

## COMM 403-201 Strategic Communication Research Methods

Loyola University Chicago | School of Communication

Mondays 7:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. (Central Time)  
SOC Room 013

**INSTRUCTOR:**

Dr. Taeyoung Kim

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**HOW TO ADDRESS ME:**

Professor Kim

**OFFICE:**

SOC #210

**PRONOUNS:**

She/her/hers

**OFFICE HOURS (ON ZOOM):**

By appointment

Most successful campaigns are based on rigorous and thoroughly designed research that can provide meaningful insights into the perception, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the target publics. That said, communication professionals should be able to 1) select the right research method relevant to research problems an organization might have, with a realistic eye of what really needs to be done within a limited time and budget, 2) plan a non-biased and less flawless research design, and 3) accurately interpret the result, avoiding it distorted, incorrect, and skewed.

With this in mind, this course aims to help students take the basic steps to frame and execute a research project as competent social science researchers who may work in fields such as UX research or market/trend research in the near future. Students will learn the essential concepts of various research methods, a critical framework for evaluating communication research, ethical considerations, and how to design and manage research processes for real-world problems. Last but not least, there is another crucial step students will learn from this course: developing the skill of communicating data to inspire action. In this course, students are going to learn a research-based methodology for explaining data in a way that moves people to action.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

Students are expected to learn how to plan, design, and conduct a research project. By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Determine how to validate the quality of a research project or article
- Learn how to structure research questions appropriately
- Select the appropriate research methods
- Conduct research considering the key considerations
- Appropriately communicate research findings in an effective and ethical manner

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Travis, D. & Hodgson, P. (2019). *Think Like a UX Researcher: How to Observe Users, Influence Design, and Shape Business Strategy*. (1<sup>st</sup> Edition). CRC Press.

Print ISBN: 9781138365292, 1138365297

eText ISBN: 9780429774003, 0429774001

Marsh, S. (2022). *User Research: A Practical Guide to Designing Better Products and Services*. (2nd Edition). Kogan Page.

Print ISBN: 9781398603608

Gutsche, J. (2020). *Create the Future + the Innovation Handbook: Tactics for Disruptive Thinking*. Fast Company Press.

Print ISBN: 978-1-7324391-4-6 | eBook ISBN: 978-1-7324391-5-3

**RECOMMENDED TEXTS**

Croucher, S. M. & Cronn-Mills, D. (2021). *Understanding communication research methods: A theoretical and practical approach*. (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). New York: Routledge.

ISBN-13: 978-0367623661 / ISBN-10: 0367623668

American Psychological Association (APA). (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association by APA*. (7<sup>th</sup> Edition). American Psychological Association.

ISBN-13: 978-1433832161.

\* [Available in the library catalog](#)

Portugal, S. (2016). *Doorbells, Danger, and Dead Batteries: User Research War Stories*. Rosenfeld.

ISBN: 978-1933820-34-7 | Digital ISBN: 978-1933820-50-7

**USEFUL RESOURCES**

Nielsen Norman Group <https://www.nngroup.com/reports/>

Harvard Business Review <https://hbr.org/topic/subject/market-research>

Pew Research Center <https://www.pewresearch.org/topics-categorized/>

Additional readings will be provided in the Sakai resource area. Throughout the semester, students are responsible for checking Sakai to see if there are additional readings for that week.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to engage in this course in three major ways: class participation (attendance & discussion), student-led sessions, and a research project. Brief descriptions of these assignments follow. More detailed assignment prompts for the three major assignments, including requirements and submission information, will be distributed in due time.

### ***Class Participation:***

Note that the class participation part of your grade will not merely be evaluated based on attendance but also on your performance in class discussions and in-class activities. Class participation may include, but is not limited to, leadership inside/outside of class, preparedness, contribution to class goals, and demonstrating professional communication and attitudes.

### ***Student-led Session:***

Students will work in pairs and take the role of discussion leader once for one of the selected topics (see the course schedule). Discussion leaders are expected to manage a class discussion based upon a sufficient understanding of the designated topic. Recommended reading lists will be provided in advance. However, it is strongly recommended to do additional searches as part of their preparations to enhance their own understanding as well as to facilitate the in-class discussion. Please note that it is not enough to just “read out” the content summary, as you will cover multiple readings/resources. Discussion leaders should demonstrate a creative synthesis of the given materials and provide thought-provoking questions that stimulate critical thinking and active engagement from other students.

### ***Research Project:***

Depending on their area of interest, students will choose one of two types of research projects: UX research or Market/Trend Research. This semester-long project consists of five small assignments, including four written assignments and one oral presentation. By default, a research project is done in groups, but you can work on it individually if you wish. Teams should consist of no more than four people. Each assignment is worth up to 20 to 50 points each, making up 50 percent of your final grade in total.

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Research Topic	February 5
Research Plan	February 26
Topline Report	March 26
Presentation	April 24
Final Research Report	May 1

### ***Assignment Submission Policies***

Style and formatting rules: Assignments must be submitted double-spaced, using a standard, legible font in 12-point size. Only .DOC(X), .PDF, or PPT files will be accepted. You are free to choose any academic writing style as long as you adhere to its rules consistently throughout your

paper. However, the APA style is encouraged, as many of communication programs use it exclusively. Assignments should be submitted through Sakai.

**Submission rules:** The semester will move very fast as we only meet once a week. Plan ahead, and don't start close to the deadline. For every day that the assignment is late without the instructor's approval, the assignment grade will drop by 10% per day. An extension may be granted in certain situations, including but not limited to illness or family emergencies. Without prior approval, the assignment will NOT be accepted later than five days after it is due.

## GRADING

### Breakdown of Grade:

There is a total possible of 400 points that students will receive in this course.

