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ABSTRACT

In a national climate of moving the media research course from the undergraduate to graduate levels, this paper analyzes an innovative, easily replicative, and significantly successful new modality--implemented at an open-enrollment university in the Deep South--that may point the way to prevent termination of this essential course to undergraduates in the future when weighed against the traditional teaching dynamic. The paper is based upon a comparative analysis of the failings of the traditional teaching system and that of a new team-process approach, measured by survey and observation, that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methodologies relevant to the demands of the media profession that were gathered from sources ranging from libraries, the Internet, and interviews and reported in 36 oral presentations, a major written project, and a series of examinations. (Contains 24 references; appendixes contain the course syllabus, an exit questionnaire, course materials and a questionnaire.) (Author/RS)

A Comparative Analysis of a Successful Approach for Rescuing the Undergraduate Media Research Course From Termination as Measured Against the Traditional Teaching Modalities

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Abstract

In a national climate of moving the media research course from the undergraduate to graduate levels, this analysis of an innovative, easily replicative, and significantly successful new modality—implemented at an open-enrollment university in the Deep South—may point the way to prevent termination of this essential course to undergraduates in future when weighed against the traditional teaching dynamic. The paper is based upon a comparative analysis of the failings of the traditional teaching system and that of a new team-process approach, measured by survey and observation, that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methodologies relevant to the demands of the media profession that were gathered from sources ranging from libraries, the Internet, and inteviews and reported in 36 oral presentations, a major written project, and a series of examinations.

A Comparative Analysis of a Successful Approach for Rescuing the Undergraduate Media Research Course From Termination as Measured Against the Traditional Teaching Modalities

No matter how important a media research course for undergraduates has been regarded in past by those directing mass communication programs, the trend seems to be to move the class to graduate levels. This situation is not surprising. Only a half-dozen years ago a University of Missouri study reported that of the two hundred educators surveyed, "research received no mention as something undergraduate education does well" (Scott 1995, 33)

Indeed, today's media research course is no longer required for accreditation, according to Susanne Shaw, the long-time consultant for schools seeking accreditation from the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication. Shaw pointed out to the author that many major programs around the nation were teaching it now only at the graduate level (1998). Philip E. Meyer, author of a seminal research work, *Precision Journalism*, also told the author that the University of North Carolina program where he holds the Knight professorship, was among them. He added an aside perhaps shared by most who have taught this class: "The kids hate the course," he said, indicating that with no dissertation or major research projects confronting them, the majority found it had little relevance.

Such opinions have been reinforced by high absenteeism rates and attitudes ranging from disinterest to antagonism. One conscientious colleague of mine despaired at the hostile reaction that greeted him during nearly every session; he persevered with the traditional quantitative regimens he knew. His predecessor, far more experienced and far less conscientious, fled such circumstances by assigning term papers and teaching mostly by consultation. He knew that between a circumscribed library (250 serials were cut in 1994), plagiarism and a thriving term-paper industry around the state's college towns, the results would be poor. That was before the Internet made such a service available to anyone who could afford America Online. Today, one local term-paper "factory" charges fifty dollars per College of Liberal Arts paper; rates are higher for the sciences.

At Chapel Hill, Meyer said program officials finally could not find faculty willing to teach that class whether the thrust was qualitative with term papers or quantitative with empirical studies. As Durham (1992) described the crux of the problem:

> Too often in a research-driven setting, teachers and students represent different goals: Faculty approaches call for teaching from a research-driven perspective of knowledge production, while students expect job-oriented information. (19)

At the same time, it is unfair to generalize that *most* media undergraduates are averse to serious and original investigative work. But unless they are pursuing a market-research course, most cannot see how Likert scales or content analyses, analysis of variance or chi-square testing will ever be useful in a newsroom or at a broadcast station— viewpoints often reinforced by cohorts and bosses. Ego-driven junior professors, battling to be assigned for what they perceive to be the most prestigious undergraduate course, soon discover it to be a Pyrrhic plum.

Before the axe does fall on *all* undergraduate research courses, the purpose of this paper is to report the success of a new approach introduced the past fall semester at McNeese State University in Louisiana. The changes *were* Draconian and based on employing an untapped and viable middle ground between the two investigative methods that appeared appropriate and topical for the *average* media undergraduate (SEE Appendix A).

Longitudinal evaluation is scarcely available three months after the last class, but the author did conduct an informal, twenty-item survey about the class on the term's last day and most students stayed to complete it (SEE Appendix B). The key finding was that 79% of the respondents present (28 out of the 35 enrolled, or 80% of the class) who were well aware of the traditional system used up to last fall, said they preferred the change in emphasis and the methods employed in the course redesign. Ninety-three percent even declared that their methods of presenting research material to a large audience had been improved.

Other indicators of success were a memorandum from the dean of Institutional Planning who asked for three team-produced instruments on curricular and retention projects and noted: "It is *so* encouraging and rewarding to see such quality [research] work coming from our students" (Daboval 1998). Constantly monitored, analyzed and tweaked by the author, the course's scope and rigor also earned high student evaluations—a median of 4's and 5's—for instruction of that class. Students even surprised her with a commendatory plaque and card on the term's last day.

Eighty-nine percent of the students said they believed they would do a better job on research for other courses as a result of the class. Those benefits, particularly in history and the sciences, have begun to trickle in. A broadcast major, initially intimidated by any kind of research much less presenting its results, reported that the class proved to be of "immense help" for a project this semester in an environmental science course.

A Comparative Analysis of the Effectiveness of Current Teaching Techniques

Few defenders of continuing this course seem willing to scrap the near-sacrosanct regimens that seem largely responsible for terminating the only course offering investigative training for a Pulitzer prize or Emmy award—or being able to pry data out of a close-mouthed zoning-board commissioner. Just a few issues ago in the *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, a University of Texas professor described at considerable length her innovation in an advertising-public relations research course of implementing a team process on a major presentation project of their choosing (Poindexter 1998, 25-27). That particular effort followed the usual quantitative-technique lectures and discussions, readings from her upcoming textbook, the devising of a survey instrument, and data analysis that were followed by study of a journal article and a research proposal.

Much of that new approach, she indicated, came from the methodology employed and described by Denham (1997). But not even the team dynamic—which drew raves from many participants, she reported—makes that modality singular. Yet in teaching those who could see the benefits of quantitative skills, she admitted: "...it is no secret that teaching research is fraught with learning barriers that the teacher must overcome." (24)

The recent suggestions in the literature to add a class on critical-thinking skills only adds evidence to conclusions about the failure in all lower-division baccalaureate courses to develop such abilities, much less to do credible research. One professor from

a major research university declared that large classes and the "prevalence of multiple choice tests" militated against any kind of thinking at all. He added this damning quote about undergraduate research capabilities:

> Many of us teaching in such schools can substantiate this assertion with anecdotal evidence relating our personal experiences with juniors and seniors who are still unable to construct a well-reasoned essay or produce a coherent library research paper. (Vocate 1997, 11)

Those kind of remarks and the aforementioned harbingers of "death" for the research class should awaken faculty and administrators to the notion that perhaps an agonizing re-appraisal is essential to change the rigid focus of the course rather than to expunge it from the curriculum. Few research instructors seem able to admit aloud that the prevailing content *is* irrelevant to undergraduates who sense that outside of interpreting science studies and Bureau of Labor statistics, or procedures governing Arbitron results, they will have little need for quantitative methodologies.

Faculty attitudes are understandable. For decades the emphasis in both undergraduate and graduate levels—and in our journals—has been largely devoted to quantitative research. This thrust has been subtly perpetuated at the prestigious schools and, thus, elsewhere because most doctoral candidates are not foolhardy enough to insist upon a *qualitative* dissertation if committees hold that kind of study in disrepute. They then tend to teach with those values, a system reinforced by expensive and formidable-looking textbooks, sometimes pairing them with the amusing and iconoclastic supplement *How to Lie With Statistics* that undermines the validity of such research.

This author was among the "Chi-Squares" until embarking upon a book about the Civil War hegira of *The Memphis Daily Appeal*, a project that has involved eight years of *qualitative* research and writing and the expenditure of more than $25,000 for field work throughout the Deep South. Her undergraduate degree required a thesis closely monitoring the year-long development of a publication, and both the master's thesis and doctoral dissertation were quantitative projects of significant worth to two disciplines (journalism and English composition). But none of these previous projects involved the expenditure of such energies, time and resourcefulness, or the ultimate tangible and satisfying contributions to journalism as the *Appeal* project.

So prevalent is academic preference for quantitative research that one of the *Journalism Monographs* was devoted to how to do a *qualitative* project (Pauly 1991). Such immutable focus flies in the face of reason and reality when the majority of broadcast and print research used for stories tends to fall in the *qualitative* areas.

