

**Comm 2124**

**CRN: 12992**

**Dr. Megan Duncan**

**Class:** 12:30 to 1:45 p.m. Tuesday and Thursdays

**Room:** Online using Zoom. Please check the Canvas site to find the Zoom link.

**Office hours:** 10 to 11 a.m. Wednesday; 2 to 3 p.m. Thursday

**Office hours Zoom link:** <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/97386738025>

[\(Links to an external site.\)](#)

**Final Exam time:** Saturday, May 8

### **Welcome to Communication Research!**

This course enables students to develop proficiency in basic skills of communication research. Communication research is about solving puzzles about how people interact with each other and media. The purpose of this course is to help you be a better communicator by understanding the science of these interactions. It will also help you be a better citizen in democracy as you can evaluate research and factual claims better. We'll also talk about the types of careers that require the skills covered in this course. At its core, we'll cover research concepts, approaches and methods. Students will complete several applied assignments as well as exams and quizzes to show their mastery of topics. At the completion of this course, students should possess an understanding of research processes and procedures. The course objectives are as follows:

## **Course Objectives**

1. Define research terms and research contexts
2. Distinguish the advantages and disadvantages of academic and professional research uses
3. Distinguish the advantages and disadvantages of various research methods and methodologies
4. Identify procedures for analyzing research fundamentals

5. Identify procedures for developing qualitative and quantitative research
6. Demonstrate ability to apply research fundamentals to research contexts

## Required Textbook and Readings

Introducing Communication Research: Paths of Inquiry. Donald Treadwell and Andrea Davis. FOURTH EDITION. 2020. Sage. ISBN 9781506369051

This is the newest edition of the book, and it is important to get this edition. You're looking for the one with a yellow cover.

You can purchase or rent the textbook from any vendor. It is also available from the publisher as an electronic version or to rent at the following link:

<https://us-sagepub-com.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/en-us/nam/introducing-communication-resear>

[Links to an external site.](#)

Additional online readings will be required and are available in Canvas.

## Course structure

I have chosen to use a course structure that most closely resembles a flipped classroom. This means that I ask that you complete reading, videos, and short activities before class starts. Then, in class, we will spend most of the class period applying and discussing what you learned in group and individual activities. We'll end most classes

with a 5-minute reflection in Canvas. This will serve to both check your comprehension of the class activity and your class engagement.

For each class meeting, you'll find a Module in Canvas. The Modules are numbered X.Y, where the number in the place of X is the week of the semester and the number in the Y place is the meeting of the week.

### **Engagement:**

You have chosen to take an online synchronous course. I expect you to attend the course via Zoom for our scheduled time period, to arrive on time, to have your camera on, and to participate in discussions and activities. I incentivize this through daily reflections that are due at 9 p.m. the day of class. See the assignments section for more details. You will get the most out of this class if you participate actively and in real time. If something prevents you from turning on your camera or participating, please contact me.

## **Groups**

Much of the in-class meetings will center cooperative learning. This is a valuable career skill, as you'll see in Module 1.2. It's also an efficient way of learning in a course where there are many of you and one me. Many of the in-class activities will be done in randomly assigned Zoom breakout groups, as will three of the group assignments. I will assign each classmate to a group of three or four. You'll work with that group throughout the semester on three group assignments that answer questions about the same topic using different methods. If there is a reason group work won't be possible for you this semester, get in touch.

**Grading:** About 3 to 5 days after each group assignment is started in class, each group submits to me a 1-page planning document that details what your group plans to do, the division of labor, and timeline to completion. After the final project is turned in, each group member will complete a self-assessment of their own work on the project as well as how well other group members met their obligations. The group project will receive a common grade. Additionally, individuals will be given a project grade based on input from group members and the self-assessment at the end of the semester. If a consensus of group members reports that a particular student was severely derelict in fulfilling duties to the group, that student's common group project grade will be reduced

as well. If I determine that a student is participating in group work in bad-faith, I may remove that student from the group and the student will need to complete the assignments independently.

