

J 380 Introduction to Research Methods

Fall 2021 (09105)

School of Journalism and Media

The University of Texas at Austin

Class meetings:	TTH 12:30-2 p.m.
Teaching modality:	Hybrid (Zoom or DMC 3.378A)
Instructor:	Hsiang Iris Chyi, Ph.D.
Office:	DMC 3.374
Phone:	(512) 471-0553 (voice mail)
Email:	chyi@mail.utexas.edu
Office hours:	TH 9-12 or by appointment (via Zoom)

Course Description and Objectives

Social science research allows scholars to make sense of the social world -- to discover why people think and act the way they do. The main purpose of this course is to provide students with an introduction to the methodological foundations and tools to address journalism, media, and communication issues. Students will learn how to conduct surveys, content analyses, experiments, focus groups, and in-depth interviews. Specifically, after taking this course, students will be able to:

- (1) understand the purpose of research;
- (2) describe and compare the major research methods in journalism, media, and communication;
- (3) identify a meaningful research topic;
- (4) select an appropriate method and theory;
- (5) propose a research study;
- (6) understand the importance of research ethics and integrate ethics into the research process;
- (7) evaluate existing research that uses one of the primary research methods in the field;
- (8) reflect on the role of social science and the impact of academic research on society.

Required Readings

Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research, 9th edition (2019), by Russell K. Schutt. Sage.

Additional readings from different sources will be made available on the course's Canvas site at <http://canvas.utexas.edu>.

Course Requirements

Assignments

Participation and Exercises (15%): A series of exercises and activities are designed to help students achieve learning goals. Students are expected to: 1) read and respond to assigned readings, 2) complete exercises in time, and 3) actively participate in in-class and online discussions. Everyone is expected to think critically and exchange ideas with others.

The instructor will monitor attendance or give in-class exercises from time to time. No make-ups for such exercises will be granted. There is no need to justify your absence, but more than 4 absences will result in an F (60/100) for participation, and more than 6 absences will result in a zero for participation.

Design Survey and Content Analysis Instruments (20%): You will design a survey questionnaire for an online platform (e.g., Qualtrics) and a codebook for a content analysis.

Exam (30%): The exam, scheduled after the mid-term of the semester, will cover materials discussed in class and readings and will include multiple-choice and short answer questions.

Research Proposal (35%): This will be developed in several stages, including the description of the topic, research questions, draft of the proposal, and final version. During the process, the instructor would serve as your consultant and your classmates would also provide feedback.

Always turn in professional-level written work, using the most recent edition of *American Psychological Association* (APA) style or the *Chicago Manual of Style* for citing references. Points will be deducted for spelling, grammatical, punctuation, and capitalization errors.

Grading Scheme

Final grades will be determined on the basis of the following rubric. The University does not recognize the grade of A+.

< 59	60-63	64-66	67-69	70-73	74-76	77-79	80-83	84-86	87-89	90-93	94-100
F	D-	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A

Missed Classes/Deadlines and Late Assignments

If an emergency prevents a student from taking a scheduled exam or meeting the deadline of a presentation, the student must notify the instructor prior to the exam or presentation. Otherwise, the student will not be eligible for a make-up. Make-up exams/presentations will be granted only for a limited time and only for valid, documented reasons, such as serious illness, family emergency, jury duty or military reserve obligation. Absence excuses are subject to verification. Presenting a false excuse will be considered a violation of the academic integrity rules.

If the deadline of an assignment is missed, all late work must be turned in within one week after it is due and will be downgraded for one letter grade no matter it is 1 or 7 days late. No late work beyond the one-week period will be accepted. Missed assignments will receive a zero.

Disruptive Behavior and Class Engagement

Mutual respect is essential in this class. In accordance with university policy, disruptive behavior will be documented and may lead to sanctions. Examples of disruptive behaviors in the classroom include arriving late to class, chatting, etc. For online meetings, I encourage everyone to participate in class discussions.

Academic Integrity

Be academically honest in every aspect of class work. All students are subject to the student code of conduct, including the University Code of Academic Integrity. For this course, *academic dishonesty* includes (but is not limited to) the following: fabrication (i.e., making up data, sources or information), plagiarism (using someone else's work in your work without giving proper credit), duplication (doing an assignment for this course and for any other course in this or any prior semester without the express consent of the instructor), and cheating (exchanging information with another individual during an exam). Violations of the academic integrity code will result in penalties in this course and all violations will be reported to the University. It is your responsibility to be aware of the rules of academic dishonesty -- ignorance is not a defense. When in doubt, consult the instructor before doing anything about which you are uncertain.

