
	University of North Carolina at Wilmington Department of Communication Studies Communication 200: Research Methods Spring 2012 Section 001	
Course Information		
Professor: Rick Olsen	Office: 223 Leutze Hall	
Phone: 962-3710	Office Hours: 9-11 Monday through Friday.	
Email: olsenr@uncw.edu	Feel free to drop by or schedule an appointment.	
Class Time: MWF 8:00-8:50	Class Location: MO 100	

Syllabus

“The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on folly. Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed.” (Proverbs, 15: 14 and 22) **Application:** learn to research, think and work in groups effectively!

Research is not library work. Nor is it statistics. Nor is it field observation. Research is an argument. In particular, communication research is a process by which we answer questions and try to draw conclusions from information gathered about message-related behavior. (John C. Reinard, Introduction to Communication Research). **Application:** focus on changing YOUR processes for answering questions and solving problems!

Course Description

COM 200. Research Methods (3) Prerequisite: “B” or better in COM 105 and CSC 105. Restricted to pre-communication studies majors. Overview of research methods and how research is used to answer questions and support claims. Includes secondary, quantitative, qualitative and critical research.

Studying communication involves attention to attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and the **processes** of, as well as the **artifacts** that result from, and influence, communication behavior.

This course is about understanding and managing the challenges associated with researching communication. We will investigate some of the most basic and popular approaches to researching the phenomena of communication and learn how to effectively write up the results from those efforts. Command of this material will not only foster success in this class but in many of the classes in the major, across campus and a variety of internships, professions and life in general. This class is about asking and answering questions and solving problems: that’s a lifelong skill!

In a class this size, obviously there will be a fair amount of lecture, but your active participation is essential for this class to work. Come in with questions from the reading: What does it mean? What does it look like? How does it apply? How do we do it? These are all good questions and will help make the class meaningful for you. **You may submit such questions in writing if raising your hand is not for you.**

COM Department Learning Outcomes

The COM department is committed to four overarching learning outcomes. You will encounter assignments that address one or more of these outcomes. This course will stress outcome three but will help you gain abilities in each of these outcomes.

1. Capacity to construct and deliver an effective oral argument or performance of text, based on thorough audience analysis and clear rhetorical objectives.
2. Capacity to construct effective written argument or media product based on thorough audience analysis and clear rhetorical objectives.
3. **Capacity to conduct original primary research, locate and critically evaluate secondary research, and integrate such information into new communication products.**
4. Capacity to analyze and critique messages in all forms and across objectives from an informed, critical perspective.

Obviously we will use our time together to pursue the outcomes above by becoming better writers and speakers. Learning outcomes 3 and 4 are the primary focus for this course. More specifically, this course is intended to address the objectives below.

Student Learning Outcomes

This course fulfills the University Studies requirement for Information Literacy. Consistent with that designation, in completing this course the successful student will be able to:

1. Be able to determine the type and extent of information needed to solve a problem;
2. Access information effectively and efficiently from a variety of sources;
3. Evaluate information and sources critically and use sources appropriately in the context of research and argument;
4. Use the information gathered through secondary and primary research to inform specific purposes such as decisions, claims, understanding and appreciation;
5. Understand the legal, economic, social and ethical issues imbedded in the research process and conduct secondary and primary research that abides by common ethical and legal guidelines;
6. Demonstrate familiarity with common terminology used within communication research;
7. Describe worthy problem statements/research topics in a scholarly manner;
8. Design a reasonable research plan for researching a specific communication problem;
9. Express results of research processes in appropriately formal writing that adheres to APA style guide and college level writing expectations.

Please note that the above are *specific* course objectives. There are, of course, continuing obligations to grow as a person and continue to master the core skills and bring all that you have learned so far into the course as well: Your education and character are cumulative.

Texts and Other Materials: Reading the required material is an important part of this course. If you do not think you can commit to active reading of the textbook, this may not be a good time for you to take the course.

Required

Treadwell, D. (2010) Introduction to communication research: Paths of inquiry. Los Angeles: Sage.

