**Course and Instructor Information**

Instructor: Dr. Mihaela Popescu  
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Office hours: MW 12:00-2:00 pm or by appointment  
Class Days/Time: online  
Classroom: online

**Course Description**

How do we study communication phenomena? The ability to ask productive questions about our social environments, the process whereby we proceed to find answers in a systematic, valid and repeatable manner, and the rigors of communicating our results to an audience are the important features that distinguish science from speculation. This course aims to give you hands-on experience to design, conduct and implement your own research project and to interpret and evaluate communication research.

**Course Objectives and Student Learning Goals**

1. Learn the main concepts in qualitative and quantitative research design  
2. Read, understand and summarize communication research articles  
3. Use available scholarly evidence to construct a research hypothesis about a communication phenomenon  
4. Collect and analyze empirical about communication phenomena  
5. Write a persuasive research report

**Required Readings and Software**

1. **Textbook** (available in the main campus bookstore)  

2. All other required readings and videos are available in electronic format through Blackboard
3. Software

- Internet browser (e.g., Microsoft’s Internet Explorer, Mozilla’s Firefox, Google’s Chrome, Apple’s Safari)
- PDF reader (e.g., Adobe Reader 10.0)
- Document editor (e.g., Microsoft’s Word, Apple’s Pages)
- Spreadsheet application (e.g., Microsoft’s Excel, Apple’s Numbers)

ASSIGNMENTS

**NOTE:** For the purpose of COMM 499, the culminating assignment in this course fulfills Outcome 1.1, Theory & Methodology

- 5 discussion questions graded 0, 0.5, or 1 3% of final grade each, 15% total
- 10 quizzes, max. grade 10 each 2.5% of final grade each, 25% total
- Final exam, max. grade 30 15% of final grade
- Intermediate Assignment 1, graded 0, 0.5, or 1 10% of final grade
- Intermediate Assignment 2, graded 0, 0.5, or 1 10% of final grade
- Final paper, max. grade 50 15% of final grade
- Participation: Visual essay + 10% of final grade

**GRADING SCALE**

| 95 – 100 % | A | Excellent performance, superior achievement |
| 90 – 94 %  | A- |
| 87 – 89 %  | B+ |
| 84 – 86 %  | B  | Good performance, substantial achievement |
| 80 – 83 %  | B- |
| 77 – 79 %  | C+ |
| 74 – 76 %  | C  | Meets minimum standard performance and achievement |
| 70 – 73 %  | C- |
| 67 – 69 %  | D+ |
| 64 – 66 %  | D  | Unsatisfactory performance and marginal achievement |
| 60 – 63 %  | D- |
| 0 – 59 %   | F  | Unsatisfactory performance and achievement |
COURSE SCHEDULE

MODULE 1: Research Ethics (1/12-1/18)
Read and Watch: Ch. 1, Ch. 2 and all materials on Bb

TO DO:
• Complete “Who am I?” visual essay
• Answer discussion question

MODULE 2: Research Paradigms (1/19-2/1)
Read and Watch: Ch. 3, Ch. 4, Ch. 5 and all materials on Bb

TO DO:
• Complete Quiz 1
• Answer discussion question

MODULE 3: Research Design (2/2-2/15)
Read and Watch: Ch. 7, Ch. 9, Ch. 8 and Ch. 6-in this order

TO DO:
• Complete Quiz 2, Quiz 3 and Quiz 4
• Answer discussion question
• Complete and submit Intermediate Assignment 1
• Start making appointments with instructor

MODULE 4: Qualitative Research Methods (2/16-3/8)
Read and Watch: Ch. 10, Ch. 11, Ch. 12, Ch. 13, Ch. 19, Ch. 20

TO DO:
• Complete Quiz 5, Quiz 6 and Quiz 7
• Answer discussion question
• Meet with Dr. Popescu
• Complete data collection and analysis
• Complete and submit Intermediate Assignment 2

READ and Watch: Ch. 14, Ch. 15, Ch. 18, Ch. 16-in this order
TO DO:
- Complete Quiz 8, Quiz 9, Quiz 10
- Answer discussion question
- Complete Final Exam
- FINAL PAPER DUE BY Saturday 3/28 @ 11:59 pm.

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

I. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Grading: 1 point (credit), 0.5 (partial credit) or 0 (no credit), 3% of final grade each

For each of the five learning modules, there will be several discussion questions posted on the forum covering the materials in those modules. You are required to answer one of the questions. The answer can be an original posting or a reply to a peer. In order to receive full credit, the answer has to be at least 200 words and fully address the question.

II. QUizzes

Maximum score: 10 points, 2.5% of final grade each

There will be 10 quizzes posted on the blackboard, 10 questions each, multiple choices, true/false or short answer. They are open book and may be taken as many times as needed to achieve the maximum score of 10. They may not be taken after their due date. These quizzes are meant to help you understand the material, so please regard them as learning tools.

Please note that, if you choose to retake the quiz, only your last attempt will be retained on Blackboard.

