

# PR 680: Journalism and Mass Communication Research Methods

Spring 2026 (Online)

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Instructor:	Dr. Sungwon Chung
Email:	schung2@bsu.edu
Office:	Art and Journalism Building, Room 300E
Virtual Office Hours:	10am–12pm (Tues), or by appointment, via Zoom Email me to schedule a virtual meeting appointment! For online students, “email” is preferred. I will respond to email daily.

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## **Interacting with the Instructor:**

The best way to reach me is by email. In your email, please include our course id “PR 680” in the subject line, and sign the email with your first and last name. I will try my best to get back to you within 24 hours in business days. If you do not receive a response, please email me again.

## **Course Description:**

This course is designed to provide students with details about how researchers ask and answer questions for public relations or advertising research. Students will review a variety of the basic quantitative and qualitative research methods of gathering data including survey, experiment, content analyses, field observation, focus group, in-depth interview, and so on. This course will provide some hands-on experience on the process of conducting empirical investigations, including reviewing basic statistical methods for evaluation of quantitative data and developing a survey questionnaire.

## **Course Objectives:**

The centerpiece of the course is a research proposal, in which students will explicate concepts, formulate research hypotheses and/or research questions, and propose the research method(s) that is (are) appropriate for the proposed research topic. This final project may serve as the first foundation toward a creative project or thesis. Additionally, the course emphasizes the ethical use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, by providing clear guidelines for their integration into the research process.

## **Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Increase knowledge about ethical issues while conducting human subject research
- Conduct primary and secondary research qualitatively and quantitatively
- Articulate and justify the research design for the chosen method
- Identify how the data would be analyzed
- Articulate problems and/or limitations that the researcher might experience in conducting this study
- Enhance proficiency in utilizing Generative AI Tools (e.g., ChatGPT) for academic research.
- Develop the ability to ethically integrate Generative AI tools into the research process.

### ACEJMC Core Values and Competencies

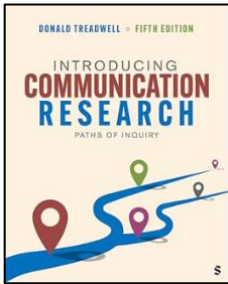
PR 680 is substantially aligned with the following Core Values and Competencies defined by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication:

- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- Think critically, creatively and independently
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts

### National Association of Colleges and Employers Career Readiness: Competencies

- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
- Oral/Written Communications
- Digital Technology

### Course Material:



- **(Required):**  
Donald Treadwell (2024). *Introducing Communication Research: Paths of Inquiry* (5th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, Sage. ISBN-13: 978-107188663-2  
\*\* You may use an earlier edition (3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>) of the same textbook, but you are responsible for any differences (including the order of chapters)
- **Jamovi**, free data analysis software: <https://www.jamovi.org/download.html>
- **(Recommended):**
  - The APA Publication Manual, 7th edition
  - Purdue online writing lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
  - Generative AI tools (free versions)
    - o ChatGPT: <https://openai.com/index/chatgpt/>
    - o Perplexity AI: <https://www.perplexity.ai>
    - o Google Gemini: <https://gemini.google.com/>
  - Zoom and AI Companion for Interview: <https://bsu.zoom.us>

\* **Ball State First Day Statement:** This course is part of our course material delivery program, Ball State First Day. The bookstore will provide each student with a convenient package containing all required physical books and any digital materials will be integrated into Canvas for this course. You should have received an email from the bookstore confirming materials provided for each of your courses and asking you to select how you would like to receive any printed components (in-store pick up or home delivery). If you haven't done so already, please confirm your fulfillment preference so the bookstore can prepare your materials. Students who do not want to participate in the First Day program may choose to opt out. See here: [https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/business-and-auxiliary-services/first-day#accordion\\_what\\_happens\\_if\\_a\\_student\\_drops](https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/business-and-auxiliary-services/first-day#accordion_what_happens_if_a_student_drops)

### Course Assessments:

Your final grade will be based on the following. Each will be fully explained during the class.

