

**COMM 201: Introduction to Research Methods in Communication Studies**  
**Last updated: Fall 2014**

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**Instructor:** Jennifer Kienzle

**Office:**

**Office hours:**

**E-mail:**

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**Course Description**

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**From catalog:** Introduction to the social-scientific and critical-historical research methods in communication studies. Location, interpretation, and application of extant communication research.

**Additional description:** To add to the above description, this class will survey the three major research traditions often used in communication studies research as well as introduce students to developing unique and research provoking projects based on interests and career goals. This class will expose students to reading and doing communication studies research so that a good foundation is built for future coursework in communication studies, specifically geared toward capstone (COMM 495) and upper division classes.

**Department Mission:**

The mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies is to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, technology, and culture. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages ranging from face-to-face to digital media contexts.

The department's research and teaching devote particular attention to scholarly initiatives aimed at understanding and explaining the role of communication in (a) facilitating civic engagement, mediating public controversies, and organizing for social change, (b) constituting individual and family health, promoting healthy behaviors, and helping persons navigate relational challenges, and (c) creating, maintaining, and challenging personal, social, and community identity in a complex and diverse world.

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**Learning Outcomes**

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1. Understand and be able to dissect and describe each major research tradition in communication studies and develop competence in various methods that are anchored within each tradition.
2. Be able to locate specific communication studies research (e.g., journal articles) and understand the goals, methodology, and big picture takeaways.
3. Enhance your appreciation of the study of communication and how knowledge is derived in this discipline.
4. Understand the ethical implications of doing communication studies research and engage in ethical practices when doing one's own research.
5. Have competence in performing various types of data analyses such as statistical analyses, rhetorical criticism, and thematic analysis.
6. Be able to identify a research interest in order to compile research and develop a research proposal.

## **Book/ Requirement**

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\*Baxter, L. A., & Babbie, E. R. (2003). *The basics of communication research*. Belmont, CA:

Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

\*There is an e-book version on Amazon.

## **Blackboard Requirement**

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I post all assignments, grades, resources, videos, and updated schedule/syllabus on Blackboard. It is crucial that you familiarize yourself with how I use Blackboard and have access to Blackboard on a regular basis.

## **Library Requirement**

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Since this is a research heavy class, you will be accessing the UNL library very frequently. I will provide resources and a training tutorial on how to use the library website effectively as well as connect you with people who specialize in communication studies research. Sometimes you might need to physically go in the library to check out a book.

## **Course Policies**

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### **Attendance/Participation**

You will not pass the class if you do not attend. Crucial information is provided during class lectures, activities, and presentations. If you are habitually late or absent, expect a conversation with me. I want you to succeed!

### **Due dates**

I rarely ever allow extensions. My grading schedule is very tight. Please try to give yourself soft due dates so that you don't fall behind.

### **Late work**

Any assignment that is late will be marked down 20% from the total possible points (20 points for a 100 point assignment). For each day that your assignment is late, an additional deduction will be added so that each day would accrue 20% (a two day late assignment would incur 40% off).

### **Grade change/dispute**

I follow the 24/7 rule: Wait at least 24 hours after receiving a grade to discuss it and inform me of a grade inquiry within 7 days of that date. I highly prefer to discuss grade inquiries in person, please plan for that.

### **Missed exam days**

Exam make-ups will be accommodated to students with a **valid** reason AND with **documentation** (e.g., doctor's note). All make-ups should be completed within a week from your last **valid** absence.

### **Technology in the classroom**

I love technology. You will often see me pull out my MacBook, iPad, and iPhone for class purposes (or for personal purposes before/after class). With that said, I only use technology for

class purposes during our class time. I will not be hesitant to call students out in class when I see inappropriate usage of technology. Be respectful.

### Recording lectures

I will sometimes record my own lectures through Camtasia and post them on Blackboard. If you would like to record my lectures through another mode, please ask me beforehand. I always announce to the class prior to recording my own lectures so they are aware that they may be on the lecture.

### Academic Integrity

All course work should be original and unique for this class (i.e., do not use work from other courses even if it is your own). Plagiarism results in, at minimum, failure on the assignment, but can result in failure of the course and reporting to academic authorities at the university. If you have questions concerning what constitutes plagiarism, please discuss this with me. Not knowing the definition of plagiarism does not excuse you from the consequences.