This text is our primary text. Much of the lecture and exam material will focus on the concepts in this text. You are encouraged to visit the publisher's website for this text. There is a link from the COM 200 materials on [my site](#).

Hacker, D. (2008). A pocket style manual (5th ed.). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin.

This will help you write better which is a big part of your success in the major. It also provides guidelines for each of the three major academic styles: MLA, APA and Chicago. We will use the APA style in this class in other COM classes. It is compact and inexpensive and should be kept in your book bag at all times and used whenever you are doing formal writing. Do not sell this book back; you will need it for other classes.

Response Innovations RF Keypad. *This electronic device will be used for attendance and quizzes as well as informal assessment. You MUST purchase the touch pad at the bookstore and REGISTER the unit on the Blackboard 9 site for COM 200 or you will get zeros on the quizzes and attendance.*

Recommended but not Required

Pyrczak, F., & Bruce, R. R. (2000). Writing empirical research reports (5th ed.). Los Angeles: Pyrczak.

*This text will provide far more **explicit help on writing formal projects** than I can offer in class. If formal writing is not a strength for you, or if you do not tolerate ambiguity, you'll make significant use of this text—especially for research project two.*

*There are also many **FREE** and practical resources in the SkillSoft COM 200 folder. These include very practical guides on survey construction for managers, Statistics for Dummies and other sources that may address some issues you find unclear after reading our text. Use them!*

Course Policies

This course is conducted in a manner consistent with all UNCW and COM classroom policies. See Appendix A for some of the most critical policies.

Attendance: There will be daily quizzes in class using the individual keypads. So your final grade is directly affected with each absence. However, there is also a group dimension to this class and you need to attend class to be an asset to your group. Consequently, you automatically **fail the class regardless of the grade you currently have upon the sixth absence from class as evidenced by your sixth zero on a quiz**. If you must be absent, handle it responsibly: communicate with your group members and me so that you are prepared for the next class session. **You must present any counter argument for any posted zero within 24 hours of the class in which you received a zero: check your grades after each class!.**

Assignments: All work must be handed in on time unless *prior* arrangements have been made. No make-ups will be given unless there are extreme circumstances and such circumstances are handled responsibly. **If you cheat or plagiarize on any aspect of any assignment you fail the course. The ethical bar is set high for many reasons but please understand my seriousness on this issue: One intentional deception in this area will result in failure for the course. In the case of an F for academic dishonesty you cannot retake the course and will need to change your major or transfer from UNCW.**

Assignments and Grading: I will be using a modified plus/minus system:

90% and above = A	defined as excellent to exceptional work for a college student
80% through 89% = B	defined as above basic expectations of work for a college student
70% through 79% = C	defined as meeting basic expectations of work for a college student
60% through 69% = D	defined as substandard work for a college student
Below 60% = F	defined as significantly deficient work for a college student

You may keep up with your grades by dividing the points available so far by the points you've earned. The result will be a number corresponding to your percentage. For instance, after the assessment instrument and research project one, you have had the opportunity to earn 80 points. Let's assume your actual scores when added up come to 67. If you divide 67 by 80 you get .83 which is a solid B.

The learning objective outlined above will be assessed through the following assignments:

Assignment	Points Available	Points Earned
IRB Certification	30	
CBT training on group skills	30 (pass/fail based on certificate of completion)	
Research project one: qualitative interview	60	
Group Reflection Report	25	
Research project two conference	25	
Research project two: quantitative research proposal	100	
Peer evaluations	30 (three 10 pt evaluations)	
Exam one: secondary research (library exam)	100 (out of class group)	
Exams two and three (online)	200 (2 X 100 each)	
Final exam	100	
"Daily" quizzes based on readings, worksheets and class discussion	About 400 points (quizzes most every day at about 15-20 pts. each)	

Assignment Descriptions

All work, unless otherwise noted, must be typed and adhere to the APA style guide. Clear, error-free writing and attention to detail are big factors of your success in this class, your major and life in general. Manage your time accordingly.

