

# COMM 390

## Communication Research Methods

Fall 2016  
SBSB 1109  
Monday/Wednesday 2:30-3:45p.m.

### Instructor Information:

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Office: CRAVEN 6123      Office Phone: 760-750-8790  
Office Hours: Mondays 9:30-11:00a.m. or by Appointment

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### Text (available in paper as well as electronic versions):

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

\*\* Other readings, such as scholarly articles may be assigned, and will be available online via Cougar Courses \*\*

*You will also need 3x5 note cards (no other size please, but feel free to use any color!). We will use these note cards EVERY DAY of class for participation contributions (part of your grade), so you are required to bring them! ☺*

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## AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS CLASS:

### **Course Description:**

We all engage in research in our everyday lives. Whether we observe customer interactions, critically consider the impact of the media, negotiate a bureaucratic healthcare system, or seek to improve our personal relationships, we use research tools to help us understand the world in which we live. In this class, you will bring together communication theory, qualitative research methods and lived experience in order to explore the ways in which these elements inform each other, and how you can use research methods to solve problems in the real world. You will develop an understanding of how to engage in a variety of research methodologies, including interviewing, ethnographic participant observation, needs assessments, and analysis. Throughout this exploration, we will discuss issues of self-reflexivity, ethics, and power. This course will be both rigorous and fun!

This class incorporates “service learning.” **Service Learning promotes student learning through active participation in meaningful and planned service in the community, and this volunteering is substantively related to our course content.** You will be able to choose from one of seven (7) service learning hand-picked for our class. Each of these partners has a problem or need that you will help solve or meet. In other words, through service learning, you have “hands on” experience studying communication “in the real world” while also gaining a greater understanding about how your own communication impacts your community. You will spend approximately 20 hours outside of class completing service learning activities this semester. I can’t wait to see all we learn together!

Students are expected to spend six hours each week working on this course beyond attending the class meetings. Out-of-class work includes such things as participating in service learning, completing readings, homework exercises, independent research (library or online), and research activities such as participation observation and interviewing.

This course therefore fulfills the following CSUSM Catalogue description:

### **COMM 390 Research Methods and Design (3)**

Introduction to qualitative research methods. Students will learn procedures for conducting various kinds of research (i.e., participant observation, interviewing, focus groups, ethnography, textual analysis, etc.) useful for understanding human problems and media texts and processes. Emphasis is on the implementation of a research project which encourages students to consider the usefulness of various ways of knowing and to apply the selected method(s) in a systematic way. Also considers the theoretical, practical, and ethical issues that arise in conducting research. *Prerequisite:*

*COMM 200. (CTM)*

**Learning Objectives:**

**Communication Department Student Learning Objective for COMM 390:**

- Make knowledgeable and relevant contributions to intellectual conversation pertaining to communication phenomena (COMMUNICATION Majors/Minors)
- Analyze a media topic, form, or theme from a variety of perspectives or levels (MASS MEDIA Majors)

**Dr. Rivera’s Additional Student Learning Objective for COMM 390:**

- Connect communication theories and research to your own lived experiences and community challenges through completion of an original research project (APPLICATION)

**Service Learning Community Partners**

You will have a choice from seven (7) Service Learning Partners with which to work. Each of our Community Partners has a problem or need that they need your assistance with. Therefore, we have provided a “Project Description” with the primary career/skills you will develop by working with this Community Partner. You will submit a Job Application & Cover Letter assignment (see Assignments on pages 4-5 of the syllabus) in which you will discuss your first and second choices, as well as WHY you want to work with that organization or on that project. We’ll discuss each of these options in class, but below is a summary of our Community Partners and Projects (additional information about each organization and project are also available online in Cougar Courses):