Components	%	Points
• Midterm and Final Exams @100pts each	33%	200
• 3 Discussion assignments @30pts each <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Reflection of the CITI training</li> <li>b. Presentation 1: Interview research findings</li> <li>c. Presentation 2: Survey research plan</li> </ul>	15%	90
• 3 Activity assignments @30pts each <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Activity 1: CITI completion</li> <li>b. Activity 2: Descriptive statistics and chi-square test</li> <li>c. Activity 3: t-test and correlation</li> </ul>	15%	90
• 4 Report Paper assignments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Report 1: Brief topic paper (30)</li> <li>b. Report 2: FGI/IDI interview questions (20)</li> <li>c. Report 3: Concept explication and hypothesis development (50)</li> <li>d. Report 4: Method for the survey research proposal (50)</li> <li>e. Report 5: Survey questionnaire (20)</li> <li>f. Report 6: Final research paper (including Reports 1-5) (50)</li> </ul>	37%	220
TOTAL	100%	600

### 1. Midterm and Final Exams (2@100pts.):

There will be mid-term and final exams (e.g., multiple-choice questions and short answers) using Canvas. Each exam will cover half of the course material, respectively, during the semester.

### 2. Discussion assignments (3@30pts.):

Discussion assignments are designed to facilitate interaction among students in the virtual class, as well as to improve your research and presentation skills using technology. First, you will post your own content (20pts. each), such as video presentations of your focus-group or in-depth interview research plan, your findings of the research, and the follow-up survey research plan. Second, you will provide two peer reviews for different students' work (2 x 5pts. each).

- A narrated presentation should be recorded in about 15 or longer minutes using Zoom, ScreenPal (formerly: Screencast-O-Matic), PowerPoint, or whatever will show your work and allow you to narrate.
- A reflection post will be your original messages to answer in 200-300 words.
- You will need at least two peer reviews in 200-300 words for this assignment.

Your content should be thoughtful and meaningful to demonstrate that you must put good effort in complete the assignment(s). Responses that fail to meet these standards will not receive a full credit. **Incomplete notation or late responses will receive a 0 point.** Specific direction will be provided with each assignment.

### 3. Activity assignments (3@30pts.):

You will also learn from several activities beyond the textbook. In Activity 1, you will complete Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training. In Activities 2 and 3, you will learn basic use of free data analysis software *Jamovi* for descriptive statistics, chi-square test, t-test, and correlation analysis for hypothesis testing.

#### 4. Report Paper assignments (220pts.):

You will complete a semester-long research project consisting of Discussion assignments and Report Paper assignments. The project is in two parts: one qualitative research using a focus-group (at least 5 participants) or an in-depth interview (at least 5 separate interviewees) method and one quantitative research using a survey method. Report 2 and Discussion 2 will be about your interview research in the qualitative research part (as a preliminary study). Reports 3-5 and Discussion 3 (presentation) will be about your survey research in the quantitative research part (as a follow-up study proposal developed based on your interview research findings). At the end, you will compile all your work and add new components to complete your Report 6 (Final research paper). A detailed guideline on what constitutes a good research proposal will be later provided.

All Report Paper assignments will be graded based on four main criteria: (a) how much this research is appropriate and theoretical for the chosen research topic; (b) how comprehensive and logical hypotheses are in their conceptualization and operationalization; (c) how appropriate the proposed research method(s) is (are); and lastly (d) how well the complete survey proposal paper is written, logically and professionally presenting the main messages of the proposal without logical fallacies. Detailed information and direction will be provided with each assignment.

- **Report 1: Brief topic paper.** Describe your possible research project topic.
- **Report 2: FGI/IDI interview questions.** List 10-12 interview questions (for focus group or in-depth individual interview) you will ask.
- **Report 3: Concept explication and hypothesis development.** Develop hypotheses and provide the rationale (including conceptualization of the key constructs)
- **Report 4: Method.** Describe your method including subjects, research design, operationalization of the examined variables, procedure, etc.
- **Report 5: Survey questionnaire.** Devise a complete survey questionnaire, including an informed consent form, to investigate your hypotheses.
- **Report 6: Final research paper.** Write a final research paper including new components + Reports 1-5.

