

**CMGT 540: Uses of Communication Research**  
**Spring 2008 Tuesday Wednesday**  
**Course Syllabus**

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Check your email linked to Blackboard regularly. The instructors will regularly send emails about class agenda and logistical arrangements through Blackboard.

### **Course Description**

What good is learning research methods? Is it like eating vegetables rather than strawberry cheesecake? Yes, it is. But like most vegetables, learning about research methods can be good for you.

Part of the goodness is that learning research methods can serve as a foundation for success in your professional lives. As professionals, part of your responsibilities will involve solving problems. And although solving problems successfully will require many resources (e.g., interpersonal and political skills), a fundamental ability is being able (1) to understand problems conceptually – to break problems down into their important parts and have a sense of how the parts relate to one another and to the whole; and (2) to obtain and analyze relevant data. Conceptualizing problems, and obtaining and analyzing data are two core skills you will refine by learning research methods.

To emphasize the value of learning research methods, consider this: in University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, research methods is a substantial part of a course called Decision Sciences in their highly-ranked MBA program. Research methods is offered in the same spirit at USC's Marshall School of Business.

Students have taken advantage of this course (and the subsequent CMGT 597) to explore entrepreneurial ideas, test feasibility of business opportunities, and develop projects for clients. The skills you learn in this class will allow you to stand out in your profession as a creative thinker, with the additional ability to design and implement good assessment practices.

Another benefit of learning research methods is that, if you find it interesting, research is a viable career field. Graduates of this course have been hired by market research firms such as Lieberman Worldwide, Western Psychological Testing, and various other firms in research oriented roles.

More generally, in terms of completing your program at Annenberg, this course serves as an early start to the capstone course CMGT 597. A good capstone experience is to gain some expertise in a problem interesting and important to you. You will start gaining or consolidating that expertise by learning more about the problem in this class's assigned project.

*Course Materials*

Required materials

- *Business research methods (10<sup>th</sup> edition)* (abbreviated as BRM), by Donald Cooper and Pamela S. Schindler (2006).
- *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (5<sup>th</sup> edition)* (abbreviated as APA), by the American Psychological Association (2001).

Supplemental materials

- Additional supplemental materials will be introduced as the course progresses.

Recommended materials (to be explored after you have selected your method)

Materials on specific methods

- *The content analysis guidebook*, by Kimberly A. Neuendorf (2002).
- *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*, by Richard A. Kruegar and Mary Anne Casey (2000).
- *Case study research: Design and methods (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*, by Robert K. Yin (2003).

Materials on data analysis

- *Using SPSS for Windows and Macintosh (4<sup>th</sup> edition)*, by Samuel. B. Green and Neil. J. Salkind.
- *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*, by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman (1994).

Materials on writing

- *The clockwork muse: A practical guide to writing theses, dissertations, and books*, by Eviatar Zerubavel (1999).
- *The elements of style (4<sup>th</sup> edition)*, by William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White (1999).
- USC Writing Center,  
[www.usc.edu/schools/college/writingcenter/information\\_for\\_students](http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/writingcenter/information_for_students)

**Evaluation of Performance**

Course Project

Description of topic	05%
Initial search and gathering of literature on topic	05%
First draft of introduction and literature review	12%
Initial draft of method(s), including design of procedures and instrument(s)	15%
Review of and comment on peers' methods	05%
Final paper (revised introduction, literature review, and methods)	30%
Presentation of case studies (I)	03%
Presentation of case studies (II)	07%
Tests on Assigned Readings	03%
Attendance	12%
Participation in Class	03%

*Grading Practice and Philosophy*

This course uses the following grading scheme:

A	95% or higher
A-	90%-94%
B+	87%-89%
B	83%-86%
B-	80%-82%
C	70%-79%
F	69% or lower

To get a better sense of what these numbers mean, consider these scenarios.

You are a professional engaged by your client to deliver a service wrapped in the form of a project. The project earns a B+ to A- grade, if you delivered the service competently, on time, within budget, and with adequate quality. Your client is reasonably pleased, and you are on her short list of people to call for the next job.

To earn an A for the project means the equivalent of impressing your client, outperforming her expectations. For example, you manage to deliver on time and with quality even when the job scope and demands unexpectedly expand under unreasonable deadlines. This earns you the equivalent of being called first when your client has another job, or being asked to join the client's firm.

