

## Syllabus - Summer 2021

**Excluding materials for purchase, syllabus information may be subject to change. The most up-to-date syllabus is located within the course in HuskyCT.**

### Course and Instructor Information

**Course Title:** Research Methods in Communication

**Credits:** 3

**Format:** Online

**Prerequisites:** COMM 1000; Recommended Preparation: A Mathematics Course

**Professor:** Stephen C. Stifano, Ph.D.

**Email:** Stephen.Stifano@uconn.edu (For general assignment and material questions, please use the “Questions for the Professor” portion of our HuskyCT discussion board)

**Availability:** I am available to respond to questions via email or our course discussion board throughout our course; please allow 24 hours for a response (48 hours if contacting on a Friday). At pivotal times during the semester, I may hold virtual office hours to answer student questions - these office hours will be announced in advance.

### Course Materials

**Required course materials should be obtained before the first day of class.**

Texts are available through a local or online bookstore of your choice. The [UConn Bookstore](#) carries the required text(s), which can be shipped ([fees apply](#)).

#### **Required Materials:**

Keyton, J. (2018). *Communication research: Asking questions, finding answers* (5th ed.). Boston : McGraw-Hill.

*e-Book on Amazon:* [Communication Research: Asking Questions, Finding Answers - Kindle edition by Joann Keyton.](#)

[Reference Kindle eBooks](#)

*Available in both hard-copy and (cheaper) ebook versions through the UCONN Bookstore.*

Also Required: A Scientific Calculator for the quantitative portion of the course.

*Additional course readings and media are available within HuskyCT, through either an Internet link or Library Resources*

### Course Description

COMM 2000Q: Research Methods in Communication

Three credits. Prerequisite: COMM 1000. Recommended preparation: MATH 1011Q or Equivalent.

The scientific approach as it specifically applies to communication.

The field of Communication is diverse and multidisciplinary, covering everything from mass media effects to the psychological role of emotion in human relationships. Whatever your area of interest, we are all connected by one common bond – the need to understand, interpret, evaluate, and ultimately conduct research.

This course looks at the role of research in the field of communication, and provides a better understanding of the fundamental components of the research process. We'll examine the scientific method, the concept of intersubjectivity and truth in research, the differences between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the nuts and bolts of quantitative research design, and the key elements of any research study. In the process, you'll gain a much broader understanding of the field of Communication, and the kind of work you would undertake

when pursuing an academic career in Communication, or a research-oriented career in industry. When the course is complete, you'll be able to evaluate scientific research in terms of Measurement, Design, Sampling Technique, Method, and Analysis. You should also be able to design a basic scientific research project, including proper hypotheses, research design, and method of data analysis – skills that will serve you well in this field.

## Course Objectives

**Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:**

1. Relate the role of research to the broader field of communication
2. Differentiate the roles of constructs, concepts, hypotheses, research questions, and variables in crafting a research study.
3. Identify the basic components of a quantitative research report.
4. Identify the major issues in research design – including concerns of reliability and validity, sampling techniques, and design considerations – and how these issues impact our ability to draw conclusions from quantitative communication research.
5. Assess some of the ethical concerns associated with human subjects research.
6. Use descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the distributions and properties of variables in a basic quantitative data set
7. Test hypotheses by appropriately using chi-square analysis, t-tests, and correlations and draw accurate conclusions from these statistical tests.
8. Design a basic scientific research project, including proper hypotheses, research design, and method of data analysis.

## Course Outline

### Part One: Research Basics

#### Module 1: The Fundamental Principles of Communication Research

- Introduction to Communication Research
- The Research Process and the Role of Theory
- Reading and Writing the Quantitative Research Report
- Constructs, Concepts, Hypotheses, and Research Questions
- Variable Relationships and Confounding Variables

#### Module 2: Considerations in Designing a Research Study

- Principles of Measurement
- Principles and Techniques of Sampling
- Research Design
- Surveys and Questionnaires
- Research Ethics

*-Midterm Exam-*

### Part Two: Interpreting Quantitative Research Data

#### Module 3: Descriptive and Inferential Statistics

- The Normal Distribution
- Descriptive Statistics: Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion
- Inferential Statistics: Comparing Sample to Population
- Hypothesis Testing

#### Module 4: Testing Categorical Data

- Chi-Square Analysis: Univariate
- Chi-Square Analysis: Bivariate

#### Module 5: Exploring Differences and Relationships in Data

- Differences: The Independent Samples T-Test
- Relationships: The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation
- Determining Which Statistic to use and When

## Course Requirements and Grading

### Summary of Course Grading:

Course Components	Weight
<b>Midterm Exam</b> (Modules 1 & 2)	200 Points
<b>Final Exam</b> (Cumulative, Emphasis on Modules 3 - 5)	200 Points
<b>Module Discussions</b> (5)	150 Points (30 each)
<b>Module Journal Entries</b> (5)	150 Points (30 each)
<b>Module Quizzes</b> (5)	150 Points (30 each)
<b>Problem Sets</b> (3)	150 Points (50 each)

### Exams (Midterm and Final, 200 Points Each)

This course has both a midterm and final exam, each worth 200 points (20% of your course grade.). Exams will test understanding of important course content, including a variety of questions coming from both readings and course presentations. More information about exams will be given as they approach. There will be NO MAKEUPS for missed exams without proper documentation.

