COMM 5303: Research Methods
CRN 20822 …Section 001…158 Island Hall…Thursday 7:00pm-9:30pm

Professor: Dr. Michael Sollitto, Ph. D.
Email: michael.sollitto@tamucc.edu
Office: 327 Bay Hall
Credit Hours: 3
Office Phone: (361) 825-2443
Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 12pm-2pm

TAMUCC Department of Communication and Media Mission Statement
“Our mission is to develop students who are effective and ethical communicators with the creative, critical, and collaborative skills necessary to succeed in a diverse global environment.”

Course Title and Description
Research Methods is a three-credit course facilitated to increase students’ knowledge of the research process used in the Communication Studies discipline. Specifically, the course will allow students the opportunity to learn the goals of communication research and scrutinize various techniques for creating academic research and assessing academic knowledge, and craft their own research project.

Course Objectives
The course is designed to expose students to the process of finding, evaluating, and executing academic research. This course is in partial fulfillment of the following Communication and Media Department outcomes. Specifically, students should be able to perform the following by the conclusion of the Spring 2020 semester:

• Identify the goal(s) of communication research.
• Articulate the connection between theory and research methods.
• Execute the rudimentary procedures involved in creating a communication research project, including formulating the purpose, designing a method, gathering participants, analyzing data, and interpreting data.

Required Texts

Washington: APA.

Required Readings
• Reading material for each topic from a variety of sources will be placed in the “Required Readings” folder on Blackboard. (See reference information for each source on pages 5-6 of this syllabus).

Attendance
Attendance and participation are required for this course, as they are the strongest predictors of success on assignments and for actual learning to occur. Absences are understood but discouraged.
**Grading Procedure**
Grades will be based on the following point values:

- 248-275 points = A
- 220-247 points = B
- 193-219 points = C
- 165-192 points = D
- 0-164 points = E

**Grading**
Grades are comprised of classroom engagement activities, study questions, a position paper, a miniature project, and a research roundtable presentation. The total amount of points possible for the course is 275. There will be no opportunity to makeup in-class activities and assignments submitted late will receive a 10-percent deduction for every day it is late.

**Classroom Engagement Activities**
During various class periods, students will complete classroom engagement activities that will be used for direct application and discussion of course topics, discussion material, and reading content. There will be five classroom engagement activities in this course, each worth 5 points, for a total of 25 points.

**Study Questions**
Beginning with the second class period on January 24, for each reading source, a series of questions will be posed to ensure foundational understanding and intellectual engagement with the course content. The answers to these questions should be thorough and showcase genuine understanding of the content and an ability to make intellectual connections between the reading sources and other topics covered in class. Answers will be evaluated based upon depth of understanding, spelling/grammar, and the ability to synthesize the reading material. Each student will submit ten Study Questions during the semester, each worth 10 points, for a total of 100 points. They must be typed with Times New Roman size 12 font and physically submitted during the class session. Further directions and rubric for the Study Questions will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time.

**Position Paper**
There will be one position paper in this course, which is worth 25 points. The purpose of the Position Paper is to encourage reflection, critical thinking, and argumentative skills. Position papers allow students to learn about an issue regarding communication research methods, take a stand on the issue, and then effectively argue their viewpoint with relevant supporting evidence. Grading will be based upon the quality of information presented to defend one’s viewpoint. Further directions and rubric for the Position Paper will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time.

**Miniature Project**
Working with Dr. Sollitto, students will create and execute a miniature research study about a communication topic that is of most interest to them involving a relatively small number of research participants. The purpose of the Miniature Project is to gain experience as communication researchers by executing a study from idea development to interpretation of results, with special focus placed on recruiting participants and analyzing results. This project will include an introduction and purpose section, literature review, a method section, results section, and discussion. The Miniature Project will be worth 100 points. Further directions and rubric for the Miniature Project will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time.

**Research Roundtable Presentation**
Upon completion of the students’ Miniature Project they will present their study to their classmates in the form of a roundtable discussion. Students should provide detail about the previous literature used to frame their investigation, rationale, method, results, and interpretation of the results. Presentations should be approximately ten minutes and include a one-page handout that provides useful detail about their study’s results. Grading will be based upon the quality and accuracy of information presented and liveliness of the roundtable presentation. The Research Roundtable Presentation will be worth 25 points. Further directions and rubric for the Research Roundtable Presentation will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time.
**Academic Advising**

Students pursuing the Master of Arts in Communication will be paired with a graduate faculty member advisor in their first semester. Students should contact their advisors within the first two weeks of a semester to arrange a meeting during which degree plans, tracks, and opportunities for professional development should be discussed. If there is any question regarding whom a student’s academic advisor is, the student should contact Dr. Stephanie Rodriguez, Graduate Coordinator, for assistance (stephanie.rodriguez@tamucc.edu; 361-825-5753). To finalize your degree plan and register for graduation, you must also meet with the Graduate Student Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Center for the College of Liberal Arts. This office is located in Driftwood 203E and can be reached at (361) 825-3466.

