

COM 564: Research Methods for Professionals

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Office hours:
Tu/Th 1:30-3:00
& by appointment

Course Overview: The objective of COM 564 is to acquaint you with quantitative and qualitative research methods. Topics we'll examine include research designs, questionnaire construction, sampling, data collection techniques, variable measurement and related topics. This is an applied course designed to increase your understanding of the role of research in media and related organizations and its application to organizational decision making.

Course Learning Goals: The purpose of this class is to increase your understanding of quantitative research methods. As a result of taking this course, I expect you to develop an appreciation for the importance of research and the benefits it provides through informed organizational decision making. In addition, I expect you to learn the basics of research methods so you understand the advantages and disadvantages of using different research methods in applied settings and can begin to use them in your own working environments.

Course Work:

Required Text: Baxter, L. A., & Babbie, E. (2004). *The basics of communication research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning.

Supplemental text: Austin, E. W., & Pinkleton, B. E. (2006). *Strategic public relations management*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. I will assign some additional readings from this text. Please do not purchase this text for the class.

I will assign weekly readings concerning the topic we are addressing as a class each week. You are to keep up with the readings and participate in class by commenting on both the lecture and reading materials. In addition, we will discuss case studies and related materials we have time. Please participate in class by asking questions and commenting on the lecture and reading materials. I will use guest lectures and case studies as time and availability allow. You also may have the opportunity to participate in a research project.

Instructor Interaction: I will make every effort to be active in the course space Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:10-10:25 a.m. (Pacific). Generally, you can expect responses to emails or questions received outside of these times during my next "office hour."

Late Work Policy: All work is due by 5:00 p.m. on the due dates specified in the syllabus. Work turned in up to 24 hours late will be worth half credit and I will not accept work that is more than 24 hours late. Please contact me as soon as possible if you miss any work.

Grading: There are 150 points possible in the course. I will use a straight scale (including pluses and minuses) to determine final grades.

Research critique. The purpose of this assignment is to integrate quantitative research concepts we've learned in class into an evaluation of a study under consideration for publication. Your grade will be based on your ability to demonstrate an understanding of the material we have learned through the quality and accuracy of your critique.

Focus Group design and protocol development. The purpose of this assignment is for you to consider the application of focus group research to a real-world problem. To complete this assignment, you will propose and develop all aspects of a focus group project in response to a case. The materials you develop will include the study's design and procedural guidelines, participants and their recruitment, a moderator's guide and related information. Your grade will be based on your mastery of the materials we learned in class as demonstrated in the quality of your work.

Survey research project. The purpose of this assignment is to design a market-based survey in application to a real-world problem. To complete this assignment, you will propose and develop all aspects of a survey in response to a case. The materials you develop will include the study's design and procedural guidelines, participants and sampling procedures, a questionnaire and related information. Your grade will be based on your mastery of the materials we learned in class as demonstrated in the quality of your work.

Market Test project. The purpose of this assignment is to design a product market test in application to a real-world problem. To complete this assignment, you will propose and develop all aspects of a market test project in response to a case. The materials you develop will include the study's design and procedural guidelines, participants and sampling procedures, a questionnaire or other forms of measurement and related information. Your grade will be based on your mastery of the materials we learned in class as demonstrated in the quality of your work.

Grading:

Course Work	Points	Percent of Final Grade
Participation	30	15%
Research critique/reaction paper	30	15%
Focus group assignment	40	20%
Survey assignment	50	25%
Market test assignment	50	25%

Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage
A	93–100%	C	73–76%
A–	90–92%	C–	70–72%
B+	87–89%	D+	67–69%

B	83–86%	D	60–66%
B–	80–82%	F	0–59%
C+	77–79%		

Incomplete Grade Policy. Incompletes are granted only with permission of the instructor and are subject to the following guidelines:

1. Students must request an incomplete in writing or by e-mail from the instructor before the end of the semester.
2. The request must be signed and dated by the student (or identified by student's e-mail address), and must explain the reasons behind the request for the incomplete.
3. In order to be considered for an incomplete, **there are two main conditions:**
 - o a student must complete a minimum amount of the assigned course work. Specifically, a student must complete 75 percent of the course work.
 - o a student must have a mathematical possibility of passing the class. A passing grade is 60 percent or above for the entire course.
4. If extraordinary circumstances (e.g., family emergency, serious illness) are involved and are documented to the instructor's satisfaction, the professor/ instructor retains the discretion to grant an incomplete even if the minimum conditions outlined in item 3 above are not met.

