

# **COMM 300: Communication Research Methods**

Department of Communication Arts

Spring 2019

*“Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel” Proverbs 20:15.*

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## **INSTRUCTOR**

Luis C. Almeida, Ph. D.

## **OFFICE LOCATION**

Communication Arts Building, Main Office 210-F

## **PHONE NUMBER**

423-614-8341, Ext. 8341

## **EMAIL ADDRESS**

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## **LOCATION AND MEETING TIME**

M/W/F: 11:00am to 11:50am

CAB 211

## **OFFICE HOURS**

Monday	2:00pm - 4:00pm
Tuesday	1:00pm - 2:00pm
Wednesday	2:00pm - 4:00pm
Thursday	11:00am - 12:00pm - 2:00pm - 3:00pm
Friday	2:00pm - 3:00pm

## **TEXT**

Wimmer, R.D. & Dominick, J.R. (2014). *Mass Media Research, An Introduction, Tenth Edition*. Boston: Wadsworth.

## **UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT**

Lee University is a Christian institution which offers liberal arts and professional education on both the baccalaureate and master's levels. It seeks to provide education that integrates biblical truth as revealed in the Holy Scriptures with truth discovered through the study of arts and sciences and in the practice of various professions. A personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior is the controlling perspective from which the educational enterprise is carried out. The foundational purpose of all educational programs is to develop within the students knowledge, appreciation, understanding, ability and skills which will prepare them for responsible Christian living in a complex world.

## **CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces students to research methodologies used in the field of communication. Theoretical approaches to research and its value provide a basis for studying research design, specific qualitative and quantitative methods, the collection of data, and standards in statistical and rhetorical analysis of data. Attention is given to how research functions in the academic world as well as in

communication-related professions such as journalism, public relations, advertising, and telecommunications.

*Prerequisites: COMM-200 or TCOM-200*

*Credit Hours: 3*

## **I. PURPOSE**

This course is intended to introduce communication, public relations, and telecommunications majors to the concepts and practices of research methodology so that students will be able to understand the concepts they encounter in research reports and academic writing and so that they will have a foundation for doing their own research projects in advanced courses in the various communication majors and emphases.

## **II. OBJECTIVES OF COURSE**

### **A. General Learning Objectives**

This course seeks to:

1. Distinguish between the humanities and social science sides of the communication field and the methodologies specific to each.
2. Introduce the language and practices of research used in the field of communication.
3. Assist students in understanding the critical thinking skill of explaining causes within the study of communication.
4. Provide opportunities for students to gain experience with various types of research design.
5. Instruct students how to analyze research data and critique the findings of research studies.
6. Investigate the ways that communication-related professions make use of research.
7. Explore the ethical and moral issues involved in research on human subjects from a Christian perspective.

### **B. Specific Behavioral Objectives**

As a result of the activities and study in this course, the student should be able to:

1. Describe the purpose and value of communication research from the varying points of view found within the field.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the elements of research design according to each of the major methodologies used by communication scholars.
3. Utilize the critical thinking skill explaining causes to identify possible causes, search for possible evidence, and determine the most likely causes within the communication discipline.
4. Develop protocols and research instruments for specified investigations.
5. Appraise and criticize the results of published communication research reports.
6. Distinguish the goals and practices of academic (“pure”) research from those of professional (“applied”) research.
7. Evaluate the ethical standards practiced by communication scholars from a Christian framework.

## **III. TOPICS TO BE COVERED**

- A. Research philosophy and design
- B. Research ethics and Christian perspectives on knowledge, investigation and human dignity
- C. Qualitative research methods: The rhetorical tradition
- D. Qualitative research methods: The social science approach
- E. Quantitative research methods in the social sciences
- F. Specific research methods: content analysis, survey, interview, focus group

- G. Developing research questions and hypotheses
- H. Sampling and data collection
- I. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis
- J. Research issues specific to the print media, the electronic media, advertising, public relations, and the Internet

## **VI. INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES**

- A. Lectures and group presentations
- B. Readings from the textbook and research journal articles
- C. Development of sample research project materials
- D. Case studies of published communication research studies
- E. Class and group discussion
- F. Analysis of sample data

