

MCM 330 :

Instructor: Beverly Narum Roth, adjunct instructor of Mass Communication

Office: Room 128, Dan Rather Communication Building

Office hours: 9:30-11 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays or by appointment

Phone: 713.256.6533 (cell); 936.294.3977 (office); 936.327.2107 (Livingston)

E-mail: JRN_BXR@shsu.edu (You can click this in Blackboard along with email addresses for all your classmates.)

Texts:

Research Strategies for a Digital Age by Bonnie Tensen (second edition)

Math Tools for Journalists by Kathleen Woodruff Wickham (second edition)

Catalog description

This course provides a comparative survey of communication investigation, including practical training in ethical 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: MCM 132)

Course objectives

This course introduces students to skills and processes needed to successfully complete advance communication courses. After completing the course, students should be able to:

1. Compare and contrast primary and secondary methods of collecting information;
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;
5. Understand the roles of law and ethics in gathering and assessing data.

Grading:

Quizzes, exercises, homework: 30 percent

Individual project: 40 percent

Final group project: 20 percent

Class participation/attendance: 10 percent

As per university policy, grades are assigned on this scale:

90-100 percent = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79=C; 60-69=D;

below 60= don't go there.

Deadlines: Students will be expected to meet deadlines or lose points on major assignments. Short assignments may not be turned in late without an excused absence.

It is your responsibility to check Blackboard for assignments.

Assignment preparation: All assignments should be professionally prepared (typed with appropriate computer-generated support materials such as charts, Power Point, etc.)

Time requirements: Expect to attend the full 80 minute class session twice a week. You also will be assigned out-of-class readings and projects. You should allow at least two out-of-class hours of preparation for every hour you spend in class.

Attendance policy: Class attendance will be recorded. Any unexcused absences will count against your participation grade. Perfect attendance will help your grade. Advice: Save your absences for illness or emergencies.

To get an excused absence, please bring a doctor's note confirming illness or other documentation to explain why your absence should be excused. If you have a question, please check with me in advance.

Academic Honesty

Ethical behavior is the cornerstone of responsible journalism. Honesty is expected – and demanded – of all students. 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.

Students should be aware that the instructor examines all assignments and exercises for evidence of plagiarism and/or collaborative work and may use computer programs such as **Turnitin.com or Internet search engines** to check student papers. Be sure to give credit to any sources by using proper attribution.

While it is sometimes appropriate and encouraged for students to discuss concepts and ideas, it is never permissible to work collaboratively on written or production assignments unless they are part of a group project.

Evidence of plagiarism in a written assignment or cheating on a test will result in a zero for that assignment or test. (Students may appeal any penalty to the department chair, the dean and to the vice president for academic affairs (whose decision shall be final) before imposition of the penalty.

Classroom Conduct

Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process.

Cellular telephones, pagers, iPods and any other electronic devices must be turned off and put away before class begins to avoid penalties. Do NOT send text messages or answer a vibrating phone during class or you will be penalized.

No eating, drinking or smoking is permitted in computer labs. Please turn off the computer screen while instructors or guests are talking unless otherwise instructed or by permission.

Avoid reading newspapers (unless part of an assignment), sleeping, talking at inappropriate times and wearing inappropriate clothing. Do not wear hats that shade faces. Plan ahead to avoid disrupting class for restroom breaks.

Engage in lively discussion, but respect the opinions of others.

Students who are especially disruptive may be reported to the dean of students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.

Sam Houston Writing Center

The Writing Center provides free services to SHSU students, faculty and staff. It is located in Farrington Building, Room 111. Use this resource to improve your writing skills and perhaps your grades.

Student Absence on Religious Holy Days Policy

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911(a)(2) defines religious holy days as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code..." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 says a student desiring to miss a scheduled class in order to observe religious holy day(s) shall present a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will notify the student of a reasonable time frame in which complete missed assignments and/or exams.

Americans with Disabilities Act

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that students otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participating in any academic program. Also, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs or be subjected to discrimination.

Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. No accommodations can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with instructors to develop appropriate strategies and helpful procedures to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential.

Q-Drops

A Q-drop is a class dropped after the last date for tuition refunds (12th class day for fall/spring) but before the date for which a drop would result in the grade of F. For **Fall 2007, Sept. 5** is the last day to drop without getting a Q-drop. **Oct. 10** is the last day to drop without a grade of F and the last day to resign without receiving WP or WF. **Dec. 6** is the last day to resign.

SHSU students are allowed only FIVE Q-drops during their academic careers. Students over the limit must petition their respective deans for drops. *Note:* A class dropped prior to the Q-drop date will not count toward the limit.

Visitors in the Classroom

Any unannounced visitor to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. If the visitor is not a registered student, please ask me a day or two in advance if the person may come to class. Do not bring pets to class.