**Disability Services**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Dropping a Class**

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation will not automatically result in your being dropped from the class. The last day to drop a class for the spring semester is April 10, 2020.

**Grade Appeal Process**

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at: [http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.c0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf](http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.c0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf).

**Expectations of Graduate Students**

1. Ability to contribute engaging and thoughtful discussion points during class.
2. Demonstrated completion of all assigned reading material prior to class.
3. Proficiency in academic writing and use of APA Style.
4. Focus on learning instead of focus on grades.

**Student Conduct**

1. **Know the syllabus:** Be informed on what is to be read, discussed, and submitted for each class meeting.
2. **Respect:** Be courteous of the professor and fellow students and refrain from talking amongst yourselves during lecture and discussion. This also means that proper professional communication is also required.
3. **Preparation:** Attend class ready to contribute and interact with material presented in class.
4. **Punctuality:** Please make best effort to arrive to the classroom before class begins.
5. **Electronic Devices:** All devices that distract from the learning process are prohibited.
6. **Listening/Feedback:** Devote attention during class sessions and heed advice and constructive instruction on assignments provided throughout the semester.
7. **Effort**: This class will be fun and enlightening, yet challenging. Please put forth your best effort each day in the course.

### Tentative Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thu Jan 23</td>
<td><em>Creating a Foundation</em>: Introducing Communication Research</td>
<td>Keyton (2011a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu Jan 30</td>
<td><em>Creating a Foundation</em>: Philosophy and Theory</td>
<td>Merrigan &amp; Huston (2015); Chaffee (2009)</td>
<td>Study Questions 1</td>
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<td>Thu Feb 13</td>
<td><em>Creating a Foundation</em>: The Literature Review</td>
<td>Burleson (1997); Card (2010)</td>
<td>Study Questions 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu Feb 20</td>
<td><em>Creating a Foundation</em>: Ethics of Communication Research</td>
<td>Keyton (2011c); Herrera (2010)</td>
<td>Study Questions 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu Feb 27</td>
<td><em>Designing a Study</em>: Levels of Measurement, Sampling, Validity and Reliability</td>
<td>Carmen (2010); Petrocelli (2010); Thorkildsen (2010); Fritz &amp; Morgan (2010)</td>
<td>Miniature Study Literature Review (Feb 28)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Thu Mar 05</td>
<td><em>Designing a Study</em>: Surveys, Interviews, and Observation</td>
<td>Mrug (2010); Keyton (2011b)</td>
<td>Study Questions 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu Mar 12</td>
<td><em>Designing a Study</em>: The Method Section</td>
<td>Choi &amp; Pak (2010b)</td>
<td>Study Questions 5</td>
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<td>Thu Mar 19</td>
<td>No Class: Spring Break</td>
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<td>Thu Mar 26</td>
<td><em>Analyzing Quantitative Data</em>: Correlations and Regressions</td>
<td>Allen, Titsworth, &amp; Hunt (2009c); Allen, Titsworth &amp; Hunt (2009b)</td>
<td>Study Questions 6; Miniature Study Method Section (Mar 27)</td>
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<td>Thu Apr 02</td>
<td>No Class: ECA Convention</td>
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<td>Thu Apr 09</td>
<td><em>Analyzing Quantitative Data</em>: T-Tests and ANOVAs</td>
<td>Keyton (2011d)</td>
<td>Study Questions 7</td>
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<td>Thu Apr 16</td>
<td><em>Analyzing Quantitative Data</em>: Factor Analysis</td>
<td>McCroskey &amp; Young (1979); Allen, Titsworth, &amp; Hunt (2009a)</td>
<td>Study Questions 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu Apr 30</td>
<td><em>Discussing Research</em>: The Discussion Section</td>
<td>Choi &amp; Pak (2010a)</td>
<td>Study Questions 10; Miniature Study Results Section (May 1)</td>
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<td>Thu May 07</td>
<td>No Class: Reading Day</td>
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<td>Thu May 14</td>
<td>Research Roundtable</td>
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<td>Final Study</td>
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Reference Information for all Required Reading Material (Continued on Subsequent Pages)