On the other side of the spectrum, a C represents a minimally acceptable result, often delivered grudgingly. An example of a C experience is this: You are at a local franchise restaurant ordering breakfast to go for your colleagues. The service staff packs your order, and moves on to the next customer. You check the bag, and realize that the receipt is missing. You ask for the receipt because you want to be able show your colleagues what their order costs. However, the service staff says, "No, I can't give you a receipt because the order is closed." You ask to talk to a supervisor. The supervisor comes to the counter. The staff and the supervisor then speak to each other in a non-English language, saying essentially, "What's her problem? Why the eff does she want a receipt for?" You understand perfectly the non-English language, and you say to them, "I need the receipt to show my colleagues, to collect money from them. So give me my effing receipt." The supervisor reopens the order, and gives you a receipt, making a tremendously displeased face the whole time. So, in this scenario, you got your food and your receipt, so the restaurant staff delivered, but the quality of your experience is poor. The restaurant in this scenario earns no better than a C.

More in terms of your performance in this course, an example of earning a C would be turning in a 12-page report when report asks for 20 pages, or otherwise failing to fulfill in the paper required criteria.

At end of the poor outcome spectrum, an F grade represents failure. This may occur when a student fails to attend more than half of the classes, or fails to turn in assignments, or does something remarkably bad, such as committing plagiarism.

### *Course Project*

The course project is an opportunity for you to learn more about topic (in the form of a question or a problem) interesting and important to you. The project is a multi-month effort that should represent your best intellectual and professional work to date.

Please refer to the document “Course Project Guidelines” for details.

The following are important administrative requirements about delivery of assignments:

First, all assignments must be posted on Blackboard’s Digital Dropbox and emailed to Ben Lee at [bblee@usc.edu](mailto:bblee@usc.edu) and Daniela Baroffio-Bota at [baroffio@usc.edu](mailto:baroffio@usc.edu). This is to ensure that all instructors have access to your work, and should the instructor with whom you are working be unavailable, another instructor can step in effectively.

Second, all documents must be in Microsoft Word format (to allow comments to be annotated on the document). If you are using Microsoft Office 2007 (with the .docx format), please convert documents to the .doc format.

Third, it is your responsibility to ensure that assignments are posted and received, not merely sent, by the deadline. There are significant penalties for late assignments (at best half of the normal score). Any late assignment still has to be completed and delivered, or it may prevent you from completing the course. These restrictions are designed to encourage behavior that will better lead to success in this course and in C597.

### *Presentation of Case Studies (I & II)*

The main objective of doing research is to solve problems. In using real-life cases and collaborating in groups, you will have an opportunity to practice that skill. Week 4 and Week 14 will provide you with the opportunity to join in groups and using assigned case studies, demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how the different research methodologies can be applied to the cases at hand.

On week 4, you will be divided into groups and presented with different cases to be analyzed and discussed as an in-class exercise. The subsequent case study exercise will be handed out to the groups on week 11. At this point of the semester you will be familiar enough with the various methodologies and analytical strategies necessary for “solving problems.” You will be asked to meet with your group on more than one occasion (in week 11 and week 12) to prepare and design an actual research plan for the objective(s) presented by your case. Acting as consultants, you will be asked to discuss how your group plans to tackle the issues presented by your case, and what recommendations you would make for further action. This exercise will culminate in a brief in-class presentation on week 13. For both exercises further information will be provided as we move closer to these dates.

### *Tests on Assigned Readings*

These tests are meant to motivate you to read the assigned materials. The tests will consist of no more than 10 questions in multiple-choice or short answer format, to be completed within 10 minutes. The answers will be given immediately after the test, and you will grade your own answers.

To do this, have two different colored pens: a blue pen to mark your answers, and a red pen to grade.

Why have these tests? They aim to give you the incentive to read the assigned materials before class. Previous experience with this class indicated that some students consistently avoid completing the assigned reading. Reading may be a chore, but it remains an important chore nonetheless. The readings are assigned to assist you in getting the most out of this class. Time in class is better spent discussing the important points in the material, rather than having the instructors transmit for the first time information that you can get from reading. With even a passing read of the material, we have a chance to learn more and more deeply, and have a better experience. Research on learning has consistently shown that students who engage with the material in multiple formats (e.g., through reading and then through listening in lecture) increase their absorption of the new knowledge.

*Attendance and Punctuality, Participation and Attention in Class*

Come to class. If you are not here, we cannot teach you, and you cannot learn from us. Attendance represents 12% of the total grade. Many of you are working professional and also have personal lives. So, we realize that you may be forced to miss an occasional class. You are therefore allowed one absence without penalty. Thereafter, each unexcused absence costs 1% of the total grade. Being absent from more than half of the classes opens the possibility that you may fail the course.

