

## COM 435

# Quantitative Research Methods

### Required text and course materials

Nussbaum, J.F. (2014). *Readings in communication research methods: From theory to practice*. San Diego: Cognella (ISBN: 9781609275853)

Wrench, J.S., Thomas-Maddox, C., Peck Richmand, V., & McCroskey, J.C. (2016). *Quantitative research methods for communication: A hands-on approach*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. NY: Oxford University Press. (ISBN: 978-0-19-045640-0)

WebCampus (<http://webcampus.nevada.edu>).

Additional course readings available through UNLV Libraries (<http://library.unlv.edu/>).

### Course overview

Quantitative Research Methods (COM 435) builds upon and extends the knowledge, skills, and experiences gained in other upper-division COM courses. COM 435 is one of two options for the COM degree's "culminating experience" (your other option is COM 408 Rhetorical Criticism). Thus, this course provides a final review, consolidation, and assessment of all four of the [University Undergraduate Learning Outcomes](#) (UULOs) and all eight of the [COM BA's Learning Objectives](#). To accomplish these goals, COM 435 provides a survey of several empirical research designs (e.g., surveys, experiments, in-depth interviewing) often used in social scientific communication research and issues related to human research (e.g., ethical obligations, conceptualization, sampling, and data analysis). By the end of this course, students should:

1. Understand what social scientific research is and how it is conducted in Communication Studies;
2. Be able to identify and explain the basic guiding ethical principles of conducting human research;
3. Be able to conceptualize and operationalize a research study, including identifying a research purpose, creating and distinguishing among research questions and hypotheses, and identifying variables (and their measures) and distinguishing among independent and dependent variables;
4. Know what validity and reliability are and be able to identify and discuss threats to validity and reliability for several types of research designs;
5. Know and be able to apply random and nonrandom sampling techniques;
6. Be able to explain the difference between several types of research designs (e.g., case studies, interviews, surveys, and experiments) using their defining characteristics and distinctive elements;
7. Write the methods, results, and discussion sections for several types of research designs according to APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition standards; and
8. Have a basic understanding of how to analyze data for each type of research design.



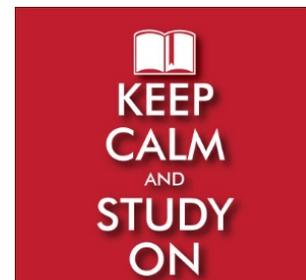
### Course policies and procedures

#### Course prerequisites

- You must have successfully completed the following courses: COM 101, 102, & 216; English 101, 102, & your constitution course requirement (i.e., all Pre-COM requirements).
- You must have access to computers, email, WebCampus, and the UNLV library (both the building and online resources).

## Academic conduct

- 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 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. See the [Student Academic Misconduct Policy](#).
- Academic misconduct also may include, but are not limited to, plagiarizing, “cut and copy”-ing from original work, cheating on an examination, stealing or having unauthorized possession of examinations, substituting one person for another at an examination, submitting another person's work, submitting your own work that you submitted in another course, facilitating acts of dishonesty by others, falsifying data, fabricating citations, and tampering with the academic work of other students.



Source 1: [www.library.arizona.edu](http://www.library.arizona.edu)

## Copyright

The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves 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.

## Course format

Class days will consist primarily of lectures, in class group activities, and guided discussion of assigned readings. Your success and the success of this course are dependent on your preparation and participation. Therefore, I do expect you to complete a close reading of all assigned material and be actively engaged in class discussions and activities. You are responsible for all information discussed in class and the readings.

WebCampus is an integral part of this course. Grades, email, and other materials for this course will be accessible only via WebCampus. If you do not have access to WebCampus or are unfamiliar with it, contact the Student Help Desk in SU 231 at (702) 895-0761, or e-mail at [studenthelp@unlv.edu](mailto:studenthelp@unlv.edu).

