

COMM 2135: Communication Research Methods

Seton Hall University, Spring 2015

Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30 – 4:45 p.m., Fahy 102

<p>Professor: Kyle Heim, Ph.D. Office: Fahy Hall B12 Office hours: Mondays, 2 – 3 p.m. Tuesdays, 1 – 2:30 p.m. Wednesdays, 2 – 3 p.m. or by appointment</p>	<p>Instructor email: kyle.heim@shu.edu Email for turning in assignments <u>ONLY</u>: COMM2135@gmail.com Telephone: (973) 761-9475 (office)</p>
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Don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions that are not addressed in the syllabus or if you wish to discuss assignments, grades, or anything else related to the course. When emailing, **include a subject line** and mention the course in the email. You are always welcome to meet with me during my office hours or to schedule an appointment if those times are not convenient.

What kind of a course is this?

Course description

Students are introduced to research in communication, including an overview of contemporary communication research and a survey of research methodologies. Prerequisite: COMM 1670 (Introduction to Communication Theory).

Course goals

- To become acquainted with different ways of thinking about the world, gathering information, and answering the question "How do I know?"
- To learn how to use a variety of quantitative and qualitative research methods applicable to the study of communication.
- To analyze the scholarly literature and propose a research study on a communication-related topic of your interest.

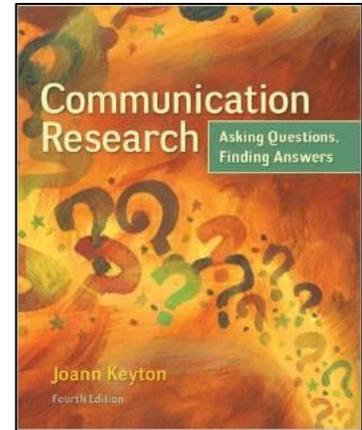
Some words of advice — and caution

This course will make you think and make you work. It is a demanding course with a heavy workload. **It is an upper-level course intended for juniors and seniors majoring in journalism, public relations, or communication studies who have taken or are taking COMM 1670 (Introduction to Communication Theory).** Your work in this course will help prepare you for your senior seminar. The course challenges you to think about communication in ways that are more abstract and more theoretical than most of us are accustomed to doing.

Attending class regularly, staying on top of the assigned reading, and completing assignments on time are essential to your success in this course. Because assignments and exams are spaced throughout the semester, you will not be able to turn a poor grade into a good grade with a sudden burst of energy at the end of the semester.

Required texts

- Keyton, J. (2014). *Communication research: Asking questions, finding answers* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. (ISBN 0078036917).
- Additional book excerpts and articles will be assigned as required reading. They are posted on the course Blackboard site as pdf files in the “Readings” folder.
- The website for the textbook, <http://highered.mheducation.com/sites/0078036917/> (click on “Student Edition”), contains materials, including PowerPoint slides and practice quizzes, to help you review the reading and study for quizzes and exams.



What rules and procedures do you need to know?

Blackboard site/email

To succeed in this course, you must check the course Blackboard site and your Seton Hall email account regularly. This syllabus has been posted to the Blackboard site, and all grades will be recorded in Blackboard. Assignment instructions will be posted to the Blackboard site in a folder called “Assignments” in addition to being distributed in class. Announcements also may be posted to Blackboard. I will return some assignments via email and may send messages to the class or to individual students via email. It is your responsibility to make sure you can access Blackboard and your Seton Hall email. Computer or email problems will not be a valid excuse for ignoring instructions or for failing to submit assignments on time.

Attendance

Regular attendance is essential. I will circulate a sign-in sheet at the start of each class once the add/drop period has ended. The sign-in sheet is the official record of attendance. If you come to class late, after the sheet has circulated, you will be marked absent. If you forget to sign the sheet, you will be marked absent. If you need to leave class early, please notify me before the start of class. Leaving class early may count as an absence, especially if it happens repeatedly.

If you are absent:

- You are still responsible for material covered in class that day. Consult a classmate to obtain notes and any assignments or handouts you missed. If you still have questions, you may email me.
- You are still responsible for turning in **on time** any assignments that are due. Submit the assignment via email by the deadline AND bring a hard copy when you return to class. If you are unable to meet an assignment deadline because of extreme circumstances, contact me in advance. I may grant an extension and waive the deadline penalty if you have a documented excuse such as illness or emergency (see “Deadlines and extensions” below).

