SIM/UB Undergraduate Program
COM 205: Research Methods
Summer 2016

Instructor:	Dr. Gregory D. Saxton, Associate Professor, University at Buffalo
Class Time:	Section A: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 12:00 – 2:30pm
	Section B: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 3:30 – 6:00pm
Classroom:	Please refer to electronic signboard
Office Hours:	Section A: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: immediately after class
	Section B: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: immediately after class
Office Location:	Please refer to electronic signboard
E-mail:	gdsaxton@buffalo.edu

Textbook

There is one assigned textbook for this course along with additional articles:

> Trochim, W., Donnelly, J., & Arora, K. (2015). *Research methods: The essential knowledge base.* 2nd edition. Cengage. ISBN-10: 1133954774

All other required readings will be made available in class and/or on the UBLearns course website.

Course Description

COM205 introduces the scientific methods used by communication scholars to examine interpersonal, small group, organizational, international/intercultural, telecommunications, and mass communication processes. The class introduces the logic and procedures of scientific inquiry. This course focuses on *research design* guided by the *scientific method*. The course is organized around key components and stages of the scientific research process: topic selection, research questions, hypothesis development, research design, data-gathering method (experiment, field study, qualitative), sample selection, operationalization and measurement, and managing, exploring and understanding your data. The principles and practices you learn here are fundamental to any form of research – whether applied or academic.

Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students successfully completing the course should be able to do the following:

Student Learning Outcome 1: Students will be familiar with the language of variables such as the various types of variables, their relationships, and the differences between conceptual and operational definitions.

Student Learning Outcome 2: Apply the principles of variable conceptualization and measurement.

Student Learning Outcome 3: Understand and apply the logic of causal order.

Student Learning Outcome 4: Understand hypothesis testing and be able to distinguish between one-tailed and two-tailed hypotheses.

Student Learning Outcome 5: Develop the ability to critically evaluate empirical research.

Student Learning Outcome 6: Understand the concepts of reliability and validity and be familiar with the threats to validity in empirical research.

Student Learning Outcome 7: Identify, explain, apply, and report basic descriptive and inferential statistics.

Student Learning Outcome 8: Understand, apply, and evaluate communication research designs and methods.

Student Learning Outcome 9: Understand different sampling methods and describe the advantages/disadvantages of probability and nonprobability samples.

These outcomes will be assessed through class participation, tests, group projects and in-class activities.

Course Requirements and Assessment

Students can earn a total of up to 1,000 points in this class, which will be converted to percentage and then the final letter grade. The four components of this grading system include:

- **2 Tests (600 points)**: These tests will include multiple choice and true/false questions to assess your learning.

- **Final Project (200 points)**: At the end of the semester there will be a brief applied research project. This project is aimed at engaging students to apply and showcase what they've learned.

- **Participation, Quizzes, and Attendance (200 points)**: Your participation over the course of the semester is worth a total of 200 points. This component includes your participation and contributions in class as well as your performance in several short quizzes.

Grading

The grade scale is as follows, which will be applied to each assignment and the final grades in the course:

UB Letter Grade	% Equivalent	Interpretation
A	**93 – 100**	High Distinction
A-	**90 – 92.9**	High Distinction
B+	**87 – 89.9**	Superior
B	**83 – 86.9**	Superior
B-	**80 – 82.9**	Superior
C+	**77 – 79.9**	Average
C	**73 – 76.9**	Average
C-	**70 – 72.9**	Average
D+	**67 – 69.9**	Passing Grade
D	**60 – 66.9**	Minimal Passing Grade
F	**0 – 59.9**	Failure

Expectations

This is an intense course, so you will be busy! Above all, I will expect you to take responsibility for your course work. I am here to help you in any way that I can but, ultimately, the responsibility for your success in the course is your own. Experience suggests that students who maintain contact with me, who submit assignments in a timely fashion, who participate in the discussions frequently and ask insightful questions are usually highly successful. Students who take short cuts on their reading assignments, who "lurk" in the class discussions without sharing their thoughts and ideas, who consistently miss deadlines, and who don't ask questions are the ones who do poorly.

