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School of Social Sciences
2020-2021 Term II

MASS MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH POSC322

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Office Hours: By appointment

CLASS TIMINGS

Class Day: Friday
Time: 8:15AM-11:30AM
Venue: SMUC Active Learning CR 3-3

NOTE: Two classes fall on holidays, Chinese New Year (W5. Feb. 12) and Good Friday (W12. April 2). We will do a Saturday makeup class or online zoom sessions to makeup for these classes.

PRE-REQUISITE/ CO-REQUISITE/ MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE COURSE(S)

No pre-requisites

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The mass media (TV, press, online) and its impact on the public represents an important sphere through which we can understand our political and social world. Does the media foster political participation or apathy? Does it fuel racism and hate or empathy and understanding? Do some media sources exhibit bias which influences public opinion? What are the prominent ways in which the media engages in agenda-setting, priming, or the framing of issues? What effect does this have on political behavior? These are the kinds of questions that can be posed and empirically answered in this project-based class.

The emphasis of the course will be on understanding the methodological steps and developing the skills involved in doing content analysis and public opinion survey research. Content analysis is a systematic way to code and analyze textual, audible, or visual media. In class we will cover sampling, theme identification, code definition, and the construction of

codebooks. To understand public opinion, we will also cover concepts and strategies for developing, implementing, and assessing survey questionnaires.

These skills will be put into practice through a group research project. Each student group will come up with a research proposal that will use either content analysis or a survey to answer their specific research question. Some groups will engage in a content analysis to objectively study a particular issue, theme, or aspect of a chosen media source. Meanwhile other groups can choose to employ a survey design to measure the media’s impact, or the public’s attitude towards the particular issue/theme/aspect in the media. The project will involve a literature review, sourcing data, codebook and questionnaire development, coding media content, survey design and implementation (in-person or online), data visualization and analysis, plus a final group presentation and research paper.

After taking the course students should have a solid foundation in how to conduct a content analysis research project, how to design and implement a public opinion survey, and how to write and present an empirical research paper.

COURSE GOALS

This course has four main goals. First, it will provide a foundation in the principles of media content analysis and survey design. Second, the class will expose students to exemplary works, which use these methods. Third, students will learn how to research and write the different components of an empirical political science research paper. Finally, the course will provide students with hands-on experience in content analysis and survey design—from developing a research question to the final research paper.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Component	Regularity	Individual/ Group	Percent
Class Participation	W2 to W13	Individual	10
Quizzes on Readings	W5, W10	Individual	20
Essay	W11	Individual	20
Research Paper Presentation & Materials	W6, W9, W13	Group	10
Research Paper	W14	Group	25
Peer & Self-Evaluations	W15	Individual	15
Total			100

Participation (10%): Class participation includes attendance and contributions to the open and group discussions. Students must actively and regularly participate in discussion during class meetings, and their contributions should be thoughtful, well-informed, and aimed at

promoting the overall discussion. Constructive participation requires advance preparation and evidence that you have completed the assigned reading prior to class. Absences will lower your final participation grade.

Quizzes on Readings (20%): There will be two closed-book in-class quizzes on the readings and lectures in week 5 and week 10. These will take about 20 minutes and be held before the lecture begins. Largely using MCQs, they will test your knowledge on key concepts and arguments from the required readings. Week 5 quiz will cover the readings and lecture from week 2-4 and also the readings from week 5. Similarly, Week 10 will cover week 6-10. If you have done the required readings they should be no problem.

Essay (20%): An essay question will be given out at the end of class in week 10. It will be based on the material covered in the course. The word limit is 1,000 words (double-spaced, 12 pt, Times Roman, default margins) and you will have a week to complete it.

Research Paper Presentation & Materials (10%): There are three deliverables on your research paper, before the final paper is submitted.