*Plagiarism means intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own. This includes your own previous work. Plagiarism may be incremental, patchwork or global, and includes quoting or paraphrasing from other sources without acknowledging/citing the source of your information or presenting quoted material as your own words. You must be very clear about attribution of sources and you must know how to cite sources in a paper. Not knowing the definition of plagiarism will not excuse you from the consequences. UNL's complete Student Code of Conduct can be found at: <http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code/three.shtml>*

### Assignments

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#### PLEASE NOTE:

- Your assignments **MUST** be Microsoft Word documents. If you are saving your assignments on your MAC, you must add the .doc or .docx file extension to your document in order for it to be accepted. Assignments submitted as a .txt file or as a .pdf (or anything aside from a .doc/x file) will not be graded until you, the student, resubmit your assignment in the appropriate file format. **IF** the assignment is resubmitted past the due date, points will be deducted for late work.
- No emailed assignments. I will not read or grade any emailed assignments. I also won't consider an emailed assignment "on-time" for whatever reason you decided to email it.

Assignment Name	Points
Google Form – Information/Syllabus Sheet <i>Submitted using Google Form.</i>	<b>10</b>
Final Research Proposal <i>A paper on a research topic of your interest. The final paper should include a literature review/argument, research questions/hypotheses, and a clear method section detailing a plan of how you will collect data to answer research questions/hypotheses. This project will be built up from previous assignments and you will meet with me to talk</i>	<b>100</b>

<i>about questions and drafts of your paper. You will not write this paper in one night!</i>	
<p>Final Research Proposal Prep  <i>This assignment is comprised of three components to help you stay on track for the final research proposal. This assignment will consist of the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Choosing your topic (10 points)</i></li> <li>• <i>Researching your topic (20 points)</i></li> <li>• <i>Final Checklist (10 points)</i></li> </ul>	<b>40</b>
<p>Group Research Paper  <i>Groups of six students will complete a very structured literature review on a specific area of communication studies. This paper essentially helps you read and unpack research articles and also gets you acquainted with your classmates.</i></p>	<b>40</b>
<p>Concept Activities (10 points each)  <i>A series of mini-assignments will be assigned throughout the semester to check your knowledge on specific concepts such as statistical analyses, sampling, field methods, and more.</i></p>	<b>50</b>
<p>Exams  <i>A total of 4 exams will be administered throughout the semester and primarily revolve around assigned readings with some questions based off of class discussion/activities.</i>  <i>Exam 1: 50 points</i>  <i>Exam 2: 30 points</i>  <i>Exam 3: 50 points</i>  <i>Exam 4: 70 points</i></p>	<b>200</b>
<p>Research Experience  <i>You will be offered to complete communication studies research listed at <a href="http://comm.unl.edu">comm.unl.edu</a> throughout the semester. Research studies are worth 1, 2, or 3 credits. Each credit is 5 points and each study will designate a different number of credits, depending on the length of participation (generally, 1 credit is 30 minutes, 2 credits is 60 minutes, and 3 credits is 90 minutes). If you participate in a 3 credit research study, I will award you 5 extra credit points (this will count as 5 out of the possible 10 EC).</i></p> <p><b><i>If you choose to NOT to participate in research:</i></b>  <i>You are not required to participate in research and so an alternative assignment is available in place of these assigned points. Also, sometimes students don't qualify for research or are only able to complete a 1 credit study for 5 points. In any case, the alternative assignment will be a one page paper on a faculty member in Communication Studies. This can be a faculty member at UNL or at another university. Full requirements for the paper are on Blackboard. Each paper is worth 5 points.</i></p>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>Total points in class</b>  <i>A maximum of 10 extra credit points will be possible.</i></p>	<b>450</b>

<b>A</b>	93% & above	<b>B</b>	83%- 86%	<b>C</b>	73%-76%	<b>D</b>	63%-66%
<b>A-</b>	90%-92%	<b>B-</b>	80%- 82%	<b>C-</b>	70%-72%	<b>D-</b>	60%-62%
<b>B+</b>	87%-89%	<b>C+</b>	77%- 79%	<b>D+</b>	67%-69%	<b>F</b>	59% & below