

**JOUR 5250-001 (43347)**  
Fall 2009

**Research Methods I (Quantitative)**  
Room 204, General Academic Building  
Tuesday, 6:30–9:20 p.m.

Instructor: Koji Fuse, Ph.D.  
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Office hours: Monday, 4:30–5:30 p.m.; Tuesday, 3–6 p.m.; or by appointment  
(For meeting after 5 p.m., call me first.)  
Web site: Blackboard for JOUR 5250-001  
(Always use your Blackboard e-mail for class purposes.)

### **Overview:**

Scientific investigation is an indispensable part of mass communication research. As management has demanded “hard” evidence that justifies its investment in communication activities, those who (plan to) work in any mass communication field (e.g., public relations, advertising, journalism, media) must get accustomed to the terminology, process, application and evaluation of mass communication research. This course is designed to introduce graduate students to basic quantitative research methods, statistical thinking and data analysis used in mass communication fields. Students will learn fundamentals of scientific research and statistical reasoning through continuous reading, proactive learning, exercises and data analyses. In the applied part of the course, each student will conduct quantitative research and write a final paper.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Understand the structure of the scientific research process;
2. Describe major quantitative methods used in mass communication fields;
3. Use the basic vocabulary of scientific methods and statistics;
4. Comprehend statistical reasoning and data-analysis techniques;
5. Discern high-quality from low-quality research papers; and
6. Plan and conduct systematic quantitative research.

### **Prerequisites:**

Graduate standing.

### **Course Structure:**

This course consists of lectures, discussions, in-class/take-home exercises and data analyses. You are expected to keep up with the readings, turn in all assignments on time and actively participate in class discussion. **To create an active learning environment, I assume that you have read the assigned materials before coming to class. When I ask you a specific question, you should be able to answer it or at least articulate precisely what you do not comprehend.** Active participation will help you understand the class better and improve your grades. Bring a scientific calculator to class when we discuss mathematics and statistics. You will have (1) one exam, (2) two written assignments, (3) client research project or critique of applied research, (4) final project, and (5) in-class/take-home exercises. Your final grade is based on your total score, with 1,000 points possible. The breakdown of the total possible score is as follows:

Midterm exam (200 points)

Written assignments (200 points)

|                     |            |
|---------------------|------------|
| Article critique 1: | 100 points |
| Article critique 2: | 100 points |

Track A or Track B—depending on the semester (300 points)

Track A

|                               |            |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Client research:              | 200 points |
| In-class/take-home exercises: | 100 points |

Track B

|                               |            |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Critique of applied research: | 150 points |
| In-class/take-home exercises: | 150 points |

Final project (200 points)

Preparation and participation (100 points)

**Readings:**

(Required) Wimmer, Roger D., and Joseph R. Dominick. *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. 8th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2006. (Abbr. WD)

(Required) Salkind, Neil J. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics with SPSS Student Version 15*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008. (Abbr. SA)

(Required) American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2010.

(Recommended) Williams, Frederick, and Peter Monge. *Reasoning with Statistics: How to Read Quantitative Research*. 5th ed. Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt College Publishers, 2001.

Note: Additional readings will be assigned.

**Course Schedule (subject to change at the instructor's discretion):**

**Sept. 1** Introduction to Class.

**Assignment:** *Personal Information Sheet due.*

**Sept. 8** Scientific Research (WD Chapter 1); Types of Research Design; Quantitative versus Qualitative Research (WD Chapter 5); Writing a Quantitative Research Paper.

**Additional Reading:** (EBSCOhost) Banning, Stephen A. "Third-Person Effects on Political Participation." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 83 (Winter 2006): 785–800.

