

**JOUR 701 (Section 620) – Fall 2008**  
**MASS COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH – SYLLABUS**

**Instructor: Dr. John C. Besley (jbesley@sc.edu)**

**Class Time: Wednesday, 7-10 p.m.**

**Classroom: Swearingen 2A11**

**Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 10:30-11:30 a.m. (or by appointment)**

**Office: Coliseum 4009C**

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**Introduction and Objectives**

Journalism 701 aims to introduce new graduate students to the social science research process, particularly the methods used by applied communication researchers. The first part of the course is structured as a series of discussion-oriented lectures on topics relevant to the research process as well as discussion of the research methods that communication researchers use in their work. The second part will involve hands-on work collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. As students of communication, understanding how social science works is essential to understanding *how* we know *what* we know about society. The course is designed to provide an introduction to the following skills:

- Critical thinking about the role of mass communications in the production of fair and accurate scholarly and applied research.
- Using databases, appropriate software, and other technology in conducting research.
- Understanding the importance of recognizing context and diversity in research design and execution.
- Understanding mass communications theories and their application in research.
- Analyzing data and statistics in qualitative and quantitative research.
- Producing correct and clearly written social scientific analyses.

You should look at the present syllabus as a first draft. In order to ensure the class meets all of our needs, it should be expected that we will need to make changes to as we go along. We will discuss any change in class and you should also check Blackboard regularly for announcements.

**Required Text**

Wimmer, R.D. & Dominick, J.R. (2003) *Mass Media Research: An Introduction* (8<sup>th</sup> Edition). Belmont, California: Wadsworth.

See also: <http://rogerwimmer.com/mmr/wimmerdominick.htm>

**Grading**

(1) Exams on text and lectures (60%): There will be three 1-hour quizzes (20% each) spaced throughout the semester. These closed-book tests will occur during regular class time and involve multiple-choice, true/false, and definitional questions.

(2) Assignments and Field Work (35%): You will be asked to complete an individual assignment and two group assignments (15% each). I will assign you groups and will ask each group to develop solutions to a particular research challenges.

(3) Professionalism (5%): You are expected to attend class. You are also expected to take active part in class discussion and group work by contributing your experiences, knowledge, and questions. During the group projects, you are expected to behave in a professional manner and contribute to your group's workload as appropriate and needed. Each group member will submit confidential reports on the adequacy of each group-member's contribution following each assignment.

### **Grade Scale**

A = 90 or above	
B+ = 89.9 – 85.0	B = 84.9 – 80.0
C+ = 79.9 – 75.0	C = 74.9 – 70.0
D+ = 69.9 – 65.0	D = 64.9 – 60.0
F = below 60.0	

I will post grades on Blackboard but these are not your official grades. Your official grades are what you see written on your returned assignments. If the grade you see on Blackboard is not the same as the grade you have on the hard copy, you must let me know. If you find yourself doing poorly on the tests or assignments, please come see me.

### **Attendance Policy and Make-up Work**

University Bulletin regulations consider missing more than 10% (excused or unexcused) of scheduled classes as "excessive." If a student exceeds the allowable number of class, each additional missed class costs the student two points off the final average. *Any student missing any exam or assignment, or three unexcused classes, during the session will receive an F in the course, regardless of their final average.*

NO makeup exams will be given unless the student notifies me prior to the exam and can verify that s/he was: (1) under a doctor's care or hospitalized at the time of the exam, (2) on a university-sanctioned trip, (3) away from school due to a major medical event/emergency involving a member of their immediate family, or, (4) experiencing some sort of major personal trauma (e.g. divorce). I understand that emergencies come up. If you can, let me know in advance and be prepared to provide me with appropriate documentation.

### **Cheating**

The university lays out serious consequences for cheating. If you get caught, it will not be pleasant for anyone involved. For my part, I will fail you and report you to the appropriate review body. Cite all sources you use and do not try to pass off the work of anyone else as your own. For additional information, see: (<http://www.sc.edu/policies/rsch100.html>).

