.

NOTE: Additional “Excused” absences are only those due to religious holidays, University sanctioned events, or extended illness. In such events, you **MUST** present appropriate documentation and may need to be in contact with other departments on campus. The status of these (excused or not) is at the discretion of the instructor on a case-by-case basis. This documentation is best provided in advance of the absence. But otherwise must be turned in within a week of the absence.

*Tardiness:* Please be on time to every class, or alert me when you’ll be late. If you are continually tardy, your final grade may be lowered. If you are late on a speaking day please wait outside the classroom until applause signals the end of a presentation.

*Late work:* In business, failure to complete reports and projects by assigned deadlines will result in the loss of important clients, missed opportunities for advancement, and pay reductions. So let’s form good habits now. **Assignments are due on the day they are due!** Technical problems such as power outages or downed systems are not legitimate excuses for late or missing work. Always make a backup copy of your work. Furthermore, give yourself ample time to complete assignments.

- **I will not accept work via email.** We will typically use BB for assignments. If you must miss class on a day we are turning in printed material, please turn your work in at my office or ask a classmate to drop it off.
- **If you are using an excused absence, you are still responsible for the work due and should turn work in early or work with me to negotiate an alternative due date, if possible.**
- In the case of serious emergencies, please see me. You will need to provide proper documentation and extension dates/alternative assignments will be negotiated between instructor and student. **NOTE: There are no exceptions for the final.**

*Technology:* If you are using a laptop, please avoid personal entertainment use (email, chatting, facebook, etc.). If I suspect personal entertainment, your participation grade will be lowered and you may be asked to leave the class (resulting in an absence).

*Email:* Feel free to email me with questions. I will attempt to respond within 24-48 hours. I encourage you to visit me in my office as well! Sometimes questions require a longer discussion. Be sure you are also checking your student email account for information and reminders.

*Format of Assignments:* All work must be typed and double-spaced unless otherwise noted. Assignments should follow APA style, have one-inch margins, and use a standard Times New Roman, 12pt font. I expect all written or spoken communication to be of professional quality. Please proofread your work carefully.

### *Accommodation/Disability Policy*

Rollins College is committed to equal access and does not discriminate unlawfully against persons with disabilities in its policies, procedures, programs or employment processes. The College recognizes its obligations under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 to provide an environment that does not discriminate against persons with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of academic accommodation in order to participate in this class, please make appropriate arrangements with the Disability Services Office: (407) 646-2354. Requests for accommodations must be made as early as possible in the semester. You are invited to speak with me so we can ensure the appropriate accommodations are made. We will create a detailed contract together.

### *Title IX Statement*

Rollins College is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which students, faculty and staff can work together in an atmosphere free of sex and gender based discrimination. Rollins is strongly opposed to all forms of sex and gender based discrimination (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and sexual harassment) and is committed to providing support, resources, and remedies to individuals that have experienced sex and gender based discrimination. Faculty members are responsible employees under Title IX and must share information about sex and gender based discrimination with the Title IX Coordinator. Information about available confidential resources, support services, and reporting options can be found online at [www.rollins.edu/sexual-misconduct](http://www.rollins.edu/sexual-misconduct).

### *Emergency Communication Plan*

Disasters, emergencies, and crises disrupt the College's normal activities and may require activation of the Rollins College Emergency Operations Plan. Whether the crisis is a result of an accident, natural disaster, or another cause, effective and accurate communication helps us minimize rumors and restore a sense of confidence and order. You can see the university's plan here: <http://www.rollins.edu/safety/documents/EOPRev03122012.pdf>. Please be sure to have Campus Safety's number in your cell (407-646-2999).

### *Assessment*

Rollins College is strongly committed to creating and maintaining a culture of evidence-based continuous improvement. The Department of Communication's assessment initiative is designed to help answer the essential questions of the learner-centered college: Are our students learning? How do we know they are learning? How does what we know allow us to improve learning? Your participation in this program is essential to quality assessment and program improvement. As part of this course, you will be asked to participate in a knowledge and skills assessment. Your performance on this is not part of your course grade, though you are expected to complete the assessment. We sincerely appreciate your participation in developing and improving the Communication Studies courses.