Each group will submit their final papers to Turnitin, which provides a similarity report. If your group submits more than one version, I will only grade the newest version. For this reason, I suggest you turn in the paper about an hour before the deadline to check it for similarities and revise it if necessary. All group members are responsible for ensuring there are no academic honesty issues for the work that is turned in. However, if it is necessary to report a group for academic dishonesty, I will include the 1-page planning document that outlines who was responsible for the portion of the paper that contains the issue in my report to the Honor System and let the officials there decide if most of the burden falls on individual group members. Please see the academic integrity section for more information.

## Exams and quizzes

Your comprehension of the course material will be measured individually in exams and quizzes. Both will be administered online in Canvas. Quizzes and exams will include multiple choice, short answers and an essay. Exams will include the same types of questions.

- Exams will be open book and open note during the scheduled class time (4 opportunities; lowest 1 drops)
- Quizzes will be open book/note and done outside class time (3 opportunities; lowest 1 drops).

**Your lowest score from each category will be dropped from your final grade calculation.** The course includes three mid-term exams that include only material since the last exam. It also includes a cumulative final exam during our scheduled final exam meeting. I drop the lowest of the four exam scores. This means that if you are satisfied with your grade after the three mid-term exams are scored, you may choose to not take the final exam. Though you could do the same in the quizzes category and not take Quiz 3 if you've done well on the first two, this is **not recommended** because taking the quiz is an excellent way to study for Exam 3. Because your lowest score drops from each category, I do not offer make-up exams or quizzes except for in rare, documented circumstances.

### Participation, engagement and attendance

Your participation and engagement will be measured both in the homework to prepare you for the class and in post-lecture reflections. Homework activities are listed in online Canvas, and they include worksheets, concept explication, and writing prompts. These activities are designed to reinforce main concepts and give you materials with which to study for exams and quizzes. Each is designed to take about 15 minutes to complete. At the end of most classes, we'll take five minutes to complete a writing prompt in Canvas. These activities are designed to summarize what we've covered in class. To get credit for participation you need to complete reflection and homework activities by their due date (most often 9 p.m. the day of class). There are no make-ups, but you do get several "free passes" for each category. For full credit, complete:

- 10 of the 12 homework activities
- 20 of the 24 post-lecture reflections

I do not take attendance each class and grade attendance. However, you will need to attend the synchronous class session to complete the post-lecture reflection by the due date. Reflections submitted after the due date will receive no more than 0.5 points.

Here are the guidelines for in-class reflections to get the full credit:

- They are done individually
- It should be on-topic and use classroom-appropriate ideas and language
- It should be at about 100 words
- You may use any notes or resources you have with you to refresh your memory.
- It should be YOUR WORDS. Rephrase others' ideas into your original words to help you remember the ideas and to avoid plagiarism.
- It must be turned in by the deadline.

## Research Experience:

All students in Comm 2124 are required to complete a research experience. This is a portion of your homework project grade. **\*\* This is the one homework assignment that cannot be dropped from your grade. \*\*** We will register for the system in early September. If you have an objection to participating in a research project, an alternative research experience (e.g., article review or library exercise) will be designed to help you meet the requirements of a research experience. Students are required to create an account using the Department of Communication SONA system as a homework assignment in Week 3. Then, at any point in the regular semester, you can complete research opportunities sent to you. Completion of the research opportunity will count as

homework assignment 12, which cannot be dropped. Information about account creation is available on the Canvas course site. A guide to Sona is available online:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_1OnT2ZU6QQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1OnT2ZU6QQ)

[\(Links to an external site.\)](#)

## **Technology Policy:**

Devices (laptops, tablets, cell phones) are a requirement for online participation and to access materials and activities. While I encourage the use of technology to aid learning, I recognize it can be a distraction. Students who are not engaged with the course material will be asked to return to the objective at hand. As employees or freelancers, you will be expected to use technology responsibly in meetings or at work. Now is the time to practice that. Students who disrupt others will be asked to leave the Zoom meeting.