## Classroom conduct

- You may hear class members share ideas and opinions that are very different from your own. Be polite and respectful in your responses.
- Arrive to class on time. Missing any part of class interferes with your opportunity to learn and others' ability to concentrate. You also may miss important announcements and other information that may benefit you in the future. If you do arrive late, enter quietly and avoid becoming a distraction to other class members.
- You may use your computer or tablet in class although it is not recommended. If at any time your technology becomes a distraction to you, your peers, or the instructor, you will be asked to put it away and may lose the privilege to have electronic devices in class. Cell phones, iPods, etc. are *not* permitted. You may *not* take pictures, audio record, or otherwise record this course (in part or whole).
- If there is an emergency and you are expecting a phone call (e.g., your father is in the hospital), notify Dr. McManus at the beginning of class. Otherwise, all phone calls are subject to being answered or text messages responded to by Dr. McManus. Turn off your phone and put it out of eye sight during class.
- This classroom is not a charging station, and loose cords are a safety hazard.
- Please use the bathroom before or after class. Leaving and returning is just as distracting as arriving late.

Dear students,  
**I know when you're  
 texting in class.**  
 Seriously, no one looks down  
 at his/her crotch and smiles.  
*Sincerely, your teacher.*

## Attendance

Class attendance is important for academic development. [UNLV's Undergraduate Handbook](#) states “There are no official absences from any university class. It is the student’s responsibility to consult with the teaching faculty regarding absences from their class. Students may be dropped from classes for nonattendance during the first week of instruction.”

- You are expected to attend *each* scheduled class session *in its entirety*. Attendance will be considered in your final course grade.
  - During each class session, an attendance sheet will be passed around for you to sign-in. If your signature does not appear on the attendance sheet, you will be considered absent for the day.
  - Three absences are permitted. An automatic ***0.3 point reduction in your final grade*** will be assessed regardless of the reason for the absence for each day missed over three (e.g., If you miss 4 days of class, and you earned a 4.0, your grade will become a 3.7. If you miss 6 days of class, and you earned a 3.3, your grade will become a 2.4).
  - Each class not fully attended (i.e., arrive late or leave early) will incur penalty. If you miss more than ½ the class, you will be considered absent.
- Missing an exam will result in a zero.
- If you will be absent for University sponsored events (e.g., intercollegiate athletics, band, forensics, recruitment, or other activity sanctioned by a college dean, the Executive Vice President and Provost, etc.), **you must speak with Dr. McManus at least seven days (one week) prior to your absence and provide appropriate written documentation** to make arrangements per University 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** 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, review the [Religious Holidays Policy](#).
- If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain missed information from a class member.

## University Resources

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### Title IX

Title IX maintains that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race, national origin, etc.). Offenses may take place on or off campus with university affiliated individuals. If you (or someone you know) has been harassed or assaulted because of sex or gender and feel this hurts your ability or opportunity to a fair and equitable educational experience, please speak with someone. [UNLV Title IX resources](#) make several resources available, and you may talk with a [Title IX Coordinator](#).

### Rebelmail

E-mail is appropriate for brief questions that need short responses. It is not a substitute for office hours. I make every effort to respond to email within 24 hours, but I do not guarantee a response in 24 hours.

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](mailto:@unlv.nevada.edu). Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.

### Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The [UNLV Disability Resource Center](#) (SSC-A 143, 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 me during office hours so that we 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 confidentiality, do *not* approach me during class to discuss your accommodation needs.

### UNLV Libraries

Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is Susie Skarl. 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/>.

### The Academic Success Center (ASC)

Information can be found at <http://www.unlv.edu/asc>.

### UNLV Writing Center

Information can be found at <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

### Transparency in Learning & Teaching

Information can be found at <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning> and <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

## ASSESSMENTS

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### Homework (15%)

You will have several homework assignments to practice ideas discussed in class and help with your final paper. These will be provided at the end of class and will be collected at the beginning of the next class. Ten are scheduled. I may add 1 or 2 as needed. Your highest 8 scores will be used to calculate your final grade.

You may complete homework in groups or individually. If you work in a group, all group members' names must be on the assignment. Everyone in the group will receive the same grade; grades will be assigned based on the names on the homework at the time it is submitted. If your name is not on a homework assignment, you receive a zero (0). It is your responsibility to verify your name is on the work. If you do not submit a homework (for whatever reason), you will receive a zero (0). Other arrangements *cannot* be made.