Extra-credit attendance bonus:

- Students who have **no recorded absences** during the semester will receive a **12-point attendance bonus** to be added to the final score at the end of the semester.
- Students with **one absence** will receive an **8-point** attendance bonus.

- Students with **two absences** will receive a **4-point attendance bonus**.
- Students with **three or more absences** will not receive any bonus points.

NOTE: “Excused” absences (including absences because of illness or emergency) still count as absences under this policy. There are only five exceptional situations in which I might consider counting you as present even though you were absent: (1) involvement in an official Seton Hall sports team or extracurricular activity that requires you to miss class for a game, competition, performance, or conference; (2) a death or life-threatening illness in the immediate family; (3) an extended period of hospitalization or incapacitation; (4) an order to report for jury duty or military service; or (5) observance of an officially recognized religious holiday. In any of these situations, you must notify me in advance or as soon as possible. You may be asked to provide documentation.

Submitting assignments

Unless instructed otherwise, submit all assignments twice: via email **and** in hard-copy form. **Any assignment that is not submitted in both formats may not receive credit.**

Submit all assignments as Microsoft Word attachments (.doc or .docx files) via email to COMM2135@gmail.com. The email must be sent from your Seton Hall (shu.edu) address. Any assignment sent from a non-Seton Hall address will not be accepted. Assignments submitted late will be penalized (see “Deadlines and extensions” below). It is your responsibility to make sure your computer is working properly, emails are addressed properly, and the correct files are attached. Computer or email problems will not be a valid excuse for failing to submit assignments properly or for submitting them late.

In addition to emailing an assignment, print out a copy to hand in at the start of class on the due date. Pages must be **stapled** and your name must be at the top of the first page. You must turn in the assignment yourself. Do not give it to a classmate to turn in on your behalf.

Deadlines and extensions

Assignments must be turned in on time. Any assignment submitted up to 48 hours late will receive a 10% point deduction (approximately one full letter grade), any assignment submitted from 48 hours to one week late will receive a 20% point deduction (approximately two full letter grades), and **ANY ASSIGNMENT TURNED IN MORE THAN A WEEK LATE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED, WILL NOT BE GRADED, AND WILL EARN A ZERO.**

If you cannot come to class, submit the assignment via email by the deadline on the due date AND bring a hard copy when you return to class.

Extensions are granted at my discretion and may require documentation of extreme circumstances, such as illness or an emergency. All extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due. Extensions will not be granted after the deadline has passed.

Keeping copies of assignments and emails

Keep an electronic copy of all assignments and course-related email messages, and save another copy to a backup location. Do not delete any course assignments or course-related email messages until you receive your final grade at the end of the semester. If there are questions about assignments, you may be asked to produce the original emails and files.

“Recycling” assignments from other courses

You are encouraged to draw upon research topics and materials from other courses you have taken or are currently taking. However, you cannot “recycle” papers or substantial portions of papers from other courses. Doing so may lead to a zero on the assignment or an “F” in the course, depending on the nature and severity of the offense. If you intend to submit an assignment that is substantially similar to one you have submitted or will be submitting in another course, you must inform me in advance so we can discuss the situation.

Laptops and other electronic devices

Laptop and tablet computers are **NOT ALLOWED** to be used in class unless you are instructed to use them. Laptop and tablet computers must be closed and turned off before class. [Research shows](#) that students who use a laptop for note taking do worse on exams than students who take notes by hand. [Research also shows](#) that students who sit near someone using a laptop do worse on exams. Phones and other electronic devices may **NOT** be used during class. They must be turned off (or set to “vibrate”) and put away to avoid disrupting the class. “Texting” is not allowed. **Students violating the policy on laptops and electronic devices during class will lose participation points and may be asked to leave or be marked absent.**

Make-up work and extra credit

No make-up assignments or substitute assignments will be given. Extra credit is available for students with excellent attendance (see “Attendance” above).

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty

It is unethical to plagiarize the work of others or to fabricate information. For all writing assignments, any concept or idea that is not your own must include a source citation, even if it is a paraphrase. Any direct quote must include a source citation **AND** be enclosed in quotation marks. Failing to put quote marks around a direct quote is plagiarism, even if a source citation is included.

