COMMUNICATION 408-508
Quantitative Research Methods in Communication
Spring Term, 2014
Tentative Initial Syllabus

Professor: Robert McPhee
Office: 459 Stauffer
Phone: 480-965-3844
Email: bob.mcphee@asu.edu
Office Hours: 10:00—12:00 TuTh, or maybe after class preferably by appointment

Room: Coor L1-54
Tu and Th, 1:30-2:45PM
Schedule Line: 15475 for 408, 10299 for 508
Final Exam: TH 5/12, 12:10-2:00PM

Class Assistant Instructor: Gladys Muasya
Office Hour: 12:00-1:00PM TH
Office for Office Hour: 431 Stauffer
Please contact by email at gmuasya@asu.edu

Course Text: Privitera, G. J. (2012 or Latest Ed.). *Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. THIS TEXT IS TENTATIVELY SUGGESTED, BUT THE MATERIAL FOR TESTS, ASSIGNMENTS, ETC., WILL BE COVERED, ALWAYS, IN POWERPOINTS, HANDOUTS, AND ALTERNATE SITES. The text's explanations and examples are usually good—BUT IT DOES HAVE SOME SERIOUS ERRORS. It works through calculations and examples very well. Its coverage of the computer program SPSS [used in our class] is good. However, it is quite expensive, and you can succeed in the course without it, by using the other course materials.

Also required will be some course documents and voiceover powerpoint explanations that I will place on Blackboard; SPSS will be used, but need not be bought. It is available from all campus computers, and with luck can be downloaded or run as an ASU App in My Apps.

Nature of Course: This course is intended to increase your knowledge of and skill using quantitative methods and especially univariate behavioral statistics. The course represents a capstone experience for undergraduate students, and may cover in passing some set-up and design issues, but its main focus is on the use and meaning of statistical procedures used once you "have the data". Partly that's because students are presumed to have covered more general research procedures in Comm 308.

This course is primarily a skills and understanding oriented course. At the end of this semester, successful students will have a variety of **skills**, detailed later in the final syllabus. Also, a key goal for the course is **understanding** of main statistical concepts and procedures, so you will need to demonstrate a level of understanding of important research and statistical concepts. I have chosen ideas to emphasize based on [a] relevance in everyday and workplace exposure to statistics, [b] utility for understanding varied behavioral research, and [c] my sense of future trends in use of statistics.

Grading:

Your grade will be based on basic skill and understanding demonstration, plus extra performance on tests, earned in four main ways:

1. **Tests—400 points total**: There will be 3 tests, each including a variety of question types, including short-answer essay, multiple choice, interpretation of statistical findings, and simple calculations. Worth 100, 150, and 150 points [plus extra credit points]. For undergrads, I make calculation questions optional, and optionally worth some extra credit.

2. **Laboratories—mostly 40 points each, about 220 points total**: These will consist of assigned data analysis projects using SPSS, working on the data-sets supplied in the CD accompanying the text. To complete most laboratory assignments successfully, you will need to turn in computer output plus a verbal report. There will be voluntary sessions for group 'pre-performance' of some labs.

3. **Class Participation—About 250 points?:** The class participation grade will be partly based on objective factors such as attendance and scheduled presentations at the board for in-class exercises. But another part of the participation grade is unavoidably subjective, dependent on my perception of outstanding (or in rare cases, outstandingly bad) involvement during lecture and especially discussion. This includes mainly answering questions, or asking good ones, in class; letting me know when something is unclear or in error; and general class citizenship. I will try to make the class as participative as possible—learning by doing seems especially valuable as an approach to statistics.

   The participation subjective portion will use, as a baseline, either the average of all your other grades in the class [for people whose participation is at least above minimal], or a low C [72 points, for truly minimal participation]. Apart from attendance, the participation grade for students who at least follow basic class policies will <u>never</u> lower their grades below a C.

4. **Exercises—5 to 15 points each, about 130? points total**: Each of these will consist of a few problems or skill demonstrations, sometimes done during class and sometimes in a problem sheet on Blackboard, to be worked out by hand outside class, due on many days other than test days. They are assigned mainly for practice, to get feedback about your understanding and skill related to course concepts, and to fulfill calculation requirements for students with concerns about math. I may end up allocating them a few more points each, depending on how many exercises I assign.

I also use what I call the "C Route", which allows students to receive a guaranteed C in the course if they demonstrate thorough understanding of specific course concepts, with as many tries as they need in order to perform well with each concept. For people who take this route, tests, exercises, participation, and most labs do not affect their final grade of C. It is possible to both take the C route, while also doing the normal class work, which might yield a grade higher than C.

There <u>may</u> also be some extra credit available.

Grade Point Distribution:

First Midterm Test	[2/20]	100
Second Midterm Test	[3/27]	150
Final Exam	[5/12]	150
Laboratories		220?
Participation		250?
Exercises		130?
Total:		1000