If an incomplete is granted, the standard WSU policy applies (i.e., ALL work must be completed within one full year from the end of the enrollment semester at issue. Otherwise, an automatic grade of "F," or failing, will be entered on the student's transcript).

Academic Regulations

Students enrolled in distance courses are subject to the same WSU academic regulations as on-campus students. A complete listing of the WSU academic regulations is available online ([Academic Regulations](#); select "Printable" next to "List All Academic Regulations" to view a printable list of all regulations).

Disability Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. DDP and the Disability Resource Center (DRC) work together to provide reasonable accommodations for students who have documented disabilities and who are registered both with DDP and the DRC. DDP's liaison to the DRC will assist you in getting started. To begin this process, contact DDP (800-222-4978 or distance@wsu.edu). We strongly recommend that you notify us as soon as possible. All accommodations must be approved through the Disability Resource Center.

If you have questions, please contact the DRC at DRC.FrontDesk@ad.wsu.edu or 509-335-3417. Additional information is available on the DRC website: <http://www.drc.wsu.edu>.

Online Collaboration:

Threaded discussion posts in online course spaces are an integral part of online learning environments. In certain courses, assessment of discussion posts is included as part of the final grade.

WSU is committed to the rights of all community members to freedom of expression and academic freedom. In order to protect the rights of all participants and to preserve the educational tone of online course spaces, the following rules apply:

1. Postings must be germane to the subject matter.
2. Postings must comply with WSU's policy on appropriate use of computing resources: <http://www.wsu.edu/ElectronicPolicy.html>.
3. Illegal postings or postings that violate WSU policies, including those regarding harassment and discrimination or the Standards of Conduct for Students, are not permitted.
4. Postings that are threatening to others are not permitted.

Instructors have the authority to remove posts that violate these rules. Continued postings in violation of these rules may result in removal of access rights, course failure, and, when appropriate, referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

In addition to the netiquette guidelines for online collaboration, you will be expected to participate in the online discussions in a way that engages with the topic and with the other participants. An overview of the criteria used in this course to evaluate your participation through your original and response posts is provided in the online course space, if applicable.

Critical Thinking

The ability to think and write critically are essential skills in many walks of life. Critical thinking skills are developed and refined through practice, self-reflection, and the critique and support of peers and instructors. Throughout this course you will have many opportunities to exercise your analytical thinking, synthesize information, and apply knowledge to real-life situations. To help facilitate your thinking and writing, the "Critical Thinking Rubric" is provided in the online course space, if applicable, to assess your own writing and that of other students. Please review it carefully before completing each activity.

Technical Support

If you need technical assistance, please expand the **Content** folder in the Map menu on the left by clicking the plus sign (+), then select **Technical Support**.

DDP Student Help Centers,

DDP understands that navigating the academic world may be confusing – that is why we have created the DDP [Help Centers](#), a central location where students can find information on a variety of topics. Take a moment to check out the many links available in the various help centers. Below are just a few important links to information in the help centers we would like to bring to your attention:

- Please review "Tuition & Fees" in the [Finance Center](#). Tuition is due on the first day of the semester, and WSU does not mail billing statements.

- If you are a new DDP student, information to assist you with online learning is available under "Resources and Tips" in the [New DDP Students Center](#). In this section you will find study tips, resources, and skills to give you a good head start in assuring success with your course.
- Also check out [myDDP](#), your personal DDP Web page where you can find quick links to important information, upcoming DDP events, deadlines and more. The quick link "Go to myDDP" is available from every page in the help centers, found in the upper right part of the page.

Library Support,

All students enrolled in Washington State University distance courses can use the WSU Libraries online databases and receive reference and research assistance from the Distance Degree Library Services (DDLS). Enrolled students can also borrow books and other circulating material and receive photocopies of journal articles.

Visit the DDLS Web page ([DDLS](#)) for links to the WSU online database and library support information.

eTutoring,

As a WSU student you have **unlimited FREE** access to eTutoring.org, a tutoring platform that enables students and tutors to collaborate in an online environment. This is not a course requirement, but simply an available resource that you may utilize as needed.

