

COMM 403-201 Strategic Communication Research Methods
Loyola University Chicago | School of Communication

Tuesdays 7:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.
Class meets in SOC 014

INSTRUCTOR

Taeyoung Kim

Assistant Professor

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Required Text

Stacks, D. W. (2016). *Primer of Public Relations Research, Third edition*, Guilford Publications.
ISBN-10: 146252270X / ISBN-13: 978-1462522705

Other required or additional readings will be uploaded or linked to Sakai for you. Students should expect that the content from any materials provided could be included in exam. Lecture notes also will be provided on Sakai after the class session.

Course Description

Does research sound tedious or difficult? Unfortunately, it's not an option anymore. In many cases, successful and effective marketing/communication campaigns derived from a thoroughly designed research program that provides meaningful insights on the perception, belief, attitude, and behaviors of a targeted public. That said, communication professionals should be able to 1) select the right research method relevant to research questions 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.

As (soon-to-be) professionals, you need to keep it in mind that many organizations (in general, I would say) might be somewhat reluctant to spend their money on extensive research work. Ironically, however, even though you have a brilliant idea for a new campaign, it is hard to get it approved without a piece of solid evidence ensuring its effectiveness. Then prior research will help you to develop a strong rationale for it. Research is also necessary for you to evaluate the outcomes of a project. There are different ways of measuring performance. Assessing the right information will help you demonstrate how your idea is “tied to the bottom line” and make you a more valued employee to top management.

With this in mind, the course will cover the basic steps and methods that are commonly used in communication fields. Students will learn the essential concepts of various research methods, a

critical framework for evaluating communication research, and how to design and manage research process for real-world problems.

Course Objectives

Students are expected to know how to read and evaluate a research study, select appropriate research questions, develop measurements, draw a sample, collect and analyze data and interpret the results. 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 appropriately structure research questions
- Identify the appropriate tools when beginning an inquiry
- Select the appropriate methodology for primary research
- Build skills related to accessing and using information
- Appropriately communicate your findings in an honest and ethical manner

Assignments

In addition to readings and lectures on research methods, the course objectives will be pursued through several different types of assignments (see descriptions below).

Weekly Discussion Questions. Every week (when lecture will be given) students are required to submit 3 discussion questions about the week's readings. The questions should help guide class discussions and should also indicate any commentary or questions that the student has about the material for the week. They will be graded on those attributes. The questions should be submitted to Sakai, and they are **due at 12 pm (noon) every Tuesday, starting in week 2**. They will not be accepted late.

Research Critiques. The purpose of the research critiques is to develop your ability to: critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of research designs and methodologies; apply the research principles/methods discussed in class; read data correctly; and point out a loophole in prior research. These skills can only be learned through practice. Consequently, several times throughout the semester you will be required to prepare a written critique of an assigned article and to discuss your criticisms in class.

Individual Research Projects. In this project, students will learn how to select, design, and conduct a research method for the client of own choice. Every student should choose a client organization (could be either a for-profit or non-profit organization) to work on throughout the semester. This project involves a series of assignment modules, providing you first-hand experience by applying the methods discussed in class. Further instructions will be given in class.

Take Home Exam. Students will be given multiple cases that use different research methods (s) and asked to provide a critique of each case's strengths and weaknesses and to make a suggestion to improve it.

Grading

The following weights will be used to determine overall grades in the course.

Weekly Discussion Questions	10%
Research Critiques	20%
Individual Research Projects	30%
Take Home Exam	30%
Professionalism	<u>10%</u>
	100%

*** You can get an extra credit that is worth 5% per every certification on online and social media management or analysis, such as HootSuite Platform Certification or Social Marketing Certification. If you get both, you will earn 10% as extra credit points. See [HSA Certification Guideline](#) on Sakai for detail.

Professionalism

This includes leadership inside/outside of class, attendance, contribution to class goals. Positive contributions to class discussion increase your score. Attending class and not speaking has neither a positive nor a negative impact on your participation grade. Yet failing to attend an entire class session, poor preparation, and detrimental participation decrease your participation score.

Attendance I will check your attendance at the beginning of the class. Be on time. Arriving late is a disruption and disrespectful both to your classmates and your instructor. If you are late and don't pass this check, please see the professor at the end of the class to update your status. If you need to leave the class earlier, please let the instructor know this advance. Each student's final grade will be reduced by 2 percent for each absence up to 10 percent. If a student misses more than 5 classes, the student will receive a failing grade (F) for the course.

If you expect to be absent for any reason advance notification is required for the instructor's approval, NOT after the fact. Absences for serious medical reasons will be excused if you provide appropriate documentation from the Student Health Center or your personal physician. Absences due to documented family emergencies will also be excused. If students want to make their absence excused, they need to provide the professor with the appropriate documentation with valid contact information within a week. Otherwise, absence will not be considered excused. Falsification of your attendance in any way will result in an "F" for the course.

Grade Scale

Grade	Minimum %
A	93.0
A-	90.0
B+	87.0
B	83.0
B-	80.0
C+	77.0
C	73.0

C-	70.0
D+	67.0
D	63.0
D-	60.0
F	0.0

Academic Integrity

Each student is expected to do his or her own work in the course. Allegations of academic misconduct will be forwarded immediately to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication for possible disciplinary action. Loyola regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter with consequences ranging from failure of the course to probation to expulsion.

Academic misconduct includes:

- Cheating on exams or aiding other students to cheat. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful.
- Stealing the intellectual property of others and passing it off as your own work (this includes material found on the Internet). Software will be used to identify plagiarism.
- Failing to quote directly if you use someone else's words, and cite that particular work and author. If you paraphrase the ideas of another, credit the source with your citation. Please ask me if you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism and/or how to cite sources.
- For closed-book exams, academic misconduct includes conferring with other class members, copying or reading someone else's test, and using notes and materials without prior permission of the instructor.
- Turning in the same work for two classes.