1. Research Paper Proposal (1%): The research paper proposal is due in week 6. Email it to me 48 hours before the Friday class so I can look over it and give feedback.
2. Content Analysis Codebook or Survey Questionnaire (1%): The Content Analysis Codebook (coding protocol) or Survey Questionnaire is due in week 9. For groups doing the content analysis, the codebook should contain an 1) an brief introduction 2) procedure for selecting media content and 3) variable operational definitions. For guidance on the codebook refer to week 6 slides and in particular Riffe et al. pages 102-108. As well as the codebook, include a snapshot of your coding sheet too. For those doing a survey, list out all the questions in the survey and all the answer options. Also, for each question, specify what independent or dependent variable is it is measuring. See week 7 slides and Fowler chapter 6 in particular for guidance on questions. Email it to me 48 hours before the Friday class so I can look over it and give feedback.
3. Research Paper Presentation (8%): In week 13 each group will presentation their project using software such as Powerpoint, Keynote, Prezi etc. A good presentation will introduce the project, clearly state the research question and its importance, briefly relay what we know from the literature, explain how the content analysis and survey was conducted, present the findings, and concluding remarks. A Q&A will follow the presentation. Groups should take notes and consider incorporating any critiques/ comments into their final paper.

Research Paper (25%): Throughout the course, groups of students will work on a research paper that uses content analysis or public opinion survey research. Groups will first select a topic and research question. Next, they will engage in a literature review and plan out their research design. To generate the data each group will engage in either codebook or survey development, implementation, and analysis. Throughout the course we will discuss drafts of the literature review, argument, research design, and findings in the group work class. In week 14 the final research paper is due. It should be approximately 30 pages in length

(double spaced, Times Roman, 12pt, default margins, extra space can be used for appendices, bibliography). It should be uploaded to eLearn's dropbox. All students in the group will be given the same grade for the presentation and paper.

Peer and Self Evaluation on Research Project (15%): This is to evaluate students' individual contributions to the group research project. It assesses each students' ability to generate ideas, meet deadlines, produce quality work, resolve differences, and communicate effectively with the group. It has two components—a peer evaluation and a self-evaluation. These forms should be downloaded from e-learn. In the peer evaluation forms, each team member uses quantitative and optional qualitative measures to evaluate the contributions of his/her teammates. In the self-evaluation, each team member documents and evaluates his/her own contributions to the team. You can fill in the digital versions of the forms and email them to me in the 15th week. Based on these evaluations and my own observations of how individuals worked in groups on their research project I will assign a grade for each student.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND EXPECTATIONS

Classes

There will be one 3-hour class a week. Please arrive on time. We will have some lecture and discussion on skills and research design in the first half of the class.

- ▶ **Skills:** In the skills section there will be some lecture and discussion on the techniques involved in doing content analysis or survey design.
- ▶ **Research Design:** Week-by-week we will go over each stage of writing a research paper.

In the second half of the class, groups will work on their research project and discuss progress and any issues with the professor. Most weeks there will be some kind of formal or informal deliverable.

- ▶ **Deliverable:** A part of the project, e.g. research proposal, codebook etc. due that week.
- ▶ **Class Work:** Each group will give updates on the progress of their research projects during the past week and work together on the next stage.

Laptops and Cell Phones

In the class students may use laptops for taking notes and working on the research project, but not for chatting, emailing, surfing, or gaming. It can be distracting for other students. Please don't abuse the right to use laptops or I will have to enforce a no-laptop policy mid-course. Put cell phones, PDA's, and Google glass on silent mode. If you do have an urgent call that you must take, take it outside the room.

Late Assignments

Papers must be uploaded on time. Late papers will be penalized.

Accessibility and Accommodations

SMU strives to make learning experiences accessible for all. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers due to disability, please let me know immediately. You are also welcome to contact the university's disability support team if you have questions or concerns about academic accommodations: included@smu.edu.sg

Emergency Preparedness for Teaching and Learning (EPTL)

As part of emergency preparedness, Instructors may conduct lessons online via the WebEx platform during the term, to prepare students for online learning. During an actual emergency, students will be notified to access the WebEx platform for their online lessons. The class schedule will mirror the current face-to-face class timetable unless otherwise stated.