Reporters probing potential fire hazards in American garment factories that are said to be greater than those causing the horrific 1911 Triangle Waist fire undoubtedly will turn to qualitative research. That form of investigation was used to pry the truth about Agent Orange from Defense Department officials. Stories concerning nursing-care abuses also tend to be based on qualitative, rather than quantitative, measurements. The same is true of covering events in Bosnia or Beirut, or uncovering the whereabouts of the legendary Carlos.

Some years ago, two outspoken journalism professors—one from Chicago's Roosevelt University and one from Oregon State University—railed at what they perceived to be a "Chi-Square" fixation in *all* research classes and graduate projects, something they strongly intimated was over-emphasized, largely frustrating to

undergraduates, and demonstrative of a paucity of faculty contributions to the media whose handmaidens they were supposed to be (McDaniel 1990; Lovell 1986).

When journal articles use terms like "epistemological literacy" (Wilkins, 1998, 73), practitioners *are* inclined to question the kind of education proffered to the next generation of communicators. Two-time Pulitzer winner Jon Franklin was disenchanted enough at curriculum priorities in 1995 to inform colleagues at the University of Oregon's mass communication school that news and editorial classes were in a "precipitous decline". He implied that writing and editing were subordinate to research and broadcast studies (Mortenson 1995). He was granted an immediate transfer to the university's Creative Writing Program, soon took a sabbatical and today is back in the newspaper business.

So stands the long-standing and unending conflict between "Chi Squares" who know universities equate scholarly endeavor to programmatic survival and the "green eye shades" and broadcast employers who demand curricular concentration be on training future employees in state-of-the-art "practical" skills.

Within academia's walls lurks another major factor supporting a change in emphasis that is obvious to any doctoral candidate: If the intent of an *undergraduate* research course is to prepare students for advanced degrees, curriculum designers apparently have not considered that retention fades rapidly unless the move from the baccalaureate to the doctorate is swift. A top student who took a course in statistics, told the author that because she had not used any tests of significance for a year or more, their applicability and procedures had been largely forgotten. Because most master's candidates tend to prefer taking additional course work instead of the rigors of researching and defending a thesis, the lower-division course seems moot to them. For longer time periods, retention of the course content is almost negligible, as most doctoral candidates can attest. Most enroll in intensive research classes *during* candidacy to refresh their memories before tackling empirical projects.

Little in the literature in the past five years indicates that the issues of relevance or graduate need are being addressed. Seemingly unaware of the course's impending demise and unhappy with its stretch across the media curriculum, a public relations professor declared the antidote to student dissatisfaction was stratification:

> Offering a general research course that addresses the variety of emphases commonly found in most communication departments may often lead to teaching a generic, one-size-fits-all, kind of research. (DeSanto 1996, 28)

Launching and Monitoring the 'Rescue Mission'

In examining syllabi for the undergraduate research course, in weighing the anecdotal experiences recounted over the years by many of its frustrated instructors and approaches described in the literature, this author decided to embark on a "rescue mission" to prevent it from being eliminated from the curriculum at McNeese and those across the nation. Significant changes seemed in order. Implemented with a few modifications during the term, the unqualified success of the redesigned course indicated that it could be replicated.

If the new approach could succeed at an open-enrollment university in this impoverished state, replication is possible at both large and small units *anywhere*. Success does require dedication to a major departure in teaching this course, willingness to fine-tune procedures as needed, and the ability to withstand overt and/or covert opposition by colleagues either mired in the *status quo* and/or who were

disgruntled at not being assigned the course. Above all, an instructor will need to exhibit firmness and fidelity to the belief that as the Information Age enters the twenty-first century, undergraduates will need quality and practical research training more than ever.

The first and most important priority for the course was to teach students what constitutes reliable data, more vital to an undergraduate destined for newsrooms and studios than mastery of a Pearson R calculation or drafting a flawless survey instrument and securing a seventy percent response rate.

In the suffocating atmosphere of the Internet pouring out millions of "facts" in nanoseconds and the incredible public acceptance of such data as holy writ, students would need to be made aware that it also yields a mother lode of fraud and folly in everything from pornography to scamming the elderly on investments and veterans on service-insurance dividends. Anyone with a cause and a few dollars can set up a World Wide Web site, and anyone who can afford America Online, can E-mail anything anywhere. That both students *and* colleagues now are accepting the Net's Encarta encyclopedia as a reliable source should be shocking to any media practitioner or researcher. Convenience and type somehow have been equated with credibility by the gullible who hallow anything in print or that is broadcast, as Orson Wells' *War of the Worlds* proved nearly sixty years ago.

The "red flags" are everywhere, but seemingly ignored in that the electronic source has a "dangerous potential of gaining unearned respect and credibility from millions of people" (*Arizona Republic* 1996). Seemingly forgotten is the instance of President Kennedy's former press secretary, Pierre Salinger, glancing at his E-mail and a Web page and then insisting a Navy missile was responsible for the 1996 TWA crash that killed 230 people (*Chicago Tribune* 1996). Salinger's "scoop" had the same acceptance as the drole commencement address purportedly in store for a Rice University audience by writer Kurt Vonnegut ("Use sunscreen..."). That script, expertly mimicking that writer's well-known style, was accepted as gospel by thousands until *Chicago Tribune* columnist Mary Schmich was unmasked as its author.

Considerable disquiet was aroused by some of us researchers when a journal article quoting the Columbia *Missourian* guidelines for "Assessing a Site's Credibility" contained the unthinking comment: "The most credible information will generally come from government sites" (Ketterer 1998, 12). Memories are too fresh about such sources. Too many remember the Defense Department's lies about Agent Orange and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara's constant indication that we were about to win the Vietnam war. President Clinton's veracity about *anything* was provided by the most gifted of spin-doctors. To that writer's credit, he *did* quote the *Arizona Republic*'s 1996 *caveats* (5) about the reliability of online data:

> Most anybody, anywhere and at any time can create an item on the Internet and make it look credible....[and] that information can be transferred to a journalist's computer in seconds from anywhere. But the technology can neither ensure the accuracy of the information nor verify its source. It cannot assess the importance of the information, determine whether it is credible, or decide whether it should be included in a story. (*Arizona Republic* 1996)

He also urged faculty to provide students with search-engine "links to sites deemed credible in advance," singling out resource recommendations from, among others, the Investigative Reporters and Editors organization (IRE) (6). That this group

was supported as a credible source for undergraduate research is a long overdue tribute to that organization, reinforced by his heartening remark admonishing professors to emphasize to students that: "sometimes the information can be obtained easier via conventional sources, such as an official state manual, atlas or cross directory" (13). Or, this author would add, by Time Inc.'s famed "red-check" list.

One Southern daily, finally stung enough in its *vox populi* column by "facts" off the Net may have been one of the nation's first newspapers to take a public and bold stance when it announced to Sunday readers in early March:

> In the future, *Informer* team members will not accept Internet Information, even from government sources, without talking personally to a responsible individual who represents the government office named.
>
> (Lake Charles *American Press*)

So one thrust in the course redesign was to raise doubts about the infallibility of Internet data and, instead, introduce students to the two almost peerless research "engines" in the mass communication field. Apparently unknown or untried by most media research instructors, the systems have been held in the highest regard for years by the print profession. They are the research systems used by magazines of the Time, Inc. empire (*Time, LIFE, Fortune, Money, etc.*) and the sources utilized by IRE members.

When the author was hired as a *LIFE* reporter, she was told by an assistant editor that the parent company, Time, Inc., generally shuddered at the products of "journalism factories" although a fellow hire was Dick Stolley, who was to become the first and long-time editor of *PEOPLE*. We had just finished MA degrees at two such "factories" (the University of Minnesota, Northwestern University). What they wanted were bright, self-starting, well-read and well-traveled, resourceful investigators who were story-minded and undergirded by outstanding liberal-arts credentials. And careful. The hiring edge then almost always went to the ambitious, bright, superbly educated graduates of Ivy League or Seven Sisters schools even though *LIFE*'s top editors seemed to come from heartland newspapers like the *Des Moines Register*.

"We can always train people to be our kind of journalists, " said that editor, "but we can't provide the broad education or resourcefulness that our magazines require" (Hall 1953). Nor could that company or any university teach curiosity and ardor for fact-findings and discovery, the route to those Pulitzers and Emmys. To the company's stable of editors, the courses in quantitative research, critical thinking and even basic 5-W reporting always have been far less important than these innate qualities and backgrounds.

Most of all, Time, Inc. magazines have been subjected to generations of sharp-eyed readers who still write ferocious letters attentive to accuracy of detail. Editorial bias there *is* on those publications, and editors *have* overruled reporters' discoveries, but the high marks for accuracy always have come from several elements: the grueling training of its people for checking "facts," startling even Britain's famed prime minister Sir Winston Churchill when a *LIFE* reporter caught him in an error on a text piece. They are bolstered by an outstanding morgue and staff, and a world-wide network of correspondents and stringers trained "the Time, Inc. way."