That said, I am here to help you accomplish your goal of successfully completing this course. I promise that my comments will be constructive and helpful. If something you are doing is not up to standard, I will let you know and suggest ways to improve your work. Above all, please keep in touch. If you are having trouble with something and don't understand, let me know. Please don't let little problems go unresolved until they become big problems.

Good luck in your studies and remember, I am here for you. Be prepared for a challenging course. I think you will enjoy it!

General UB Program Policies

Attendance and active participation is expected by all students in every class. Students are expected to be present for the entire duration of each class. Tardiness to or absenting oneself during class will result in a deduction from the attendance and participation portion of the final grade.

Late assignments, if accepted, will be penalized.

Students who are absent from a **midterm exam** must request a make up exam from the course instructor; a make up will be given only if there is an appropriate, documented reason for absence from the exam (such as an MC); any disputes regarding the validity of the reason or the documentation may be referred to the student advisor.

Students who are absent from a **final exam** must formally request a make up exam in writing to Mr. Christopher Kohler, Assistant Resident Director, within 24 hours of the original exam. The make up

exam request form can be found in SIMConnect. In all cases, supporting documents must be provided and a make-up exam will only be scheduled if there is a valid and appropriate reason for the absence. For example, prior commitments to external activities or events outside of SIM are not considered a valid reason for absence. For medical cases, students must submit a detailed letter from the doctor**,** highlighting the date of the medical consultation, the nature and the severity of the illness, and how the illness prevented them from taking the scheduled exam. **Medical Certificates (MC) will not be accepted for make-up final exams.** Disputes may be referred to the Resident Director.

There will be no make ups for other course assessments, and students who are absent from such assessments will receive a zero.

UB Statement of Principle on Academic Integrity:

The University at Buffalo has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for appropriate citation of sources, and for respect for others' academic endeavors. By placing their name on academic work, students certify the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements.

Additionally, students are expected to understand and abide completely by the following guidelines for academic integrity in all UB courses:

Plagiarism, cheating, and other incidents of academic dishonesty will result in an **automatic failing grade for the course.** Depending on the severity of the violation, your case may also be reported to UB for further investigation and may result in expulsion from the university.

Plagiarism consists of copying work from another source without giving proper citations. You must not copy information from printed materials, internet sources, or from the work of other students. If you are uncertain about how to submit your work correctly, consult the instructor immediately.

Any claim of ignorance of the rules of academic integrity by any student is unacceptable.

Accessibility Resources for Students with Disabilities

Reasonable Accommodation refers broadly to reasonable modifications of policies, practices, and procedures as necessary to ensure that persons with disabilities have the same opportunities as others in all programs, services, and benefits of the University at Buffalo. Anyone with a disability who needs reasonable accommodations in the SIM-UB Program should refer to the Student Handbook (available online via SIMConnect) for further information, or consult the Resident Director.

Scheduled Topics and Assignments

	Date	Topics
Week 1	May 30 Monday	Introduction & Overview; Discuss course syllabus and schedule
	May 31 Tuesday	Ethics
	June 2 Thursday	Conceptualization and Measurement
Week 2	June 6 Monday	Theory and Design
	June 7 Tuesday	Sampling
	June 9 Thursday	***Test 1***
Week 3	June 13 Monday	Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Design
	June 14 Tuesday	Univariate Statistics
	June 16 Thursday	Hypothesis Testing
Week 4	June 20 Monday	t-Test
	June 21 Tuesday	Chi-Square Test
	June 23 Thursday	***Test 2***
Week 5	June 27 Monday	`Big Data' Methods (I)
	June 28 Tuesday	`Big Data' Methods (II)
	June 30 Thursday	*Final Presentations* Audience Questions and Critique
Week 6 Final	July 5 Tuesday	Final meeting 10:00am – 12:00pm