Organization	Service	Project Description	Important Info.
<a href="#"><u>SOLE Effects</u></a> in Poway	Middle School Leadership Program	<b>Event Planning &amp; Marketing/Training &amp; Development:</b> Help organize and promote a film screening event (1st half); Assist in creating providing materials for tutors and recruiting students to the SWITCH program (2nd half)	Dates: Screening Event is 10/12 @ 6p.m. Transportation Needed
<a href="#"><u>Community Resource Center</u></a> in Encinitas	Homeless Resources	<b>Community Engagement &amp; Planning:</b> Complete needs assessments with community (such as Police, Schools, Health Centers, etc.) and make suggestions for collaborative projects/goals as part of the “Opening Doors” Project	Transportation Needed
<a href="#"><u>San Marcos Senior Activity Center</u></a>	Community Services, Education & Enrichment for Elders	<b>Program Consultation &amp; Development:</b> Assist the Center in answering “How are we Currently Doing” by assessing current programs and clients and identifying potential areas of growth and development.	Within walking distance from campus
<a href="#"><u>CSUSM LGBTQA Pride Center</u></a>	Student Support and Education around issues of sexual identity	<b>Event Planning, Marketing &amp; Community Organizing:</b> Plan, coordinate and market an educational event or social event for World AIDS Day and/or The Coming Out Monologues	Dates: World AIDS Day is 12/1; AIDS Walk & Run event is 9/24 Coming Out Monologues is 11/29
<a href="#"><u>ECOLife Conservation</u></a> in Escondido	Environmental Sustainability Education	<b>Marketing:</b> Work to create a marketing plan for the rollout of a new Aquaponics system, including full campaign for website, print, education, and social media.	Skills/Experience: Video production a PLUS! Transportation Needed
<a href="#"><u>CSUSM Gender Equity Center</u></a>	Student Support & Education around issues of gender identity	<b>Event Planning, Marketing, and Community Organizing:</b> Work to plan, coordinate and market support or educational event for Student Parents and/or as Love Your Body Day.	Date: Love Your Body Day is 10/27
<a href="#"><u>Escondido Education Compact</u></a>	Community Resources, Especially Youth Education	<b>Corporate Communications &amp; Fundraising:</b> Create a corporate giving campaign, including identifying potential partners, create external visual materials, research potential grants, etc.	Transportation Needed

**Teaching Philosophy & Classroom Climate:**

I believe learning occurs not only through interaction between the instructor and the student, but also in exchanges between students. As your instructor, I will do my best to cultivate a safe learning environment in which students are encouraged to share ideas, questions, and experiences that relate to class material. As a student in this class, I expect you to participate in creating a productive learning environment by:

- Helping in the creation and implementation of Class Guidelines for a Civil & Safe Classroom
- Demonstrating respect for others in the language and communication you use, including:
  - Being mindful of others' experiences, opinions, values, and beliefs
  - Refraining from using potentially offensive language that doesn't respect another person or a group of people (sexist, racist, heterosexist, homophobic, ageist, etc.)
- Being prepared for class by reading course materials and being ready to discuss course concepts

**CLASS POLICIES AND RESOURCES:****Disability Accommodations/ADA Statement:**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodations must be approved for services by providing appropriate and recent documentation to the Office of Disabled Student Services (DSS). This office is located in Craven Hall 4300 and can be contacted by phone at (760) 750-4905, TDD (760) 750-4909 or by email at: [dss@csusm.edu](mailto:dss@csusm.edu) Students authorized by DSS to receive accommodations should meet with me during my office hours, or in another private setting, in order to ensure your confidentiality.

*I want to ensure your success in my class, so if you have a disability, please contact me as soon as possible!*

**Academic Integrity:**

CSUSM and the Department of Communication strongly believe in academic integrity. As your instructor, I will uphold the standards of academic honesty as stated in the CSUSM Student Handbook and online at: [http://www.csusm.edu/policies/active/documents/academic\\_honesty.html](http://www.csusm.edu/policies/active/documents/academic_honesty.html). Every student is expected to submit original and independent work. We will also utilize the "turnitin.com" software to check your work, and help us to see where you can improve your citations skills.

For this class, we will use APA style for citation formatting. You can learn more about APA style online at: <http://www.apastyle.org/>. I also like to check out the OWL at Purdue when I have APA questions! It's at: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>.