Any incident of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in **a zero on the assignment and/or an “F” in the course**, depending on the nature and severity of the offense. Incidents also may be reported to the department chair and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Students suspected of academic dishonesty on an assignment may be required to re-do that assignment or a similar assignment at the discretion of the instructor, with no proof of misconduct required.

Needs and accommodations

If you have a documented disability, you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations in compliance with University policy, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and/or the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination. Students are not permitted to negotiate accommodations directly with professors. To request accommodations or assistance, please self-identify with the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS), Duffy Hall, Room 67, at the beginning of the semester. For more information or to register for services, contact DSS at (973) 313-6003.

Important dates

Tuesday, Jan. 20	Last Day of Add/Drop and Late Registration
Friday, Feb. 20	Last Day for Withdrawal with No Signature Required
Friday, March 6	Last Day for Withdrawal with Professor/Dean Signatures

What will you do in this course, and how are grades earned?

Course requirements

Readings: Reading is an essential part of this course. Assigned material must be read by the date on which it is listed on the schedule. Class discussion and exercises will be based on the assumption that you have completed the assigned reading. Class sessions will not simply rehash the readings. Don't expect to do well in this course if you don't do the reading.

Research proposal (total of 120 points): You will design an original research study on a communication topic of your choice, with my approval, that uses one of the research methods discussed in this course. You will not actually carry out the study in this course, but you may wish to use it as your research project in your senior seminar. The topic of your proposal must be narrow and focused (not big and broad), the topic must directly relate to your specific major (i.e., if you're a public relations major, the topic must be about PR or advertising; if you're a journalism major, the topic must be about journalism), and the proposed study must be feasible (research that you could actually carry out yourself). The proposal is divided into two components: a topic exploration (in which you will develop a set of research questions and/or hypotheses and review the relevant scholarly literature) and a methodology (in which you will refine your research questions and/or hypotheses and detail how you would carry out your study). Each component is worth up to 60 points. **You must complete both components and receive a passing grade on each one in order to pass the course. Components must be completed in order (i.e., you cannot submit the methodology until you have submitted the topic exploration). Failure to complete both components with a passing grade on each one will result in "F" in the course, regardless of your point total at the end of the semester.**

Exams (total of 120 points): Exams will be **Monday, March 2, during class; Monday, March 30, during class; and Monday, May 11, at 10:10 a.m.** Exams are closed-book and closed-notes. They will consist of both multiple-choice and short-answer/essay questions. Exams must be taken at the designated dates and times. Plan your schedule accordingly. Only in the most extreme circumstances will you be permitted to reschedule an exam. You must take all three exams. **Failure to take all three exams will result in an automatic "F" in the course, regardless of your point total at the end of the semester.**

Blackboard quizzes (total of 40 points): You will take seven quizzes on Blackboard outside class. They will be posted to the "Quizzes" folder on the course site. Each quiz will contain 8 multiple-choice and true-or-false questions about the assigned reading for the week (BOTH Monday's and Wednesday's readings) AND the material covered in Monday's class that week. Quiz dates are listed in the schedule at the end of the syllabus. Each quiz will be available from 9 a.m. Tuesday until noon Wednesday. Failure to take the quiz during that time will result in a score of zero. Quizzes are open book and open notes, but you will have only 15 minutes to complete each quiz. Your five highest quiz scores will count toward your grade, and your two lowest quiz scores will be dropped. It is your responsibility to make sure you have a reliable Internet connection, your computer is charged, and you are free from distractions. If computer problems prevent you from completing a quiz, you may re-enter the quiz and finish it, but the 15-minute timer will keep counting down. There will be no make-up quizzes.

Research exercises (total of 60 points): You will complete four research exercises, each of which is worth up to 15 points. These exercises will test your mastery of the material discussed in class and in the readings, asking you to apply the skills you have learned to real or hypothetical research situations.

Article presentation (40 points): You will select a scholarly research article from a list and present to the class a summary and critique of the article. The presentation must be no shorter than 5 minutes and no longer than 8 minutes. The presentation must include a visual aid in the form of PowerPoint or Prezi slides or a handout. You will discuss and critique the study’s theoretical/conceptual framework, hypotheses and/or research questions, methodology, findings, and significance. In addition, you will evaluate your classmates’ presentations. Presentations will take place at the start of class, so you must show up on time the day you are to present. If you are not prepared to present at the start of class on the scheduled day, you will earn a zero. Only in the most extreme circumstances will you be permitted to reschedule your presentation.