**\*\*\* Note.** For all report assignments in this course, avoid using direct quotes and focus on paraphrasing instead. Paraphrasing not only demonstrates your understanding of the past literature but also allows you to integrate it effectively with your own ideas. Each use of a direct quote will result in a 2-point deduction.

All reports will be evaluated using **TurnItIn SimCheck** to ensure originality and prevent plagiarism. Excluding the bibliography, the similarity index must remain below 25% to reflect your original work. If you use AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT for brainstorming or proofreading), do so carefully and responsibly. A similarity index above 20% will result in point deductions, while a score exceeding 25% may indicate plagiarism or an overuse of direct quotes.

#### Grading Scale:

Grade	%	Grade	%
A	93% or above	C	73-76%

A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	63-66%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	77-79%	F	59% or below

### **Course Policies:**

#### Class Attendance and Participation:

This is an intensive hands-on course that relies heavily upon class participation and attendance. So, all online discussions, activities, and demonstrations are crucial to your success in this course and do contribute toward the final course grade.

#### Online Student Responsibilities:

Since this is an online class, you should be able to work around appointments and short-term interruptions as long as you don't wait until the last minute to complete/submit work. You must accept responsibility and be accountable for your work and due dates. So, with a week to complete work and the flexibility of the schedule, many excuses are not valid in terms of late work. Unexcused absences include forgetfulness, illness that did not require doctor/health center visit, internet/computer issues or trips out of town/vacation.

#### Absences for University Activities:

The University expects its units and programs that take students away from class meetings to schedule such events in a way that will minimize hindrance of orderly completion of course requirements. Such units must provide a written statement to the students describing the activity and stating as precisely as possible the dates of the required absence. The involved students must deliver this documentation to the instructor preferably before the absence, but in no event, later than one week after the absence.

#### Late Work:

No late work regarding exams and discussion posts is accepted. You have one week to complete the work. As an online student, technology issues are not an excuse. You must have a back-up/alternative plan for a computer crash or Internet issues. If you miss any written assignment, late submissions of the assignments will result in a 2 points deduction for each day's lateness. For example, if your original score for an assignment was 18 and you submitted 2 days after the due, your final score will be downgraded to 14.

#### Policies about Plagiarism and Fabrication:

Your work must be original. Seeking assistance or clarification for assignments is permissible, yet plagiarism or fabrication of any assignment component will lead to an "F" grade for that assignment and may culminate in an "F" for the entire course, or be escalated to the department chairperson with potential recommendations for suspension or expulsion.

#### Academic Misconduct:

All attending students are required to uphold principles of honor and adhere to conduct standards befitting the Ball State University community. The University anticipates students to exhibit conduct exceeding the minimum standards necessary to avoid disciplinary measures. Any instance of

dishonesty within academic work constitutes academic misconduct. Such behavior will not be tolerated within this class and will result in failure. This encompasses actions like cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and assisting or facilitating academic dishonesty, among others.

\*\*\* Please note that plagiarism is *\*not\** the only form of **academic** dishonesty. You're strongly encouraged to read the [Student Academic Ethics Policy](#) for more information.

#### Classroom Policies for AI-Generative Tools

As you work on and submit assignments this semester, know that using generative AI tools to complete your assignments is a violation of Ball State's [Academic Ethics Policy](#) *unless* the AI use is explicitly approved by the faculty member. In general, students may not submit any work generated by an AI program as their own. Doing so is plagiarism. In courses and assignments where AI use is permitted, faculty will have guidelines for that use. Work created outside of those guidelines will be considered an Academic Ethics Policy violation. If a student's grade is affected by an academic ethics violation, faculty are required to [report](#) the violation to the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs who oversees the Student Academic Ethics policy and maintains records of its violations. More information about the reporting process is available [here](#).

#### Required BSU Statement and Disability Statement:

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's [Disability Services](#) office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 [or dsd@bsu.edu](mailto:dsd@bsu.edu).

#### School's Writing Statement:

The School of Journalism and Strategic Communication regards writing proficiency as essential to the satisfactory completion of all journalism courses. Therefore, school instructors must monitor writing performance and language usage proficiency in all journalism courses. Student grades must reflect both criteria. You will be graded on your spelling, punctuation and sentence structure.