### Module Discussions (5 at 30 Points Each)

Students are expected to participate in weekly discussion boards. Full credit (30 points) will be awarded to students who provide insightful, thought-provoking comments on the discussion board and respond to at least two other students' posts (see rubric on HuskyCT for full details). Students who do not provide such comments will receive fewer points. Initial module posts are due by 11:59pm on the Thursday of each week, and comments to other students' posts must be submitted by Saturday at 11:59pm for Modules 1-4, and by Wednesday at 11:59pm for Module 5. The instructor will only minimally participate in the discussion boards, as they are meant to be a space for students to interact with one another and engage in thoughtful conversations with fellow classmates. Discussions will be worth 150 total points, or 15% of your final grade.

### Module Journal Entries (5 at 30 Points Each)

Journal entries are privately submitted and graded. Each module will contain a journal topic, and students are expected to submit journals by Saturday 11:59 PM each week for Modules 1-4, and by Wednesday at 8:00pm for Module 5. Journal entries should include 2-3 paragraphs of insightful comments regarding the journal topic. Grades for the journals will be posted on HuskyCT using grading rubrics. If students wish to receive additional comments or feedback on their journals, they should email the instructor. Journals will be worth 150 total points, or 15% of your final grade.

### Module Quizzes (5 at 30 Points Each)

Graded quizzes will consist of multiple choice and true and false questions. Each quiz will be worth 30 points. Students are given between 10 and 20 minutes to complete each quiz, unless otherwise noted. Quizzes are open from 8AM-11:59PM Eastern Standard Time on the Thursday of each week (exception: Wednesday for Week 5). You must complete the quiz within this time frame. Please be proactive and if you have any conflicts that prevent you from taking the quiz during this time, let me know in advance. At 1:00 AM on the day after the quiz, you will be able to see the correct answers and how you performed. Quizzes will be worth 150 total points, or 15% of your final grade.

### Problem Sets (3 at 50 Points Each)

One of the important components of research methods is the ability to perform the steps necessary to do research on your own. An important part of this involves understanding proper hypothesis testing techniques. Therefore, during the semester you will be given the opportunity to show off your math skills. You will be given some data and hypotheses, and be asked to test the hypotheses using the hypothesis testing methods you learned in class. The problem sets will be completed during the second part of the course. You will work with an assigned partner for each problem set. Problem sets will be worth 150 total points, or 15% of your final grade. There will be NO MAKEUPS for missed/late problem sets without prior approval.

### Grading Scale:

Points Earned	Letter Grade	GPA
930 - 1000	A	4.0

900 - 929	A-	3.7
870 - 899	B+	3.3
830 - 869	B	3.0
800 - 829	B-	2.7
770 - 799	C+	2.3
730 - 769	C	2.0
700 - 729	C-	1.7
670 - 699	D+	1.3
630 - 669	D	1.0
600 - 629	D-	0.7
0 - 599	F	0.0

Note that all fractions of a point will be rounded up to the next whole point (for example: 929.1 points = 930 points = A)

Note also that there are no exceptions to the grade scale listed above: All students will receive the letter grade equivalent to the precise amount of points they have earned, without exception.

### Readings

Assigned readings give you essential information necessary to understand the complexities of research methods. In many cases, our readings will be supplemented with a Video Presentation, but the presentations will only highlight some of the key concepts that require further explaining in a given unit. Therefore, it is important for you to read the material so that you can better understand our course material and perform well on assignments and exams.

### Doing Your Due Diligence: Working in this course

This is a fast-paced online course that covers a significant amount of material. As such, it is expected that you will work hard to complete the modules, assignments, and assessments. We estimate that across all assignments, activities, and material, you should plan to invest about 25 hours per week in this course. Additionally, you should stay up to date with current work and updates by making sure you check HuskyCT regularly (at least once every other day, if not more).

### Due Dates and Late Policy

All course due dates are identified in the Course Schedule. Deadlines are based on Eastern Time; if you are in a different time zone, please adjust your submittal times accordingly. *The instructor reserves the right to change dates accordingly as the semester progresses. All changes will be communicated in an appropriate manner.*

Late assignments will not be accepted. You must complete all assignments by the deadlines on the course calendar. In case of emergency, please email the instructor immediately - do NOT wait and address the situation later.

### Feedback and Grades

I will make every effort to provide feedback and grades within 5 days of the assignment due date. To keep track of your performance in the course, refer to My Grades in HuskyCT.