Add to this the company's spare-no-expense tradition of tracking *minutiae* and the dreaded "Errors Reports" from the Letters Department's (Kearns 1998, Nardi 1998). The extensive and intensive scholarship invested in this author's *Appeal* book is largely due to such rigorous training, something this author determined would be passed along

to McNeese students. All would receive copies of its "red-check" list of credible sources (SEE Appendix C), a resource that should be made available to all media students, faculty, and practitioners.

The Course Content

From the outset, it was obvious that changing the traditional approach to teaching a media research course would require, as Stolley once told her about one of the resurrections of *LIFE*, "turning around the *Queen Mary* without the tugboats". The content would be an amalgam of quantitative and qualitative methods combined with the Time, Inc. system. Quantitative methods would be taught in weekly lectures buttressed by Thursday quizzes covering statistics' overall purpose, history, and confounding factors as they applied to studies in areas such as medicine, education, and social studies in particular.

Medical research was to be especially emphasized because, judging from its extensive coverage in the media the past few years, publishers have ascertained such stories attract a high proportion of readers. As a former medical editor, the author believed communicators must be able to detect the worth of a study in, say, *The New England Journal of Medicine* by the subjects selected, the methodologies employed, the credibility of the researchers and the funding sources.

Students would be able to determine and interpret Standard of Deviation, along with applying appropriate alpha levels and learn the purpose calculation methods of an array of the principal measurement vehicles (regression, chi-square, content analysis, t-tests, and analysis of variance). They would be able to create cross-tabulations and calculate and interpret the Pearson R correlation coefficients. This author used the QuarkXPress 3's pagination to design graphics that furnished a calculation systems for the Pearson R, regression, and chi-square (SEE Appendix D).

The capstone assignment in quantitative methods, involving the final three weeks, would be to lay the groundwork for six survey projects for the university administration: sophomore retention, procedures involving add-drop, registration, and withdrawal, plus the exploration of new courses and retention of certain required classes (SEE Appendix E). (A unit's effort to enhance a university's mission does not go unnoticed in an era of programmatic terminations.) Other objectives were determining a null hypothesis for the topics, choosing the populations and random-selection methods and the appropriate measurement tool. Teams would round off the project by drafting and testing five items for their instruments by Delphi and pilot groups.

To keep the quantitative unit current and interesting, the instructor decided to devote part of the first session to have students make a conference call to the media-relations department of the pharmaceutical company marketing the popular anti-depressant drug Prozac. That staff would be asked nine questions about data appearing in full-page advertisements of several general-audience publications promoting this mood-altering medication (Who constituted the 10, 782 patients? Is data based on a longitudinal study? How long? Who did the clinical trials? Methods? *etc.*?).

The previous quantitative-methods textbook was to be replaced by Meyer's inexpensive, chatty and practitioner-based 1991 edition of *Precision Journalism*. Conversations with Meyer during the summer settled most questions over the book's content so that quiz questions could be drafted. The heavy enrollment of broadcast students indicated that reading comprehension would be a major problem sofaras the

other texts were concerned. The only challenge envisioned was Meyer's focus on journalism and journalists, easily solved by informing students to mentally or physically exchange those nouns for "*media communicators*".

How students would present qualitative research was never in question: Teams would make ten-minute presentations on Tuesdays on instructor-generated topics to be drawn at random. Topics would require library research or interviews. Pre-registration figures by late July showed thirty-five students were enrolled so more could be expected. Factoring in the usual percentage of add-drop numbers, that indicated seven teams of six or seven students. Eventually, we leveled off at six teams.

Procedures for selecting teams and assigning topics were commensurate with a city of four riverboat gaming palaces where many students are employed: the "luck of the draw". Immediately after the Tuesday presentations, teams would be drawn by random cards, shuffled and distributed by two volunteers. Packets of 3x5-inch topic cards, each containing subset cards for team topics, were to be placed face down on the instructor's desk for the drawing. Members then would divide into "presenters" and "researchers". Their team managers would serve in either capacity, but were their representative in the random draw of the overarching subject. Once the class vote determined that subject, managers then would draw for the sub-topic. To ensure experience in *both* areas, students were to list their presenter/researcher roles on rosters grading the other teams and submitted to the instructor. She kept a card file on each student's role and if the same role was chosen twice in succession, the instructor photocopied the duplication and informed the student that she or he needed to "widen your experience" in teamwork.

Because communication mediums survive on audience approval, students would be graded both by the professor (85%) and their classmates (15%). The groups' managers recorded the teams' "knuckle vote" (four fingers for an A, three for a B, *etc.*) in ranking presentations by the other teams. Team grades were to be posted the following Friday and *did* draw the same kind of interest as Arbitron ratings during television's "sweeps" period. The grading criteria and percentages were: 35% for research effort; 25%, comprehending source materials; 15%, clarity in explaining the topic; ; 10%, reliability of resource; 10%, team effort; and 5%, innovative presentation (SEE Appendix F).

Years of practice with the team dynamic taught the author that weekly rotations eliminate the common restiveness related to term-long team assignments. Instead of complaining about "coat-tail riders," the perennial objection to group work, the team would determine after Tuesday presentations which members would be entitled to a grade. If a critical proportion of the team did nothing or missed the presentation, members would be able to ask for a handicap vote from the class and professor, to make up a poor showing in presentation. The team then had the option of deciding whether to include the missing members on the team roster (the "roster option") for the group's grade. Another predictable outcome was that thirty-five students would get to know each other well, a major factor in any university's student-retention success and, ultimately, to alumni support and long-time friendships (Rice 1989).

Research would depend upon the McNeese library, on interviews, or from sources as reliable as those on the red-check list. The library mirrors today's dismaying condition of other institutions of comparable size. That resource has been so savaged by budgetary factors as to hobble even marginal research and lays the heaviest of burdens upon the inter-library loan staff. Online services have helped, however. Two years ago, funds were made available to underwrite two dozen computers for student use in the library, salaries for work-study staffers, and electronic linkage to the outside world sufficient to make it a "cybrary," as some now call it (Dupagne, *et al.* 33).

Yet even if the library had had a twenty-million volume collection, undergraduate research could never be said to be this school's strong suit. McNeese is certainly not alone in this respect. That a senior nursing major could chirp to the university newspaper's inquiring photographer that she had never been *inside* the library was an embarrassment to faculty that no publication of circulation figures by college—if they had been tracked—could erase. To many, that incident reinforced to many faculty members the stereotype of vacuous Southern students. That portrait was a difficult myth to eradicate in light of registrar statistics showing that one of the largest enrollments still is in the Basic Studies major. Further, because the university is an open-enrollment institution, the curriculum contains a significant number of remedial courses because of the abysmal quality of Louisiana's primary and secondary schools, now ranked as the nation's most challenged. In other words, any professor assigned a research course, even in accredited departments, is confronted by an uphill task.

Moreover, where broadcast students are concerned at *any* institution, too many seem to reflect the library habits of that nursing student. An Indiana University study revealed that it was journalism majors who used the communication library "more frequently than their speech communication and telecommunications counterparts" (Dupagne, Wilhoit, Johnson 1994, 39). Those of us who have taught classes including *both* journalism and broadcast majors usually have had to conclude that though some of the latter are outstanding students, most broadcast majors are singularly deficient in writing skills, especially in reading comprehension involving the textbook(s) or outside assignments—like research.

With such conditions in mind, the instructor still believed that a media research course weighted heavily in presentations by teams, the instructor would level the playing field. When she employed the team-process years before at Oregon State for nearly one hundred students in the media-introduction course, the mix always generated electricity that resulted in presentations rich in substance, varied, comprehensive, noisy—and highly entertaining. Seven years of teaching a public-affairs reporting class at McNeese had demonstrated to the instructor that although journalists excelled in writing, reading-comprehension, and research, broadcast majors were their superiors in the inventive presentations of data. The investigative work for this course would be drawing upon the merger of the best skills of broadcasters *and* journalists. More important, such a tack might prove an attractant to serious research projects for those entering radio or television careers.

Nevertheless, substance, not innovative performances, was to be the core of team offerings as thirty-five percent of the presentations indicated. To ensure substance, the team would have to submit to the instructor all materials used—library books and video tapes to photocopies from serials and archival materials. They would be warned that "heft" of printouts from online sources, would be immediately suspect as failure to narrow a subject. The "research effort" portion of the instructor's grade would be based on those files, meaning that the materials would have to substantiate what was presented. That would require careful monitoring of materials, using Post-Its for annotations supporting the grade given as well as offering praise and suggestions.