In-class work (total of 20 points): There will be several exercises and assignments that you will complete and turn in during class. Some of these may be graded; some will be “all or nothing” (you will earn either the full point value or a zero). This in-class work cannot be made up. If you miss class, you won’t earn the points.

Grading

You may earn up to **400 points** in this course, broken down as follows:

Item	Total Points
Three exams – 40 points each	120 points
Top five quiz scores – 8 points each	40 points
Four research exercises – 15 points each	60 points
Article presentation	40 points
In-class work	20 points
Research proposal (You must complete both components with a passing grade on each one in order to pass the course.)	120 points
Topic exploration – 60 points	
Methodology – 60 points	
TOTAL	400 points

Point totals at the end of the semester will be converted to letter grades as follows:

Point Total	Grade	Point Total	Grade	Point Total	Grade
376 – 400 (94%)	A	312 – 327.5 (78%)	B-	248 – 263.5 (62%)	D+
360 – 375.5 (90%)	A-	296 – 311.5 (74%)	C+	220 – 247.5 (55%)	D
344 – 359.5 (86%)	B+	280 – 295.5 (70%)	C	0 – 219.5	F
328 – 343.5 (82%)	B	264 – 279.5 (66%)	C-		

Grades will be recorded on the course Blackboard site. It is your responsibility to monitor your grades. Questions regarding grades should be raised when an assignment is returned. **I will NOT re-evaluate scores on assignments more than two weeks after the scores have been recorded.**

Tentative course schedule

This schedule may be modified during the semester. Changes will be announced in class or posted on the Blackboard site. Readings must be completed by the date on which they are listed. Readings listed by chapter are from the Keyton textbook (4th edition). All other readings are available as pdf files in the Readings folder of the Blackboard site. **It is your responsibility to monitor this schedule and keep track of the required reading, assignments, and deadlines.**

Part I – Research basics

During this portion of the semester, you will learn what scholarly communication research is and what distinguishes it from other types of research, such as the informal research we do every day or the kinds of secondary research involved in writing a term paper. You will learn the differences between quantitative and qualitative research. You will learn how to locate scholarly research articles in the Seton Hall library databases. Finally, you will learn how to summarize, analyze, and cite scholarly research.

Week 1

Mon., Jan. 12 – Introduction to the course

Wed., Jan. 14 – What is communication? What is scholarly research?

Reading: Chapter 1 (Introduction to Communication Research) – If you haven't yet bought the textbook, this is available as a pdf file in the Readings folder of the Blackboard site.

Week 2

Mon., Jan. 19 – NO CLASS (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)

Wed., Jan. 21 – What do communication researchers study?

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

Reading: Poole, M., & Walther, J. (2002). *Communication: Ubiquitous, complex, consequential*. Washington, DC: National Communication Association (Blackboard).

Read the first two sections (“Executive Summary” and “Communication Research: Addressing the Scientific and Social Challenges of Human and Technological Systems”), plus TWO of the four “Challenge” sections that follow (choose the two that most interest you). Each Challenge section includes a list of “researchable questions.” **Choose a total of two of the researchable questions in the article that interest you (one from each of the Challenge sections you read) and come to class prepared to discuss your tentative thoughts on how you think a researcher might go about answering or studying those questions.**

Week 3

Mon., Jan. 26 – Finding and reading scholarly journal articles

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

Reading: Chapter 2 (The Research Process: Getting Started)

Wed., Jan. 28 – Finding and reading scholarly journal articles (cont.)

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

QUIZ 1 – Available on Blackboard from 9 a.m. Tuesday to noon Wednesday

Week 4

Mon., Feb. 2 – Concepts and theories/quantitative vs. qualitative research

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

Reading: Chapter 4 (Introduction to Quantitative Research)

Wed., Feb. 4 – Quantitative vs. qualitative research (cont.)

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

Reading: Chapter 14 (Introduction to Qualitative Research)

QUIZ 2 – Available on Blackboard from 9 a.m. Tuesday to noon Wednesday

Week 5

Mon., Feb. 9 – Literature reviews

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

Reading: Chapter 13 (Reading and Writing the Quantitative Research Report)

★ DUE: RESEARCH EXERCISE 1 (Databases searches, scholarly journal articles)

Wed., Feb. 11 – Literature reviews (cont.)