Currently, eTutoring is available for Accounting, Anatomy & Physiology, Biology, Chemistry, Math and Calculus, MS Office 2007, Spanish, Statistics, and Writing! With three ways to access a tutor you can choose the one that best fits your needs...

- Use the Online Writing Lab that allows students to submit a draft of a paper to a tutor, ask for specific feedback, and receive a tutor's response within 24-48 hours.
- Access live eTutoring via eChat that allows students to meet with a tutor in one-on-one tutoring sessions via a fully interactive, virtual online environment.
- Utilize the offline eQuestions that allow students to leave a specific question for an eTutor, who will respond within 24-48 hours.

The list of available tutoring subjects can be found on the <http://etutoring.org/login.cfm?institutionid=176> site.

For more information on accessing and setting up your eTutoring account, visit: http://online.wsu.edu/current_students/as_eTutoring_start.aspx

DDP Academic Calendar,

Please review the current DDP [Academic Calendar](#) to become familiar with critical deadlines.

On Campus Safety.

Washington State University is committed to maintaining a safe environment for its faculty, staff, and students. Safety is the responsibility of every member of the campus community and individuals should know the appropriate actions to take when an emergency arises. In support of our commitment to the safety of the campus community the University has developed a Campus Safety Plan, <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu>. It is highly recommended that you visit this web site as well as the University emergency management web site at <http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies> to become familiar with the information provided.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week, Dates	Subject(s) and reading(s)
1 8/21	<p>Goal: To introduce class and begin to understand the purposes and methods of conducting applied research.</p> <p>Topics: Class introduction; the purposes and methods of gathering research; issues related to validity and reliability.</p> <p>BCR 1, 2</p>
2 8/28	<p>Goal: To begin to learn key issues in research applications.</p> <p>Topics: Considerations in research designs; answering research questions and testing hypotheses; quantitative and qualitative research.</p> <p>BCR 3, 13 and outside readings</p>
3 9/4	<p>Goal: To learn study design basics and sampling methods.</p> <p>Topics: Study design, sampling, quantitative and qualitative research applications.</p> <p>BCR 6, 7 and outside readings</p>
4 9/11	<p>Goal: To learn sampling.</p> <p>Topics: Probability and nonprobability sampling methods.</p> <p>BCR 6, 7, 14 and outside readings</p>
5 9/18	<p>Goal: To learn levels of measurement and questionnaire design.</p> <p>Topics: Measurement, variables and constructs; data collection instruments.</p> <p>BCR 6, 7 and 14</p>
6 9/25	<p>Goal: To learn questionnaire design and introduce focus groups.</p> <p>Topics: Data collection instruments; introduction to focus groups.</p> <p>BCR 6, 8</p> <p>RESEARCH CRITIQUE DUE: 9/25</p>
7 10/2	<p>Goal: To learn key components of focus group research.</p> <p>Topics: Focus group methods and applications.</p>

BCR 6, 8

8 10/9

Goal: To introduce survey research.

Topics: Survey research and sampling revisited.

BCR 7, 8 and outside readings

9 10/16

Goal: To learn key components of survey research.

Topics: Survey research methods and applications.

BCR 7, 8 and outside readings

FOCUS GROUP CASE DUE: 10:16

10 10/23

Goal: To learn key aspects of survey research-related calculations including sample size, confidence interval and response rate.

Topics: Survey research calculations.

BCR 7, 8 and outside readings

11 10/30

Goal: To introduce message content analysis.

Topic: Content analysis introduction.

BCR 10, 15 and outside readings

12 11/6

Goal: To learn content analysis.

Topics: Content analysis methods and applications.

BCR 10, 15 and outside readings

SURVEY RESEARCH CASE DUE: 11/6

13 11/13

Goal: To introduce experiments.

Topics: Basics of experiments, design and applications.

BCR 9 and outside readings

14 11/20

Goal: To learn basic designs for experiments.

Topics: Experiments, methods and applications.

BCR 9 and outside readings

15 11/27

Goal: To learn factorial and longitudinal designs for experiments.

Topics: Basics of factorial and longitudinal research designs.

BCR 9, 11, 12 (as assigned) and outside readings

16 12/4

Goal: To Introduce basics of data analysis and research reports.

Topics: Basics of data analysis, writing research reports.

BCR 9, 11, 12 (as assigned) and outside readings

17 12/10

MARKET RESEARCH TEST CASE DUE: 12/10