Subjects had to be relevant and interesting (SEE Appendix G), but also cultural and educative. Some "dessert" topics for a menu that students would perceive as "heavy," would be essential to demonstrate research did not have to be dull; so football plays and the dance were included. The swapping of topics would be winked at by the instructor who recognized that as the course rigor began to manifest itself, some mischief was essential.

The term's first topic, "Geography," was to be assigned by the author to ensure interest and to illustrate the presentation regimen. The subsets involved planning a five-day scenic car trip through places few Louisiana students had ever thought about, much less studied in depth: China, Southern France, Brazil, Russia, and North Africa. The intent was to widen parochial horizons and introduce them to cartography, topography, road systems and tourism attractions.

To augment presentations, the instructor decided to draw from background in several Toastmaster clubs and six years of working with life-insurance agents. Students would be shown how to present material by overheads, flip charts, videos, tape recordings, handouts, chalkboard, skits, prompt cards, and joint-handling of explanations by team members.

The weekly presentations and quizzes made mid-terms and final examinations unnecessary to test mastery of course material. Grade percentages were to be 35% for the quizzes and 65% for presentations. Because the author has always used examinations as a teaching tool, students would receive copies of an entire semester's quizzes at the *start* of a term (SEE Appendix H for samples). That system has been found to focus study, to underpin course mastery, to eliminate review sessions as well as test theft, cheating, and post-quiz grade disputes.

Still, that review sessions could be eliminated in a course where statistical retention is in doubt for mostly non-mathematically gifted students, seemed improbable. Students would have to have an opportunity to raise questions about the quizzes either during the quiz section of the lecture or by appointment.

Students over the years have conceded that distributing examinations at the start of the term is the acme of fairness and an indicator that the instructor wants students to master course essentials. Usually, the potential of high grades on exams has been so great under these conditions even for average students, that attendance is perfect. The author understood that a research course involving statistical topics would be far different, but she expected a significant improvement over colleagues' tales of inordinate absenteeism on test day and subsequent appeals for make-up examinations.

The Results

The results achieved greater success than anticipated, as shown by the student survey and by examination and presentation grades, in mastery of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Beyond those attainments were students learning that investigative work was not only an introductory route to information sources and determining their reliability, but that a search could be absorbing and even enjoyable. Those entering the media professions will bring considerable research experience to broadcast stations and publications as well as the ability to lead and follow in teams in a field rife with individualists, on projects with real-world pace and subject matter. Students also were exposed to more than forty projects of great diversity, but relevant to their present and future experiences. Absenteeism problems characteristic of a media research course were not conquered, but significant inroads were made.

All of the above factors, to be detailed below, should provide sufficient evidence to support continuance of the undergraduate media research course.

The purpose of using an undergraduate research course as preparation for graduate studies using quantitative methods was achieved. The term's university project drew upon all the course content provided in the textbook, in lectures and

Thursday quizzes about the major processes used to frame an empirical study and, then, to determine the worth of results. When the university's chief decision maker for curriculum and invited faculty applauded their efforts, most students seemed to realize the contributions of research, *per se*, and that their efforts might play a significant role in affecting what they perceived as vital changes at McNeese.

Medical and environmental stories, in particular, may well receive considerable scrutiny by the students who enter the media profession. The real-world mini-study on "Prozac" drew laughter after the second time the company's media specialist on that drug reported he was "still looking" for data to support the firm's advertising claims. One lecture had described the dangers of prescribing pharmaceuticals without adequate or quality longitudinal studies with particular focus on thalidomide, Valium, and the medication responsible for the "DES daughters" tragedy. Late in the term when students were capable of weighing company data from their knowledge about analytical methods, the Prozac spokesman reported he was still waiting on the arrival of data to support its advertising claims. By then, students surmised something was seriously amiss because data should have been at his fingertips; a lesson on stonewalling about medications had been learned and should raise their suspicions where scientific studies are concerned, particularly on medications.

One response in the student survey may have underscored the author's hypothesis that a research class focused solely on quantitative analysis has been responsible for disinterest in research. Even when the course is split into quantitative and qualitative research and offers fascinating mini-projects like the "Prozac study," most students (61%) said they were given as much statistical information as they were capable of learning.

Qualitative studies, however, appeared to be the primary attractant to research for most of the students. Thirty-six qualitative-research projects were presented, a monumental output linked to heavy use of library and outside resources and the ability to find pathways to credible sources, whether by electronic means or in serials, microfilms, and books or to archival repositories. Those whose missteps resulted in "global thinness" did grasp the benefits of tight focus on a salient area of a topic, learning that economies of scale, time, and energies made for a manageable presentation.

Presentations drew great interest and enthusiasm from the class, proving to students that research could be both informative and even lively. Most projects began to take on a professional sheen as students started emulating the creative approaches and styles and investigative techniques from teams earning high grades. Some students' scholarly abilities earned them celebrity stature, assuring their teams of high marks and undivided attention during presentations. Overall efforts by all teams confirmed the author's view that given motivation, proper tools and direction appropriate to their interests and abilities, students at open-enrollment institutions are the equals of counterparts at major and exclusive schools in terms of curiosity, resourcefulness in ferreting out quality data, and in presenting results in modalities that clarify complex material for ordinary audiences.

Additionally, the instructor's belief that the merger of media talents would produce sound research efforts was reinforced by those presentations. Broadcast majors were the quickest to discern which visual methods were the most effective in explaining, for example, the techniques of artist Georgia O'Keeffe or the events of Mao Tse Tung's Long March, or music's counterpoint and modulation. Though journalism majors proved to be marginal presenters, most were resourceful researchers in providing data concerning the journeys of Marco Polo, key points of the Sacco-Vanzetti

case, and the four offensive plays in football. The audio-visuals supporting data reported at the lectern, demonstrated the collective ingenuity of both majors. Near the term's end it was not unusual for a single team to use a mix of overheads, handouts, videos, tape and even treats. Flip charts never caught on perhaps because of the audience's size, but their utility as a replacement for prompt cards was clear. Several teams discovered the usefulness of audience participation in explaining topics.

The fellowship objective was attained in that 82% of respondents said they came to know all of their classmates through the rotating teams; 68% liked rotation. Most (79%) recommended that random draws for team members be retained. Eighty-five percent improved teamwork skills.

Although the author did not expect "coat-tail riders" to be barred from team grades, several groups took that remarkable action for undergraduates. Grade parasites are a major reason the group dynamic is so loathed by serious students, though few complain to instructors. The cause may have been attributable to team rotations, but much seemed to stem from the large number of broadcast students accustomed to rough handling of peers failing to carry out television or radio duties essential to a grade or the success of a show. Several teams exercised the "roster option" early in the term and may have been responsible for two students dropping the course before the first month was over and, equally, for most students carrying out tasks assigned at team meetings. Only three "victims" protested to the author, but their complaints vanished the moment she cited the team's documentation.

Only a handful—mostly journalism majors—attempted to evade the random draws for team members intended to dissolve cliques and to resolve isolate conditions fostered by large schools and large classes such as this one. A few clung to each other despite the admonishments of the instructor after a third "coincidence" put them on the same team. This pair also earned a bitter denunciation and the "roster option" from one team for absenteeism and failure to produce data vital to a presentation— and for ridiculing a handicapped member.

No amount of orientation admonishment about overcoming social fears and bias and the discovery of great talent among the shy or racial and ethnic diversity can overcome the lack of social skills or endow louts with social graces. Nor can an instructor scold a group's members for failure to announce meeting times and places or to "overlook" assigning a task to someone they do not like. This instructor's tactic in two instances of racial bias, was to teach those facing discrimination how to confront the "pack leader" with effective demands for team assignments; tacit indications that the issue might lead to university hearings seemed to detach the flock from bullies.

The instructor's monitoring of team roles also proved to be effective, forcing the timid to present and the poised to frequent the library. Although presenting a project to a large class initially was fraught with terror for some, at midterm most seemed at relative ease, except for most journalism majors. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents recommended that replication retain the system of rotating roles and instructor monitoring. Two handicapped students, one in a wheelchair and the other recovering from a near-fatal accident affecting motor skills, made major strides in public speaking, principally because they were "carrying the message" instead of themselves, one of the class credos.

Most (68%) recommended retaining the same grading percentages for presentations (85% from the instructor, 15% from the class). Another majority (79%) urged retention of scoring criteria. The instructor's plaudits for "red-check" sources in *post-mortem* critiques gradually took effect once it was discovered that grades on "research effort" were the highest on *Facts on File*, the *Britannicas*, the *Columbia Gazetteer*,

and the like and the lowest on Incarta-like data. Interestingly, even though the teams did not have the advantage of examining other students' data, they came to distinguish excellent research from marginal efforts.