PLEASE NOTE: Plagiarizing other people's ideas or publications includes, but is not limited to, material from print (articles, books, internet, magazines, pamphlets, newspapers, etc.) and personal contact (class mates, sorority/fraternity members, family, friends, etc.). Proper referencing and citation is required. If you have any question about whether or not something falls subject to this clause, PLEASE ASK ME!!!!

**Attendance Policy:**

Think of this class as a job that you may have in the future. Each and every day is important to your success. However, I understand that "life happens," so I allow two (2) absences any time during the semester EXCEPT presentation or exam days. I don't need documentation or explanations for these absences. If you miss more than two classes, you will accrue a penalty for your participation points. PLEASE NOTE: **Absences on presentation days (even if you are not presenting) count as double.**

**Tardiness:** You are to be in class at the starting time, or you will be considered tardy. Three tardy arrivals equal one unexcused absence. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will be considered absent.

**Religious Holidays:** If you will be missing class due to a religious holiday, please let me know in advance.

***Communicating with the Instructor:***

Office Hours: Office hours provide an opportunity for you to have one-on-one time with me to discuss issues and questions that you may have regarding the course. I encourage you to use office hours. I have this time set aside exclusively for your benefit. If your schedule does not comply with these hours, please contact me to find a time when we are both available to meet.

Email: Email is the best way to get in touch with me outside of class. I do my best to respond to email within 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays). If I do not respond to your email within 48 hours, please assume that I did not receive your email, and re-submit it to me.

Right to Privacy: I will not release your grades to anyone other than you or school sponsored coaches who are given permission to view your progress. This includes your parents, partners and friends. The Buckley Amendment (1974) ensures your right to privacy.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Participation (50 points):** Participation includes, but is not limited to contributing thoughtful comments in class discussions, group and individual activities, asking thought provoking questions, offering appropriate examples, and attendance in class. Class activities and discussions are designed to help you work on various aspects of the research process and to apply material from the class to your service learning experience.

**Reading Reflections aka “Notecard Questions” (150 points):** When there is an assigned reading, we’ll have a “notecard question.” Notecard questions are short, open-ended questions in which you demonstrate your understandings of the readings for the day. Each notecard is worth up to 10 points.

**Journal Reflections (160 points TOTAL—4 @40 points):** In these assignments you will reflect on your service learning experience, considering how communication and research are “at play” in a community service location. You will reflect upon your own position, as well as what’s going on in the community, and how the research process is going. This experience will help you become more aware of communication issues, will help you focus your research, and will assist in the process of applying course concepts into your learning. Students will complete the following 2 page journal assignments:

1. Journal One: Preparing to Volunteer & Observe Communication
2. Journal Two: Learning the Ropes & Naming “Communication”
3. Journal Three: Applying Course Concepts
4. Journal Four: Saying Goodbye & Thank You

**Research Updates (60 points TOTAL—3 @20 points):** Periodically throughout the semester, you will complete a “Research Update Form” that provides me with information about how your research is progressing (such as # of service learning hours you’ve completed, what’s going well and what’s challenging, and anything else I should know). You will also have the opportunity to provide feedback on your team’s work, and hold team members accountable for their contributions. This assignment helps for reflection as well as keeping us moving toward a productive completion of the course!

**Building Blocks (420 points TOTAL):** You will complete a series of assignments that will serve as “building blocks” toward the completion of your Final Project for the course. You will design your research as well as apply communication methods and theories to your work. Please

note that there are TEAM and INDIVIDUAL Building Block Assignments—you will have a choice of whether to participate in a team (with other students who are at the same service learning site) or complete your own research for the class.

