

Syracuse University  
S.I. Newhouse School of Communication

**Fall Semester 1998**

**Com 605.2 Communications Research Methods (#16452)  
Thursday 1-4 PM, Newhouse II, Rm 268**

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**Office hours:  
Tuesday 1-5 PM, Thursday  
and Friday 4:15 - 5:45 PM,  
and by appointment.**

***Course objectives and summary***

The main objectives of this course are: (1) to acquaint students with a variety of methods for communication research including quantitative and qualitative approaches, (2) to provide students with the background and tools to critically assess and evaluate social science research, (3) to provide an introduction to social science data analysis using computer-based statistical techniques, and (4) to get students the opportunity to participate first-hand the actual process of survey-based social science research.

***Course prerequisites***

Graduate level standing and/or permission of the instructor. As an additional prerequisite, students enrolling in Com 605 are required to have an Email account and regular access to an up-to-date computer with a current version of a WWW software package. These services are available to Syracuse students through the University.

***Required texts***

Babbie, E. (1998). *The practice of social research* (8th edition).

Course Reading Packet (available at The Copy Center).

**Contents of course reader**

**Excerpts from:**

1. C. P. Snow, Two cultures  
Aristotle, Rhetoric and poetics  
Kuhn, The reluctant revolutionary  
Kuhn, The structure of scientific revolutions, ch. 13  
Telecommunication Act of 1996, Sec. 551(a)
2. Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, Communication research
3. Creswell, Research design
4. Palmgreen & Rayburn, An expectancy-value approach to media gratifications  
Radway, Women read the romance
5. Tapscott, Digital economy  
Journal of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)  
<<http://209.130.1.169/jcmc/vol3/issue1/>>

***Schedule of Assignments***

The assignments for Communication 605 consist of the following: Participation in survey research project and journal and summary of your activities and observations (2 pp.), a SPSS computer-based statistics exercise, a research prospectus that describes a topic area (you choice) and identifies both quantitative and qualitative research approaches (2 pp.), and a semester research project that carries out the project described by your prosecutes. In addition, there will be a midterm and final examination.

Please note that participation in the Syracuse Media Survey Research Project requires that you commit to two four-hour shifts (out-of-class work) as a telephone interviewer during the Friday, Oct. 2 through Thursday October 15, 1998 period. In compensation, we will not have class on October 8, 1998 (week 6).

Summary

Survey research project participation with journal/ evaluative comments	10pts	10/19
Prospectus (topic, quant., qual.)	10pts	10/1, 11/5/, 11/19
SPSS exercise	10pts	12/10
Semester project	20pts	12/14
Midterm examination	20pts	10/22
Final examination	20pts	12/21
Class participation	10pts	(as requested)
Total	<u>100pts</u>	

**Note:** More details about each of these required assignments will be provided in class.

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
1 9/3	Introduction.	-	
2 9/10	•Quantitative and qualitative research as paradigms •Introduction to quantitative social science research.	•Course Reader #1 (paradigms) •Babbie, ch. 1,2,3	
3 9/17	•Sampling. •Research design.	Babbie, ch. 8 Babbie, ch. 4,5,6	
4 9/24	• Question design.	Babbie, ch. 7, 9, 10	
5 10/1	Interview techniques and training.	Course Reader #2 (Guide to research)	Topic area prospectus
6 10/8	"Comp. time" -- no class scheduled.	[Participation in two survey research interviewing sessions].	

7 10/15	• Ethics and politics of research • Summary and review.	Babbie ch. 13, 18, 19	Interviewing journal and review due Mon., 10/19
8 10/22	Midterm examination.	-	
9 10/29	Introduction to Qualitative research.	Course Reader #3 (Doing qualitative research)	
10 11/5	Presentation and discussion of results of survey.	-	Qualitative study prospectus due
11 11/12	Qualitative research techniques and analysis.	Course reader #4 (Two contrasting approaches)	
12 11/19	New communication technologies, new research opportunities.	Course reader #5 Journal of CMC at: < <a href="http://209.130.1.169/jcmc/vol3/issue1/">http://209.130.1.169/jcmc/vol3/issue1/</a> >	•Qualitative prospectus due •Internet Demo
Thanksgiving holiday			
13 12/3	Introduction to analysis of data.	Babbie, ch. 15, 16	
14 12/10	Analysis of data using SPSS.	Babbie, ch. 17	SPSS exercise due
	Semester project due Friday December 18 at 4:00 PM		
	Final examination Period 11	Thursday, Dec. 17, 5:00 - 7:00 PM	