I reserve the right to modify the schedule and assignments as needed.

Examples of *some* of the assignments may be found on my website:

<http://people.uncw.edu/olsenr/>

CBT: CBT stands for Computer-Based Training. Group skills are critical to your success in life and in the major. Although “small groups” does not appear in the title of the course, being an effective small group and small group member is a key factor in your success. So you will take a CBT on group skills and hopefully use this information to improve your group’s performance.

Exams: There will be three exams for the course.

Exam One: Library skills: The first will focus on developing your secondary research skills and writing skills. It will be an out-of-class exam to be completed in teams at the library and elsewhere on campus. Use this exam to become very familiar with how to access *quality sources* for your projects in this class and others.

Exams Two, Three: Course comprehension: These exams will be on-line exams taken in Blackboard. They are comprised of true/false and multiple choice questions. The exams will be open book but strictly timed. My suggestion is to prepare a summary sheet of key concepts based on your notes and a review of the final exam study guide (on my site) BEFORE the exam and then take it within the time limit for each exam.

Final Exam: A comprehensive exam that asks you to review what we’ve studied and put it all together. You may also have a page of notes and your APA style guide. Study guide is already on the web for you to reference. This will be an in-class exam during our final exam period. Please plan accordingly and bring one or two number two pencils to the session.

Some exam and daily quiz questions will be taken from the textbook website practice exams: Use those and the other resources on the site to prepare. The link is on my site.

Application Research projects: Throughout the semester you will do two projects to experience and apply some of the different methods we use to study communication. These should be very well written and error free. They should also adhere to the APA guide including font size of 10 or 12 point and Times New Roman font. On-line assignment descriptions and tutorials are available elsewhere on my website. Please contact me *early* with questions.

- 1) **Qualitative Research Interview:** You will use the tools and concepts discussed in class and in your text to carry out an interpretive/in-depth interview with one of your group members about a *communication aspect* of his/her life. You will use high quality sources to help you better understand the issues and create questions for the interview.
- 2) **Quantitative Research Proposal:** Your team will pick a research question on a communication topic of interest. Your team will then draft a proposal for simple, well-designed quantitative project. Details are available on the website. The optional text is very useful for this assignment. **This project is NOT related to Research project One and be started at any time.** There will be group conferences with me about the papers later in the semester.

Group Reflection Report: A brief experiential exercise that requires you to develop some connections between your Forte profiles (taken in COM 105) and the CBTs and your current group. This activity, if carried out authentically, should help your group do better on the group assignments in this class.

“Daily Quizzes”: Most every day we will have a quiz that uses the response card. Some questions will be asked at the beginning of class, some at the end. Many questions will focus on reading and worksheets but some will focus on answers that should have emerged from an in-class activity. **Always** bring your response pad to class!

Worksheets: While not individually graded, many response pad questions will come from worksheets that you fill out in response to *actively* reading the textbook chapters and selected journal articles. Reading these journal articles is essential to your gaining an understanding of the five canons (invention, organization, style, memory and delivery) as they relate to formal academic writing. Paying attention here will make the research projects and future writing much easier.

A Few Words About COM 200 as a Gateway Course

Some of you may be wondering why such a demanding course exists at the 200 level as part of a gateway into the communication studies major. Let me address that briefly here.

- 1) 100 or 200-level designation does not mean “easy” it means introductory. The material is challenging, the goals are ambitious, but we start at the beginning: what is research? That is why it is a 200-level course.
- 2) We need you to take this challenging course now to prepare you for the coursework ahead. You will draw upon the skills, work ethic and vocabulary developed here in other classes.
- 3) Many of the issues raised in this course were a result of asking the COM faculty “What do you want our students to know or do *before* they take your classes?” This is not “Dr. Olsen’s Chamber of Horrors” but rather a composite of things the *department* feels you need to know. My role is to help you master these departmental requirements. **I am your coach not your opponent.**
- 4) Please understand that there is a difference between “hard” and “unclear.” Some students complain that the assignments in COM 200 are unclear and they are not sure what to do. While this can happen, a student who actively listens in class and carefully reads the textbook and assignment descriptions on the web should have a pretty clear sense of what is being asked . . . but that doesn’t make it easy! Asking meaningful questions, seeking, finding and then clearly expressing insightful answers to such questions is HARD work, even if the goal and processes are fairly clear.