### Exams (60%)

You will have 3 exams (20% each). Due to the nature of this course, the exams are cumulative. Exams consist of multiple choice, true/false (with corrections), and short answer essay questions covering the breadth and depth of reading materials and lecture. If you miss an exam, you will receive a zero. If you arrive late, you have only the remaining time to complete exam; no additional time will be permitted for late arrivals or leaving early. *Make-up exams are permitted only at the discretion of the instructor and only possible in extreme circumstances* (e.g., document family emergency; University sponsored event, etc.).

### Final paper (25%)

The cumulative assignment for this course is a research study proposal. You will write a literature review and propose (and defend) the research methods necessary for conducting a study that tests the hypothesis offered (or answer the research question posed). You may complete this assignment in pairs or individually. Final papers must be submitted to TurnItIn. See detailed assignment on WebCampus.

## GRADES

Grades consist of		Grading scale			
<i>Assignments</i>	<i>Percentage weight</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>		
Homework assignments	15%	<b>A</b>	<b>4.00</b>	A/A-	3.85
Exams (3 @ 20% each)	60%	<b>A-</b>	<b>3.70</b>	A-/B+	3.50
Final paper	25%	<b>B+</b>	<b>3.30</b>	B+/B	3.15
<b>Total possible</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>3.00</b>	B/B-	2.85
		<b>B-</b>	<b>2.70</b>	B-/C+	2.50
		<b>C+</b>	<b>2.30</b>	C+/C	2.15
		<b>C</b>	<b>2.00</b>	C/C-	1.85
		<b>C-</b>	<b>1.70</b>	C-/D+	1.50
		<b>D+</b>	<b>1.30</b>	D+/D	1.15
		<b>D</b>	<b>1.00</b>	D/D-	0.85
		<b>D-</b>	<b>0.70</b>	D-/F	0.50
		<b>F</b>	<b>0.00</b>		

See [Incomplete Grade](#) policy.

### Grading philosophy

- My grading philosophy is that students earn grades through their demonstration of skill and knowledge of course material in a manner fitting the course requirements. As such, to earn a grade, it is the students' responsibility to demonstrate their knowledge and skills via the opportunities provided. I only indicate where each student's work falls in comparison to the University's, Department's, and course's standards and expectations.
- In addition to assessing whether submitted work meets the minimum requirements for that particular assessment, ***all work*** for this course will be assessed according to the following criteria:
  - (1) accuracy of information presented;
  - (2) knowledge of the topic demonstrated;
  - (3) depth of information presented;
  - (4) scope and focus;
  - (5) conciseness and clarity of writing;
  - (6) proper use of APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition (2<sup>nd</sup> printing) formatting, editing, and citation guidelines (e.g., 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font, parenthetical citations).
- Simply attending class and satisfactorily completing work constitutes a "C" grade. A "B" grade is earned through surpassing basic expectations. An "A" grade is earned by performing exceptionally and far exceeding expectations.
- Grades are a personal matter (and are protected by federal law just like your health records).
  - Do not discuss your grades with others or request your classmates to share their grades with you.
  - I will not discuss your grades outside of a scheduled one-on-one meeting with you. This includes reasons for absences, explanations of what feedback on your personal written work means, etc.
  - University policy does not permit grades to be discussed via phone or email.

### Contesting grades

- If you have questions about your assignments, please talk to me. I cannot help you achieve your goals or improve performance if you do not ask. To help you carefully think about your questions:
  - **Assessments will not be discussed within the first 24 hours after they are returned.** Take time to read and digest the feedback provided.
  - If you have questions after a day's reflection, email me to schedule an appointment. Discussion must occur in person and in private.

- If you would like to contest an assessment, **email me 1 to 7 days after receiving your grade and feedback.** In your email include:
- (1) Why you disagree with the grade assigned and your argument for why you believe you earned a different grade. This will help us both be prepared to address those issues in detail.
  - (2) Your request to schedule an appointment to discuss the grade in person within 7 days (1 week) of receiving the evaluation. The meeting must take place within 1 week of your initial email to me to contest the grade. We cannot accurately discuss specific details of the assignment weeks after it was completed. Also, you cannot apply the lessons learned to the next paper if you wait to ask.

### Grade availability

Grades will be recorded on WebCampus. If there is difference between what is posted and your records, please speak to me privately to rectify the discrepancy. I do my best to return grades within one week of the assignment's due date, but sometimes it may take up to two weeks to return work. All grades for a particular assessment are returned at the same time; no one receives a grade earlier than anyone else in the class.