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

Reading: Chapter 18 (Reading and Writing the Qualitative Research Report)

QUIZ 3 – Available on Blackboard from 9 a.m. Tuesday to noon Wednesday

Week 6

Mon., Feb. 16 – Academic citation style (APA)

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

Wed., Feb. 18 – Summarizing and synthesizing research

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

**Part II – Sampling, statistics, and measurement;
methods of analyzing texts**

During this portion of the semester, you will learn several strategies for sampling the people or texts necessary to conduct a research study. You will get a brief introduction to statistics and measurement, which are central to quantitative research. Finally, you will learn two methods of identifying and analyzing the characteristics or underlying themes of communication texts (news articles, advertisements, PR campaigns, speeches, TV shows, etc.). Specifically, you will learn one quantitative method (content analysis) and one qualitative method (textual analysis).

Week 7

Mon., Feb. 23 – Populations and samples

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

Reading: Chapter 6 (Populations, Samples, and Sample Size)

Wed., Feb. 25 – Statistics and hypothesis testing

Reading: Chapter 9 (Descriptive Statistics, Significance Levels, and Hypothesis Testing)

★ DUE: RESEARCH EXERCISE 2 (Synthesizing research and APA style)

QUIZ 4 – Available on Blackboard from 9 a.m. Tuesday to noon Wednesday

Week 8

Mon., March 2 – ★ EXAM 1 (Covers reading and classroom material through Wed., Feb. 18)

Wed., March 4 – Measurement

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

Reading: Chapter 5 (Measurement)

Mon., March 9, and Wed., March 11 – NO CLASS (Spring break)

Week 9

Mon., March 16 – Content analysis

Reading: Chapter 12 (Quantitative Analysis of Text) – through Page 243

Wed., March 18 – Content analysis (cont.)

★ DUE: RESEARCH PROPOSAL – Topic Exploration

Week 10

Mon., March 23 – Textual analysis

Reading: McKee, A. (2001). A beginner's guide to textual analysis. *Metro Magazine*, 127/128, 138-149 (Blackboard)

Article presentations (Group 1)

Wed., March 25 – Textual analysis (cont.)

QUIZ 5 – Available on Blackboard from 9 a.m. Tuesday to noon Wednesday

Article presentations (Group 2)

Part III – Methods of studying people’s attitudes, behavior

During this part of the semester, you will learn several methods of researching people’s communication habits and behavior, people’s attitudes and perceptions regarding communication, and the effects of communication messages on audiences. You will learn two quantitative methods that measure people’s attitudes or behavior: surveys and experiments. You will learn three qualitative methods that provide in-depth understanding: observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Finally, you will learn about ethical considerations related to research on human subjects.

Week 11

Mon., March 30 – ★ EXAM 2 (covers reading and class material from Mon., Feb. 23, through Wed., March 25)

Wed., April 1 – Surveys

Reading: Chapter 8 (Surveys and Questionnaires)

Week 12

Mon., April 6 – NO CLASS (Easter Monday)

Wed., April 8 – Surveys (cont.)

BRING LAPTOPS TO CLASS

★ DUE: RESEARCH EXERCISE 3 (Content and textual analysis)

Article presentations (Group 3)

Week 13

Mon., April 13 – Experiments

Reading: Chapter 7 (Quantitative Research Designs)

Wed., April 15 – Participant observation and ethnography

Reading: Chapter 15 (Designing Qualitative Research)

QUIZ 6 – Available on Blackboard from 9 a.m. Tuesday to noon Wednesday

Article presentations (Group 4)

Week 14

Mon., April 20 – In-depth interviewing and qualitative data analysis

Reading: Chapter 16 (Qualitative Methods of Data Collection)

★ **DUE: RESEARCH EXERCISE 4** (Surveys and experiments)

Article presentations (Group 5)

Wed., April 22 – Focus groups

Reading: Chapter 17 (Analyzing Qualitative Data)

QUIZ 7 – Available on Blackboard from 9 a.m. Tuesday to noon Wednesday

Article presentations (Group 6)

Week 15

Mon., April 27 – Focus groups (cont.)

★ **DUE: RESEARCH PROPOSAL - Methodology**

Article presentations (Group 7)

Wed., April 29 – Research ethics

Reading: Chapter 3 (Research Ethics)

Weeks 16 and 17

Mon., May 4 – Course wrap-up (last day of class)

Mon., May 11, 10:10 a.m. – ★ EXAM 3 (covers reading and class material from Wed., April 1, onward)