I will try and provide a rationale for why we are learning what we are learning. If at any point you don’t see the potential value of what we are learning feel free to raise a question in class or via email for me to address at the next class!

To resist the frigidity of old age one must combine the body, the mind and the heart - and to keep them in parallel vigor one must exercise, study and
love.

Karl von Bonstetten

To acquire knowledge, one must study; but to acquire wisdom, one must
observe.

Marilyn vos Savant

Group Work

(parts borrowed from Jennifer Chin)

Probably the biggest key to your success and satisfaction in this course (and MANY in the major) is working effectively together in your group(s). Groups are one of the most effective contexts we have for working on your communication skills and your core skills as well processing course material. In this class, you will be completing a significant amount of work in teams. Here are some key pointers on working in your group:

1. Take individual responsibility for the group's success. Do more than your share of the work.
2. Set up clear lines of communication and use them! Exchange e-mail addresses and phone numbers and learn how to send attached documents. Set up regular times to meet. More short meetings are better than 1-2 long ones.
3. Keep the assignment descriptions handy and make sure you are doing what is asked for.
4. Clearly define task responsibilities for each member and then hold each other accountable and edit and refine one another's work.
5. Communicate openly about problems you are having with the course or group members. Own your opinions—for example, don't say "you're not doing anything." Instead, say, "I am having difficulty seeing what you're contributing to this project."
6. Be respectful and civil with your group members even during disagreements and disciplinary actions.

Because of future expectations of group work in the major, it is imperative that the groups—and individuals—learn to work effectively together. Should a group member choose not to participate responsibly in your group, despite your best efforts to work with this person, you may elect to remove them from your group. The following policy will be used when there is a problem member.

- 1) You must show evidence that you have clearly expressed your concerns about the problem behaviors. This can be an email in which you CC me, or a conversation with the group member in my office.
- 2) It must be clear that the problem group member continued to engage in the problem behavior(s) after the concerns were expressed.

When determining the severity of the violation, use the following examples as a guide:

- Minor violations—being 15+ minutes late to a meeting without justification; having to miss a meeting you've agreed upon (but giving advance notice); forgetting to complete one or two aspects of a task
- Major violations—missing a deadline; not showing up to a meeting without notice; not completing an entire task; repeatedly ignoring communication with other group members, repeatedly doing substandard work

There are two possible consequences for a problem group member.

- 1) The group may elect to leave a member's name off of a submitted assignment and the group member would receive a zero. This would be necessary if the person did not do sufficient work on the project because the honor code at UNCW does not allow you to submit work on behalf of another student.

- 2) If there is a pattern of violations then the group member can be removed from the group. Please keep me in the communication loop about problems you are having in your group. I am more than happy to discuss recommendations for student-to-student intervention. Hopefully most situations can be remedied without having to invoke violations.

For the Removed Person: At whatever point in the semester a problem member is removed from a group he/she forfeits all rights to earn points based on remaining *group* assignments. That means he/she must earn a B (if still choosing the major) or better based on the points earned so far and the remaining *individual* assignments.

For the Remaining Group: The remaining partners will carry on as a team adhering to the standards required in the syllabus and assignment descriptions.

“The highest reward for your work is not what you get for it, but what you become by it.”
John C. Maxwell

Where can we get help?!? Should you or your group need or desire assistance in this course you are strongly encouraged to utilize the resources below. Be sure to bring assignment descriptions to the sessions.

