

**University of Texas at El Paso**  
**Communication Department**  
**COMM 4372 (12690): Methods of Research in Communication**  
**Fall 2023 Syllabus**

**General Information**

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**Virtual Office hours**

M-F anytime with appointment

Welcome! In this course, we are all learners and teachers. Your experience and capacities as human beings are valuable resources for us all. Respect for yourself and others is essential for creating a positive learning environment in this class. I look forward to working with you to make this happen.

**Course Overview**

The goal of this course is to increase the understanding of basic concepts and principles regarding the methodologies used in communication studies and research. This course will introduce you to the research and methods in the area of quantitative and qualitative research methods in communication. The course will also focus on other research methods in communication such as critical and cultural methods. The course will improve your understanding of communication from different research perspectives. Thus, the course will emphasize a broad approach to communication, and will address the significance of having and knowing various methods for communication research.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

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

- Outline the study of communication and its history
- Summarize research methodologies in communication
- Differentiate among research methodologies and compare the strengths and weaknesses of each
- Develop a working vocabulary of terms and concepts that relate to the methodologies used in traditional and contemporary communication research
- Select appropriate research methodologies based on your understanding of their influence on discoveries, conclusions, and outcomes
- Identify the requirements for reporting academic research and apply them to your own work
- Achieve gains in your communication, confidence, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills

**Required Materials**

Croucher, S. M., & Cronn-Mills, D. (2022). Understanding communication research methods: A theoretical and practical approach. Third edition. Routledge.

Other course readings, available on Blackboard.

**Recommended Materials:**

American Psychological Association (APA) Citation Manual, 6th Edition OR

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

**Learning Modules**

This course is designed using a modular format—that is, each week is “packaged” as a single module so that all the materials, lecture notes, submission areas, discussion posts are in one area for a given week.

**In Class/Online Expectations**

Students are expected to be respectful and supportive of diverse ideas which are welcomed and encouraged. We will discuss some controversial topics, and students must feel that they are comfortable to express their thoughts. As

your professor, I want to affirm the identities, realities and voices of all students, especially those from marginalized and underrepresented backgrounds. I also appreciate person-centered communication, including preferred gender pronouns, and respect for the experiences of others. For this course, students will be required to participate in weekly reading questions. Students will also have a collection of smaller assignments that will work to build toward the larger projects. Each of these activities will be given point values that add up to the total 100-point final grade. These points cannot be made up, so students are expected to stay active in the course by logging in/attending class and staying current weekly.

### **Attendance & Participation**

Your participation is vital for discussion and assignments, and it is very difficult to get a satisfactory grade in this course if you are not actively engaged in readings and course content. Assignments will be evaluated not only for completion, but also your reading responses about intercultural theories and concepts. UTEP is using a new version of Blackboard, so make sure to familiarize yourself with this new version before starting the course. This online course is being delivered as an asynchronous offering. Participation is determined by completion of the following activities:

- Reading/Viewing all course materials to ensure understanding of assignment requirements
- Participating in engaging discussion (grading rubric provided in the “grading information” area of each assignment)
- Participating in scheduled Blackboard assignments
- Other activities as indicated in the weekly modules

Because these activities are designed to contribute to your learning each week, they cannot be made up after their due date has passed. **If you are absent from class you will be unable to turn in your weekly RQ.**

### **Technology Requirements**

Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

You will need to have access to a computer/laptop, scanner, a webcam and a microphone. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and Java. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.

If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP’s Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about Microsoft Office 365 and follow the instructions.

**IMPORTANT:** If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

### **Course Communication**

This course is an in person offering there will be time to talk: during class time, small group meetings, and office hours. Ways we can keep the communication channels open:

- **Office Hours:** Mondays before and after class in classroom. We will not be able to meet on campus, but I will still have office hours for your questions and comments about the course. My office hours will be held online using your preference of: Blackboard Collaborate, Zoom or Skype at a time that we schedule via email (Monday – Friday):
- **Email:** UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24-48 hours of receipt. When e-mailing me, be sure to email from your UTEP student account and please put the course number and course title in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.
- **Announcements:** Check the Blackboard announcements frequently for any updates, deadlines, or other important messages.

## Netiquette

As we know, sometimes communication online and in person can be challenging. It's possible to miscommunicate what we mean or to misunderstand what others mean given the lack of body language and immediate feedback online or misinterpreted in person. Therefore, please keep these netiquette (network etiquette) guidelines in mind. Failure to observe them may result in disciplinary action.