## **Second-chances philosophy**

This is an introductory course into research. For many of you, it may be the first time you've taken a class with a focus on social science, written a paper in empirical style, or gathered original human behavior data. Recognizing that you're likely new to this, I've designed this course so that you have a second chance. Failing is a part of life, and a part of social science. Failing (or just doing as well as you hoped) any one single assignment, quiz, exam or participatory opportunity will not doom you in this course. I evaluate you on a blend of group assignments and individual assignments. Weren't prepared for Exam 1 as well as you thought? That grade disappears and you'll get a chance to show me what you've learned on the final exam. Feeling under the weather? You can miss up to four class meetings without penalty. In any of these cases, it's also a good idea to meet with me in office hours or to send me an email. I really enjoy research, and I want to help you see why solving puzzles is so satisfying, too. I'm committed to getting you on a path to success in this course.

## **Course Grades:**

Grades for the course will be calculated based homework, in-class reflection, quizzes, group projects, and exams. You can keep track of your grades on Canvas.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Available</b>	<b>Dropped</b>	<b>Percent of final grade</b>
Homework	12	2	10
Reflection	24	4	20
Quizzes	3	1	15
Group projects	3	0	25
Exams	4	1	30

#### Grade calculation

	<b>A</b> 92.5-100	<b>A-</b> 90.0-92.49
<b>B+</b> 87.0-89.99	<b>B</b> 83.0-86.99	<b>B-</b> 80.0-82.99
<b>C+</b> 77.0-79.99	<b>C</b> 73.0-76.99	<b>C-</b> 70.0-72.99
<b>D+</b> 67.0-69.99	<b>D</b> 63.0-63.99	<b>D-</b> 60.0-62.99
<b>F</b> lower than 60.0		

# Virginia Tech Honor Code:

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees

to abide by states:

**“As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”**

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who

has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining

specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation.

Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the

requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. For additional information about the Honor

Code, please visit: <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

\*\*\* Any suspected Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor System.\*\*\*

*Your written assignments may be reviewed through the University's plagiarism prevention and detection software called Turnitin- Feedback Studio, which is a resource designed to detect and prevent plagiarism. This software is a tool that works by cross-referencing submitted materials with journals, essays, newspaper articles, papers, books, the internet, and other literary works. Turnitin-Feedback Studio does not identify all forms of plagiarism. The software also does not replace my judgement regarding what constitutes plagiarism.*



All assignments submitted shall be considered "graded work" and all aspects of your coursework are covered by the Honor Code. All projects and homework assignments are to be completed individually unless otherwise specified.

Commission of any of the following acts shall constitute academic misconduct. This listing is not, however, exclusive of other acts that may reasonably be said to constitute academic misconduct. Clarification is provided for each definition with some examples of prohibited behaviors in the Undergraduate Honor Code Manual located at <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

#### 1. CHEATING

Cheating includes the intentional use of unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices or materials in any academic exercise, or attempts thereof.

#### 1. PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism includes the copying of the language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and passing off the same as one's own original work, or attempts thereof.

#### 1. FALSIFICATION

Falsification includes the statement of any untruth, either verbally or in writing, with respect to any element of one's academic work, or attempts thereof.

#### 1. FABRICATION

Fabrication includes making up data and results, and recording or reporting them, or submitting fabricated documents, or attempts thereof.

#### 1. MULTIPLE SUBMISSION

Multiple submission involves the submission for credit—without authorization of the instructor receiving the work—of substantial portions of any work (including oral reports) previously submitted for credit at any academic institution, or attempts thereof.

#### 1. COMPLICITY

Complicity includes intentionally helping another to engage in an act of academic misconduct, or attempts thereof.

## 1. VIOLATION OF UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE, DEPARTMENTAL, PROGRAM, COURSE, OR FACULTY RULES

The violation of any University, College, Departmental, Program, Course, or Faculty Rules relating to academic matters that may lead to an unfair academic advantage by the student violating the rule(s).

If you have questions or are unclear about what constitutes academic misconduct on an assignment, please speak with me. I take the Honor Code very seriously in this course. The normal sanction I will recommend for a violation of the Honor Code is an **F\*** sanction as your final course grade. The F represents failure in the course. The "\*" is intended to identify a student who has failed to uphold the values of academic integrity at Virginia Tech. A student who receives a sanction of **F\*** as their final course grade shall have it documented on their transcript with the notation "FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION." You would be required to complete an education program administered by the Honor System in order to have the "\*" and notation "FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION" removed from your transcript. The "F" however would be permanently on your transcript.