If you would like to discuss a grade with me, submit your appeal via email. Please include the following in your email:

1. Offer a cogent and well-supported written argument. This means that you should support your claims from course materials and/or class lectures.
2. This written argument should be submitted via email. You must also set an appointment to have a phone conversation with me so that the process may be completed. No grade appeals will be completed via email; you must speak with me via telephone or Skype before the appeal is completed.

### Assessment/Exam Proctoring

**IMPORTANT:** This course requires students to use the online service ProctorU for the real time proctoring of the midterm exam and final exam. In order to use ProctorU, you must meet certain technical, software,

location, and identity verification requirements.

**It is critical that you review these requirements and fully test the computer on which you will take your exam prior to the official start of classes and no later than the second day of the course. Please complete the following:**

- Follow the steps at [ProctorU's Get Started web page \(https://www.proctoru.com/portal/uconn/gettingstarted\)](https://www.proctoru.com/portal/uconn/gettingstarted)
- Review the [ProctorU FAQ's \(http://www.proctoru.com/faq.php\)](http://www.proctoru.com/faq.php).
- Sign up for your exam time slot at least 72 hours (3 days) prior to your exam's scheduled time or you will be charged a late fee. The University of Connecticut will not pay for student late fees incurred as a result of your failure to meet this deadline.

## Student Responsibilities and Resources

As a member of the University of Connecticut student community, you are held to certain standards and academic policies. In addition, there are numerous resources available to help you succeed in your academic work. Review these important [standards, policies and resources](#), which include:

- The Student Code
  - Academic Integrity
  - Resources on Avoiding Cheating and Plagiarism
- Copyrighted Materials
- Netiquette and Communication
- Adding or Dropping a Course
- Academic Calendar
- Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships
- Sexual Assault Reporting Policy

### Academic Honesty

The Student Conduct code states that "A fundamental tenet of all educational institutions is academic honesty; academic work depends upon respect for and acknowledgement of the research and ideas of others. Misrepresenting someone else's work as one's own is a serious offense in any academic setting and it will not be condoned." It further states that, "A student who knowingly assists another student in committing an act of academic misconduct shall be equally accountable for the violation." Please be aware that any instance of academic dishonesty will be pursued to the fullest extent allowable under University regulations – DO NOT take this lightly. See <http://www.dosa.uconn.edu/Code2.html> for more information on the University's student code.

### Students with Disabilities

The University of Connecticut is committed to protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and assuring that the learning environment is accessible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. Students who require accommodations should contact the Center for Students with Disabilities, Wilbur Cross Building Room 204, (860) 486-2020 or <http://csd.uconn.edu/>.

Blackboard measures and evaluates accessibility using two sets of standards: the WCAG 2.0 standards issued by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act issued in the United States federal government." (Retrieved March 24, 2013 from [Blackboard's website](#))

### Software/Technical Requirements (with Accessibility and Privacy Information)

The software/technical requirements for this course include:

- HuskyCT/Blackboard ([HuskyCT/ Blackboard Accessibility Statement](#), [HuskyCT/ Blackboard Privacy Policy](#))
- [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) ([Adobe Reader Accessibility Statement](#), [Adobe Reader Privacy Policy](#))
- Google Apps ([Google Apps @ UConn Accessibility](#), [Google for Education Privacy Policy](#))
- Microsoft Office (free to UConn students through [uconn.onthehub.com](http://uconn.onthehub.com)) ([Microsoft Accessibility](#))

[Statement, Microsoft Privacy Statement](#))

- ProctorU ([ProctorU Accessibility Statement](#), [ProctorU Privacy Policy](#))
- Dedicated access to high-speed internet with a minimum speed of 1.5 Mbps (4 Mbps or higher is recommended).
- A digital camera or scanner (for uploading images of hand-written mathematical work to HuskyCT; a cell-phone camera is acceptable).

**NOTE:** This course has NOT been designed for use with mobile devices.

## Help

[Technical and Academic Help](#) provides a guide to technical and academic assistance.

This course is completely facilitated online using the learning management platform, [HuskyCT](#). If you have difficulty accessing HuskyCT, you have access to the in person/live person support options available during regular business hours through the [Help Center](#). You also have [24x7 Course Support](#) including access to live chat, phone, and support documents.

## Minimum Technical Skills

To be successful in this course, you will need the following technical skills:

- Use electronic mail with attachments.
- Save files in commonly used word processing program formats.
- Copy and paste text, graphics or hyperlinks.
- Work within two or more browser windows simultaneously.
- Open and access PDF files through Adobe Reader or Similar applications.
- Be able to take a clear digital photograph (scan a document) and upload an image to a HuskyCT assignment.

University students are expected to demonstrate competency in Computer Technology. Explore the [Computer Technology Competencies](#) page for more information..

## Evaluation of the Course

Students will be provided an opportunity to evaluate instruction in this course using the University's standard procedures, which are administered by the [Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness](#) (OIRE).

Additional informal formative surveys may also be administered within the course as an optional evaluation tool.