Class choices of overall topics *did* reflect preferences for less substantial subjects than medicine, engineering, environment, and public affairs. But the choices of athletics and the dance were counterbalanced by the selections of categories like history and explorations. Few in the class will forget a costumed Lewis and Clark tramping through the class to invigorate diary readings from the lectern and overheads of flora and fauna collected from that expedition. Another memorable "hit" was a sensuous tango, followed by alternating speakers providing encyclopedic explanations of its history and patterns.

The instructor's assessments took nearly eight hours every two weeks: 1.5 hours for quizzes, 5.5 hours for annotating data; the remainder was spent calculating the two sets of presentation grades and preparing critiques.

Some shoals *were* encountered in these uncharted waters such as a handful of students, all broadcast majors, who apparently were totally inexperienced at weekly assignments unlike the students at Oregon State University, in a closed-enrollment institution, who nevertheless were freshmen and sophomores in the Introduction to the Media course and from the disciplines offered in thirteen colleges.

The topics were scarcely overtaxing, and research was being conducted by teams, not individual students. Too, reporters cope with instant-research demands every week for assignments ranging from local judicial rulings and the history of an enterprise zone or a city itself to ferreting out the background of a prospective school superintendent. The Indiana study had pointed up predictable difficulties for non-journalists. For those who perceived the course would involve only buying a term paper and trusting to gambler's odds on Scantron mid-term and final examinations, grumbling was a certitude. For those repeatedly failing the college algebra class after several non-credit preparatory courses, the work for those three credits did not seem inordinate and was much more fun, even sociable because of the rotating team aspect.

To retreat from the course rigor after only a month under such circumstances ordinarily might appear to be a devastating loss of face, sparked by a handful of students and fanned by a superior. But this was an experimental regimen where flexibility is expected. Though some obviously were unused to rigor, many enjoyed being part of an experiment to reshape a hated course at McNeese and for other schools, and they particularly liked watching the presentations. Most recognized that modifications to content could be expected in an experimental course. Six weeks into the term, the instructor told the class that: "It has been brought to my attention that I'm driving you too hard and that this is not the University of Southern California or the University of Minnesota." When she confessed that she, too, could use a break, they laughed; when she announced that presentations and quizzes would shift from weekly to *biweekly* scheduling, many were delighted.

Nobody had to tell them—though this author did—that their weekly presentations proved they had become some of the best researchers at the university.

The vacated Tuesday was to be used for presentation research. Judging from the time postings on Internet data and eleventh-hour telephoning to the author, few used that respite for that purpose. Even if the modification had involved shifting to *monthly* presentations, the quality of work differed little from the weekly presentations.

The weekly quizzes were moved to alternate Thursdays, and the instructor was forced to eliminate the unit on the Pearson R, to truncate that on content analysis, and offer minimal information ANOVA. The "non-quiz Thursday" became a lecture that paired quantitative sessions with a review for the upcoming quiz. A fourth of the content had been cut to satisfy an implied directive about overwork.

Another shoal was that the past high absenteeism rate on examination days did not change, yet it began to be chipped away. One encouraging signal was that 71% of survey respondents said that issuing them copies of the quizzes for the entire semester *did* help them to focus study. Another signal was that 68% of said the pre-quiz lectures also helped. They were right, for the median grade on quiz days was an A; the mean was a B+. But such impressive indications of course mastery were confounded by the fact that although absenteeism was high for quiz-review lectures—47% by late November; term average: 32%—that for the quizzes themselves was appalling. Absenteeism rose to a high of 51% at mid-point to a low of 26% at term's end. The term average was 38%.

The hopeful signal came with those who made up exams on Grade-Enhancement Day when the instructor devotes an entire class session during Thanksgiving week for students to take (or retake) quizzes. Thirty-two percent of that class—chiefly absentees from Thursday quizzes—availed themselves of this second-chance. Most sat for at least two quizzes, but one student took four. The median grade was a B; the mean, a C+. The only conclusion the author can draw is that in one way or another, students mastered quantitative analysis methods, but overcoming their fears about testing that mastery seemed to take two tries.

As for the textbook effectiveness, the only comparison in this respect for students was their cursory examination of one well-recommended hardback used for previous terms(Wimmer, *et al.*). Forty-six percent said they preferred Meyer's paperback *Precision Journalism* even though 50% admitted plans to sell it at term's end. It is possible that this paperback was so worn that the signatures were coming apart or so annotated that students believed it to be valueless for buy-back. However, considering the deluge of Wimmer's texts in past "buy-back" lines, that 50% kept it should be good news to the bookstore, Meyer and his publisher.

Because this author always solicits student comments about textbooks for authors, Meyer received more than two dozen suggestions in the survey. Sixty-three percent asked him for more explanatory passages per precept; 45% recommended more examples per precept while 29% wanted more graphics per precept. Sixty-three percent asked for simpler diction and 25% suggested he use shorter sentences.

Conclusions

The student survey about the redesigned research course and the author's observations indicated that the objective of making research relevant and interesting to media undergraduates was attained as was a "user-friendly" introduction to both quantitative and qualitative methods. Despite sufficient space on the survey instrument for additional comments or suggestions, not a single complaint appeared about work overload or difficulties in understanding the final project.

One result was that that biweekly presentations and quizzes are probably the most reasonable scheduling periods for schools like McNeese. Yet the three weeks permitted for preparation of the quantitative project may have been too great a break in the course momentum.

For those switching on the engine of innovation to preserve the research course from extinction, the incidents of colleague opposition, whatever their roots, must be expected and dealt with by the forbearance and perseverance of a Columbus and Robert Fulton who overcame fearful detractors to attain major objectives on controversial voyages. Changing the thrust and content of a research course will be controversial at some units, but at least the chief shoals are now charted.

Future research opened by this experiment should begin to address solutions for rampant absenteeism in the undergraduate research course. The grade-enhancement option might serve as a springboard for fresh ideas lessening a student's fear of examinations. Frequent quizzes, rather than basing a sizable portion of the grade on mid-terms and a final, appear to be the best gauges of progress in mastery for this particular course because of the retention factor governing tests of significance and other elements of quantitative analysis.

Another and critical area of study should be directed at solutions for the reading-comprehension difficulties of broadcast majors. The Indiana study and the reactions to Meyer's text and library readings in this course underscore these deficiencies. On a presentiment in mid-semester about their reading problems, this author described to the students the expensive ($149 per day) speed-reading short-courses offered by the Washington, D. C.-based Evelyn Wood Institute for graduate students, particularly those in law studies. Would they be interested in such a free, speed-reading "seminar" offered by the university's handicapped-services office—even if it required declaring themselves to be handicapped? Astonishingly, twelve students instantly signed up. Had the free remedial reading class been suggested, perhaps none would have come forward because of pride. But if terms like *"speed-reading seminar"* are used, those who need assistance will come forward. They know reading-comprehension has impeded university studies. The director of those services initially agreed to teach such a "seminar," but was quickly informed by his superior that he "had too much on his plate" to volunteer such aid.

Nevertheless, that response was a start. If a third of this class was willing to enroll in a "seminar" taught in the handicapped-services unit, thousands probably would agree around the nation's campuses. If national fast-food vendors have been permitted to operate inside the university walls, administrators have precedent to invite a for-profit reading company like the Evelyn Wood organization to use campus space to solve problems in reading comprehension.

In sum, the success of this new approach in teaching undergraduate research sends a strong signal that it could resurrect a moribund course and make it not only relevant, but interesting and enjoyable. Knowledge of qualitative and quantitative research methods *are* essential for students to be a success in the media professions, but will be mastered only if they are perceived as relevant. Research taught for research's sake or for bolstering a faculty member's prestige does a disservice to the undergraduate and to the profession. It does not prevent programmatic terminations as has been seen recently at major mass communication departments and schools.

Other benefits for continuing an undergraduate research course are interdisciplinary and can be direct and immediate, clearly indicating to officials that the unit is involved in the university's mission. That this course produced three instruments of use to those university officials—accompanied by plaudits about research quality—would seem to reinforce the view that practical projects utilizing both research methods can make programs essential to an institution.

For this author, the new route was a labor of love for research. The reward was the university's response and the survey's open-ended comments like: "...above all the course was very helpful to me in all respects—research, groups, etc." and "You have an incredible way of making students feel like they can do anything and reach their goals; thanks for a superb class." There was also that plaque accompanied by the smiles and applause of the class.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Syllabus for MCOM 481
Research for Mass Communication
Fall Term 1997

Professor: Dr. Barbara G. Ellis
Farrar 312

Office Hours: TTh: 10:40-noon
and by appointment
Phone: 475-5290

Textbook: *The New Precision Journalism,* (1991 Ed.), Philip Meyer

Course Objectives: You will be exposed to major research projects—both qualitative and quantitative—that are pertinent to broadcast and print-journalism toward the purposes of 1) the ability to understand and interpret such studies for media audiences and 2) to be able to undertake projects yourself.