## **V. RESPONSIBILITY OF STUDENTS**

- **Develop an attitude of professionalism** and treat your work in this class as you would any other professional situation.
- **Read assigned materials in advance** and **come to our class meetings prepared** with questions and insightful observations.
- **Punctuality and Participation** -- Arrive on time and consistently participate in class.
- **Attendance** - In the "real world," missing work could cost you your job. Your attendance in class is expected, and your participation is required to be considered present. However, an employer will often provide personal days for those "life happens" moments. Students are permitted a maximum of two (2) unexcused class absences. A third unexcused class absence will result in a loss of half of a letter grade (5%) and each subsequent unexcused absence will result in the loss of 1% from the student's final grade in this course up to a letter grade. If students come to class after the instructor takes attendance, students will be considered absent for the day. Documentation for absences for which a student wants to be excused for must be presented to the instructor on the first day the student returns to class after the absence. If students have perfect attendance, e.g., students are never late for or absent from class for any reason excused or unexcused, students will receive a two percent (2%) bonus to his/her final grade at the end of the semester.
- **Deadlines** -- Complete all assignments according to the highly suggested course schedule. In-class activities cannot be "made-up" and will result in a grade of zero for the missed assignment.
- **Electronic Submission of Work** – Students who send work via email **MUST** request confirmation before assuming the professor received the work. System failures, email malfunctions, etc. are not approved excuses for submitting late work.
- **Submit original written work that meets the following guidelines** (unless otherwise instructed): computer-generated (a.k.a. typed), single-sided, 8½" x 11" white paper, 1" margins, 12 point Times New Roman, double-spaced, stapled in the upper left-hand corner (if multiple pages), consistent application of APA style, and free of factual, grammatical, or spelling errors. Take advantage of the Writing Center as needed.
- **Silence all electronic devices** upon entering the classroom so they will not disrupt our class meetings.
- **Illness that prevents class attendance.** The student must have documentation from the health center or another physician that indicates the student cannot or should not attend class. Health center documentation is not acceptable unless it indicates the student is unable to attend class. Please schedule your routine medical appointments at times that do not conflict with class time.
- **Family emergency.** Serious illness or death of an immediate family member are honored in this class. Documentation of this emergency must be provided in order for a student to be excused from class. Friends' medical and emotional conditions are not considered family emergencies in this course.

- **Participation in a university sponsored activity.** Permission for an excused absence must be obtained in advance of the activity and the student must have a letter from the faculty sponsor or coach indicating the student's involvement in the activity.
- **Activity conflict.** Assignments due during a time that a student is participating in a student activity must be handed in to the instructor prior to departure or immediately upon the student's return, with the instructor's permission. Assignments due during a time when a student is excused for other reasons will be due at the beginning of the second class following the student's return, unless other arrangements are made with the instructor.
- **Notes about absences.** Students absent or late for class are responsible for obtaining any information relating to class lectures, discussions or assignment from other members of the class. The instructor will not provide outlines or notes from class lectures, other than the content uploaded to the content management system.
- **Use of Email.** Answering emails in class is prohibited. Information regarding grades and evaluation of assignments will not be distributed to students via email, either. If students want to inquire about a grade on an assignment, the evaluation of an assignment, or his/her grade in the course, students are welcome to come to the instructor's office during office hours or by appointment. The instructor doesn't routinely check email after office hours or on weekends.
- **Social Media Use.** Students are expected to have their cell phones silenced when entering class, otherwise. Students are not permitted to participate in social media activities during class, only under controlled circumstances.
- **Granting of incomplete grades.** Incomplete or "I" grades are assigned only in extreme circumstances where a student is unable to complete a course assignment due to illness or other emergency. This is a faculty decision and students should not anticipate this as an option simply because they are unable to complete the course work on deadline. Students must be aware of that.
- **Know of important dates.** For example, the last day for dropping courses without a W is September 5th. The last day to drop a course with a W on the transcript is November 6th. It is a good idea to obtain a copy of the university calendar and read the student handbook.