**Sept. 15** Research Concepts and Levels of Measurement (WD Chapter 2); Ethical Issues in Research (WD Chapter 3).

**Sept. 22** Sampling (WD Chapter 4); Math Review (Handout); Descriptive Statistics (WD Chapter 10).

**Assignment:** *Final Project Research Plan due.*

- Sept. 29** Descriptive Statistics, *continued* (SA Chapters 1–6); Population, Sample and Sampling Distributions; SPSS (SA Appendix A).
- Oct. 6** Statistical Inferences and Hypothesis Testing (Handout; WD Chapter 11; SA Chapters 7–9).  
*Assignment: Critique of Applied Research due.*
- Oct. 13** Content Analysis (WD Chapter 6). Brief Review for the Midterm Exam.  
Additional Reading: (EBSCOhost) Wood, Michelle L. M., Michelle R. Nelson, Jaeho Cho, and Ronald A. Yaros. “Tonight’s Top Story: Commercial Content in Television News.” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 81 (Winter 2004): 807–22.
- Oct. 20** *Midterm Exam.*
- Oct. 27** Survey Research (WD Chapter 7).
- Nov. 3** Survey Research, *continued*.  
*Assignment: Article Critique 1 due.*
- Nov. 10** Longitudinal Research (WD Chapter 8); Experimental Research (WD Chapter 9).  
Additional Reading: (EBSCOhost) Sallot, Lynne M. “What the Public Thinks about Public Relations: An Impression Management Experiment.” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 79 (Spring 2002): 150–71.
- Nov. 17** Inferential Statistics: t-tests and ANOVA (WD Chapter 12; SA Chapters 10–13).  
*Assignment: Final Project Progress Report due.*
- Nov. 24** Inferential Statistics: correlation, regression, crosstabs and multivariate statistics (WD Chapter 12; SA Chapters 14–17).
- Dec. 1** Data Analysis.  
*Assignment: Article Critique 2 due.*
- Dec. 8** Data Analysis. Summary of Semester.
- Dec. 15** *Final Project due at 6:30 p.m. More details later.*

### **Attendance, Preparation and Participation:**

I will take attendance twice each class day—one attendance sheet for each half. You cannot have more than three inadmissible absences (i.e., three halves) without penalty toward your final grade. Each additional invalid absence of a half class will cost you 10 points. You must sign the attendance sheet yourself and use the same signature throughout the semester; having someone sign your name is a form of academic dishonesty. In addition, three incidents of showing up after the class starts or leaving before it ends constitute one absence. Although you may tell me why you must miss or missed a class, **only “unforeseeable” circumstances (i.e., serious illness, family emergency) substantiated by third-party documentation will be accepted. Submit documentation within a week after an absence occurs.** Printer malfunctions, arrests for traffic warrants, difficulties in finding library materials, etc. are not “unforeseeable.” You must document a valid time conflict (i.e., an academic conference, religious observance) before it occurs. Disappearing during class is another form of academic dishonesty. Keep in mind the following warnings. First, the more classes you skip, the less education you receive. Your grade will suffer because of its high correlation with attendance. Second, you are still responsible for assignments due and course materials covered in a class period you miss. You must turn in all

assignments on or before their due dates. Finally, simply showing up for class amounts to little. Avoid “passive learning”—sleeping comfortably, sitting leisurely at the back, text-messaging or having chitchat. This is a graduate course, so finishing reading assignments before class is a minimum requirement. Good preparation and active participation are essential. I retain my nonnegotiable right to evaluate your in-class performance. You can (1) offer an in-depth description and explanation of research concepts and give an example in response to my question (1 point), (2) prepare a handout and discuss a scholarly article related to one of the day’s topics (2 points), or (3) lead the class discussion of any of Salkind’s Chapters 9 through 17 (3 points). Then, all total participation scores will be standardized to fit a score range of 50 to 100.

### **Exam:**

Latecomers will not be admitted after the first person finishes the exam and exits the room. Except for valid excuses specified in the “Attendance, Preparation and Participation” section, you should assume there is no make-up for missing the exam. Also, if you cannot take the exam on the day it is planned, you must let me know in advance and make an arrangement to take it before the original exam date. Bring a couple of pens and a calculator to the exam. Do not sit next to each other. Put everything in your bag under the table before the exam starts.