### Tentative schedule

Date	Topics, readings, & assignments
T Aug 30	<b>Introductions</b> <b>Course overview</b>
R Sept 1	<b>Science &amp; empiricism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 1 in Wrench et al.</li> <li>• Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (2016, May 8). Scientific studies [video file]. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Rnq1NpHdmw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Rnq1NpHdmw</a></li> <li>• Plait, P. (2016, May 10). When science reporting goes horribly, horribly wrong. Slate.com. Retrieved from <a href="http://www.slate.com/blogs/bad_astronomy/2016/05/10/john_oliver_science_and_the_media.html">http://www.slate.com/blogs/bad_astronomy/2016/05/10/john_oliver_science_and_the_media.html</a></li> </ul>
T Sept 6	<b>Science &amp; empiricism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 2 in Wrench et al.</li> <li>• Ch. 1 in Nussbaum, 2014</li> <li>• <i>Optional reading:</i> Gawande, A. (2016, June 10). The mistrust of science. <i>The New Yorker</i>. Retrieved from <a href="http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-mistrust-of-science">http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-mistrust-of-science</a></li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>Homework #1 due</b></p>
R Sept 8	<b>Understanding &amp; reading a scientific journal article</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chs. 4 &amp; 5 in Wrench et al.</li> <li>• Muralidharan, S. &amp; Sung, Y. (2016). Direct and mediating effects of information efficacy on voting behavior: Political socialization of young adults in the 2012 U.S. presidential election. <i>Communication Reports</i>, 29, 100 – 114. doi: 10.1080/08934215.2015.1064537</li> </ul>
T Sept 13	<b>Research ethics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 3 in Wrench et al.</li> <li>• Klitzman, R. (2014, July 2). Did Facebook's experiment violate ethics? <i>CNN.com</i>. Retrieved from <a href="http://www.cnn.com/2014/07/02/opinion/klitzman-facebook-experiment/">http://www.cnn.com/2014/07/02/opinion/klitzman-facebook-experiment/</a></li> <li>• Kramer, A.D.I., Guillory, J.E., &amp; Hancock, J.T. (2014). <a href="#">Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks</a>. <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America</i>, 111(24), 8788-8790. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1320040111</li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>Homework #2 due</b></p>
R Sept 15	<b>Concepts vs. variables</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pp. 177 – 178 &amp; Ch. 6 in Wrench et al. text</li> </ul>
T Sept 20	<b>Variables &amp; measurement: What is it?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 7 in Wrench et al. text</li> </ul>

