

**University of Calgary  
Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Communication and Media Studies COMS 313 L02  
Communication Research Methods**

**Winter 2017**

**January 10 to April 11 (excluding February 21)  
Tuesdays, 2:00-4:45pm**

**Instructor:** Tamara Shepherd  
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**Office Phone:** 403-220-6729  
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**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 12:30-1:45pm, or by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course offers a critical introduction to communication research methods. Students will explore, practice, and critique selected quantitative and qualitative research methods and perspectives on the processes of knowledge production.

### **Objectives of the Course**

COMS 313 will enable students to:

- explain the fundamentals of methodological practices in communication studies
- review the political underpinnings and historical contexts of various methods used
- apply key vocabulary and key concepts that pertain to methods and methodology
- describe how research is done and what issues are part of process and practice
- work effectively and cooperatively in groups, and hand work in on time
- develop presentation style and other professional skills

### **Textbooks and Readings**

Readings are posted on the Desire2Learn course website; see reading list below. Students are expected to have all readings completed **prior** to scheduled class times in order to contribute effectively during class discussions and activities.

### **Internet and electronic communication device information**

Laptops are permitted for note taking only. **iPods, cellphones and gaming devices may not be used at all during class.** Please respect the instructor and your fellow students. Improper use of electronic devices will impact students' grades.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

#### Grade breakdown:

20%	In-class reading responses/writing prompts	ongoing
15%	Group presentation on reading (20 minutes)	ongoing
15%	Podcast response paper (2-3 pages)	Feb 7
20%	Fieldwork paper (4-6 pages)	Mar 14
30%	Take-home exam (8-10 pages)	Apr 11

#### Reading responses/writing prompts (ongoing):

These are in-class writing assignments that will take place on throughout the term. They will last between 15 and 30 minutes. Students will be given a notebook for these assignments, which will be collected at the end of each class. These assignments will happen five times throughout the term, and students can choose their best four entries to count for the 20% (each entry = 5%).

#### Group presentation on reading (ongoing):

In groups of 4 (max), students will present for 20 minutes on a recommended reading which will be assigned in class on January 17. This presentation should be well rehearsed, organised, and give a coherent overview of the piece, identify the main concepts, critique the methodology used, and leave time at the end for a discussion activity. The group presenting will facilitate discussion among the class by designing a creative activity that focuses on the method and process presented in the article.

#### Podcast response paper (February 7):

Students will submit a 2-3 page report on a podcast episode from the BBC Radio 4 series "Thinking Allowed" (selected episodes will be chosen by the instructor). The report should introduce the featured researcher and their main argument. Outline two points that support the researcher's argument by pulling out two key quotations and explaining their significance. Focus on what methods the person uses in their research, identifying and defining three keywords that characterize their approach.

#### Fieldwork paper (March 14):

Students will conduct a mixed methods project in pairs, and submit a 4-6 page report on their findings. The report should contain subheadings that describe the hypothesis, research design, methodology, findings, and suggestions for further research. More details provided in class.

#### Take-home exam (April 11):

At the beginning of class on April 11, students will submit an 8-10 page set of responses to a series of exam questions that will be given out on April 4. More details and a review for the take-home exam will be provided in class.

**\*Bonus Points:** If you complete the TCPS Core 2 Ethics Tutorial, and show me the certificate, you will receive an extra 5% on your overall grade for the course.

#### **Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

**Note:** All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

#### **Submission of Assignments**

Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include the instructor's name, your name and your ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

**Note:** It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

**Policy for Late Assignments:** Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

### Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

### Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

### Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

Final grades are reported as letter grades. In this course, percentages are used for all written assignments.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in right-hand column below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations**
<b>4.00</b>	Outstanding	<b>A+</b>	96 - 100%	98.0%
<b>4.00</b>	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	<b>A</b>	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
<b>3.70</b>		<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%

<b>3.30</b>		<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>		<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>		<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>		<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>		<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	0- 49.99%	0%

\* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, the grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

\*\* These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

## Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

## Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

## Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

## Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca">artsads@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary Police Service</li> <li>• Emergency Text Messaging</li> <li>• Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</li> <li>• Safewalk Program</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b> <b>403-266-1234</b> <b>Emergency: call 911</b> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a> If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort ( <b>220-5333</b> ). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a>
<b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT help line</li> </ul>	<a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a> 403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Support Services</li> <li>• Student Services Mobile App</li> </ul>	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>
<b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<a href="https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/">https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a>
<b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling Services</li> <li>• Health Services</li> <li>• Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</li> <li>• Online resources and tips</li> </ul>	<b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a> <b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a> If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

## Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

<b>1</b>	<b>Jan 10</b>	<b>What is Research? Who is a Researcher?</b>	Go over the course
	Reading:	Sarah J. Tracy, 2010. "Qualitative Quality: Eight 'Big-Tent' Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research." <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i> , 16(10): 837-851.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Jan 17</b>	<b>Textual vs. Content Analysis</b>	In-class ad analysis
	Reading:	Alan McKee, 2003. "What Is Textual Analysis?" In <i>Textual Analysis</i> . Sage, pp. 2-33.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Jan 24</b>	<b>Ethnography</b>	Presentation on Readings: Group A Guest: AnneMarie Dorland
	Readings:	Laurence de Garis, 1999. "Experiments in Pro Wrestling: Toward a Performative and Sensuous Sport Ethnography," <i>Sociology of Sport Journal</i> , 16: 65-74.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Jan 31</b>	<b>Ethics Interviews and Focus Groups</b>	Presentation on Readings: Group B Ethics demo + Q&A Guest: Janaki Jayanthan
	Reading:	Koen Leurs, 2015. "Methodological trajectory, section 1.3: In-depth interviews," In <i>Digital Passages: Migrant Youth 2.0</i> . Amsterdam University Press, pp. 70-88.	
	Bonus:	Complete <a href="http://pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/education/tutorial-didacticiel/">http://pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/education/tutorial-didacticiel/</a> for 5% extra credit on your overall course grade. Submit the certificate!	
<b>5</b>	<b>Feb 7</b>	<b>Decolonizing Methodologies</b>	<b>*Podcast response paper due*</b> Presentation on Readings: Group C Guest: Monique Fry
	Reading:	Margaret Kovach, 2005. "Emerging from the margins: Indigenous methodologies" In <i>Research as Resistance</i> . Canadian Scholars Press, pp. 19-36.	
	Review:	TCPS 2: CORE Module 9: Research Involving First Nations, Inuit & Métis Peoples of Canada <a href="http://pre.ethics.gc.ca/education/Module9_en.pdf">http://pre.ethics.gc.ca/education/Module9_en.pdf</a>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Feb 14</b>	<b>Archival / Historical Research</b>	Archives visit: Regina Landwehr In-class transcription
	Reading:	Michael R. Hill, 1993. "Introduction," and "Chapter 1: Archival sedimentation," In <i>Archival Strategies and Techniques</i> . Sage, pp. 1-20.	
<b>-</b>	<b>Feb 21</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>	Reading Week
<b>7</b>	<b>Feb 28</b>	<b>Surveys</b>	Presentation on Readings: Group D Making surveys

	Readings:	Valerie Sue & Lois Ritter, 2012. "Introduction," In <i>Conducting Online Surveys</i> . Sage, pp. 1-13. Cliff Zukin, 2015. "What's the matter with polling?" <i>The New York Times Sunday Review</i> , June 20: <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/opinion/sunday/whats-the-matter-with-polling.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/opinion/sunday/whats-the-matter-with-polling.html</a>	
	Check out:	Survey Monkey <a href="https://www.surveymonkey.com/">https://www.surveymonkey.com/</a> and/or Google Forms <a href="https://www.google.com/forms/about/">https://www.google.com/forms/about/</a>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Mar 7</b>	<b>Digital Methods</b>	Presentation on Readings: Groups E, F Guest: Mylynn Felt
	Readings:	Richard Rogers, 2013. "Chapter 1: The end of the virtual: Digital methods," In <i>Digital Methods</i> . MIT Press, pp. 19-38.	
<b>9</b>	<b>Mar 14</b>	<b>Social Media Analysis</b>	<b>*Fieldwork paper due*</b> In-class app analysis Guest: Carla McCutchin
	Reading:	Ben Light, Jean Burgess, & Stephanie Dugay, 2016. "The walkthrough method: An approach to the study of apps," <i>New Media and Society</i> (online first): 1-20.	
<b>10</b>	<b>Mar 21</b>	<b>Mapping</b>	In-class mapping exercise Presentation on Readings: Group G
	Reading:	Caroline Haythornthwaite, 1996. "Social network analysis: An approach and technique for the study of information exchange," <i>Library &amp; Information Science Research</i> , 18(4): 323-342.	
<b>11</b>	<b>Mar 28</b>	<b>Critical Discourse Analysis</b>	Presentation on Readings: Groups H, I In-class policy analysis
	Reading:	Teun A. Van Dijk, 2015. "Chapter 18: Critical discourse analysis." In <i>The Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Second Edition</i> . Wiley, pp. 466-485.	
<b>12</b>	<b>Apr 4</b>	<b>Political Economy</b>	Presentation on Readings: Group J Review for take-home exam
	Reading:	Janet Wasko, 2014. "The study of the political economy of the media in the twenty-first century," <i>International Journal of Media &amp; Cultural Politics</i> , 10(3): 259-271.	
<b>13</b>	<b>Apr 11</b>	<b>*Take-home exam due in class*</b>	