

**JOUR 711 APPLIED MASS COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH: CONTENT ANALYSIS
(SPRING 2012)**

Class Meeting: W 9:00 – 11:45
Classroom: 3020b Coliseum

Instructor

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Office Hours: M/W 1:15-2:15, 4:00-5:00 or by appointment

Required Texts

Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The Content Analysis: Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CAL Sage.

Course Description

This is an introductory course in content analysis for communication-related topics. The key objectives are to help you (a) understand the prerequisites for collecting data that are suitable for content analysis, (b) actually collect and analyze data to describe the communication content and/or to test a theory or hypotheses, and (c) produce a research paper to be presented to a conference or to be published in a scholarly journal. Some familiarity with communication research methods and introductory statistics is expected. We will talk about many methods and statistical tools for content analysis, but not at an in-depth level. Thus, some previous undergraduate or graduate coursework in statistics and research methods is strongly advised.

The course is designed as a lab course. I will provide some context and lecture materials, but a significant portion of course time will be spent designing an analytic framework, collecting content data, analyzing data, and linking findings to your research questions and hypotheses. At the same time, this course is designed as a seminar course. This means two things. First, you will not learn much in this course unless you actively engage in the material. Second, each student will formally participate in at least three roles:

- (1) As an active participant in all class discussions. I will letter grade your participation at the end of the semester.
- (2) As a discussion leader on two of the introductory weeks.
- (3) Presenting your own content analysis paper during the last week of the semester.

Course Requirements

Discussion Participation (50 points)

I will grade your participation in class discussions. For your contributions to the discussions, it is not enough that you just come to class. You are expected to actively discuss the readings and methodological issues, and critically evaluate other content analysis studies.

Discussion Leading (50 points)

Each student will lead/moderate class discussions on two or three of the first eight introductory weeks, where we will discuss the textbook chapters and other related topics. The discussion leader must:

- (1) Read the assigned chapter carefully;
- (2) Prepare a number of questions to discuss;
- (3) Raise a discussion question from each topic;

(4) Then, all class members will be discussing the question raised, talking about what the concept means (definition), how it can be applied to content analysis, how useful the concept/idea is going to be (pros and cons), what are further questions to be asked and discussed. The discussion leader will moderate the discussion;

(5) Summarize and conclude the discussions on the topic.

*** Remember that your role is to ask questions, not to answer them. Have/help other students answer the questions, and help them ask further questions. You should not lecture the class. Your role is to help other students actively and meaningfully participate in class discussions by raising important and intriguing discussion topics.

Midterm (100 points)

One exam (midterm) is scheduled during the semester. See Course Outline and Assignment for the scheduled date. The exams will be short essay questions. Questions will be taken from reading assignment (textbook chapters and other required readings), lectures, and class discussions. There will be no formal final exam.

Final research paper (content analysis project, 180 points)

All assignments are based on the assumption that one or two semesters down the road you will need what we have learned for a conference presentation or a publication. Each student will be paired up with another student in class and carry about a formal content analysis. This will involve: 1) selecting a useful topic/issue, 2) designing an analytic framework (coding sheet and coding book), 3) sampling and retrieving the content to analyze, 4) coding the content, and 5) analyzing the findings. By the end of the semester, you are required to write up a final paper, with at least conference-paper quality, which will involve literature review, formulating the research questions and/or hypotheses, methods, analyzing the data and reporting your findings.

Final Presentation (20 points)

Each group will give a formal presentation of their findings during the last week of the semester. A Power-Point presentation is required.

Attendance

You are expected to be in class for each session. Each unexcused absence will result in lowering your final grade by 20 points (out of 400 total). Refer to the University of South Carolina's definition of an excused absence. If you are unable to attend class due to an excusable reason, you must tell, call, or email me before class. You will need to bring an appropriate and DOCUMENTED excuse before being allowed to make up any missed assignment and to be excused. For example, a note merely stating that you have visited a doctor's office will not be acceptable. Documentation alone does not mean your absence will be excused. The instructor makes the decision whether or not to excuse your absence.

Assignment Submissions

All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late submissions will be penalized 10% of the maximum point, per day, with no submissions accepted after 3 days (including Saturdays and Sundays). Punctuation, grammar, spelling, page numbers, and physical appearance will be a grading criterion. No email submissions of any kinds will be accepted. No exceptions. Page numbers are required in all written assignments.