Course Regimen: **Tuesdays**, 8-minute presentation of a mini-research project by teams; a 20-minute lecture to backstop Thursday's textbook quizzes.
Thursdays, a 15-minute textbook quiz, a 20-minute instruction period for Tuesday presentations, 40-minute period of team drawings for topics and planning sessions for presentations.

Absentee Policy: Class attendance regulations Nos. 3, 4,and 6, as contained on pp. 34-35 of the 1998-99 catalogue, says:

"3. A student shall submit excuses for all class absences to the professor within three days after the student returns to his/her respective class. The professor shall accept an official university excuse. University-sponsored events, band trips, special field trips, athletic team trips, etc., constitute a valid excuse for absence from the class. Students must present proof of participation. Each professor is to determine whether any other absence is excused or unexcused."
4. When a freshman or sophomore student receives excessive unexcused absences (ten percent of toal classes) in any class, the professor may recommend to the student's academic department head that the student be withdrawn from the rolls of that class and given an appropriate grade.
6. If a student misses an examination, it is the student's responsibility to present an excuse to the course instructor within three days of returning to class and to arrange a date and place for the examination."

[Please turn the page.]

Three "cuts" have been factored into the overall grade so that you will be unaffected by 3 absences excused or not; you need not make up any work due for those three absences; after that,

Three "cuts" have been factored into the overall grade so that you will be unaffected by 3 absences excused or not; you need not make up any work due for those three absences; after that, Regulation No. 3 will be in force. **Those enrolled in university activities who require more than the 3 allowed cuts are strongly advised to enroll in this class during another term.**

Chronic absenteeism generally indicates no interest in a class so it's far better to withdraw and to enroll in something that does hold interest. You now are paying at least **$250** per class so get your money's worth in a course you like.

[NOTE: "Students with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills are encouraged and have the responsibility to contact their instructors in a timely fashion, regarding reasonable accommodation needs."—McNeese University Policy.]

Grading

Grading percentages are: 35% for Thursday quizzes
65% for Tuesday's presentations (posted every Thursday)

To calculate your grade, add the grades for each category (quizzes, presentations) Then, divide by the number of efforts. Then, multiply that sum by the percentage given above. When you get the sum of all four factors, add them together, plus the .40 handicap provided for absences.

The grading scale for assignments and the final grade is as follows:

A+ = 4.50	B+ = 3.50	C+ = 2.50	D+ = 1.50
A = 4.00	B = 3.00	C = 2.00	D = 1.25
A- = 3.75	B- = 2.75	C- = 1.75	D- = 1.00

Grading on the weekly quizzes is: 4=A 3=B 2=C 1=D

[Please turn the page.]

Course Outline

Aug.	25	Orientation
	27	Orientation/dryruns:
Sept.	1	Presentations/Lecture
	3	Quiz/Team Instructions/Planning
	8	Presentations/Lecture
	10	Quiz/Team Instructions/Planning
	15	Presentations/Lecture
	17	Quiz/Team Instructions/Planning
	22	Presentations
	24	Quiz/Team Instructions/Planning
	29	Presentations/Select Team, Project
Oct.	1	**Quiz/ Field Research**
	6	**NO CLASS: Field Research**
Oct.	8	**Lecture for Upcoming Quiz**
Oct.	13	Presentations/Select Team, Project
	15	**Quiz/ Field Research**
	20	**NO CLASS: Field Research**
	22	**Lecture for Upcoming Quiz**
	27	Presentations/Select Team, Project
	29	**Quiz/ Field Research**
Nov.	3	**NO CLASS: Field Research**
	5	**Lecture for Upcoming Quiz**
	10	Presentations/Select Team, Project
	12	**Quiz/ Field Research**
	17	**NO CLASS: Field Research**
	19	**Lecture for Upcoming Quiz**
	24	**GRADE ENHANCEMENT DAY**
	26	**THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS**
Dec.	1	Presentations
	3	**Quiz**

NOTE: THERE ARE NO MID-TERM/FINAL EXAMS

[The quizzes will more than suffice]

[Please turn the page.]

Schedule of Readings for the Quizzes

[Questions are in the Quiz Handouts that is distributed at the semester's start. Tuesday's lectures will augment the readings.]

Sept. 3 Chapter 1: Journalism and the Scientific Tradition

10 Chapter 2: "Some Elements of Data Analysis"

Oct. 1 Chapter 3 : "Harnessing the Power of Statistics" (pp. 39-51; stop at "Central Tendency")

Oct. 15 Chapter 3 : "Harnessing the Power of Statistics" (pp. 51-60; stop at the ¶ starting with: "In addition to chi-square")

29 Chapter 5: "Surveys"

Nov. 12 Chapter 6: "More About Data Analysis" (pp. 139-56, stop at "More Than One Independent Variable")

Dec. 3 Chapter 7: "Field Experience"

APPENDIX B

A Questionnaire for Fine-Tuning MCOM 481 for Replication at Other Universities

Because you were a student in an undergraduate media research course redesigned to include both qualitative (library/primary sources) and quantitative (statistical measurements), your opinions are essential to fine-tuning the class for media-research classes at other universities. Most are devoted to quantitative research preparation for graduate school and involve lectures, mid-term/final examinations, and either a term paper or an individual field project. Would you take a few minutes to provide your views about this redesigned system for undergraduate research. Thank you..

Dr. Ellis

N=28 (out of 35), Percentages Rounded Off Survey Date: Dec. 3, 1998

1. Would you have preferred the traditional system described above (lectures-only, mid-term/final exams, etc.) to the qualitative/quantitative system used this semester (biweekly research presentations/biweekly quiz lectures/quizzes, no midterm/final exams)?

Value Label	Percent
TRADITIONAL SYSTEM	10.71
QUALITATIVE/QUANTITATIVE SYSTEM	78.57
NO OPINION	10.71

2. Do you think you will do a better job on research projects in other courses as a result of this class?

Value Label	Percent
YES	89.00
NO	7.0
NO OPINION	4.0

3. Did you improve your methods of presenting research material to a large audience?

Value Label	Percent
YES	93.00
NO	4.0
NO OPINION	4.0

4. Did you improve your teamwork skills with people you initially didn't know in this course?

Value Label	Percent
YES	85.00
NO	10.71
NO OPINION	4.0

5. In the quantitative portion of the course, did you feel you were given about as much statistical material as you were capable of learning, not enough, or too much?

Value Label	Percent
AS MUCH AS I COULD LEARN	61.00
NOT ENOUGH	10.71
TOO MUCH	14.00
NO OPINION	14.00

6. The next questions are on the presentations. Did you like the system of rotating teams or would you have preferred a permanent team assignment

Value Label	Percent
LIKED ROTATING TEAMS	68.00
WOULD HAVE LIKED PERMANENT TEAMS	29.0
NO OPINION	4.0

7. Would you recommend other universities retain the system of rotating researchers/ presenters?

Value Label	Percent
YES	79.00
NO	10.71
NO OPINION	10.71

7a. If you answered "no," what system would you suggest?

Value Label	Percent
PERMANENT TEAMS	100

8. Did you get to know most of the 37 students enrolled as the result of the rotating-team system?

Value Label	Percent
YES	82.00
NO	14.00
NO OPINION	4.00

9. On presentation grades, would you recommend other universities retain the same percentages (students, 15%; professor, 85%)?

Value Label	Percent
YES	68.00
NO	25.00
NO OPINION	7.00

9a. If you answered "no," what system would you suggest?

Value Label	Percent
STUDENTS, 25-35%/PROFESSOR, 65-75%	14.00
STUDENTS, 75%/PROFESSOR, 25%	14.00
STUDENTS, 50%/PROFESSOR, 50%	29.00
STUDENTS, 25%/PROFESSOR, 75%	14.00
PROFESSOR, 100%	14.00
NO OPINION	14.00

10. On the evaluations, would you suggest the scoring criteria be retained?

Value Label	Percent
YES	79.00
NO	4.00
NO OPINION	18.00

10a If you said "no, " what change(s) would you make?

Value Label	Percent
NO OPINION	100.00

11. Would you suggest the system used for selecting topics be retained by other universities?

Value Label	Percent
YES	79.00
NO	14.00
NO OPINION	7.00

12. Would you suggest the system used for selecting team members be retained?

Value Label	Percent
YES	79.00
NO	14.00
NO OPINION	7.00

13. The next questions are on the quizzes and textbook. Did having all the quiz questions for the semester help you to focus your studying?