Copyright Infringement

Please note that only copyright holders are entitled to reproduce their work, publish their work, perform their work in public, communicate their work to the public and make an adaption of their work. Hence, making course materials (owned by the faculty) available for sale or posting such works on websites for gain, is strictly prohibited. Disciplinary action will be taken against those found infringing copyright.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to abide by SMU's policy on academic integrity. They should complete their own work and cite ideas information, data, and words that they have obtained elsewhere. Plagiarism and cheating will be dealt with strictly. Let me know if you have questions on how to properly cite sources.

Need Help for your Assignments, Presentations and Papers?

Contact Rebecca Maniates, Research Librarian for the Social Sciences (rmaniates@smu.edu.sg), who will help you get started with your research and teach you how to scope your topic, narrow a search, evaluate sources, and create citations. She will guide you to find what you need in SMU Libraries' collection of more than 250,000+ online and 50,000 physical resources such as journal articles, e-books, images, streaming videos, DVDs and more, available at <http://library.smu.edu.sg>.

TEXT AND READINGS

The required readings are essential for each class. They contain vital knowledge for completing the research projects. There are three core books for this class. One is on content analysis, another on survey design, and the final one on writing a research paper. I highly recommend you purchase these as we will go through each in their entirety. However, the books are available in the library—either on reserve or in ebook form. The content analysis and survey design books give very good overviews of the main concepts and current knowledge on content analysis and survey design. In addition, they are written for those who are not primarily statisticians or methodologists. These books will be supplemented with an occasional journal article and/or book chapter.

Required Readings

Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Fico, F. (2019). *Analyzing Media Messages*. (4th Edition) Routledge.
SMU E-book: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/lib/smu/detail.action?docID=5732528>

Baglione, L. A. (2019). *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*. (4th Edition) CQ Press.

Li Ka Shing Library Reserves 3 Hours JA86 .B24 2020

Amazon Kindle version also available

Floyd J Fowler, J. (2013). *Survey Research Methods*. (5th Edition) SAGE Publications.

Li Ka Shing Library Reserves 3 Hours HN29 .F68 2014

WEEKLY LESSON PLANS

PART I. INTRODUCTION

Week 1. Empirical Political Science Research

- ▶ Skills: Introduction to the course and what mass media and public opinion research is.
- ▶ Research Design: Introduction to research design.
- ▶ Class Work: Discuss areas where content analysis and surveys can be used to answer research questions, e.g. in politics, economics, media studies, public policy, culture and society. We will also examine different examples of content analysis and survey research projects.

Required Reading

- ▶ Riffe et al. Ch 1. Introduction
 - ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 1. Introduction
 - ▶ Baglioni Ch 1. So You Have to Write a Research Paper
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Week 2. Introduction to Content Analysis

- ▶ Skills: Lecture and discussion on what content analysis is with examples of the kinds of questions it can help us answer. Plus, an introduction on content sources.
- ▶ Research Design: Lecture and discussion on how to find interesting topics and research questions.
- ▶ Class Work: Discuss different types of content analysis projects using samples provided. Examine potential research questions using content analysis or survey design.

Required Reading

- ▶ Riffe et al. Ch 2. Defining Content Analysis as a Social Science Tool
 - ▶ Baglioni Ch 2. Getting Started: Finding a Research Question
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Week 3. Introduction to Survey Design

- ▶ Skills: Lecture and discussion on what survey design is and examples of the kinds of questions it can help us answer. Methodological approach to designing the survey will also be discussed.
- ▶ Research Design: Lecture and discussion on how to do an annotated bibliography.
- ▶ Class Work: Discuss different types of survey design projects using samples provided. Examine potential research questions using content analysis or survey design. If helpful, work on Baglioni Ch. 2 worksheet *Generating Questions Identifying Types*. Begin annotated bibliography.