- Always consider audience. This is a college-level course; therefore, all communication should reflect polite consideration of other's ideas.
- Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to the instructor at all times. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.
- Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted on in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space.

## Course Assignments and Evaluation

Assignments for this course are assessed according to rubrics. You can find these rubrics by clicking on the appropriate assignment link in Blackboard and choosing to "View Rubric" from the button beneath the Points Possible for the assignment.

**1. Syllabus Quiz.** Quick 2 question quiz to get you started with the basic requirements for the course. A "getting on the same page" evaluation.

**2. Class Facilitation/Article Presentation.** You will select a week to present. You will conduct class facilitation and article presentation on the same day. You will receive 5 points for Co-facilitating a discussion of the weekly chapter reading and 5 points for your article presentation. You will select a journal article that presents research to the class (this article will be different from the one you will use to operationalize your research). I will need to pre-approve your selection. You will email a pdf copy of your selected article to everyone in the class (including the instructor) a week before the Monday that you present. You will be docked 10 points if you do not facilitate or miss your class facilitation.

**3. Reading questions.** Each set of reading questions is designed to focus your reading of difficult texts and concepts. I will use the reading questions as a basis for evaluating your grasp of the concepts for that particular reading set in an online format. Try to answer questions as you read, but also remember that your answers may change as you continue reading. Reading questions will be graded for completion and for your attempt to answer questions (meaning: you don't always have to have the right answer, but you have to put forth a good faith effort). **RQ assignment can only be turned in if you are present in class. Reading questions should be submitted via Blackboard, by (11:59pm) on Wednesdays. Your response should be 1 page (single-spaced) Microsoft Word document (400 minimum - 600 words maximum DO NOT including questions in your response). Number your answers to questions in your responses as guideposts do NOT include the questions in your response. You must answer the full set of questions for each reading.**

For each reading assignment set, answer the following questions:

1. What do you think are the important points from the reading?
2. Which points are most intriguing or persuasive to you? Why?
3. What news articles or stories have you seen this week that relate to the theoretical concepts in the reading? Give at least one example in your discussion. (Look one up if needed).

**Purpose:** The purpose of the reading questions is to help you develop an understanding of the texts, so that you can build foundational knowledge and redefine the way we think about culture and its scope. Questions #4 and #5 are designed to help you think about real world applications.

#### 4. Research Proposal

Throughout the semester, you will develop a research proposal on a communication-related topic that uses one of the research methodologies we've studied in class. Details about the research proposal requirements are provided in the Research Proposal Module on BB Learn. This assignment is broken down into four parts:

- a. Topic and Research Question
- b. Literature Review
- c. Methodology and Data Gathering Plan
- d. Final Draft & Presentation

Your proposals and components are graded on content as well as structure, grammar, and correct spelling and language usage. I recommend that you work with the [University Writing Center](#) to polish your papers before submitting them.

Your presentation provides the opportunity to talk about your findings in an informal conversational manner. Powerpoint or visuals are permitted but should be limited. It will just be you in front of a camera/class talking with me/us about what your final paper. It will exemplify your ability to converse using the concepts, vocabulary and ideas you learned this semester. You can't discuss what you don't know – this is your chance to “tell” me/us what you know. The presentation must be 5 minutes long delivered in class and uploaded to Blackboard Learn (if class moves to online) by deadline.

Writing Expectations: You are in a senior class in the Communication Department. I expect you to write in a formal tone and to use correct grammar, spelling, sentence structure, etc. I also expect your writing to be clear, specific, and well-organized. If you feel you may need help in these areas, please contact the University Writing Center EARLY. You must also know how to correctly cite your sources in-text and build a correctly-formatted bibliography. If you do not know how to do these things, you must learn BEFORE turning in your work to me.

#### Grading

<u>Points for Assignments</u>	<u>Possible Points</u>
Syllabus Quiz	2 points
Class Facilitation/Article Presentation	10 points
Reading questions (12 x 4)	48 points (4 points each)
Research Proposal: Topic and RQ	10 points
Research Proposal: Literature Review	10 points
Research Proposal: Methodology & Data Gathering Plan	10 points
Final Research Proposal & Presentation	10 points
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Total points	100 points

#### Course Grading Scale

A = 90 –100%

An “A” grade is designated for assignments that go beyond the requirements of the assignment; exceptional and outstanding work, well written and argued.