The Building Blocks (BB) for the project are:

- BB1: Self Assessment as an Instrument of Research- evaluating your interests and skills
- BB2: Job Application & Cover Letter- applying for the service learning site of your choice
- BB3: TEAM Illustrated Site Map- creating a visual overview of your site
- BB4: TEAM Needs Assessment Plan- make a plan (including dates) for the research you will conduct with your service learning site
- BB5: Field Notes- recording observations at your site through reflexive narrative writing
- BB6: TEAM Interview Guide- forming a list of guiding questions for interviews or focus groups
- BB6: TEAM Rough Draft- creating a literature review and methods section for the Final Project
- BB7: TEAM Data Presentation & Analysis- Compiling all your data (field notes, interview transcriptions, etc.) and analyzing your data with coding sheets

**Final Project (100 points TOTAL):** The Final Project provides you an opportunity to use what you've learned to create something useful for your organization, the community, other scholars, and/or yourself. Using what you know about communication theory (from library research) and your research site/population (from your research), you'll create a meaningful product that keeps the community you researched in mind.

Because you have the opportunity to work either in a team or individually, our class will have a variety of projects, which will give us a rich body of knowledge and experiences!

This final product can take various forms, including either 1.) a traditional ACADEMIC PAPER for a scholarly audience (11-12 pages); or 2.) an APPLIED PROJECT for a "popular" audience, such as your organization or the public at large. Your final Project will be a reflection of your research, and therefore will be a collaboration with the project and goals from your Community Partner. Applied projects may include (but are not limited to!) a final report for your Community Partner, a series of feature stories for the newspaper or a magazine, a performance or play, a public service announcement, a training module, a series of poems or a song, or a marketing plan. If you choose an applied project (and most of you will), you will also write a conceptual paper (6-7 pages; revised from the rough draft) that provides the theoretical and methodological grounding for your project, unless it is already included in your applied project.

**Final Presentation (60 points TOTAL):** Because we have worked all semester with our Community Partners, we will invite them to join us in the final class (final exam time) to hear formal presentations of our projects. This gives you the opportunity to practice your formal presentation skills, and also gives us the chance to thank our Community Partners! If you completed a Team Final Project, ALL members of the team will present. Length of presentations will vary, depending on the number of team members.

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**COURSE GRADES:**

***Assignments & Grading:***

**Formatting of Assignments:** ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE TO BE TYPED. Please use APA style for all assignments; this means 12 point font, double-spaced, 1 inch margins, with APA style citations. When in doubt, consult the APA Manual. It is available at the bookstore, in the library and on line. You can also utilize the APA Hints & Pointers sheet available for you on Cougar Courses. Poor spelling, grammar, punctuation, and incorrect formatting will negatively affect your grade.

**Late Work:** Assignments are to be turned in by the assigned due date and time. **Most assignments will be due electronically via Cougar Courses.** You should plan ahead, so that you are not submitting right before the due time, and you should ALWAYS do a screen save or print your “proof of submission” page when turning an assignment in online. *I do not accept assignments via email.*

**24/7 Rule:** I practice the 24/7 Rule. This means that if you want to contest a grade, you have to wait at least 24 hours after it’s posted and you must contact me within 7 days of receiving the grade. The only exception is if I’ve made a simple mathematical error. When you contact me regarding your grade, please type up your argument and present it as you would an assignment, then we’ll discuss it.

***PLEASE NOTE: I do not “give” grades. You earn your grade.*** Grades are earned based your performance over the semester. Any one graded assignment does not determine your final grade. Consistent work over the entire semester is totaled to determine a final letter grade based on points earned.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points Possible</u>	<u>Earned</u>
Participation	50	_____
Reading Reflections	150	_____
Journal Reflections (4 @ 40)	160	_____
Research Updates (3 @ 20)	60	_____
BB1: Self Assessment	20	_____
BB2: Job Application	50	_____
BB3: TEAM Site Map	40	_____
BB4: TEAM Needs Assessment Plan	35	_____
BB5: Field Notes	65	_____
BB6: TEAM Interview Guide	45	_____
BB7: TEAM Rough Draft	90	_____
BB8: TEAM Data Presentation & Analysis	75	_____
Final Project	100	_____
Final Presentation	60	_____
Total Points	1000	_____