Required Reading

- ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 2. Types of Errors in Surveys
- ▶ Baglioni Ch 3. Learning Proper Citation Forms, Finding the Scholarly Debate, and Summarizing and Classifying Arguments

PART II. PLANNING

Week 4. Planning a Content Analysis Project

- ▶ Skills: Lecture and discussion on how to plan a content analysis project and issues of measurement and sampling.
- ▶ Research Design: Lecture and discussion on the process of writing and revising research papers.
- ▶ Class Work: Present and discuss the research question the group has settled on. Work on the annotated bibliography and proposal.
- ▶ Deliverable: The Research Question.

Required Reading

- ▶ Riffe et al. Ch 8. Designing Content Analysis
- ▶ Riffe et al. Ch 4. Measurement
- ▶ Riffe et al. Ch 5. Sampling
- ▶ Baglioni Ch 6. Revising and Editing Your Work: The Writing-Thinking Spiral

Week 5. Planning a Survey Design Project

NO CLASS TODAY, CHINESE NEW YEAR HOLIDAY (Need to reschedule quiz)

IN-CLASS QUIZ. Class will begin with a 20 min quiz on readings and lecture, including today's readings.

- ▶ Skills: Lecture and discussion on how to begin a survey project and issues of sampling and data collection.
- ▶ Research Design: Lecture and discussion on the model and hypothesis section of the research paper.
- ▶ Class Work: Discuss any modifications to the research question. Present the annotated bibliography. Discuss and work on the literature review and proposal.
 - CA Group: explore the planning, measurement, and sampling for the content analysis.
 - Survey Group: explore the planning, sampling, and methods of data collection for the survey.
- ▶ Deliverable: The Annotated Bibliography.

Required Reading

- ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 3. Sampling
- ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 4. Nonresponse: Implementing a Sample Design
- ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 5. Methods of Data Collection
- ▶ Baglioni Ch 4. Making Sense of the Scholarly Answers to Your Research Question: Writing the Literature Review

PART III. CODEBOOK & QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT

Week 6. Content Analysis Codebook Development

- ▶ Skills: Lecture and discussion on ensuring reliability, plus we'll discuss the use of computers in doing content analysis.
- ▶ Research Design: Lecture and discussion on revising and editing the research paper.
- ▶ Class Work: Discuss any modifications to the annotated bibliography. Present the proposal and literature review. Discuss and work on the argument (model and hypotheses).
 - CA Group: specific data sources, codebook development.
 - Survey Group: survey question development.
- ▶ Deliverable: **Proposal (contains a short draft of the literature review) (Graded)**
Email it to me at least 48 hours before class.

Required Reading

- ▶ Riffe et al. Ch 6. Reliability
 - ▶ Riffe et al. Ch 3. Computers and Content Analysis
 - ▶ Baglioni Ch 5. Effectively Distilling Your Argument: The Thesis, Model, and Hypothesis
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Week 7. Survey Design Questionnaire Development

- ▶ Skills: Lecture and discussion on evaluate survey questions and the implementation of the survey.
- ▶ Research Design: Lecture and discussion on the research design section of the paper.
- ▶ Class Work: Discuss any modifications to the literature review or proposal. Present the argument (model and hypotheses). Discuss and work on the research design.
 - CA Group: Testing the codebook and writing it up for the appendix.
 - Survey Group: Testing survey questions and writing them up for the appendix.
- ▶ Deliverable: Argument draft (the model & hypotheses).