R Sept 22	<p><b>Variables &amp; measurement: Reliability, measurement validity, &amp; other descriptive statistics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 8 in Wrench et al. text</li> <li>• <i>If you are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with basic statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation), read Ch. 15</i></li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>Homework #3 due</b></p>
T Sept 27	<p><b>Exam 1: Science &amp; empiricism; Journal articles; Research ethics; Concepts, Variables, &amp; Measurement</b></p>
R Sept 29	<p><b>Variables in research questions &amp; hypotheses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 7 (pp. 326 – 334) in Wrench et al. text</li> </ul>
T Oct 4	<p><b>Variables in research questions &amp; hypotheses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 7 (pp. 334 – 346) in Wrench et al. text</li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>Homework #4 due</b></p>
R Oct 6	<p><b>Sampling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 13</li> <li>• Krieger, J.L. (2014). Ch. 3: Sampling. Nussbaum text</li> </ul>
T Oct 11	<p><b>Surveys</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pp. 216 – 226 in Wrench et al. text</li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>Homework #5 due</b></p>
R Oct 13	<p><b>Surveys: Design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pp. 179 – 181 in Wrench et al. text</li> <li>• Dillow, M. (2014). Ch. 5: Construction of the Survey. Nussbaum text</li> <li>• Hummert, M.L., &amp; Nussbaum, J.F. (2014). Ch. 8: Cross-sectional and Longitudinal approaches to Research on Development. Nussbaum text.</li> </ul>
T Oct 18	<p><b>Surveys: Administration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pp. 227 – 231 in Wrench et al. text</li> <li>• Pecchioni, L.L. (2014). Ch. 4: Techniques of Surveying. Nussbaum text</li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>Homework #6 due</b></p> <p><i>Last Presidential debate Oct 19</i></p>
R Oct 20	<p><b>Surveys: Quality (reliability, validity, &amp; other problems)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pp. 206 – 215; pp. 231 - 238 in Wrench et al. text</li> <li>• Morse, C.R. (2014). Ch. 2: Measurement. Nussbaum text.</li> </ul>
T Oct 25	<p><b>Surveys: Inferential statistics &amp; Writing the “Results” section statistics testing relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 19 in Wrench et al. text</li> </ul>
R Oct 27	<p><b>Surveys: Inferential statistics &amp; Writing the “Results” section statistics testing relationships &amp; Wrap-up</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 20 in Wrench et al. text</li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>Homework #7 due</b></p>
T Nov 1	<p><b>Exam 2: Variables in RQs &amp; Hs; Sampling; &amp; Surveys</b></p>
R Nov 3	<p><b>Experiments: Testing for causation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 11 (pp. 261 – 274) in Wrench et al. text</li> <li>• Schwartz, D. (author) &amp; Augenblick, A. (producer). (no date). <i>Not all scientific studies are created equal</i> [TedEd]. Available from <a href="http://ed.ted.com/lessons/not-all-scientific-studies-are-created-equal-david-h-schwartz">http://ed.ted.com/lessons/not-all-scientific-studies-are-created-equal-david-h-schwartz</a></li> </ul>
T Nov 8	<p><b>Experiments: Common validity concerns &amp; designs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 11 (pp. 274 – 286) in Wrench et al. text</li> <li>• Robinson, J.D., &amp; Cusella, L. (2014). Ch. 6: Internal and external validity. Nussbaum text</li> </ul>
R Nov 10	<p>NCA Work day for final papers</p>
T Nov 15	<p><b>Experiments: Common validity concerns &amp; designs</b></p> <p>➤ <b>Homework #8 due</b></p>
R Nov 17	<p><b>Experiments: Inferential statistics &amp; Writing the “Results” section when testing for differences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 17 in Wrench et al. text</li> </ul>

T Nov 22	<p><b>Experiments: Inferential statistics &amp; Writing the “Results” section when testing for differences &amp; Wrap-up</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 18 in Wrench et al. text</li> </ul> <p>➤ <b>Homework #9 due</b></p> <p>*Last day Dr. McManus will accept and review final paper drafts. Must be submitted by 11:30am via email.</p>
R Nov 24	Happy Thanksgiving!
T Nov 29	<p><b>Qualitative research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pitts, M.J. (2014). Ch. 13: Qualitative field methods in communication. Nussbaum text</li> <li>• Fisher, C. (2014). Ch. 14: Narrative methodology. Nussbaum text</li> </ul>
R Dec 1	<b>Final paper due @ 12:45 on WebCampus</b>
T Dec 6	<p><b>Qualitative research: Transferability &amp; ethics in qualitative research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parry, M. (2015, June 12). Conflict over Sociologist’s narrative puts spotlight on ethnography. <i>The Chronicle of Higher Education</i>. Retrieved from: <a href="http://m.chronicle.com/article/Conflict-Over-Sociologists/230883/">http://m.chronicle.com/article/Conflict-Over-Sociologists/230883/</a></li> <li>• Neyfakh, L. (2015, June 18). The ethics of ethnography: Alice Goffman’s heralded book about inner-city life has come under fire for inconsistencies and inaccuracies. Is the author to blame—or does the fault lie with her field? <i>Slate</i>. Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/crime/2015/06/alice_goffman_s_on_the_run_is_the_sociologist_to_blame_for_the_inconsistencies.html">http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/crime/2015/06/alice_goffman_s_on_the_run_is_the_sociologist_to_blame_for_the_inconsistencies.html</a></li> </ul>
R Dec 8	<p><b>Qualitative research wrap-up</b></p> <p>➤ <b>Homework #10 due</b></p>
R Dec 15 @ 10:00am – 12:10pm	<p><b>Exam 3</b> Experiments &amp; Qualitative research</p> <p>See the full <a href="#">final exam schedule</a>.</p>