The University of Texas Honor Code

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: "As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity."

University Electronic Mail Notification Policy

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week.

In this course, e-mail will be used as a means of communication with students. You will be responsible for checking your e-mail regularly for class work and announcements. We will use your e-mail address in Canvas.

Use of Canvas

This course uses Canvas, a Web-based course management system in which a password-protected site is created for each course. Canvas can be used to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to take online quizzes and surveys.

You will be responsible for checking the Canvas course site regularly for class work and announcements. As with all computer systems, there are occasional scheduled downtimes as well as unanticipated disruptions. Notification of these disruptions will be posted on the Canvas login page. Scheduled downtimes are not an excuse for late work. Canvas is available at <http://canvas.utexas.edu>. Support is provided by the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 Monday through Friday 8 am to 6 pm, so plan accordingly.

Use of Zoom

Synchronous class meetings will be conducted through Zoom. Links to class meetings will be made available on Canvas course calendar.

Class Recordings

Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have the instructor's explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. UT is aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Q Drop Policy

If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you'll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see: <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop>

Services for Students with Disabilities

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions. If appropriate, also contact Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329- 3986 (video phone). <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/>

Counseling and Mental Health Services

Taking care of your general well-being is an important step in being a successful student. If stress, test anxiety, racing thoughts, feeling unmotivated or anything else is getting in your way, there are options available for support.

For **immediate** support:

- Visit/Call the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC): M-F 8-5p | SSB, 5th floor | 512-471-3515 | cmhc.utexas.edu
- CMHC Crisis Line: 24/7 | 512.471.2255 | cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html

CARE Counselor in the Moody College of Communication is: Abby Simpson, LCSW

- |CMA 4.134 | 512-471-7642 (Please *leave a message* if she is unavailable)

FREE Services at CMHC:

- Brief assessments and referral services
- Mental health & wellness articles - cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html
- MindBody Lab - cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html
- Classes, workshops, & groups - cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html

Important Safety Information:

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right – it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency

Title IX Reporting

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university's [relevant policies](#).

Faculty members and certain staff members are considered "Responsible Employees" or "Mandatory Reporters," which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. **I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX related incidents** that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you want to speak with someone for support or remedies without making an official report to the university, email advocate@austin.utexas.edu For more information about reporting options and resources, visit titleix.utexas.edu or contact the Title IX Office at titleix@austin.utexas.edu.

The **Counseling and Mental Health Center, University Health Services** and the **Employee Assistance Program** are confidential as outlined by federal and state law. UT also offers private resources who are not confidential but are non-mandatory reporters to Title IX and the university. **Advocates, University Ombuds, Faculty Ombuds, and the Interpersonal Violence Peer Support Program** are all private resources, and safe spaces to ask questions and receive support without making an official report to the university. These services are there for you if you would like emotional support, would like to discuss options, or are in need of academic or financial assistance.

I also take any other kind of discrimination or harassment very seriously, and I urge you to report such misbehavior. Discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, citizenship, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression can be reported to the Office for Inclusion and Equity. Or tell me and I will report it.

- [Office for Inclusion and Equity \(OIE\)](#)
The Office for Inclusion and Equity (OIE) investigates and helps to resolve complaints of sexual misconduct and discrimination.
 - [File a report of discrimination via online form](#)
 - [Call to report discrimination 512-471-1849](#) or email: equity@utexas.edu
- [Office for Civil Rights \(OCR\)](#)
The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the US Department of Education is responsible for

enforcing federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance from the Department of Education, including sex discrimination covered under Title IX. [Call the Office for Civil Rights 214-661-9600.](#)

- [Equal Opportunity in Employment Commission \(EEOC\)](#)
The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or employee on the basis of a protected class, including discrimination on the basis of sex. [Call the Equal Opportunity in Employment Commission 800-669-4000.](#)

COVID-19 Guidelines

Masking

University policy is to follow CDC guidance. So, until the CDC guidance suggests differently, wearing a mask is strongly encouraged in this course. You will not be penalized in any way for not doing so. Please bear in mind, however, that the interests protected by masking are not just your own. Masking to prevent transmission is very important for the health of our greater community. It may be important for others in the room in ways that you do not know or appreciate. For all of these reasons, I urge you to do so.