Required Reading

- ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 6. Designing Questions to be Good Measures
 - ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 7. Evaluating Survey Questions and Instruments
 - ▶ Baglioni Ch 7. Making Your Plan and Protecting Yourself from Criticism: The Research Design
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Week 8. Recess

PART IV. DATA GATHERING

Week 9. Content Analysis Coding

- ▶ Skills: Lecture and discussion on issues of validity in coding.
- ▶ Class Work: Discuss any modifications to the argument (model and hypotheses). Present the codebook or survey questionnaire appendix. Discuss and work on the research design.
 - CA Group: Get feedback from me on the codebook and then begin coding.
 - Survey Group: Get feedback from me on the survey and then begin implementation.
- ▶ Deliverable: **Appendix (content analysis codebook or survey questionnaire) (Graded). Check details above for what they should contain. Email it to me at least 48 hours before class.**

Required Reading

- ▶ Riffe et al. Ch 7. Validity
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Week 10. Implementing Surveys

IN-CLASS QUIZ: Class will begin with a 20 min quiz on readings and lecture, including today's readings.

- ▶ Skills: Lecture and discussion on doing the survey and preparing data for analysis.
- ▶ Research Design: Lecture and discussion on the research paper analysis and assessment section.
- ▶ Class Work: Discuss any issues with coding or survey implementation. Present the research design. Catch up with any literature review, argument, and research design.
 - CA Group: Continue coding and discuss any issues that have arisen.
 - Survey Group: Continue with implementing of the survey and discuss any issues.
- ▶ Deliverable: Research design draft.

Required Reading

- ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 8. Survey Interviewing
- ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 9. Preparing Survey Data for Analysis
- ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 11. Ethical Issues in Survey Research
- ▶ Baglioni Ch 8. Evaluating the Argument: The Analysis and Assessment Section

I will hand out the essay question at the end of class. It should be completed and uploaded to e-learn before the following class on Tuesday.

PART V. VISUALIZING, ANALYZING, AND PRESENTING

Week 11. Visualizing Data

- ▶ Skills: Lecture and discussion on techniques, practices, and software (such as Tableau) to present findings visually will be introduced

- ▶ Class Work: Discuss any issues with the research design, codebook, or survey implementation. Present completed coding or survey. Discuss analysis and assessment and how to present the findings.
- ▶ Deliverable: Content analysis coding completed or survey responses gathered.

Optional Reading

- ▶ Yau, N. (2013) Ch 4. Exploring Data Visually, in Yau, N. Data Points: Visualization That Means Something 135-200, Wiley
-

Week 12. Analyzing Data

NO CLASS TODAY, GOOD FRIDAY HOLIDAY

- ▶ Skills: Lecture and discussion on analyzing content analysis and survey data.
- ▶ Research Design: Lecture and discussion on writing the conclusion, introduction, and title of the paper/presentation.
- ▶ Class Work: Discuss any issues with completed coding and survey. Present analysis and assessment section. Discuss presentation of research. Begin work on the introduction and conclusion.
- ▶ Deliverable: Findings draft (analysis and assessment). This should include some rough visualizations (line/pie/bar charts, maps etc.) and/or cross-tabulations to illustrate the key empirical findings from the data.

Required Reading (31p) (*There will be no in-class quiz*)

- ▶ Riffe et al. Ch 9. Data Analysis. Read up until ‘The Significance of Proportions and Means’
 - ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 10. Analyzing Survey Data
 - ▶ Riffe et al. Appendix: Reporting Standards for Content Analysis Articles
 - ▶ Fowler Jr., F. J. Ch 12. Providing Information About Survey Methods
 - ▶ Baglioni Ch 9. Bringing Your Paper Together in Three Essential Ways: The Conclusion, Introduction, Title, Abstract, and the Utility of a Presentation
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Week 13. Research Presentations

- ▶ Group presentations. Student groups will present their content analysis and survey projects and answer questions on their project.
 - ▶ Deliverable: Presentation File. Upload your presentation files (i.e. Powerpoint, Keynote etc.) to eLearn’s dropbox before the presentation.
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Week 14. Study Week

Deliverables (Friday 6:00 PM)

- ▶ Final Paper Due
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Week 15. Exam Week

Deliverables (Friday 6:00 PM)

- ▶ Self-Evaluation on Research Project
 - ▶ Peer Evaluation on Research Project
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