### *Academic Honor Code*

Membership in the student body of Rollins College carries with it an obligation, and requires a commitment, to act with honor in all things. Because academic integrity is fundamental to the pursuit of knowledge and truth and is the heart of the academic life of Rollins College, it is the responsibility of all members of the College community to practice it and to report apparent violations.

The following pledge is a binding commitment by the students of Rollins College:

**The development of the virtues of Honor and Integrity are integral to a Rollins College education and to membership in the Rollins College community. Therefore, I, a student of**

**Rollins College, pledge to show my commitment to these virtues by abstaining from any lying, cheating, or plagiarism in my academic endeavors and by behaving responsibly, respectfully and honorably in my social life and in my relationships with others.**

This pledge is reinforced every time a student submits work for academic credit as his/her own. Students shall add to all papers, quizzes, tests, lab reports, etc., the following handwritten abbreviated pledge followed by their signature:

**"On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work."**

***Credit Hour Statement:***

This course is a four-credit hour course that meets three hours per week. The value of the four credit hours results from work expected of enrolled students both inside and outside the classroom. Rollins faculty require that students average at least three hours of outside work for every hour of scheduled class time. In this course, the additional outside-of-class expectations include additional reading beyond the textbook, small group collaboration, library research, and writing.

***Course and Instructor Evaluation***

At the end of each semester, students are asked to evaluate the course and instructor. These evaluations are extremely valuable in the teaching and learning process on our campus. Student evaluations help assess student perceptions of classroom learning and often lead to improved teaching. Your feedback is important and Rollins students are encouraged to be honest, fair, and reflective in the evaluation process.

The online evaluative survey is anonymous. Students are never identified as the respondent. Instead, each student's comments are assigned a random number. You will be asked to rate your course and instructor on a numerical scale and through narrative comments.

The online Course and Instructor Evaluation (CIE) process opens at 8:00 a.m. on the first scheduled date. It remains open for a period of 14 days (2 weeks) until 12:00 a.m. (midnight) on the final scheduled date. The evaluation period ends prior to the start of final examinations and faculty cannot access completed evaluations until 10 days after the end of final exams.

Students will receive one email at the start of the CIE period, one after the 15th day, and a final reminder the day before the CIE period ends. Students who complete evaluations for all classes will be able to view grades ten-days before students who do not complete an evaluation form.

***Please note: This syllabus and schedule are subject to change. I will make you aware immediately if any changes are made.***

## Schedule

NOTE: I will announce any additional readings in class and give you plenty of time to read them.

### *Part 1: The What and Why of Communication Research*

Week 1: 8/25

Introduction to the course and each other

Introduction to Communication Research (Read: Ch. 1)

Week 2: 9/1

Three Paradigms of Knowing (Read: Ch. 2)

Ethics and Research (Read: Ch. 3)

Week 3: 9/8

Finding Research (LIBRARY)

Reading and using Research (*Due: Research Rdg Exercise*)

Week 4: 9/15

Making Claims (Read: Ch 4)

What counts as communication data? (Read: Ch. 5)

Week 5: 9/22

Warrants for Arguments (Ch. 6)

Warrants for Arguments (Ch. 6)

### *Part 2: How to Interpret and Critique Communication*

Week 6: 9/29

Ethnography (Read: Ch. 7)

TBD

Week 7: 10/6

Conversation and Discourse Analysis (Read: Ch. 8)

TBD

Week 8: 10/13

FALL BREAK- NO CLASS

Week 9: 10/20

Rhetorical Criticism (Read: Ch. 9)

How to critique texts (Read Ch. 10)

### *Part 3: How to Discover Communication*

Week 10: 10/27

How to design discovery/empirical research (Read: Ch. 11)

Theory, hypothesis, research questions

Week 11: 11/3

Content Analysis (Read: Ch. 12)

TBD

Week 12: 11/10

How to conduct survey research (Read: Ch. 13)

How to conduct experimental research (Read: Ch. 14)

Week 13: 11/17

Descriptive Statistics (Read Ch. 15)

Week 14: 11/24

Inferential Statistics (Read Ch. 16)

Week 15: 12/1

Presentations

Week 16: 12/8

Final (Due: Final Design Proposal w/Bib)