***Grading Scale:***

Grades will be assigned as follows:

	A	92-100%		A-	90-91.9%		
B+	88-89.9%		B	82%-87.9%		B-	80-81.9%
C+	78-79.9%		C	72%-77.9%		C-	70-71.9%
D+	68-69.9%		D	62%-67.9%		D-	60-61.9%
			F	59.9% or less			

*\*\*\*This syllabus represents a contract between students and instructor. By remaining in this course, you are agreeing to these guidelines and requirements. However, as the instructor, I do reserve the right to make modifications to meet the needs of students.*



## *Tentative Course Schedule (subject to revision if necessary):*

<b>Class Day</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Readings (complete prior to class)</b>	<b>Assignments Due in class</b>	<b>Assignments Due to Cougar Courses by 11:59p.m.</b>
Mon. 8/29	Welcome & Overview			
Wed. 8/31	Contextual Research that Matters <b><i>Intro to Community Partners!</i></b>	Ch.1	BB1: Self Assessment (done in class)	
Mon. 9/5	<b>LABOR DAY- No Class</b>			
Wed. 9/7	Qualitative Research Intro	Ch. 2		BB2: Job Application
Mon. 9/12	Paradigms & Foundations <b><i>Community Partners Assigned!</i></b>	Ch. 3		
Wed. 9/14	Research Ethics & Reflexivity	Justus, 2014*		Journal #1
Mon. 9/19	Exploring Your Site	Ch. 4		
Wed. 9/21	Developing a Research Question and a Plan of Action	Needs Assessment*		
Mon. 9/26	Writing Field Notes	Ch. 6	BB3: (TEAM) Site Map	
Wed. 9/28	Writing Field Notes		Research Update #1 (done in class)	
Mon. 10/3	Reflexivity & Autoethnography	Tillman-Healy, 1996*		BB4: (TEAM) Needs Assessment Plan
Wed. 10/5	Evaluating "Good" Ethnography & Alternative Formats	Ch. 11 Rivera & Tracy, 2015*		
Mon. 10/10	Writing a Literature Review	How to Write a Lit Review*		
Wed. 10/12	Library Research			Journal #2
Mon. 10/17	<b>Library Research</b>	<b>Meet in KEL 2303</b>		
Wed. 10/19	Interviewing and Creating an Interview Guide	Ch. 7		
Mon. 10/24	Interviewing as Practice	Ch. 8		BB5: Field Notes
Wed. 10/26	Interviewing Workshop			
Mon. 10/31	Needs Analysis Check-In		Research Update #2 (done in class)	BB6: (TEAM) Interview Guide
Wed. 11/2	Rough Draft Writing Workshop			
Mon. 11/7	Rough Draft Writing Workshop			
Wed. 11/9	Data Analysis & Creating a Codebook	Ch. 9		BB7: (TEAM) Rough Draft
Mon. 11/14	Data Analysis & Creating a Codebook Workshop		Bring Fieldnotes & Transcripts and Codebook	Journal #3
Wed. 11/16	Data Analysis & Codebook Workshop		Bring Fieldnotes & Transcripts and Codebook	
Mon. 11/21	Data Analysis & Codebook Workshop	Ch. 10	Bring Fieldnotes & Transcripts and Codebook	
Mon. 11/23	Data Analysis & Codebook Workshop		BB8: (TEAM) Data Presentation & Analysis	
Mon. 11/28	Needs Analysis Check-In		Research Update #3 (done in class)	
Wed. 11/30	Final Project & Presentation	Ch. 12		
Mon. 12/5	Applied Communication Research	Applied Comm.*		
Wed. 12/7	Writing Workshop			Journal #4
<b>Monday, 12/12</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM TIME: 1:45p.m.-3:45p.m.</b> Final Presentations to Community Partners		(TEAM) Final Project & Presentations Due Site hours form due	(TEAM) Final Project (Revision of Rough Draft)

\*Indicates reading that is posted online to Cougar Courses