B = 80 – 89.5%

A “B” grade is designated for assignments that go beyond some of the requirements of the assignment; better than average work, for the most part, well written and well argued, but with a few errors in writing or reasoning.

C = 70 – 79.5%

A “C” grade is designated for assignments that meet requirements of the assignment, but is average work; average writing, thesis lacks clarity, reasoning is insufficient, or errors in writing.

D = 60 – 69.5%

A “D” grade is designated for assignments that do not meet all requirements of the assignment; generally, less than average work, less than average writing, no thesis, reasoning is faulty, or substantial errors in writing.

F = 0 – 59.5%

An “F” grade fails to meet most of the requirements of the assignment; far below average work, faulty reasoning, massive errors in writing.

**Late Assignments and Incomplete Policy:**

Late assignments are not accepted. Generally, I find it unacceptable for students to turn in late assignments, unless there are extreme and extenuating circumstances. If your assignment is late, you will receive a zero for the assignment. All assignments in this course are due on Sundays at (11:59pm). A grade of incomplete will not be given for any reason, unless there are EXTREME extenuating circumstances AND you have talked to me in advance. Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.

**Alternative Means of Submitting Work in Case of Technical Issues:**

I strongly suggest that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. I also suggest you save all your work in a separate Word document as a back-up. This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, please contact the UTEP Help Desk. You can email me your back-up document by the deadline as a last resort.

**Excused Absences and/or Course Drop Policy:**

According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, “When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of “W” before the course drop deadline and with a grade of “F” after the course drop deadline.” See academic regulations in the UTEP Undergraduate Catalog for a list of excuse absences. I will not drop you from the course. However, if you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me know and then contact the Registrar’s Office to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an “F” for the course. We meet only once weekly therefore, you can not miss more than one class before being docked 10 points per class missed thereafter, unless we have made arrangements PRIOR.

**Scholastic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, copying answers from other students’ papers or tests, discussing test questions with students who have not taken the test, and/or using notes when taking a test. Another example of cheating is to use a source from a text book without obtaining the original author’s work. If you do not read a work in its entirety, you may misrepresent the original author’s work. Another example is to copy answers from another student or to allow another student to copy from your work. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as ones’ own. If you use the ideas or words of someone else, **you must cite the source** of the original information in your paper or presentation. For this class, using your own papers completed for another class also would be considered plagiarism. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. If you provide answers to someone or knowingly allow someone to copy your work, you will be held responsible. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline.

Invented or plagiarized work can result in an F grade for the course and may result in possible disciplinary action at the university level. Students may be suspended or expelled for engaging in academic dishonesty.

**Guidance on Artificial Intelligence**

The use of generative AI tools such as Chat GPT is permitted in this course for the following activities, which must be noted or cited:

Weekly RQ’s

However, you may not use AI tools to complete the following activities:

All Papers associated with this course pertaining to research project, Presentations or Final Presentation

Students must cite any borrowed content sources to comply with all applicable citation guidelines, copyright law, and avoid plagiarism. Instances that violate these guidelines will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

**Plagiarism Detecting Software:**

Some of your course work and assessments may be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used to review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

**Copyright Statement for Course Materials:**

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

**Class Recordings:**

The use of recordings will enable you to have access to class lectures, group discussions, and so on in the event you miss a synchronous or in-person class meeting due to illness or other extenuating circumstance. Our use of such technology is governed by the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and UTEP's acceptable-use policy. A recording of class sessions will be kept and stored by UTEP, in accordance with FERPA and UTEP policies. Your instructor will not share the recordings of your class activities outside of course participants, which include your fellow students, teaching assistants, or graduate assistants, and any guest faculty or community-based learning partners with whom we may engage during a class session. **You may not share recordings outside of this course.** Doing so may result in disciplinary action.

**Accommodations Policy:**

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, or email them at [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

**Letters of recommendation policy**

Letters of recommendation should be written by someone who knows you well, thinks highly of your work, and has had you in class before. For these reasons, I will only write letters of recommendation for students who I have had in two or more classes. If you plan on asking me for a letter of recommendation, you should provide me a copy of your resumé, UTEP transcript (unofficial is acceptable), the addresses and names of the people to address the letters, and descriptions of the programs to which you are applying. I will need approximately two weeks advance notice for writing letters of recommendation. This policy is also a good guideline to follow when asking anyone for a letter of recommendation.