The midterm is a closed-book, closed-notes exam, which covers the textbooks as well as everything discussed in class. It has 80 multiple-choice/true-false and two essay questions.

### **Written Assignments:**

All assignments must be word-processed in 12-point font (no “funny” font, please), double-spaced and turned in at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due. Late assignments will drop one letter grade for each day. Exceptions for this rule are the same as the “Attendance, Preparation and Participation” section. Submit a hard copy in class and an electronic copy via Blackboard. **You must exactly follow the APA style. Attach to your paper a hard copy of the article you have chosen to critique. Extensive Internet research is strongly discouraged for this class; library searches and academic journal/book reading are expected.** Ask a librarian about how to use electronic databases (e.g., EBSCOhost, JSTOR). For each paper, make sure that you refer to Wimmer and Dominick (2006) as well as at least two additional scholarly articles and books relevant to the paper. **Attach a cover page at the beginning and a page of references at the end, and staple the paper. Remember that incomplete citations or references will cost you one letter grade.** Too many grammatical and stylistic errors will lower your grade. Save all your work on your computer, or you may end up redoing the assignments when they get lost. Talk to me within a week of receiving your graded paper if you have questions. No consideration will be given beyond that time limit.

Article critique will familiarize you with research processes and academic writing. Select a quantitative research article from a recent (within the past 5 years) issue of an academic journal, not a conference paper, in any area of journalism and mass communication. The article must contain (1) clear hypotheses or research questions and (2) statistical analyses (i.e., inferential statistics, statistical significance). Examples of journals include *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Newspaper Research Journal*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Human Communication Research*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, and *Journal of Advertising Research*. Divide your paper into the following seven sections:

1. A full bibliographic citation: Give the citation of the article you have chosen to critique.

2. An abstract: This is a brief summary of an article (100 words or so). Most journal articles have their abstracts at the beginning, but you must write an abstract in your own words.
3. Hypotheses or research questions: If the article addresses more than two hypotheses, select the two that you think are most important and theoretically relevant to the research. Explicate, for each hypothesis, the independent and dependent variables, and the conceptual and operational definitions for each variable.
4. Method: Identify and discuss the research method, design and procedures.
5. Target population and sample: Explain the target population, the population studied and the sampling methods used for the study.
6. Summary of the results, general discussion and conclusion: This section should correspond to the hypotheses you have chosen to discuss at the earlier stage. What results did the research obtain? What generalizations and conclusions did the author(s) make?
7. A critique of the study: Constructively critique the research article you read. In other words, offer your own conclusion about whether the research was good, useful, methodologically sound or informative, and why. You must do an additional literature search and review of other research articles that are methodologically and theoretically relevant to the article you have chosen. For example, if you select a research article that focuses on one aspect of agenda-setting theory, incorporate in your own critique other research articles that test the specific aspect of the theory. Also use other research textbooks that discuss the same method of the article you are critiquing. Your extra effort will be taken into consideration. In other words, the more outside literature you review and incorporate in your critique, the better grade you are likely to receive.

***1. Article critique 1 (six pages maximum, excluding the cover and reference pages)***

Choose and critique one scholarly survey-research article.

***2. Article critique 2 (six pages maximum, excluding the cover and reference pages)***

Choose and critique one scholarly content-analysis article.

**Client Research (Track A):**

In the past, JOUR 5250 (Research Methods I: Quantitative) and JOUR 5260 (Research Methods II: Qualitative) sometimes collaborated to conduct research for a client. Everyone is required to make a significant contribution to completing a project and writing a report for a client. The real world of research is unpredictable because of the client's demands, technical glitches, unexpected low-response rates, etc. Therefore, you must be flexible in adjusting your schedule to complete your tasks.

**Critique of Applied Research (Track B):**

Find a "comprehensive" applied quantitative research report in journalism or strategic communications and write an insightful, constructive critique of the research, including new angles or discoveries. You will have to contact the organization(s) to obtain more information. Discuss the following in your paper: goals and activities of the organization that commissioned the research, reputation of the organization that actually conducted research, problems or issues investigated, method(s) and procedures used, findings, the ways the information was used, missing methodological information, and the quality of the research as a whole. Your paper must not exceed eight pages, excluding the cover and reference pages.