Note that several class sessions are devoted to meetings with instructors. During those sessions, there will not be formal lessons taught in a group setting. Instead, the time is for you to meet with the instructors to review your project progress. During such sessions, an in-person meeting or another form of communication constitutes attendance.

Come to class on time. Being on time is appreciated and is respectful to your instructors and peers. Being late will cost 0.5% of the total grade each time.

Come to class prepared to discuss and ask questions about the material. Asking a question or contributing to the discussion counts as participation. So do serving as respondents in your peers' research projects. Judgment of participation is based on the instructors' general impressions gained throughout the semester. If you participate frequently and enthusiastically, you will earn the full 3%. If you are silent or otherwise disengaged, you will earn 0%.

*Note on use of personal laptops during class.*

Many of you expect to be able to use your personal laptops in class. Laptops are useful tools, and distracting devices. We know that with your laptop in front of you, you will tend to IM, email, or watch YouTube videos while the instructors are trying to engage you in the lesson. As instructors, we find this very frustrating. Schools elsewhere (notably USC's Marshall School of Business) have banned the use of laptops in their classes.

We would not like to impose such a blanket regulation. Instead, we will operate on principles, and the operating principle is mutual respect. The instructors are committed to provide you the best possible learning experience for a difficult course to teach. In return, we ask that you extend us the basic courtesy of paying attention in class.

### **Academic Integrity**

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity code as detailed in the in the SCampus Guide. It is the policy of the School to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication Management program.

The School and the University is committed to the general principles of academic honesty that include and incorporate the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. By taking this course, students are expected to understand and abide by these principles.

All submitted work for this course may be subject to an originality review as performed by Turnitin technologies (<http://www.turnitin.com>) to find textual similarities with other Internet content or previously submitted student work. Students of this course retain the copyright of their own original work, and Turnitin is not permitted to use student-submitted work for any other purpose than (a) performing an originality review of the work, and (b) including that work in the database against which it checks other student-submitted work.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure this letter is delivered to your TA or professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in the Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

<p>Jan 15, 2008 (Tu)                  Jan 16, 2008 (W)                  Week 1                  All instructors</p>	<p>Discussion: Why do this?                  Walk through course syllabus; C540's relation to C597.                  Overview of the research process; Methods and theory.                  Start thinking about what you want to know more about.                  Avoiding plagiarism; Research ethics.</p> <p>Lesson Activity: Enroll in research ethics module.</p>
<p>Jan 22, 2008 (Tu)                  Jan 23, 2008 (W)                  Week 2                  Daniela</p>	<p>VENUE: To be determined.</p> <p>Readings: BRM, Ch. 4, pp. 83-96 (esp. how to define research questions);                  Ch. 7, pp. 162-166 (qualitative vs. quantitative approaches)</p> <p>Article: <i>Fishing the quantitative pool yields qualitative insights.</i></p> <p>Lecture &amp; Discussion: Library staff Susan Gardner on database resources.                  Daniela on asking questions, and starting your project; ingredients of a successful project, esp. the literature review;</p> <p>Lecture &amp; Discussion: Thinking qualitatively and quantitatively: Which is sexier?                  Assumptions and consequences of each approach.</p> <p>Project Activity: Search of materials on topic.</p> <p><b>Project Deliverable:</b> Initial description of topic with three tentative questions</p>
<p>Jan 29, 2008 (Tu)                  Jan 30, 2008 (W)                  Week 3                  Ben</p>	<p>Readings:                  APA, p. 306-316 (sample article), pp. 112-115 (organization of headings),                  pp. 117-122 (quoting sources), pp. 207-214 (citations in text),                  pp. 215-281 (reference list), especially pp. 215-216.</p> <p>Article: <i>The Science of Scientific Writing</i>                  Article: <i>Brand Community</i> (example of a good literature review)                  Paper: <i>Participating in Internet-Mediated Financial Markets</i> (example of an introduction and literature review).                  Brochure: <i>Avoiding Plagiarism</i></p> <p>Practice test on readings.</p> <p>Lecture &amp; Discussion: Writing the introduction and literature review;                  Following APA style; Avoiding plagiarism.</p> <p><b>Project Deliverable:</b> Results of initial search of existing studies on topic  <b>Lesson Deliverable:</b> Proof of passing of research ethics module.</p>