## VI. EVALUATION

### A. Evaluation Activities

Class Activities/Participation		5 points
Research in Action Assignment:		10 points
2 Assignments @ 5 points each		
Tests/Final Exam		40 points
Test 1	5 points	
Test 2	10 points	
Test 3	10 points	
Final Exam	15 points	
Communication Research Project		45 points
Annotated Bibliography	5 points	
Research Article Critique	5 points	
Instrument Design/Critique	5 points	
Group Research Report	20 points	
Group Presentation	10 points	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100 points</b>

B. Grading Scale

90-100 = A  
80-89 = B

70-79 = C  
60-69 = D

Below 60 = F

C. Description of Activities:

*Attendance and Participation*

Students are expected to come to class and engage in conversations relating to the content of this course and the weekly book chapter. Participation doesn't equate to answering a question yes or no or I agree or disagree, only. Instead, participation in this class means answering and elaborating on responses about course content.

*Research in Action Assignment*

Students will be expected to participate in the research in action assignment during class. This assignment will be produced and introduced by the instructor and will be practical in nature. The goal of this assignment is to teach students, through practice, the value of Mass Communication research in society.

*Tests*

Students will be required to take three tests in this course relating to the chapters of the book. These quizzes won't be cumulative and will be composed mostly of multiple choice and true false questions.

*Final Exam*

Students will be required to take a final exam relating to the chapters of the book. This test is cumulative and comprehensive. The instructor will, however, provide a full study guide for students on week 15 of the semester.

*Annotated Bibliography*

Students are to build an annotated bibliography in this class. The annotated bibliography must include the following components: 10-12 topics on your topic of choice, at least 5 choices must come from academic research journals, and no more than 1 choice can be commentary. This assignment must be completed in APA style.

*Research Article Critique*

Students will be required to critique a research article in this course. The article can be quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods. A detailed rubric will be given to students to assist with completing this assignment.

*Instrument Design Critique*

Students will be required to critique a research instrument in this course. The instrument will be provided by the instructor. A detailed rubric will be given to students to assist with completing this assignment.

*Group Research Report*

Students will be required to complete a group research project about a topic of choice. The group research report will include specific elements of research including a research question, research tradition, methods of evaluation and conclusions. This project will take the form of a focus group, unless approved otherwise by the instructor.

### *Group Presentation*

Students in this course will be required to present, as a group, the findings of their research report. A group between 5-7 students will deliver a keynote about their findings to the class. Students are expected to briefly ask reasonable questions after the presentation.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Lee University is committed to the provision of reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities as defined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Students who think they may qualify for these accommodations should notify their instructor immediately. Special services are provided through the Academic Support Program.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

As a Christian community of scholarship, we at Lee University are committed to the principles of truth and honesty in the academic endeavor. As faculty and students in this Christian community, we are called to present our academic work as an honest reflection of our abilities; we do not need to defraud members of the community by presenting others' work as our own. Therefore, academic dishonesty is handled with serious consequences for two fundamental reasons: it is stealing – taking something that is not ours; it is also lying – pretending to be something it is not. In a Christian community, such pretense is not only unnecessary, it is also harmful to the individual and community as a whole. Cheating should have no place at a campus where Christ is King because God desires us to be truthful with each other concerning our academic abilities. Only with a truthful presentation of our knowledge can there be an honest evaluation of our abilities. To such integrity, we as a Christian academic community are called.

### **DR. ALMEIDA'S ADVICE**

Come to class regularly and participate. Do your homework and act with respect towards your peers. Don't procrastinate. Read the book chapters, do the assignments, come prepared to learn and share. Don't hesitate to come to office hours in case you have questions or no questions. There is no penalty to stop by, just rewards! **DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO ASK QUESTIONS!** Be proactive not reactive. Ask for the Lord for guidance and wisdom. In Jeremiah 29:11 we learn, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Let the Lord work in your life by doing what you can to allow Him to make you prosper! Be wise... Listen, plan, execute, ask! Enjoy your college career. It is likely they will be the best four years of your life.