III. CUMMULATIVE FINAL EXAM (due by 03/22 @ 11:59 pm)

Maximum score: 30 points worth 15% of your final grade

The final exam is open-book and consists of 30 multiple-choice, true/false or short answer questions on all the material covered in class. The exam will become available on Blackboard on Friday March 20 at 8 am, and has to be taken by Sunday March 22 at 11:59 pm. Once you open the exam, you have 2 hours to complete it. You may not retake the final exam. Your best study guide for the exam are the chapter quizzes.

IV. PARTICIPATION (10% of your final grade)

To receive the full participation score, you need to complete a visual essay and a mandatory advisory session with your instructor, described below.

Visual Essay: “Who am I?” (due by Sunday 01/18 @ 11:59 pm)
Please prepare a multimedia introduction of yourself according to the instructions provided on Blackboard and upload it on the class blog.
Mandatory advisory session with instructor
Starting week 5, make an appointment with Dr. Popescu to discuss your data collection and culminating project in this class. The in-person advising session lasts 30 minutes and may be conducted by Skype, if necessary.

V. CULMINATING PROJECT

Your final paper is a research report of 2,500 words (minus references) to be completed in three steps as follows: (1) Intermediate Assignment I: Research proposal (10% of final grade); (2) Intermediate Assignment II: Data collection and analysis (10% of final grade); (3) Final paper (15% of final grade). The two intermediate assignments are graded 0 (no credit), 0.5 (partial credit) or 1 (full credit), while the final paper has a maximum grade of 50. In total, your culminating project is worth 45% of your final grade.

Please upload the intermediate assignments on the class blog, and the final paper via the link provided on Bb.

1. Research proposal (due by 2/15 @ 11:59 pm)

This written assignment of no more than 5 pages will require you to choose a research topic from among the topics posted on Bb, do a brief literature review for your topic, and formulate a research question. Extensive instructions will be provided on Blackboard in due time. You will receive feedback from your instructor.

Please upload on the class blog. You lose 3 points for each day you are late. I will not accept a proposal that is more than three days late.

2. Data collection and analysis (due by 3/8 @ 11:59 pm)

This written assignment of no more than 5 pages requires you to interview four students, transcribe the interviews, and interpret the results. Extensive instructions about the interview protocol will be provided on Blackboard. Please note that you need approval of your research project before you can engage in data collection.

Please upload on the class blog. You lose 3 points for each day you are late. I will not accept a proposal that is more than three days late.

3. Final Paper (due Saturday 03/28 by 11:59 pm)

Your final paper is a 2,500 words research report properly edited and prepared according to the American Psychological Association (APA) standards. The report will include your research question and literature review (as per the Research proposal), method description and data analysis (as per the Data collection and analysis assignment), as well as a discussion of your
findings and a full reference list. Extensive instructions will be provided on Blackboard. See pp. 168-172 in your textbook for an example of this particular kind of reports.

*Please upload via the link provided on Blackboard. You get a grace period of one day to submit after the deadline (no penalty). However, since the grades are due on March 30, I will not accept submissions that are more than one day late.*

VI. EXTRA CREDIT

Extra credit up to 2% of the final grade will be available for various class-related activities. Your instructor will indicate which activities are worth extra credit points.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**ACADEMIC BEHAVIOR**

- Any assignment in which you commit plagiarism, whether intended or unintended, will receive 0 points. Repeated instances of plagiarism result in an overall F for the course and serious administrative consequences.
- The penalties for other forms of cheating are similar to the ones for plagiarism.
- You commit plagiarism when you are not the author of text or ideas in your paper, but you don’t acknowledge the source. For example, you:
  - Copy/paste from a print or online source (e.g., Wikipedia) into your paper without quotation marks and reference to the source.
  - Paraphrase print or online text without acknowledging the source.
  - Use ideas from print or online text without acknowledging the source.

To avoid plagiarism, please use in-text references as follows: (Reichman, 2005, p. 23).

Use complete citation in APA format in the reference section at the end of the paper.

Example:


**EMAIL AND BLACKBOARD**

- You must be able to access and use the Blackboard as well as your CSUSB email account (the account automatically registered on the Blackboard).
- Your grades will be posted on Blackboard. Your written work is returned by email to your CSUSB account (NOT a private account).
- It is critical that you consult the Blackboard frequently for important announcements and course-related materials.
COURSE ASSIGNMENTS
• It is your responsibility to ensure that all your assignments were correctly submitted by the due date.
• For the final paper, please use the following format: Microsoft Word, Arial or Times New Roman 12 pts font, double-spaced. Always include the date, your full name, course number and title of the assignment at the beginning of the assignment. Always include a reference page at the end of the assignment, NOT in a separate document or email.
• You may not do alternative work in lieu of a required assignment.

LATE OR MISSED ASSIGNMENTS
• Due to the nature of the class, timely completion of each assignment is crucial. I will not accept assignments more than three days late.

INCOMPLETES
• You may receive an Incomplete (I) for this course only if you are unable to complete your final paper by 3/30 (the date when the grades are due). In that case, you need to provide written documentation of the legitimate reasons (such as hospitalization) preventing you from completing your final assignment, as well as an estimated time of completion (no more than 1 year).
• You will NOT receive an Incomplete if you fail to complete any other assignment by the end of the course.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
• If you are in need of an accommodation for a disability in order to participate in this class, please contact Services to Students with Disabilities at UH-183, 909-537-5238.