Value Label	Percent
YES	71.00
NO	14.00
NO OPINION	14.00

14. Did the lectures help prepare you for the quizzes or would you suggest they be a student's option?

Value Label	Percent
WERE HELPFUL	68.00
MAKE A STUDENT'S OPTION	18.00
NO OPINION	14.00

15. Did you form a study group to prepare for the quizzes?

Value Label	Percent
YES	36.00
NO	54.00
NO OPINION	10.71

16. Now to questions about the textbook: Are you planning to sell it at semester's end?

Value Label	Percent
YES	50.00
NO	32.00
NO OPINION	18.00

17. At the term's start, you were shown a traditional media-research text (Wimmer, *et al.*). Considering that hard-back's price and content, would you have preferred that quantitative text to the one assigned for the course?

Value Label	Percent
YES	32.00
NO	46.00
NO OPINION	21.00

18. The textbook readings varied from whole chapters to splitting difficult chapters into parts. Did you find those divisions to be necessary for your comprehension of the material ?

Value Label	Percent
YES	75.00
NO	10.71
NO OPINION	14.00

19. Because the text's author will receive your responses to this questionnaire, what changes would you suggest he make for a 2d edition? (YOU MAY CIRCLE MORE THAN ONE)

Value Label	Students
MORE EXPLANATORY PASSAGES PER PRECEPT	15
MORE EXAMPLES PER PRECEPT	11
MORE ILLUSTRATIONS PER PRECEPT	7
SIMPLER WORDS	15
SHORTER SENTENCES	6

19. Any other suggestions for fine-tuning the course will be welcome.

•"To add to these suggestions, the professor could also break down his or her material with more examples and sample handout sheets. But above all the course was very helpful to me in all respects—research, groups, etc. Whether the experiences were negative or positive, they were all growing experiences and used as stepping stones!! May God bless you and yours—Dr. Ellis. A Blessed Student"
•"I enjoyed the class. Thank you."
•"You have an incredible way of making students feel like they can do anything and reach their goals. Thanks for a superb class."

Appendix C

1998 Red-Check Research Sources*

for all TIME, Inc. Publications

(*SI, Time, People, Life, Money, Fortune,* etc.)

Subject	Red-Check Source
Current News	*The New York Times* *London Times*
Past News	*Facts on File*
Long-Past Events	*Encyclopaedia Britannica*
Geographical Names, Description	*The Columbia Gazetteer*
Maps	*The New York Times Atlas* *London Times Atlas*
Biographies, Name Spellings	*Biographical Dictionary* *Encyclopaedia Britannica*
Sports Data	*Frank Mencke's Sports Encyclopedia*
Religion	*Encyclopedia of Religion*
Brand Names *Names*	*Gale's Dictionary of Trade*
Drug Names, Descriptions, Mfgrs.	*Physician's Desk Reference*

*Source: Rakisha Kearns, Research Assistant, LIFE Magazine (Interview, March 25, 1998)

Appendix D

[Regression Exercises]

Callaway Golf Co.: Bertha Driver Club Data*

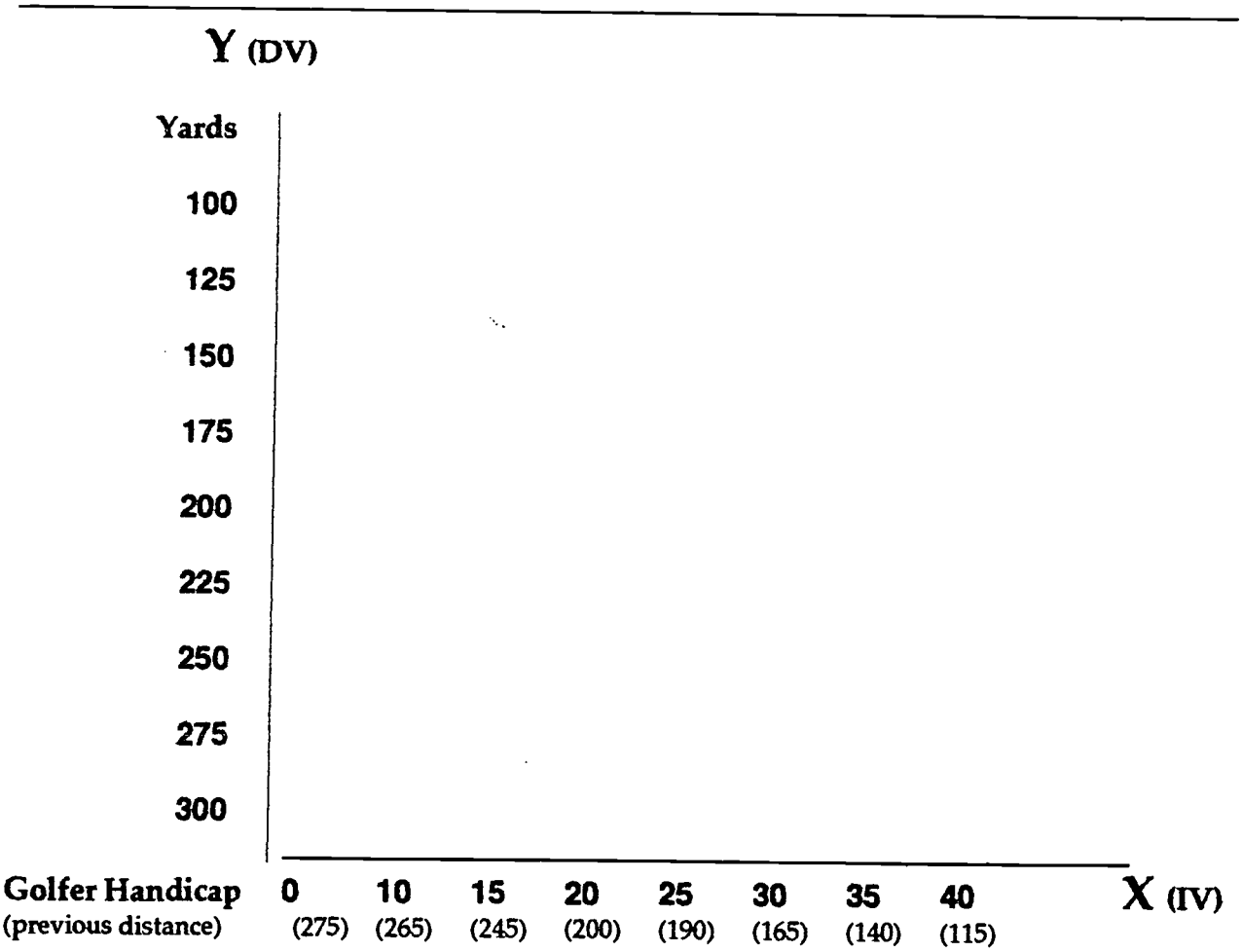
Driver	Shaft Size	Club Head* Material
Price		
Biggest Big Bertha $379	45.5"	Titanium
Great Big Bertha $369	45"	Titanium
Big Bertha Steel Head $259	44"	Stainless Steel
Big Bertha War Bird $199	44"	Stainless Steel

* All drivers had graphite shafts. The driver's degree angle is not included in thisstudy.

*Allison Walling, manager, Golf Link, 2940 Ryan St., Lake Charles Sept. 5, 1998, 439-3080.

Methods:

Random samplings were made at St. Andrews golf course in Scotland of 150 men with an age range of 30-35, a weight range of 160-180 pounds, and an golf experience range from 10-15 years. Ten subjects from the mode in each handicap group were included in each unit measured. The observations were made on a Saturday morning, September 5, 2000, from 7-10 o'clock. Temperatures ranged between 60-65°, and there was almost no wind. The Great Big Bertha driver was chosen because the source, Allison Walling, said better golfers apparently prefer that club to the other three listed above.



A Scatterplot for Effects on Distance With a Callaway Great Big Bertha Driver

Instructions: **Put 10 visible dots (one for each golfer in the handicap units) where the Handicap and the Distance meet, from the raw data on the next page:**