### **In-Class / Take-Home Exercises:**

We will do some quantitative exercises and deal with some datasets for statistical analyses.

### **Final Project:**

Using at least one of the quantitative research methods you learn in class, conduct your original research on any phenomenon related to mass communication. You must actually gather data. However, do not conduct research on minors. You can choose to work alone or collaborate with one of your classmates. Remember that scholarly articles you read provide the best model for your research. During the semester, you are required to write (1) a research plan and (2) a progress report and discuss it in class. You must obtain my approval on your questionnaire or coding sheet before collecting data. Please do not ask me during class a question about your final project without first telling me what you think is the right way of conducting your research. “How should I do that for my final project?” takes too much time away from a meaningful class discussion. You should first think for yourself and then ask me questions during my office hours or a break. If your question is useful and relevant to everyone, I will discuss it in class later.

You must exactly follow the APA Style. The maximum page number of your final paper is 25, excluding the cover page, abstract, reference page, illustrations, charts, graphs and tables. Your paper must have the following sections: (1) a cover page, (2) abstract, (3) introduction, (4) literature review (at least 10 quantitative scholarly articles published in academic journals, not presented in academic conferences), (5) research questions and hypotheses, (6) method, (7) results (including inferential statistics), (8) conclusion, and (9) appendices (i.e., questionnaire, tables). The minimum sample size is 150, 120 and 100 for a content analysis, a survey and an experiment.

### **Grading:**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 90% or higher of total possible points: | A |
| 80%–lower than 90%                      | B |
| 70%–lower than 80%                      | C |
| 60%–lower than 70%                      | D |
| Lower than 60%                          | F |

### **Basic Course Policy:**

This is a research course that requires you to constantly work hard by attentive listening, meticulous note-taking, active class participation and timely submission of assignments. Assume that you will be learning a “foreign language.” **Keep in mind that no study guide is available.** However, never forget Albert Einstein’s statement: “The whole of science is nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking.” Anyone can master science and statistics. Feel free to stop by my office whenever you have questions.

You must follow the basic rules of the society as well. Academic dishonesty in particular has been a nationwide problem. Read through the “Categories of Misconduct” page at the Web site of the UNT Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities.<sup>1</sup> Saying “I didn’t know that,” “He copied my work,” or “Others also plagiarized” will not save you, and the consequences of

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<sup>1</sup> UNT Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities, Categories of Misconduct, [http://www.unt.edu/csrr/pdf/conduct/acts\\_of\\_misconduct.pdf](http://www.unt.edu/csrr/pdf/conduct/acts_of_misconduct.pdf).

academic misconduct will be grave. Also “recycling” your previous work is not tolerated. Submitting work for this class is the same as making a statement that you have produced the work yourself in its entirety, and you have not previously produced this work for submission in another course or any other outlet.

In addition, you are not the only person enrolled in this class. Even small noises you make will negatively affect its learning environment. Furthermore, bringing your laptop to class and surfing the Net or checking your e-mail during class is reprehensible. Therefore, if you cheat, plagiarize, fabricate facts (e.g., asking someone to sign your name) or continually disrupt the class (e.g., no preparation, no participation, chitchat, frequently leaving the room or disappearing during class, disturbances such as cell phones, beepers and computers), I will remove you from this class with an F as your final grade and report your case to the dean of the School of Journalism. **There is no exception for this.**

If you have a disability and will require academic accommodations in this course, I would be happy to discuss your needs. Do not hesitate and wait until the end of the semester. The earlier, the better. Please register with the Office of Disability Accommodation and submit a Special Accommodation Request to me. For more information, contact Ron Venable, director of the Office of Disability Accommodation, at 940-565-4323 or ronv@unt.edu.

Finally, consider various options discussed at <http://www.unt.edu/transit/> to save on fuel costs.



Sept. 1, 2009