Academic Honesty

It is the student's responsibility to understand how the University defines academic honesty. This definition can be found in the university homepage. Plagiarism will be dealt with severely and treated as academic misconduct as defined by the university. "I didn't intend to plagiarize. I just don't know any better" cannot be an excuse.

Policy for Late Arrivals to Exams

If you arrive after another student has already finished the exam and left, you will not be allowed to take the exam. You will have to make an arrangement to take a make-up exam. See policy regarding make-up exams. If you arrive late and are allowed to take the exam, you will receive only as much time is left in the exam period.

Make-Up Exams

Students must have a valid and DOCUMENTED excuse and they must notify me 24 hours advance of the original exam to make up an exam. A valid and documented excuse is a current doctor's note that states you are to be excused the date of the exam, a notice for jury duty, or a university-sponsored athletic event. Any exam not made-up within a week of the original exam date will turn into a zero. If you miss an exam without notifying me in advance, no opportunity will be given to make up the exam, unless you have an appropriate and documented excuse. No make-up exam will be taken BEFORE the scheduled exam date.

Course Outline and Assignment

January 11 (W1)	<p>Class Introduction Reading: Kim, Carvalho, & Davis (2010) Discuss: Content Analysis Process (Steps I and II) Content Analysis Project: Explain what is expected for this project and have students think and talk about potential topics. Have their topic and initial coding sheet ready by the 25th.</p>
18 (W2)	<p>CH1 Defining Content Analysis Reading: Ch1; Kim, Carvalho, Davis, & Mullins (2011) Discuss: Content Analysis Process (Step III); readings Content Analysis Project: Have students talk about their topic and go over the coding sheet. Revise the coding sheet.</p>
25 (W3)	<p>CH3 Beyond Description: An Integrative Model of Content Analysis Reading: Ch3; Kim, Shanahan, & Choi (in press) Discuss: Content Analysis Process (Steps IV and V); readings Content Analysis Project: The first version of coding sheet should be ready by this time. Have students get sampling done by next week. Have the actual content ready by next week.</p>
February 1 (W4)	<p>CH4 Message Units and Sampling Reading: Ch4; Riffe, Aust, & Lacy (1993); Maier (2009) Discuss: readings Content Analysis Project: Sampling should be done by this time. Talk about coder training.</p>
8 (W5)	<p>CH5 Variables and Predictions Reading: Ch5; Gamson & Modigliani (1989); Nisbet & Lewensetin (2002) Discuss: readings Content Analysis Project: Continue coder training. Revise the coding sheet. Calculate pilot inter-coder reliability.</p>
15 (W6)	<p>CH6 Measurement Techniques Reading: Ch6 Discuss: readings Content Analysis Project: Continue coder training. Revise the coding sheet. Calculate pilot inter-coder reliability.</p>
22 (W7)	<p>CH7 Reliability</p>

		<p>Reading: Ch7; Lombard et al. (2002)</p> <p>Discuss: Readings, How to calculate inter-coder reliability?</p> <p>Content Analysis Project: Coder training should be done by this time. Report the initial inter-coder reliability. Start the real coding (15% double coding). Start writing the literature review. Literature review should be done by April 4. All coding should be done by April 18.</p>
	29 (W8)	<p>CH8 Result and Reporting</p> <p>Reading: Ch8; Kim, Besley, Oh, & Kim (in review)</p> <p>Discuss: readings</p> <p>Content Analysis Project: Keep coding the content. Report inter-coder reliability (15%) and see if the numbers are satisfactory.</p>
March	7 (W9)	Spring Break – No Class
	14 (W10)	<p>Meeting with Dr. Kim</p> <p>Content Analysis Project: Keep coding the content.</p>
	21 (W11)	Midterm
	28 (W12)	<p>Meeting with Dr. Kim</p> <p>Content Analysis Project: Keep coding the content. Literature review should be done by this time</p>
April	4 (W13)	<p>Meeting with Dr. Kim</p> <p>Talk about literature review.</p> <p>Content Analysis Project: Keep coding the content.</p>
	11 (W14)	<p>Meeting with Dr. Kim</p> <p>Content Analysis Project: Keep coding the content. All coding should be done by this time.</p>
	18 (W15)	<p>Meeting with Dr. Kim</p> <p>Talk about the literature review. Talk about the findings.</p>
May	2	Final Paper Due