Welcome to Research Methods! My name is Dr. Laura Beth Daws, and I'll be your instructor this semester. You can learn more about what we'll be doing on the welcome video, but before you watch it, please take a few minutes to carefully read the syllabus here.

Instructor Contact Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Laura Beth Daws. You can call me "Dr. Daws" or "Dr. D" or "Professor Daws."

Website: http://educate.spsu.edu/ldaws/

Twitter: @lbdaws

Email: ldaws@spsu.edu


NOTE: this is a Google Voice number that I will respond to regularly on weekdays from 8 am-5 pm. Voicemails and texts received before/after that will be handled on the next business day.

Virtual Office Hours: contact me to make an appointment. We can meet up via Skype, Facetime or Google Chat/Google+ Hangout.

Required Textbook


Strongly Recommended Textbook


Additional readings
You can expect multiple journal articles and book chapters to read each week. Readings not in your textbook will be supplied throughout the semester via Desire2Learn. You can find a list of the readings at the end of the syllabus on our daily schedule.

**Technical requirements**

To be successful in this class, you will need daily access to a computer with the ability to connect to the Internet.

**Course Description**

Introduction to how to make practical use of research to inform information design and communication decisions. Students learn to create and to be critical consumers of research reports by getting hands-on exposure to quantitative and qualitative methods, including interviewing, survey design, and analysis. The course teaches how to use standard software products such as MS Word and MS Excel to perform basic qualitative and quantitative analyses. Although students learn important statistical concepts, formulas and calculations are de-emphasized. **Prerequisite: IDC 6001.**

**Learning Outcomes/Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, you’ll be able to:

- Recognize the difference between quantitative and qualitative research (Learning Objective 1)
- Write and administer questionnaires and surveys (both quantitative and qualitative) in technical communication research situations (Learning Objective 2)
- Analyze data gathered from surveys, interviews, and quantitatively and qualitatively coded media texts (Learning Objective 3)

**General Structure of Course**

In order to complete all modules by the end of the semester, you are expected to complete roughly 1 module per week. All content is due for each module on Sundays at 11:59 pm EST. In other words, if you haven't submitted your work by 11:58 pm on Sunday, you are **really** cutting it close to meet the deadline! At 11:59 pm on Sunday, the module will close, and you will no longer be able to complete content in the module. Any work not completed by the due date will receive a grade of zero.
Class Policies

Communication with Instructor:

You may contact me through the D2L email client, but I'm much easier to get in touch with via SPSU Email – ldaws@spsu.edu. I prefer SPSU email over D2L email because it's more convenient for me to check and respond to on my iPhone when I'm away from my computer. I check my email multiple times each day, Monday-Thursday, during the hours of 8 am – 4 pm, and usually once each night. My policy is to respond to emails within 24 hours.

Please contact me at any time if you have questions or concerns about anything relating to the course!

Turning in Assignments:

All assignments must be submitted via the Dropbox function in Desire2Learn. I do not accept assignments via email or other method. All due dates and times for assignments are in Eastern Standard Time and are posted on the D2L course calendar. Unless otherwise specified, all assignments should be submitted as a .doc or .docx file. Please read the document called Pace Yourself: Our Weekly Schedule for more information about staying on schedule this semester.

Naming Conventions:

Unless otherwise specified, when submitting documents, please adhere to the following naming conventions:

Lastname_Firstname_Project1.docx

Late Work:

Due to the nature of the online course, no late work will be accepted.

Feedback on assignments:

I will be actively participating in your discussions with you, and you can generally expect to see grades for each module within 72 hours of their due dates. My goal is to provide prompt and detailed feedback for each written assignment (in this case, the four parts of your major project). Generally, you can expect a grade with comments within 48 hours of the assignment’s due date.
My general philosophy on grading is to praise in public and reprimand in private. Whenever possible, I try to highlight student work that is exemplary. If you turn in work that is not so great, I will let you know - but I won't humiliate you in front of the class. You're here to learn, and part of my job is to make sure you are in a learning environment that is comfortable and safe. Specific feedback will always be private.

**Plagiarism:**

Though collaboration is encouraged in this course, you are expected to turn in only your original work. **Plagiarism is not tolerated under any circumstances and could result in failure of the course.** Cite all sources and do your own work. If you are ever in doubt about whether or not you are in danger of plagiarism, please ask me for help.

**Communication with Each Other/Netiquette and Online Civility:**

We will have one discussion that involves you interacting with a group of your peers, but each week, you will be working as a group to discuss major issues relating to course content. Class discussions should facilitate an open exchange of ideas. Debates should be healthy, and each individual should be respectful of others’ opinions. Hate speech, or racist, sexist, ageist, or homophobic comments are not allowed.

Please use discussion posts and any other online interaction as a chance to practice professional communication. Make sure all postings are grammatically correct and free from typographic errors. Avoid using acronyms whenever possible. And, do not type in all caps.

For further information about guidelines on discussion posts, please see the document entitled **Discussion Post Guidelines.**

**Technical Support:**

If you need technical support or assistance with Desire2Learn, please contact the SPSU IT Help Desk. You may visit them online here: [http://www.spsu.edu/itdivision/help/](http://www.spsu.edu/itdivision/help/) or call 678-915-HELP (4357).

**SPSU Policies**

**ADA Procedures:**

Southern Polytechnic State University is committed to providing an educational environment that is accessible to all students. In accordance with this policy, students in need of accommodations due to a disability should contact the ATTIC (Student Center 1st floor, extension 7361) for verification and determination of reasonable
accommodations as soon as possible after admission to the University, or at the beginning of each semester. More information is available at http://www.spsu.edu/attic/index.htm.