***Please note the following***

All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments up to 48 hours late will be subject to a -20% penalty. Assignments more than 48 hours late will be subject to a -40% penalty. *All assigned work must be completed by the end of the semester to receive a passing grade.* No provision is made for early or late examinations. No grade of "incomplete" will be awarded absent documented compelling circumstances and prior consent of the instructor.

### ***Class attendance and participation required***

Attendance and class participation are mandatory. Each student is expected to regularly attend class and actively participate in class discussions. Attendance and participation will affect your final grade in the course.

### ***Excused absences***

An absence may be considered "excused" only if (1) the instructor is contemporaneously notified by telephone or Email and (2) the student sends by Email to the instructor a 500 word summary of the lecture or presentation that was missed. Please note that it is the lecture or presentation that must be summarized and not the readings. This summary is due within one week of the absence, and will not be accepted if late. Please note that in all cases an absence is much more likely to be considered as "excused" if the instructor is notified *in advance*, either in person, by telephone or Email.

### ***Grading and evaluation***

An multiple choice/ short answer quiz will be scored on the basis of 100-93 = A; 92-87 = B; 86- 79 = C; 78-71 = D; 70 and below = F.

The essence of the assigned papers is the quality of the information and its presentation and not quantity. All written work, including any essay questions assigned for the midterm examination is graded on a subjective scale as indicated below:

In general: Written work is assigned a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F (including pluses or minuses). All written work should reflect a satisfactory standard of writing, including use of complete sentences, paragraphs and section headings. The writing should be clear and concise. If the meaning is unclear, you may lose partial credit. Papers and other assignments must be typed and conform to the "style guide" distributed by the instructor.

**A grade:** The paper or answer is complete, specific, and all aspects of the question are considered. If there are two or more sides to a question or issue, facts supporting all sides are presented and analyzed. The argument or explanation is well-organized and supported by examples. For a grade of "A" to be assigned, the work must be in some way outstanding and evidence originality and depth in its elaboration.

**B grade:** The paper is complete, correct and well-organized. Compared to an "A grade," the paper may lack detail or be stated in generalities, but is still well supported and makes good use of facts or examples.

**C grade:** The question addressed by the paper is satisfactorily answered and generally correct. The argument or explanation is on target and comprehensible. Organization is generally satisfactory. Some supporting examples or material may be inapplicable or lacking in detail or originality.

D or F grade: The question addressed by the paper is only partially answered or incorrect. Organization is unsatisfactory, and supporting material is lacking in detail, poorly chosen or irrelevant to the paper.

Each paper will be assigned a numerical grade based on the scale of A = 100- 93 % as noted above. The final grade for the course will be computed by adding all of the points together, adjusting for participation and attendance, and then comparing the result to the scale of A = 100- 93, etc.

### ***Office hours***

I welcome your visits during office hours.

### ***Other terms and conditions***

1. It is a condition of your continued enrollment in this course that you conform your conduct to the usual norms and practices of university education. It is presumed, for example, that all work submitted is the original work of the student whose name appears on it, and was prepared originally for this course. Plagiarism and other acts of dishonesty are subject to academic penalties ranging from loss of credit for the assignment to a failing grade for the course and suspension from the University.

2. Papers and assignments are due at the beginning of classes on the assigned due date. Do not miss class because your assignment is not finished. Call or email the instructor to make arrangements to turn your paper in after class.

3. All assigned work and examinations must be completed in the semester in which it is undertaken. All assignments must be turned in by the last day of the semester in order to receive a passing grade, and a grade of incomplete will not be awarded absent documented extenuating circumstances.

4. A student must take the midterm and final examination (if any) as scheduled. Any exceptions to this rule must be approved in writing by the instructor prior to the examination.