#### Professional in Residence:

The School of Journalism and Strategic Communication may provide virtual professional development and networking seminars each semester to provide industry insight and encouragement for our student majors. These events provide an opportunity for you to connect classroom instruction with current professional practices. They also help expand your professional network. The school may offer in person and/or Zoom presentations.

#### Student Rights Links:

It is your responsibility to be familiar with your rights and responsibilities as a BSU student. Please visit the following sites for relevant information: [www.bsu.edu/studentcode](http://www.bsu.edu/studentcode) Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities. This code includes appendices that contain Ball State's policies on academic dishonesty, policy and procedures for appealing final grades, student leaves for funerals, etc.

**Class Schedule:**

\* The instructor reserves the right to modify the course or assignment schedule as necessary. Any changes will be announced in class.

MODULE	TOPIC	READING/TASKS	ASSIGNMENT DUE
Module 1 Jan 5 -	What is Research? Research Methods Overview Developing Questions	Read the syllabus carefully Ch1 & Ch2 Getting Started Read Guidelines for Ethical AI Use in PR 680 Read the Direction for Report 1 assignment	By 11:59 pm (Sun) • Introduce yourself
Module 2 Jan 12 -	Writing Research	Ch13 Reporting and Presenting Research Results	By 11:59 pm (Sun) • Report 1: Brief topic paper
Module 3 Jan 19 -	Research Ethics	Ch3 Ethics The IRB Process at BSU CITI training	By 11:59 pm (Sun) • Activity 1: CITI completion
Module 4 Jan 26 -	Bibliographic Research	Ch4 Resources for Research	By 11:59 pm (Sun) • Discussion #1: Reflection of CITI training experience
Module 5 Feb 2 -	Qualitative Research: Watching and Listening	Ch12 Qualitative Understanding of Behaviors and Attitudes • Focus-group and in- depth interview Read the Direction for Discussion 2 assignment	By 11:59 pm (Sun) • Report #2: FGI/IDI Interview questions
Module 6 Feb 9 -	Sampling	Ch6 Sampling: Who, What, and How Many?	
Module 7 Feb 16 -	FGI/IDI research continued...	Read the Direction for Report 3 assignment	By 11:59 pm (Sun) Discussion #2: Interview research findings
Module 8 Feb 23 -	Midterm Exam	Midterm exam (Ch. 2, 3, 4, 6, 12, 13)	
Module 9 Mar 9 -	Quantitative Research I	Ch5 Measurement: Research Using Numbers Revisit Ch2 for hypothesis development Read the Direction for Reports 4 and 5 assignments	By 11:59 pm (Sun) • Report 3: Concept explication and hypothesis development
Module 10 Mar 16 -	Quantitative Research II	Ch8 Surveys	
Module 11 Mar 23 -	Quantitative Research III	Ch9 Experiments: Researching Cause and Effect Ch10 Quantitative Understanding of Content • Content analysis	By 11:59 pm (Sun) Discussion #3: Survey research plan

Module 12 Mar 30 -	Quantitative Data I: Descriptive Statistics	Ch7 Summarizing Research Results and Chi- Square Test	
Module 13 Apr 6 -	Quantitative Data II: Inferential Statistics	Ch7 Generalizing from Research Results, t Test, Correlation, and Regression Read the Direction for Report 6 assignment	By 11:59 pm (Sun) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report 4: Method</li> <li>Report 5: Survey questionnaire</li> </ul>
Module 14 Apr 13 -	Data Analysis I	Jamovi activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Descriptive statistics and chi-square test</li> </ul>	By 11:59 pm (Sun) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity 2: Descriptive statistics and chi-square test</li> </ul>
Module 15 Apr 20 -	Data Analysis II	Jamovi activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>t-test and correlation analysis</li> </ul>	By 11:59 pm (Sun) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity 3: t-test and correlation analysis</li> </ul> <b>** Extra credit opportunity</b>
Module 16 April 27 - May 1	Final Exam Final Research Paper	Final exam (Ch. 5, 7, 8, 9, 10)	By 11:59 pm (Fri) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report 6: Final research paper (including Reports 1-5)</li> </ul>