THE UNIVERSITY LEARNING CENTER

Westside Hall, first floor

910.962.7857

www.uncw.edu/ulc

The University Learning Center’s (ULC) mission is to help students become successful, independent learners. Tutoring at the ULC is NOT remediation: the ULC offers a different type of learning opportunity for those students who want to increase the quality of their education. ULC services are free to all UNCW students and include the following:

--Learning Services (Basic Studies) <http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/uls/tutoring.htm>

--Math Services <http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/uls/math.htm>

--Study Skills <http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/uls/study.htm>

--Supplemental Instruction <http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/uls/si.htm>

--Writing Services <http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/uls/writing.htm>

Of course, I am also available for assistance when it is sought in a timely manner. Feel free to utilize my office hours, schedule an appointment or email me with questions. I can’t promise I’ll answer a late night last minute question, but I’ll do my best to help when and where I can!

Core Skills and Attributes Summary Sheet

The Department of Communication Studies offers a diverse array of courses and faculty. Below is a summary of some common attributes and objectives we seek to foster. We expect you to work with us to acquire and develop these outcomes through personal reflection on course content and through activities and assignments you encounter.

It is important to see this list as central, not comprehensive: Other concepts could easily be added. These were selected because they are foundational to pursuing other important outcomes and because they reflect an understanding of our discipline as an art, craft, and science. In each of our emphasis areas you will encounter assignments that require and seek to develop these traits.

You will often hear that “theory informs practice” in our courses. That is also true on this list. Some of the concepts are primarily “habits of mind” and focus on thought processes. Others are “habits of action” and focus primarily on behaviors. Clearly they work together: habits of mind should result in habits of action and certain actions can help refine habits of mind. Finally, remember that living by these concepts should be framed by a strong awareness of the *ethical dimensions, ideals and obligations* of whatever you are thinking, valuing, and doing. (The following list was adapted from *Megaskills* by Dorothy Rich).

Core Skill	Definition	Example From COM Experience/Curriculum
Confidence	Feeling able to do what you set out to do, mentally, emotionally, and physically.	Performance and writing assignments throughout the curriculum should work to instill confidence in your ability to speak and write well under pressure.
Intellectual Curiosity	Valuing and participating in experiences that comprise “the life of the mind”	Asking higher level questions in class. Connecting concepts, themes and behaviors between courses. Completing extra work of an academic or scholarly nature; participating in extracurricular opportunities, offered by the university that are academic or scholarly nature (e.g., attendance at lecture series or challenging artistic performance).
Responsibility	Taking control of the processes necessary to achieve what you set out to accomplish. This involves the coordination of motivation, initiative, and perseverance	Consistently meeting due dates and criteria of assignments. Honoring your advising appointments, office visits by being on time and prepared. Many assignments in various situations require responsibility; both as a member seeking positive final peer evaluation and in giving honest feedback.
Collaboration	Working well with others to accomplish a high quality outcome of a completed task, service, product or performance.	Panel presentations, video projects and many other COM assignments will require and foster collaboration. It is important to explicitly work on becoming a better team member, as well as completing the task at hand. Both process and product are important concerns.
Critical Thinking	Using sound reasoning, criteria, theories and definitions to explore specific questions or issues of concern.	Debates, class discussions and performance analyses, as well as essays that ask for arguments help to acquire and develop critical thinking skills.
Problem Solving	Coordinating all that you know and can do to bring about satisfactory outcomes.	Research and DIS projects, internships, extracurricular opportunities within the department (Advertising Club, CSS, PRSN, Lambda Pi Eta) as well as groups and organizations outside the department such as SGA and SBTV are all ways to demonstrate and refine problem solving abilities.
Civility	Showing regard for the dignity of other people and the importance of social expectations.	Respectful involvement in class discussion and performances (active listening and meaningful contributions). “Pulling your own weight” out of respect for your fellow group members as people. Being honest but tactful in peer feedback, interaction with faculty and other communication exchanges.
Praxis	Able to do what the theory or concept tells you to do with skill and self-awareness.	Making clear, insightful and recognizable connections in assignments that demonstrate your ability to connect course content to your own thinking, performance choices and habits. This concept speaks to your ability to put course vocabulary into practice.

Appendix A

This class will be conducted in a manner consistent with the following UNCW and COM department expectations and requirements.