## Tentative Class Schedule

Week	Subject	Chpts.
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction and terminology</li> <li>• Research ethics - Complete USC's human subjects training for the behavioral and social sciences at: <a href="http://www.citiprogram.org/">http://www.citiprogram.org/</a></li> </ul>	W&D 1-3
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sampling               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Also read: <a href="http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/sampling.htm">http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/sampling.htm</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	W&D 4
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature Reviews: <a href="http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/literature_review.html">http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/literature_review.html</a></li> <li>• Research Questions, Hypotheses, Analyzing and Reporting Data</li> </ul>	W&D 10- 12
Week 4 and 5	<p style="text-align: center;">Exam #1 will likely take place at the beginning of week 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey Research               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Example 1: Knowledge Networks white paper on internet surveys (see Blackboard)</li> <li>○ Example 2: The most recent entry at: <a href="http://people-press.org/reports/">http://people-press.org/reports/</a></li> <li>○ Example 3:</li> <li>○ Example 4: Besley, J. C., McComas, K. A., &amp; Waks, L. (2006). Media use and the perceived justice of local science authorities. <i>Journalism &amp; Mass Communication Quarterly</i>, 83(4), 801-818. (Focus only on the measurement aspect.)*</li> <li>○ Example 5: Bolsen, T., &amp; Cook, F. L. (2008). The polls-trends: Public opinion on energy policy: 1974-2006. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>, 72(2), 364(325).*</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>See also: <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/06/opinion/06langer.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/06/opinion/06langer.html</a></p>	W&D 7 & 8
Week 6 and 7	<p style="text-align: center;">Exam #2 will likely take place at the beginning of week 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative Content Analysis               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Example 1: The most recent entry at: <a href="http://people-press.org/news-interest/">http://people-press.org/news-interest/</a></li> <li>○ Example 2: Nisbet, M.C., &amp; Huge, M. (2006). Attention cycles and frames in the plant biotech. debate: Managing power and participation through the press/policy connection. <i>Harvard International Journal of Press-Politics</i>, 11(2), 3-40.*</li> <li>○ Example 3: Brunner, B. (2006). Where Are The Women? A Content Analysis of Introductory Public Relations Textbooks. <i>Public Relations Quarterly</i>, 51(3), 43-47.*</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	W&D 6
Week 8	<p style="text-align: center;">Introduction to research project will likely occur during week 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative research (Interviews, Focus Groups, etc.)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Also read: <a href="http://www.rogerwimmer.com/mmr/mmrfocusgroups.htm">http://www.rogerwimmer.com/mmr/mmrfocusgroups.htm</a></li> <li>○ Example 1: <a href="http://www.pewtrusts.org/news_room_detail.aspx?id=32806">http://www.pewtrusts.org/news_room_detail.aspx?id=32806</a> and Pew biotech focus group transcript (see Blackboard).</li> <li>○ Example 2: Southwell, B. G., Blake, S. H., &amp; Torres, A. (2005). Lessons on focus group methodology from a science television news project. <i>Technical Communication</i>, 52(2), 187-193.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	W&D 5

Week 9	Presentation of research proposals		
		Test Interviews (2 per student)	
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion of Initial Interviews</li> <li>• Qualitative research (Interviews, Focus Groups, etc.) continued ...</li> </ul>		
		Data Collection (x per student)	
Week 11 and 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experimental Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Example 1: <a href="http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Nanotechnologies/brief2kahan_final.pdf">http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Nanotechnologies/brief2kahan_final.pdf</a>.</li> <li>○ Example 2: Gunther, A. C., &amp; Schmitt, K. (2004). Mapping boundaries of the hostile media effect. <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 54(1), 55-70.*</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>You may also find the following "Research Methods Knowledgebase" website helpful:  <a href="http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/index.php">http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/index.php</a></p>		W&D 9
		Completion of Data Collection	
		Exam #3 will likely take place at the beginning of week 13	
Week 13	TBD		
Week 14	Research Presentations		
Week 15	Research Presentations		

\*Available through the library's electronic journal subscriptions.