Social Distancing and Seating Plan

Instructors may require that all students socially distance in the classroom. The instructor may create a seating chart based on your seating preference to help maintain health and safety should contact tracing be needed.

If a student tests positive for COVID-19

The student should follow [this guidance on reporting their positive test](#) to enable contact tracing. If a student tests positive for COVID-19, they **must isolate at home**. The COVID-19-positive student should contact the [Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line](#) (BCCAL) to report their positive result. BCCAL can also assist the student with isolation options, class absence notification or other support. In addition, the student will need to meet **all** of the following [CDC criteria for discontinuing self-isolation](#) including:

- 10+ days since symptom onset (if no symptoms, 10+ days since test date) AND
- 24+ hours fever-free without use of fever-reducing medications AND
- Other COVID-19 symptoms have improved

And before ending self-isolation for COVID-19, the student should submit the Self-declaration of release from COVID-19 isolation (see instructions [here](#)) through the [UHS portal](#).

Let's do everything we can to protect each other.

Course Calendar & Readings 1.0 (Subject to Change)

1. Week of Aug. 26: Overview of the course; class survey; Why research? What is social science research/communication research?
2. Week of Aug. 31: Does social science research matter?
Read and discuss:
Overcoming “physics envy,”
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/01/opinion/sunday/the-social-sciences-physics-envy.html> (PDF on Canvas)
“What’s wrong with social science and how to fix it,”
<https://fantasticanachronism.com/2020/09/11/whats-wrong-with-social-science-and-how-to-fix-it/index.html>

Identify problems in our world; the research process
“What’s your problem?” due
Read: Ch 1 & 2
3. Week of Sept. 7: Research ethics
Read: Ch 3 (Historical background and ethical principles sections)
“I fooled millions into thinking chocolate helps weight loss. Here’s how,”
<https://gizmodo.com/i-fooled-millions-into-thinking-chocolate-helps-weight-1707251800>

Conceptualization, operationalization & measurement
Read: Ch 4
Preliminary research topic/questions due
4. Week of Sept. 14: Survey research design; sampling; questionnaire construction
Read: Ch 5

Survey data collection
Read: Ch 8
5. Week of Sept. 21: Online survey questionnaire due

Quantitative data analysis
Read: Ch 9
6. Week of Sept. 28: Introduction to Qualtrics

Participant recruitment through MTurk, and CloudResearch
7. Week of Oct. 5: Content analysis
Read: Ch 15 (the content analysis section)
8. Week of Oct. 12: Focus groups; in-depth interviews (qualitative methods)
Read: Ch 10

Content analysis codebook due
9. Week of Oct. 19: Causality & experiments
Read: Ch 6 & 7

10. Week of Oct. 26: Secondary data and big data
Read: Ch 14

Research questions due
11. Week of Nov. 2: Exam (Nov. 2)

Human subjects research & IRB
Read: Ch 3 (the Institutional Review Board section)
12. Week of Nov. 9: Writing a research proposal; citation management tool (Zotero)

Consultations on research questions
13. Week of Nov. 16: Writing a research paper

Consultations on research questions
14. Week of Nov. 23: Consultations on research proposal

Thanksgiving (holiday)
15. Week of Nov. 30: Presentation of research proposal

Research proposal due (Dec. 2)

J380 Student Information Form

1. Name: _____
2. Master's (R&T/Professional/Hybrid) / Ph.D. student
3. Do you already have a communication/journalism degree?
 1. No
 2. Yes. At which level (undergraduate/graduate)?
From which institution?
4. Research method courses taken before (specify undergraduate or graduate level, and textbook used if possible):
5. On a 10-point scale, how would you evaluate your familiarity with social science research methods in general? (1 = Not familiar at all; 10 = Very familiar) _____

Specifically, how familiar are you with the following research methods/tools?
(1 = Not familiar at all; 10 = Very familiar)

- a. Survey _____
 - b. Content analysis _____
 - c. Experiment _____
 - d. Focus group _____
 - e. In-depth interview _____
 - f. Secondary data analysis _____
 - g. Big data _____
 - h. Digital media metrics _____
 - i. Statistics _____
 - j. SPSS _____
 - k. Zotero (or other citation management tool _____)
6. Have you conducted any social science research before? If so, with what kind of method(s)?
 7. Briefly describe your current research interest.
 8. What do you expect of this course?
 9. Do you have any concerns about taking this course? If so, what are they?