Accommodations

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/>.

Students are excused for recognized religious holidays. Please let me know in advance if you have a conflict.

Keeping in Touch

Get the most out of your professor! I am available to help you:

- During my office hours
- During in-class meeting sessions
- By email
- By appointment at my office

Email is the best means of communication to request an individual meeting or to consult any accommodation you might need. The reasons for meetings might be topic-driven so please provide a

summary of the material you wish to discuss when we meet as part of your email request. When you send your emails to the professor, please use proper salutation for it, such as “Dear Professor Kim (instead of “Hi there” or “Hello”). Students’ emails will be responded within three business days. Please be patient and allow at least one day in receiving response from the professor.

You may call me Taeyoung (which has two syllables /te- jʌŋ/) if you would like to be my friends, which is welcome. If you prefer something more formal in any situation, please call me “Professor Kim” in face-to-face interactions and email communication.

Classroom Behavior

To help create a positive learning community, silence your cell phones and mobile devices. I prefer that you refrain from social networking during lecture. If you must, please make it class-focused and minimize its impact on your attention to class discussion. Be respectful of fellow students and be in your seat when class begins.

Policies

I treat this class as a professional setting. I will encourage professional behavior as part of the class activities. Here are some tips: Always come to class, on time (be reliable); always do your best (work hard; be good at what you do); always reach out and contribute as best as you can (show hustle; work as part of a team). These attributes will help you succeed in your career as well as in life.

Assignments and an exam may not be accepted after the due date. Turning in assignments after the due date may provide a student with an "unfair advantage over other students." Late work will be penalized one letter grade. If the work is more than two days late, it will be graded at my discretion. Students unable to complete the course assignments and exams by the due date will receive a zero for that part and therefore may not pass this class.

Re-grade requests must be submitted within 7 days from when the assignment is returned. Along with the graded assignment, you must attach a letter explaining why you are requesting a re-grade. While I will consider the specific concerns cited in your letter, I will re-grade the entire assignment.

If you get sick or face a personal emergency on the day of a test or when a paper is due, you must send me an email in advance of the class or deadline (sending the email does not automatically extend your deadline). If you fail to do this, you should assume the test/assignment will not be made up or that the assignment will be downgraded.

Incomplete class grades are only given for exceptional reasons.

Course Schedule

PLEASE NOTE:

The following schedule is subject to change. The instructor reserves the right to make changes in the course schedule and class assignments for the good of the class. Students should attend class, check their email and Sakai to make certain they are up-to-date with class activities and aware of any changes.

Week	Subjects, Readings & Assignments
Week 1 Jan. 14	Course Introduction Share your experience & expectations Sign up for individual meetings
Week 2 Jan. 21	What is research? Readings: Stacks's Chapters 1 thru 3 Assignments: Weekly Discussion Questions Individual Research Project Guideline will be given
Week 3 Jan. 28	Content Analysis Media Coverage Analysis Readings: Stacks's Chapters 8 thru 10 Reading for week 3 on Sakai Assignments: Weekly Discussion Questions A research synopsis (i.e., plan for your research) due on Jan. 28
Week 4 Feb. 4	Media Coverage Analysis (Cont'd) Impact Measure Readings: Readings for week 4 on Sakai Assignments: Weekly Discussion Questions Revised research synopsis (if asked) due on Feb. 11 Keep working on developing research materials (e.g., survey or interview questionnaire, content analysis coding scheme, etc.)

Week 5

Feb. 11

Survey

Readings:

Stacks's Chapters 4, 12, & 13

Assignments:

Weekly Discussion Questions

Research Critique 1 due on Feb. 11

Keep working on developing research materials.

Week 6

Feb. 18

Survey (Cont'd) & Experiment

Introduction to Social Media & Digital Analytics

Readings:

Stacks's Chapters 14 & pp. 327-332

Readings for week 6 on Sakai

Assignments:

Weekly Discussion Questions

Finalize research materials and schemes

You should be ready to do data collection this week.

Week 7

Feb. 25

Social Media & Digital Analytics

Readings:

Readings for week 7 on Sakai

Assignments:

Weekly Discussion Questions

Data collection & analysis

Week 8

Mar. 3

NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK

Week 9

Mar. 10

Individual Meetings with an Instructor (Interim Reviews)

Research Critique 2 due on Mar. 10

Data collection & analysis

Week 10

Mar. 17

Interviews

Readings:

Stacks's Chapters 11

Readings for week 10 on Sakai

Assignments:

Weekly Discussion Questions

Data collection & analysis

Week 11

Mar. 24

Data Analysis

Readings:

Stacks's Chapters 5, 6, & 15

Readings for week 11 on Sakai

Assignments:

Weekly Discussion Questions

Writing a results section

Week 12

Mar. 31

Individual Meetings with an Instructor

Research Critique 3 due on Mar. 31

Bring your draft of your research findings

Week 13

Apr. 7

Ethics, Limitations, and Other Considerations

Readings:

Readings for week 13 on Sakai

Assignments:

Weekly Discussion Questions

Research Findings, Discussion, and Implication

Week 14

Apr. 14

Individual Meeting with an Instructor

Take Home Exam Questions will be open on Apr. 15

Week 15

Apr. 21

Individual Meeting with an Instructor

Research Critique 4 due on Apr. 21

Week 16

Apr. 28

Presentation Day

Assignments:

Individual Research Project Report due on Apr. 27, both paper & electronic copies

Take Home Exam Due on May 3

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