

Syllabus > JMS 712 Research Methods

Fall 2016 (3 credits) Thursdays 4-6:45pm

Meets in GUA 1120

Professor

E-mail (best):

(Preface e-mail subjects with "712" to help bypass spam filters.)

Voicemail:

Direction to my office and hours are posted on my faculty website

Overview

Whether you plan to create knowledge (as a researcher or as part of planning media campaigns) or use the products of research (which we do when we read reports or watch television), it is important to understand how research is planned, conducted, analyzed, and presented. This quantitative course examines social scientific research methods used by media practitioners and researchers, focusing in particular on the scientific process, introductory statistics, and research design. Prerequisite: Graduate student standing. Basic computer experience is necessary.

Contacting me

If you cannot meet me during my office hours (listed online), please send me an e-mail with at least two alternate times. E-mail is the best way to contact me; I try to respond within a working day to most messages. If your question is relevant for the entire class, I might discuss it with the class. While I welcome a broad range of questions related to this course, please research your question so that we can discuss it knowledgeably.

Course requirements/learning outcomes

The major goals of this course are for you to be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the scientific research method.
- Characterize appropriate methodological procedures for common research problems.
- Understand and evaluate research.
- Apply key research methods and techniques.

I will help you achieve these goals through class lectures, assigned readings, discussions, comments on your work, and examinations. You are, however, ultimately responsible for achieving these goals.

Assignments

There are several individual assignments in this course. You must follow the instructions on the assignment handouts very carefully. Professional presentation of your work is important in this course, and will be counted in the grading. If printing an assignment, you must staple pages together, number them, include appropriate appendices (sketches, graphics, printouts, and so on), and use the APA publication style for citations. Specific requirements for each assignment will be discussed in class.

Exams

You'll demonstrate your familiarity with the course topics on two exams. Any aspect of research methods that we discuss or read in class can be on these exams. To be fair to everyone, no exams will be given early to anyone. For the same reason there will be no makeup exams except to students with credible medical excuses from a physician.

Grading expectations and policies

If you understand the readings, participate, and incorporate the course topics into your paper and exam responses, you're likely to receive some form of "B." A grade in the "A" range indicates consistently excellent contributions in all areas, whereas a "C"-range grade (or lower) indicates substantial gaps in knowledge or effort. Specifically, a "D" indicates problems in all areas, and an "F" is given for substantially unprofessional work and class behavior (such as rare attendance, missing major assignments, or plagiarism). I expect you to be familiar with what constitutes plagiarism; if you are in doubt, it is your responsibility to ask me (see the "academic integrity" section below).

Late work will not normally be accepted; however, in unusual circumstances such as credible documented emergencies late work will be accepted with one grade deducted per working day left. Late work is not accepted by e-mail. Missed mini-exams are an "F."

Papers are due at the beginning of class on the official due dates, unless stated otherwise. A student missing a class or assignment because of observance of a religious holiday has the opportunity to make up missed work, but you must notify me of anticipated absences in time (see last page). Students who represent UNLV at any official extracurricular activity have the opportunity to make up assignments, but you must provide official written notification no less than one week before the missed class.

Three methods evaluations (content analysis, experiments, and survey)

3*10%: 30%

Thesis methods review: 5%

Draft methods chapter: 25%

Two exams: 2*20%: 40%

Total: 100%

Estimated paper length: The goal for this course's papers is to prepare thorough reviews of methods materials. The topic and the resources you locate should dictate the length of the papers you prepare. That said, the typical length for each of the paper assignments should be about 5 pages (not including the cover sheet or the bibliography). The exception is the final assignment (the draft methods chapters), which should be about 10-15 pages. Thus, the total formal writing output is about 30-35 pages.

In addition, class attendance is mandatory and critical for keeping up in this intensive course. Any undocumented absence will result in a grade reduction of three percent. If you're absent from class, you must contact another student for notes and handouts.

Academic integrity

I expect that all work you submit is your own, and that you are familiar with and follow the university's standards regarding academic honesty and general academic standards for citing and quoting work that is not your own. The web provides easy access to other people's work; thus, you must be particularly careful to document the source of all work and acknowledge assistance by others; failure to do so is considered plagiarism, which has serious academic consequences. Instead, use the APA citation style for assignments in this course; style information is widely available online. Work may not be "double-dipped" for this course (also submitted for a job or another course) without the instructor's written permission. If you have any questions about this, please ask me.