**Illness Precautions**

Please stay home if you have symptoms of a communicable illness. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations.

## **Course Resources: Where you can go for assistance**

### **Technology Resources**

- [Help Desk](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

### **Academic Resources**

- [UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.
- [The Miner Learning Center](#): Join peer-led study sessions in person or online to review content and discover study strategies in core curriculum courses.
- [UTEP Edge](#): UTEP's cross-campus framework for student success and empowerment – develops students' assets through high-impact experiences made possible by the expertise and dedication of faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners.

### **Individual Resources**

- [Student Success Help Desk \(SSHD\)](#): Students experiencing challenges or obstacles to academic success including registration, financial, food, housing, and transportation resources may submit a ticket request assistance to [studentsuccess@utep.edu](mailto:studentsuccess@utep.edu)
- [Military Student Success Center](#): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.
- [UTEP Food Pantry](#): Non-perishable food items are available to students who are currently enrolled in classes. Bring a Miner Gold Card to Memorial Gym, Room 105, Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

## Course Schedule

Other reading assignments are listed by author's last name, and can be found on Blackboard. All readings from Blackboard are in the order that they appear on the syllabus schedule.

W	Date	Focus	Readings and assignments due Wednesdays before (11:59 p.m.)	
1	Week of August 28	Syllabus overview Course Introduction Welcome to Research Methods in Postmodern Culture: A Revisionist Approach <i>Brainstorm Interests How to look up articles (2)</i>	Read and print syllabus. <b>Take Syllabus Quiz.</b>	
2	Week of September 4	1. Introduction and Ethics 2. Social Scientific Paradigm <i>How to look up articles (2)</i> <b>LABOR DAY NO CLASS</b> virtual	Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 1 & 2 <b>Due: RQ #1</b>	1&2 SELF
3	Week of September 11	3. The Interpretive Paradigm 4. The Critical Paradigm	Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 3 & 4 <b>Due: RQ #2</b>	3 & 4



4	Week of September 18	5. Data 6. Evaluating Research Warrants <b><i>Getting Started APA</i></b>	Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 5 & 6 <b>Due: RQ #3</b>	5 & 6
5	Week of September 25	7. Hypotheses and Research Questions <b><i>Designing a Research Study</i></b>	Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 7 <b>Due: RQ #4</b>	7
6	Week of October 2	8. Ethnography 9. Interviewing <b><i>Bibliography</i></b>	Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 8 & 9 <b>Due: Research Proposal: Topic and research question</b>	8 & 9
7	Week of October 9	10. Focus Groups 11. Content Analysis. <b><i>Scholastic Writing</i></b>	Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 10 & 11 <b>Due: RQ #5</b>	10 & 11
8	Week of October 16	12. Discourse Analysis <b><i>Paper Organization</i></b>	Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 12 <b>Due: RQ #6</b>	12
9	Week of October 23	13. Surveys <b><i>Literature Review Debrief</i></b>	<b>Due: Research Proposal: Literature Review</b> Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 13 <b>Due: RQ #7</b>	13

10	Week of October 30	16. Experimental Design	Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 16 <b>Due: RQ #8</b>	16
11	Week of November 6	17. Mixed Methods <i>Feminist Methodology</i>	Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 17 <b>Due: RQ #9</b>	17
12	Week of November 13	18. Rhetorical Criticism <i>Methodology &amp; Data Gathering Plan Debrief</i>	Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 18 <b>Due: RQ #10</b> <b>Due:</b> <b>Research Proposal: Methodology and Data gathering plan</b>	18
13	Week of November 20	19. The Process of Critique <i>Internet &amp; Social Media Research.</i> 20. <i>Methods of Performance Report Format Debrief and Seminar Reflections</i>	Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 19 <b>Due: RQ #11</b> Read Crouher & Cronn-Mills (2022) Ch. 20 <b>Due: RQ #12</b> Prepare for final presentations. Meet virtually with Claudia if needed. <b>FINAL PROJECT DUE Sunday, November 26th 11:59PM.</b>	19 & 20

14	Week of November 27	Final Proposal Due and Presentations	<b>Final Research Proposal Draft Due</b> must be uploaded by Sunday, November 26th 11:59PM. <b>Final Presentations.</b>
15	Week of December 4-December 11	Finals Week	<b>NO CLASS</b>