

**Sam Houston State University**  
Department of Mass Communication

Syllabus for **MCM330W.01and 02: Information Analysis** (Credit 3)  
Spring 2008

Instructor: Q. Rene Chen, Ph.D.  
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Dan Rather Communications Bldg.  
Phone: 936 294 1347 (O)  
Office hours: 2:30-3:30 pm or by appointments

Class Time: TUTH 0500-0620  
MW 0300-420  
Classroom: CB205 and LDB407  
Email: [qrc001@shsu.edu](mailto:qrc001@shsu.edu)

***Textbooks***

Wickham, Kathleen Woodruff (2003) *Math Tools for Journalists*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Oak Park, IL:Marion Street Press, Inc.

Radford, Marie, L., Barnes, Susan B. & Barr, Linda R. (2006). *Web Research: Selecting, Evaluating, and Citing* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Boston: Pearson Education.

***Course Description***

Comparative survey of communication investigation, including practical training in ethnical gathering, interpretation and presentation of data. Students will be introduced to information-gathering methods including direct interviewing, questioning techniques, electronic document retrieval and manipulation, database management and Internet skills. Prerequisite: MCM132. Credit 3.

***Course Objectives***

This course introduces students to skills and processes necessary to successfully complete advanced communication courses. Students will become competent in discerning methods of research gathering, problem solving and critical thinking necessary for the successful manipulation of information in the mass media. The goal is to give students a solid foundation in analysis, problem-solving and data gathering necessary for successful employment in mass media.

At the completion of this course, students will have the skills to:

- 1) Compare and contrast primary and secondary data collection methods,
- 2) Design a variety of data collection instruments,
- 3) Prepare and validate data for various distribution venues,
- 4) Analyze a communication scenario to determine the most effective strategy to frame the problem, and
- 5) Understand the roles of law and ethics on data gathering.

***Assignments:***

1. Web search project: use web tool for information gathering
2. Databases: use databases for research
3. A news story: research for a news story
4. Working with numbers: working with quantitative data
5. Final group project: A research project on an issue related to mass communication and journalism

***Grading Plan***

- 1) Four individual projects at 50 points each, possible points: 200
  - 2) In-class exercises: 10 each x 20 = 200
  - 3) Final group project at 150 points
  - 4) Attendance/participation: 50 points
- Total: 600

A: 500 – 450    B: 449 – 400    C: 399 – 350    D: 349 – 300    F: < 299

**Equipment & Supplies:**

You may wish to have a portable storage device to use for backing up files.

**Course schedule by week (topics may be subject to change, and additional reading may be added)**

<b>Weeks</b>	<b>Topics</b>
1st:	Syllabus and Introduction
2 <sup>nd</sup> :	Writing and implementing a research plan
3 <sup>rd</sup> :	Web search tool
4 <sup>th</sup> :	Evaluation of information
5 <sup>th</sup> :	Public information requests
6 <sup>th</sup> :	Database
7 <sup>th</sup> :	Getting approval for research
8 <sup>th</sup> :	Questioning, surveys, focus groups
9 <sup>th</sup> :	Basic statistics for journalists
11 <sup>th</sup> :	Working with numbers
13 <sup>th</sup> :	Information analysis
14 <sup>th</sup> :	Presentation skills – writing reports, PowerPoint presentation
15 <sup>th</sup> :	Group project presentation
16 <sup>th</sup> :	Group project presentation
17 <sup>th</sup> :	Examination week

**Q Drops**

A Q drip is a drip made after the last date for tuition refunds, which is the 12<sup>th</sup> class day for fall/spring semesters (Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> for this semester), and the 4<sup>th</sup> class day for summer semesters, but before the date for which a drop would result in the grade of F as published in the Academic Calendar

Students will be allowed no more than five Q-drops during their academic career at Sam Houston State University. Classes that are dropped prior to the Q-drop date will not count towards the limit. Students who have used their limit of five Q-drops will need to petition their respective dean to drop a class. If the dean refuses to grant permission to drop a class, a student will be required to remain in the class. This limit will take effect with the start of the fall 2004 semester. Any drops accumulated prior to the fall 2004 semester will not be included in the five Q-drop limit, nor will Q-drops from other universities.

**Instructor Evaluations**

Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester. A new faculty evaluation system for SHSU, the IDEA that is somewhat different than the previously used FES forms, will be used starting this semester.

**Academic Dishonesty**

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The university and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

**Americans With Disabilities Act**

Students with disabilities covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act should go to the counseling Center and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in a timely manner to obtain the documentation required. Students are responsible for initiating the process of documenting the need for an accommodation under the ADA act.

**Religious Observance**

University policy allows for student to observe religious holy days without penalty. If you intend to miss class as a result of the observance of a religious holy day or as a result of the necessary traveling time required for religious observance, such as absence will not be penalized so long as you have notified the instructor in writing of the dates and times of class sessions that are missed. The deadline for notification is the 12<sup>th</sup> class day published in the Academic Calendar. Students absent from class as a result of religious observance are required to submit any due assignments immediately on their return to the classroom. Makeup tests and quizzes will also be provided on return to the class.

**Visitors in the Classroom**

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

**The above syllabus is subject to changes. However, you will be notified of such changes beforehand.**