SPSU Honor Code:

As a member of the Southern Polytechnic State University community of scholars, I understand that my actions are not only a reflection on myself, but also a reflection on the University and the larger body of scholars of which it is a part. Acting unethically, no matter how minor the offense, will be detrimental to my academic progress and self-image. It will also adversely affect all students, faculty, staff, the reputation of this University, and the value of the degrees it awards. Whether on campus or online, I understand that it is not only my personal responsibility, but also a duty to the entire SPSU community that I act in a manner consistent with the highest level of academic integrity. Therefore, I promise that as a member of the Southern Polytechnic State University community, I will not participate in any form of academic misconduct. I also understand that it is my responsibility to hold others to these same standards by addressing actions that deviate from the University-wide commitment to working, living, and learning in an environment conducive to a quality education. Thus, I affirm and adopt this honor code of Southern Polytechnic State University.

Grades

Grades will be posted to the gradebook in Desire2Learn for you to access and review at any time.

**Quizzes – 15%: 150 points total.** At the completion of each module, you will be required to complete a quiz over the readings and lecture materials presented in D2L. Quizzes are worth 10 points each. You will take 16 quizzes in this class, so I will drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester.

**Discussion Posts – 20%: 200 points total.** Each module will include at least one question for discussion. Each module’s discussion is worth a maximum of 10 points each. Specific instructions will be given in each module including how the points will be broken down by discussion topic.

**Tests – 30%: 300 points total.** There will be 3 tests in this course: one covering the introductory material/basics, one covering quantitative research, and one covering qualitative research. Each test is worth 100 points each.

**Corporate Case Analysis – 35%: 350 points total.** To apply the concepts discussed in class, you will conduct a comprehensive corporate case analysis. This large assignment will be broken up into smaller assignments due at various points in semester. The first
component will be due after completion of module 4, and is a short (3 page) literature review/executive summary of the corporation you’ve chosen for analysis. The second component, due after the completion of module 11, will be a description of the texts you’ve chosen to analyze (YouTube channel, Twitter, Facebook postings, website, corporate training materials, employees to contact, etc.) and your quantitative research tools. The third component, due at the conclusion of module 14, will be comprised of the tools you would use for qualitative assessment, any additional texts to analyze, and any other types of qualitative research you would include in your final report. The final component is a revision of the first three components, all tied together with the completed quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

Grade Scale:

Total number of points to be earned in the class: 1000. A = 900-1000 points. B = 800-899 points. C = 700-799 points. D = 600-699 points. F = 599 points and below.

Class Schedule


All items due May 22, 11:59 pm EST.

Readings:

Syllabus

Assignment Guides

Hughes & Hayhoe Chapter 1


All items due May 26, 11:59 pm EST
Readings:


Hughes & Hayhoe, Chapter 2


**Module 4: Literature Reviews, May 27-29**

*All items due May 29, 11:59 pm EST*

Readings:

Hughes & Hayhoe, Chapters 3 & 7


**TEST 1: TAKEN AT COMPLETION OF MODULE 4** due May 30, 11:59 pm EST

**Module 5: Conducting a Quantitative Study Part 1: Descriptive Statistics. May 30-June 2**

*All items due June 2, 11:59 pm EST.*

Readings:


**MAJOR PROJECT PART 1 DUE at completion of module**
Module 6: Conducting a Quantitative Study Part 2: Reliability & Validity. June 3-5

All items due June 5, 11:59 pm EST.

Readings:

Hughes & Hayhoe Chapter 4


Module 7: Conducting a Quantitative Study Part 3: Sampling. June 6-9

All items due June 9, 11:59 pm EST

Readings:


Module 8: Quantitative Research in Context: Content Analysis. June 10-12

All items due June 12, 11:59 pm EST.

Readings:


All items due June 16, 11:59 pm EST

Readings:

• Hughes & Hayhoe Chapter 4 (refresher – re-read)

Module 10: Questionnaires & Surveys. June 17-19

All items due June 19, 11:59 pm EST

Readings:

• Hughes & Hayhoe Chapter 6

**TEST 2: TAKEN AT COMPLETION OF MODULE 10** due June 20, 2013 at 11:59 pm EST

Module 11: Conducting a Qualitative Study Part 1: Intro to Qualitative Research. June 20-23

All items due June 23, 11:59 pm EST.

Readings:

• Conklin, J. & Hayhoe, G. F. (eds.) (2011). *Qualitative research in technical communication.* New York: Routledge. (You will read the Introduction and Chapters 1-2)

**MAJOR PROJECT PART 2 DUE at completion of module**

Module 12: Conducting a Qualitative Study Part 2: Interviews. June 24-26
All items due June 26, 11:59 pm EST

Readings:


All items due June 30, 11:59 pm EST

Readings:


Module 14: Conducting a Qualitative Study Part 4: Thematic Analysis. July 1-July 3

All items due July 3, 11:59 pm EST

Readings:


Module 15: Qualitative Research in Context: Case Studies. July 4-July 7

All items due July 7, 11:59 pm EST

Readings:

Module 16: Conducting a Qualitative Study Part 5: Ethnography. July 8-July 10

All items due July 10, 11:59 pm EST

Readings:


**TEST 3: COMPLETION OF MODULE 16** (due July 11, 11:59 pm EST)

FINAL PROJECT DUE: after completion of test 3 (due July 12, 11:59 pm EST)