### **Accommodations:**

Accommodation recommendations from the Dean's office for ANY documented learning need (the Dean's office supplies such paperwork) will be honored. Please notify me in person by the second week of class to discuss how I can ensure that you have a comfortable and reasonable learning environment.

Any student who has been confirmed by the University as having accommodations for learning must notify me in person by the second week of class so that we can work together to ensure your learning needs are met. For more information about accommodations, please go to the **Services for Students with Disabilities** office website: <http://www.ssd.vt.edu/>

### **Academic Support Services:**

Any student needing academic support should investigate the University's services at <http://www.studentsuccess.vt.edu/index.html>

For complete information on student services at Virginia Tech, please see:  
<http://www.dsa.vt.edu>.

## Inclusion and support

I will honor your request to address you by your chosen name and pronouns. Please advise me of this early in the semester.

I respect and honor your cultural and religious holidays. If you have a religious or cultural observance that will coincide with this class, please let me know in an email or Zoom office hour meeting by the start of the third week of classes.

We're having a semester during a pandemic. Things are not normal, and I recognize that.

I want you to feel able to share your life experiences in classroom discussions and written work. I want you to trust that I will keep any information you share private. Please be aware that I do have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a faculty member. This means I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on campus with the university Title IX Coordinator.

## Course Schedule

The tentative course schedule is below. For the most up-to-date information on the schedule, visit: [Student schedule online](#).

Week	Meeting	Date	Topic	Assignments	Homework due 9 p.m. Sunday	Post-lecture reflection
1	1	Jan. 19	Course introduction			
	2	Jan. 21	Research fundamentals		Course introductions; Cover letter	
2	1	Jan. 26	Research elements		(1) Vocab sheet	1
	2	Jan. 28	Perspectives. Epistemology, ontology,		(2) SONAS registration	2

			methodology			
3	1	Feb. 2	Puzzles - Hypotheses and Research Questions		(3) APA citations	3
	2	Feb. 4	Research ethics	Quiz 1 opens (due Feb. 7)	(4) Plagiarism review	4
4	1	Feb. 9	Focus groups	Group Activity 1 assigned		5
	2	Feb. 11	Field observations			6
5	1	Feb. 16	Interviews			7
	2	Feb. 18	Snow Day			8 everyone gets credit
6	1	Feb. 23	Exam 1			
	No Class	Feb. 25	Spring Break Day			
7	1	Mar. 2	Group Activity 1 Work Day			9
	2	Mar. 4	Probability and statistics	Group Activity 1 due	(5) Statistics news	10
8	1	Mar. 9	Interpreting statistics			11
	2	Mar. 11	Sampling	Quiz 2 opens (due March 14)	(6) Polling news	12
9	1	Mar. 16	Survey research	Group Activity 2 assigned		13
	2	Mar. 18	Content analysis		(7) Field experiments	14
10	1	Mar. 23	Lab and survey experiments			15
	2	Mar. 25	Exam 2			
11	1	Mar. 30	Group Activity 2 Work Day			16
	2	Apr. 1	Longitudinal research	Group Activity 2 due		17

	No 12 class	Apr. 6	Spring Break Day			
	2	Apr. 8	Big data research		(8) Big Data in the workplace	18
13	1	Apr. 13	On the Shoulders of Giants	Quiz 3 opens (due April 18)	(9) Alternative methods	19
	2	Apr. 15	Annotated bibliography	Group Activity 3 assigned		20
14	1	Apr. 20	The publication process			21
	2	Apr. 22	Problems in research		(10) Diversity in research	22
15	1	Apr. 27	Exam 3			
		Apr. 29	Revisiting grad school and careers & Some research presentations		(11) Cover letter	23
16	1	May. 4	Research presentations	Group Activity 3 due	(12) **Research participation** (This one cannot be dropped)	24
Final Exam	All day	Saturday	May 8			