<p>Feb 5, 2008 (Tu)  Feb 6, 2008 (W)  Week 4  All instructors</p>	<p>Readings: BRM, Ch. 3, p. 56-70 (esp. concepts, constructs, operational definitions, hypotheses).  Ch. 11, pp. 278-287 (measurement nature and scales)</p> <p>Article: <i>Integrating Multiple Qualitative Research Methods</i>, by Hall &amp; Rist</p> <p>Test on readings.</p> <p>Lecture &amp; Discussion: Research Design: Thinking like a Researcher.</p> <p>Lesson Activity: Case studies – given situations and problems, how to research?</p>
<p>Feb 12, 2008 (Tu)  Feb 13, 2008 (W)  Week 5  All instructors</p>	<p>Project Activity: Meetings with instructors</p>
<p>Feb 19, 2008 (Tu)  Feb 20, 2008 (W)  Week 6  All instructors</p>	<p>Project Activity: Meetings with instructors</p>
<p>Feb 26, 2008 (Tu)  Feb 27, 2008 (W)  Week 7  Daniela</p>	<p>Readings: BRM, Ch. 7, pp. 166-185.</p> <p>Lecture &amp; Discussion: Overview of qualitative research: ethnography, observation, interviews, and focus groups. How to collect data given the qualitative question.</p> <p>Lesson Activity: In-class practice focus groups or interviews.</p> <p><b>Project Deliverable:</b> First draft of introduction and literature review.</p>
<p>Mar 4, 2008 (Tu)  Mar 5, 2008 (W)  Week 8  Mathew</p>	<p>Readings:  BRM, Ch. 9, pp. 214-229  BRM, Ch. 10, pp. 244-262  BRM, Ch. 12, pp. 300-315  BRM, Ch. 13, pp. 330-358</p> <p><a href="http://www.casro.org/survandyou.cfm">http://www.casro.org/survandyou.cfm</a>  <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milgram_experiment">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milgram_experiment</a></p> <p>Test on readings.  Lecture &amp; Discussion: Experiments and surveys; How to write good questions.</p>
<p>Mar 11, 2008 (Tu)  Mar 12, 2008 (W)  Week 9  Daniela &amp; Ben</p>	<p>Readings: TBD</p> <p>Lecture &amp; Discussion: Content analysis, discourse analysis.</p> <p><b>Project Deliverable:</b> Initial draft of focus groups moderator-discussion guide</p>

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<p>Mar 18, 2008 (Tu)  Mar 19, 2008 (W)</p>	<p><i>Spring Break</i></p>
<p>Mar 25, 2008 (Tu)  Mar 26, 2008 (W)  Week 10  All instructors</p>	<p>Readings: BRM, Ch. 6, pp. 141-156 (on research design, causality);  Ch. 11, pp. 287-295 (on good measurement)</p> <p>Lecture &amp; Discussion: Review of methods; issues concerning validity.</p> <p>Project Activity: Start recruiting for focus groups.</p>
<p>Apr 1, 2008 (Tu)  Apr 2, 2008 (W)  Week 11  Daniela &amp; Ben</p>	<p>Project Activity: Meetings with instructors; Start conducting focus groups.</p> <p>Case study preparation: Meet with team members</p> <p><b>Project Deliverable:</b> Initial draft of methods and design of procedures and instruments</p>
<p>Apr 8, 2008 (Tu)  Apr 9, 2008 (W)  Week 12  All instructors</p>	<p>Project Activity: Meetings with instructors</p> <p>Case study preparation: Meetings with team members</p>
<p>Apr 15, 2008 (Tu)  Apr 16, 2008 (W)  Week 13  All instructors</p>	<p>Case study presentation</p> <p>Project Activity: Start collecting survey data.</p>
<p>Apr 22, 2008 (Tu)  Apr 23, 2008 (W)  Week 14  Ben &amp; Mathew</p>	<p>Readings: Supplemental materials on data analysis and SPSS.  BRM, Ch. 16, pp. 459-463 (cross-tabulation);  Ch. 17, pp. 468-472, p. 478;  Ch. 14, pp. 374-380, 395-399 (why sample, non-probability sampling)</p> <p>Lecture &amp; Discussion: Quantitative data analysis; Sampling.</p> <p>Project Activity: Prepare for review of peers' methods.</p>
<p>Apr 29, 2008 (Tu)  Apr 30, 2008 (W)  Week 15  All instructors</p>	<p>Lecture &amp; Discussion: Qualitative analysis; Preview of C597.</p> <p>Project Activity: Review of peers' methods.</p>
<p>May 6, 2008 (Tu)  May 7, 2008 (W)  6:00 pm</p>	<p><b>Project Deliverable:</b> Final paper: Revised introduction, literature review, and methods.</p>