Assignment	Points
Class Participation	100 points (25%)
Student-led Session	100 points (25%)
Research Project	200 points (50%)
Written Assignment 1	(20 points)
Written Assignment 2	(30 points)
Written Assignment 3	(40 points)
Written Assignment 4	(60 points)
Presentation	(50 points)
<b>Total</b>	<b>400 points</b>

### Course Grading Policy:

You will receive details about each assignment/exam separately. All assignments need to be completed and handed in on time to avoid a grade reduction. If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, you must provide written documentation that will allow you to be excused or discuss your situation with me in a timely manner. Do not wait until the end of the semester to sort things out.

In order to pass this class, you will need to complete ALL of the assignments. Failure to complete one or more of them will have a significant impact on your final grade.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- A/A- outstanding, thoughtful and enthusiastic work
- B+/B above average work, demonstrating good insight into assignment
- B-/C+ needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow-through
- C and below fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Your percentage scores won the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A	= 100-94	C	= 76-74
A-	= 93-90	C-	= 73-70
B+	= 89-87	D+	= 69-67
B	= 86-84	D	= 66-64
B-	= 83-80	F	= 63 and below
C+	= 79-77		

## COURSE POLICIES

**Attendance:** Attendance is necessary for this course. You are allowed one (1) unexcused absence during the semester (on days that do not include your oral presentation or a major grading event; this day should be banked in case of minor illness or commitments that cannot be rescheduled. The unexcused absence does not include major illnesses that require hospitalization or medical care or university-sponsored events). After the one unexcused absence (a week's worth of class), you will lose -20 points off your total grade for each additional absence. Excused absences must be approved by the instructor **beforehand**. Please see the university catalog for the definition of excused and unexcused absences.

**Grade appeal:** If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must appeal it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate, within one week of receiving the graded assignment. No late appeals will be accepted for review.

### **Respectful learning environment:**

This class -- and LUC in general -- is a place for all of us to become better versions of ourselves, and to learn from each other. Therefore, a strict zero-tolerance policy for any speech or behavior that can be construed as demeaning or discriminatory on the basis of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, culture or religion is enforced in this class. You will be asked to leave if you engage in any of the above and further punitive steps will be taken if necessary.

Conversely, if you have any concerns or issues at all with utterances or actions by me or another student, please inform me immediately. I see it as my utmost duty to create a safe space in the classroom and to make everyone feel welcome.

Please refrain from activities that may distract your classmates and therefore compromise their ability to learn. These activities include regularly arriving late to class, and regularly getting up to leave in the middle of class. If you have to leave early or arrive late, please inform the instructor beforehand and do so in an orderly and non-disruptive manner.

If you do not adhere to these basic standards of classroom decorum, I reserve the right to dismiss you from the class to ensure a quality learning environment for your peers. If you have concerns about your ability to undertake these responsibilities, please see me early in the semester.

## ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student with a learning disability who needs accommodation during class sessions or exams should provide documentation from Student Accessibility Center to the instructor during the first week of class; this information will be treated in complete confidence. The instructor will accommodate students' needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the responsibility of each student to plan in advance to meet their own needs and assignment due dates. Details are available at <https://www.luc.edu/sac/>. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

## PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty. Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity.

Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;
- Providing information to another student during an examination;
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is an act of personal and professional courtesy, as well as intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at <http://luc.edu/english/writing>.

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. A student who submits the same work for credit in two or more classes will be judged guilty of academic dishonesty and will be subject to the sanctions described below. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during different semesters. If a student plans to

submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning a grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the appropriate area head and to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication. The office of the Dean of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances.

## Course Schedule

\* COURSE CALENDAR IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITH NOTIFICATION.

W	D	TOPIC	READING
1	1/16	MLK Day — No Classes	
2	1/23	Introduction to Course	
3	1/30	Think Like a Researcher	Marsh's Introduction Travis & Hodgson's Ch. 1 Gutsche's Part 1 & 2
<i>Assignment Due: Research Topic (by 2/5)</i>			
4	2/6	Planning Your Research <i>Students: Share Your Research Idea</i>	Marsh's Ch. 2-4 Travis & Hodgson's Ch. 2 Gutsche's Part 3
5	2/13	Research Methods I ( <b>Student-led sessions</b> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Ethics</li> <li>• Qualitative Research I (Ethnography; Participatory research)</li> <li>• Qualitative Research II (Interviews; Focus groups)</li> </ul>	TBA
6	2/20	Guest Lecture (Become a UX/Market Researcher)	Marsh's Ch. 5 & 6 Travis & Hodgson's Ch. 6
		Research Methods II ( <b>Student-led sessions</b> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative Research (Survey)</li> <li>• Mixed Methods (Usability/Content Testing)</li> </ul>	TBA
<i>Assignment Due: Research Plan (by 2/26)</i>			
7	2/27	<i>Students: Share Your Research Plan</i>	
8    3/6    Spring Break			
9	3/13	Data Analysis ( <b>Student-led sessions</b> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content/Thematic Analysis</li> <li>• Agile Analysis; Mental Models</li> <li>• Turning Findings into Insights</li> </ul>	TBA



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10	3/20	Workday: Data Analysis (No Class Meeting)	
		<i>Assignment Due: Topline Report (by 3/26)</i>	
11	3/27	Individual (Group) Meetings (via Zoom)	
12	4/3	Storytelling with data I	Marsh's Part Four (Ch. 28-34)
13	4/10	Storytelling with data II (Workshop)	Travis & Hodgson's Ch. 5
14	4/17	Individual (Group) Meetings (via Zoom)	
15	4/24	<i>Student Presentations</i>	
16	5/1	No Final Exam	
		<i>Assignment Due: Final Research Report (by 5/1)</i>	

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