5. Class attendance is required because it is an important part of the learning process in this class.

6. A student must be present at the beginning of class. A student who arrives after attendance has been taken may be given a written warning. After that warning, a student who is not present at the beginning of class will be recorded as absent for the entire period.

7. The instructor will assume that each student has completed all the assigned readings that are due prior to the start of class.

*Your continued enrollment in this class indicates  
your agreement and acceptance of these terms.*



4. Again, assume that you are the experimenter. How would you *operationalize* "favorite toy" as a variable? Be sure to mention the *dimensions of the variable(s), levels of measurement, and indicators* as appropriate. (6 pts.)

5. As it was performed, what are the study's most significant problems in terms of *reliability*? (7 pts.)

**Section two (25 pts.)**

***Instructions: These questions also refer to the CNN article "Kids pick their favorite toys." (Attachment #1).***

1. After reading the results of Duracell Inc.'s Top Ten Toy survey, Eddy, a newly hired marketing representative for the retail chain Toys B Us<sup>®</sup>, exclaims: "Children always like remote-controlled toys better than any other!" Is Eddy's statement closer to *inductive* or *deductive* thinking?

Briefly explain your answer. (5 pts)

2. You have been awarded a \$100,000 research grant from the New Product Department of the Toys B Us® company. Briefly indicate how you would *test the hypothesis* that indeed it was the remote-control operation of the Power Chute™ toy that caused it to be the number one choice of the subjects of the study. In your answer, use "classic experiment" design. Be sure to identify the *dependent* and *independent* variables. (20 pts).

**Survey: 29% of high school boys have a gun (12.5 pts)**

Identify and discuss the *ethical issues* raised by the study, if any.

Identify and discuss the *political issues* raised by the study, if any.

## Kids pick their favorite toys

October 15, 1998

Web posted at: 9:01 p.m. EDT (2101 GMT)

(CNN) -- Children judged Power Chutes-Basic Start as their favorite game in Duracell Inc.'s annual Top 10 toy survey, but also liked the educational Brain Shift and a revamped favorite, the Lego Extreme Team Challenge.

The kids chose from among 26 toys that will be rolled out this holiday season. They especially were drawn to the remote-control-operated Power Chutes, which lets them control a loading truck as it picks up balls, exits a ramp, moves over a bridge and slides down a chute.

Dr. William Sears, a pediatrician and author of child-rearing books, says the game "helps children understand how the choices they make result in specific outcomes" and "encourages individual problem-solving skills."

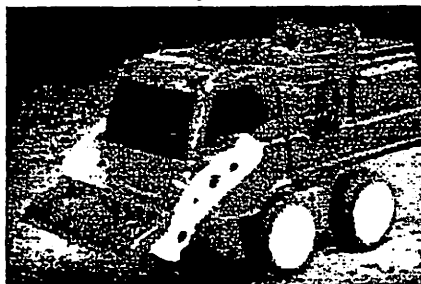
The toy testing, conducted from September 14-25, is aimed at providing gift choices that encourage social interaction and creativity, according to Duracell, a worldwide manufacturer of alkaline batteries.

Both battery- and non-battery-operated toys for the survey were chosen by a panel that included an independent toy industry expert. Judges were told to avoid toys that inspire aggressive or combative behavior, and to pick toys that appeal to both genders.

More than 500 children between the ages of 4 and 11 played with the toys for at least one hour per day for 10 days before voting on their favorites.



Children test the toys



Power Chutes - Basic Start

### ALSO:

See...

## Survey: 29 percent of high school boys have a gun

October 14, 1998

Web posted at: 6:14 p.m. EDT (2214 GMT)

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Nearly three of every 10 high school boys have at least one firearm, according to a study funded by the National Institute of Justice.



The random survey of 10th- and 11th-grade boys from high schools throughout the United States shows most of the firearms are intended for hunting and sporting purposes -- not criminal activity.

The 29 percent figure for firearm possession among males 16 to 18 compares to 6 percent who say they carry a gun outside the home.

Survey results show that half of the juveniles believe they can obtain firearms relatively easily. Relatives and friends are the primary sources of guns.

The study's random sample includes 734 students in 53 schools. The poll was conducted by surveyors from California State University and Tulane University in New Orleans.