University Statements

Academic Expectations Statement: “In choosing UNCW, you have become part of our community of scholars. We recognize that the UNCW learning experience is challenging and requires hard work. It also requires a commitment to make time available to do that hard work. The University expects you to make academics your highest priority by dedicating your time and energy to training your mind and acquiring knowledge. Academic success in critical thinking and problem solving prepares you for the changes and challenges you will encounter in the future. Our faculty and academic support resources are readily available as partners in this effort, but the primary responsibility for learning is yours.”

Honor Code: “It shall be the responsibility of every faculty member, student, administrator and staff member of the university community to uphold and maintain the academic standards and integrity of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington” (*Student Handbook and Code of Student Life*). All student work and conduct must be in accordance with the academic honor code and other codes informing the university community.

Disabilities/Accommodations: Students with diagnosed disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (962-7555). Please give me a copy of the letter you receive from Office of Disability Services detailing class accommodations you may need. If you require accommodation for test-taking please make sure I have the referral letter no less than three days before the test.

Safety: UNCW practices a zero-tolerance policy for violence and harassment of any kind. For emergencies contact UNCW CARE at 962-2273, Campus Police at 962-3184, or Wilmington Police at 911. For university or community resources visit <http://uncw.edu/wrc/crisis.htm>

Religious Observance: North Carolina General Statute 116-11(3a) and the UNCW policy authorizes a minimum of two excused absences each academic year for religious observances required by the faith of a student. Please provide written notice of the request for an excused absence within the first two weeks of class. You will be given the opportunity to make up any tests or other work missed due to an excused absence for religious observance if you follow these guidelines. Students must register this absence with the Registrar through Seanet.

The UNCW Statement on Diversity in the University Community: As an institution of higher learning, the University of North Carolina Wilmington represents a rich diversity of human beings among its faculty, staff, and students and is committed to maintaining a campus environment that values that diversity. Accordingly, the university supports policies, curricula, and co-curricular activities that encourage understanding of and appreciation for all members of its community and will not tolerate any harassment or disrespect for persons because of race, gender, age, color, national origin, ethnicity, creed, religion, disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, marital status, or relationship to other university constituents. Students with Disabilities information and resources available at <http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/disability/>

Department of Communication Studies Statements

Policy on Student Use of Electronic Devices in Classrooms

Faculty members in the Department of Communication Studies highly value technology, including various devices such as cell phones, MP3 players, and others. We believe, however, that these devices should not be turned on during class time. This is because their use in class distracts users and others around them, including the professor who is teaching the course. In short, these devices hinder the processes of learning and instruction. Further, using them in class reveals a student to be deficient in one of the core skills promoted by our department: civility (defined as “Showing regard for the dignity of other people and the importance of social expectations.”) Therefore, we expect that all students will turn off all electronic devices prior to the start of class. The only exception is laptop computers, and these may be used solely for taking notes. Laptops may not be used to log on to the internet during class time. If you are expecting an important call during class and believe you absolutely need to have your phone on, please let your professor know before class begins, and you will be instructed how to proceed.

Portfolio Preparation: One of the culminating experiences of a Communication Studies degree is the completion of COM 490: Discipline Capstone, a course that may include the preparation of a personal portfolio to organize and showcase your abilities. I encourage you to retain items from this class, whether produced independently or in groups, for inclusion as portfolio artifacts. Beyond the Discipline Capstone class, your portfolio may prove a valuable tool as you seek entry into a graduate program or employment in your area of specialization.

Course Completion and Gateway Requirements: Courses typically coded COM Majors ONLY may occasionally be opened to PCOM majors or all students. They may most commonly occur during summer terms. Please be aware, however, that to become a full status COM major, you MUST complete the gateway courses, COM 105 and COM 200, SUCCESSFULLY, *i.e.*, with a grade of “B” or higher in each. If you do NOT successfully complete those two courses, you cannot earn full COM major status even if you complete one or more COM classes apart from the gateway courses.

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