Required readings and resources

We will use SPSS and other research tools, and examine selected research articles. Resources are on the course website. This course also uses these texts (note that these are available used and in previous editions for a much better deal):

Babbie, E. R. (2015). *The Practice of Social Research* (14th edition). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Gilovich, T. (1993). *How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life* (Reprint edition). New York, NY: Free Press.

Vaus, D. de. (2002). *Analyzing Social Science Data: 50 Key Problems in Data Analysis* (1st edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Schedule

Note: Bring all books to class. We will use de Vaus' *Analyzing Social Science Data* as a guide to exercises in and out of class as we explore SPSS and data manipulation. Reading from all sources will be about 60-100 pages per week. As a graduate student, you'll be learning how to devote the time and effort needed to understand the assigned topics, to determine how thoroughly to read the assignments (in-depth versus skim), and how to prepare thoughtful questions about the topics.

Week 1: Thursday, Sep 1: Course intro / research basics

Introduction to SPSS.

Week 2: Thursday, Sep 8: Epistemology and biases

Read: BABBIE's *The Basics of Social Research*, chapter 1.
GILOVICH chapter 1, 2, 3, 4.

Week 3: Thursday, Sep 15: Research design and sampling

Read: BABBIE chapter 2, "Two logical systems..." pp. 45 to end of chapter.
BABBIE chapter 4.
BABBIE chapter 7.

Week 4: Thursday, Sep 22: Working with datasets

Read: BABBIE chapter 14, 16.
de Vaus chapter 1, 28-31.

Week 5: Thursday, Sep 29: Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement

Read: BABBIE chapter 5.
GILOVICH chapter 5, 6, 7, each student selects one of [8, 9, 10], and 11.

Due: Prepare for mid-term exam.

Week 6: Thursday, Oct 6: Ethics

Our normal in-class meeting is replaced by online resources and an assignment.

Read: BABBIE chapter 3
Assignment: Complete the CITI exam, with a score of 75% or better. Bring a printout to class.
<https://www.unlv.edu/research/ORI-HSR/training>

Week 7: Thursday, Oct 13: Content analysis

Our normal in-class meeting is replaced by online resources and an assignment.

Read: BABBIE chapter 4, *units of analysis* section.
BABBIE chapter 11, *content analysis* section.

Gross, B. L., & Sheth, J. N. (1989). Time-Oriented Advertising: A Content Analysis of United States Magazine Advertising, 1890-1988, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 53, No. 4, pp. 76-83.

Due: Prepare an evaluative report on this method using the template on our course website.

Week 8: Thursday, Oct 20: Experimental design

Our normal in-class meeting is replaced by online resources and an assignment.

Read: BABBIE chapter 8.
Experimental article TBA.

Due: Prepare an evaluative report on this method using the template on our course website.

Week 9: Thursday, Oct 27: Survey design

Read: BABBIE chapter 9
BABBIE chapter 6 (Index and scale sections; focus on Likert and Semantic Differential)

Due: Prepare an evaluative report on this method using the template on our course website.

Week 10: Thursday, Nov 3: Advanced analysis

More advanced quantitative methods, including ANOVA and regression analysis.

Week 11: Thursday, Nov 10: Reviewing quantitative analysis

Week 12: Thursday, Nov 17: Begin methods literature review

Due: Prepare an evaluative report on one method (selected by drawing names during class) and using the template on our course website. Locate a Master's thesis (ask JMS faculty for recommendations) that uses this method and review the thesis methods section.

Week 13: Thursday, Nov 24: 1: NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: Thursday, Dec 1: Emerging tools and methods

We'll examine emerging tools and methods, for example Tableau and Google News Lab resources. Specific tools and readings are TBD.

Week 15: Thursday, Dec 8: Finalize methods section of your prospectus

Due: Select one method that you'll most likely use in your own thesis project. Write a draft methods section for your prospectus.

Final exam due Thursday, Dec 15 at 6pm (take home—distributed Dec 8).

Disclaimer

Although the instructor will attempt to follow this syllabus, it is subject to change at his discretion.

Notes

Course website: _____

Login and password: _____

UNLV Course-related policies and resources are listed in full at https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/945/Policies-SyllabiMinCriteria-1617.doc. For summer courses, UNLV Summer School policies take precedence.

They include:

Academic Misconduct—Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

Copyright—The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves **with** and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)—The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

Transparency in Learning and Teaching—The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information:

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

University Library

Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is Susie Skarl (https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject). UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.

Religious Holidays Policy – Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her

intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit:

<http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

Incomplete Grades – The grade of I - Incomplete - can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

Tutoring and Coaching — The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for UNLV undergraduate students. For information ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

UNLV Writing Center—One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

Rebelmail—By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

Final Examinations—The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.