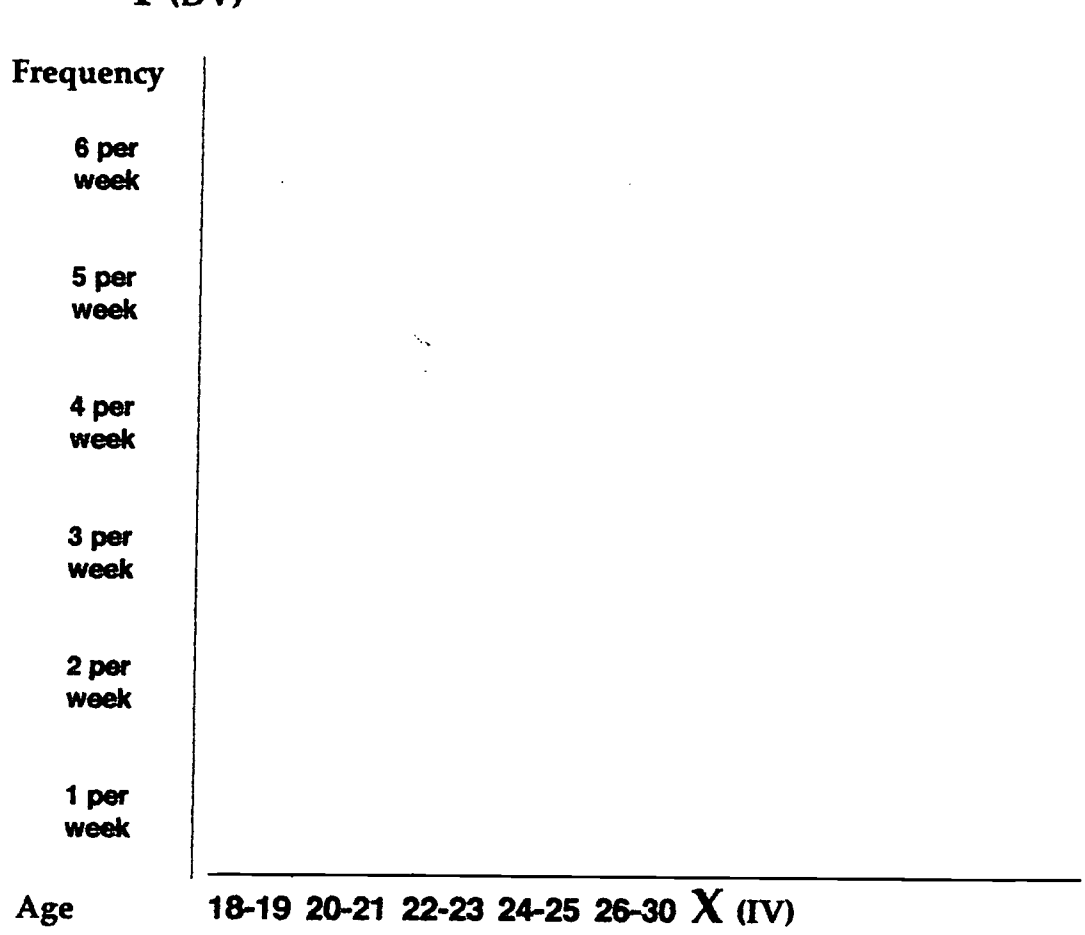
Handicap	Yards	Handicap	Yards
0	300	25	200
10	275	30	175
15	250	35	150
20	225	40	125

Zero Linear Correlation

A Correlative Study of McNeese Students' Video Viewing Habits

Methods:

Random samplings from 145 undergraduates at Louisiana's McNeese State University were made at the Old Ranch on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2000, at 10 a.m. from a pool of 65 students in each of the five categories. The non-responses were significant enough (nearly 50%) above the 18-20 age range to indicate upperclassmen either have other entertainment preferences or are utilizing their time in studying.

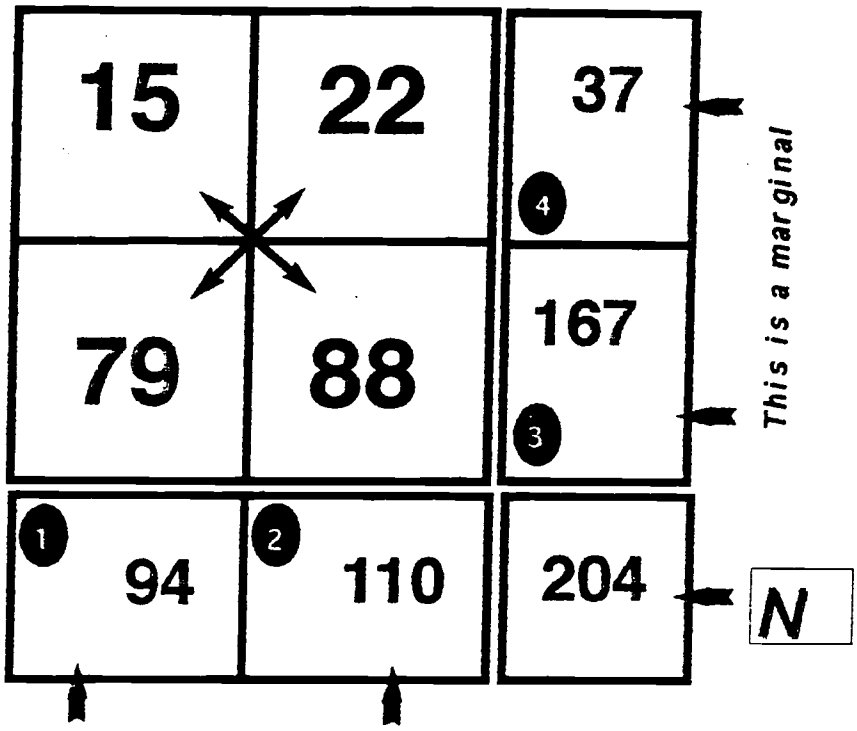


A Scatterplot of McNeese Students' Video Viewing Habits in Fall Semester

Instructions: Put a dot for each response from the following raw data:

18-19	20-21	22-23	24-25	26-30
5, 1 per week	10, 1 per wk.	5, 1 per wk.	10, 1 per wk.	5, 1 per wk.
10, 2 per wk.	10, 2 per wk.	5, 2 per wk.	5, 2 per wk.	5, 2 per wk.
10, 3 per wk.	4, 3 per wk.	5, 3 per wk.		
15, 4 per wk.	5, 4 per wk.	1, 4 per wk.	5, 4 per wk.	
15, 5 per wk.	10, 5 per wk.			
10, 6 per wk.	5, 6 per wk.			

Simple Chi-Square (X^2) Exercises and the *Phi* Coefficient



NOTE: In a simple 2x2 table like this Chi-Square, the degree of freedom (*df*) is "1". If the X^2 sum is 3.8 or more, therefore, it is significant at the .05 level. The *phi* coefficient (C) sum is like other correlative coefficients because all mathematically measure the relationship between the two or more variables.

Step 1 — Multiply the 2 diagonals.

x =
x =

Step 2 — Subtract one step-sum from the other (either is OK).

− = _____

Step 3 — Square the Step-3 sum.

X^2 = _____

Step 4 — Multiply the Step-3 sum by "N"

_____ x _____ = _____

Step 5 — Move the Step-4 sum up here for a dividing process that successively divides that sum by each of the "marginal" totals in a 1-2-3-4 counter-clockwise system (follow the black numbered circles in the Chi-Square table).

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____

and the X^2 is _____

Step 6 — To Verify the "*C*," use the "*phi*" technique: Divide the X^2 by the "N". Then, take that sum's square root.

= _____

Appendix E

481 Final Research Presentation Project

Think up a survey project involving a change in the

_____ at McNeese State University.

- Add/Drop procedures
- Required baccalaureate core courses
- Registration procedures
- Withdrawal procedures
- Suggested new courses
- Retention of sophomores

In the presentation:

1) give your null hypothesis (H_o) for the survey.
2) Show us your instrument of at least 5 unbalanced items using Likert scales that will retain or reject your H_o (soak out the bugs/bias/ambiguities, etc. before presenting it because one of the rating points is "item quality").
3) Defend the following research points:
   a. choice of your sample group and N
   b. choice of contact method (telephone, face to face, mail, etc.)
   c. choice of random start and skip interval
   d. choice of appropriate significance test for that particular kind of survey (regression, chi-square, t-test, ANOVA)
   e. choice of alpha level of significance

Date_____ Your Team No._____ Manager Name_____

List Active Team Members on Your Project:

Team Being Rated_____

(Do not give half grades, and all 4's or rating sheet will be discounted)

Grade %	Category	4	3	2	1	0
35%	Research Mastery (Ho ability, sampling knowledge, analysis tests, etc.)					
25%	Item quality (germane to H_o, unbiased, clarity to sample group, validity, reliability, etc.)					
10%	Probable Success of Survey as Presented					
15%	Clarity in Explaining Survey					
10%	Team Effort					
5%	Innovative Presentation					

Appendix F

[Grade Tally]

Presentation Date_____ **Team Rated**_____

Grade %	Category	Class Rating (15% of grade)	Prof's Rating (35% of grade)
35%	Research Effort (well documented, stuck to Red-Check source, etc.	x	x
10%	Reliability of Resource	x	x
25%	Did Team Understand Source Material	x	x
15%	Clarity in Explaining Topic	x	x
10%	Team Effort	x	x
5%	Innovative Presentation	x	x
		CLASS GRADE_____ x. 15	PROF's GRADE_____ x.85

Grand Total_____

Appendix G

[Overall Class Presentation Topics With Subset Choices]

481 Mini-Research Projects

Agriculture	The Problem With Kudzu	How to Plant a Bare-Root Rose	Origin & Effects of Irish Potato Blight	How Rice Is Planted, Cultivated and Harvested	How Sugar Cane Is Planted, Cultivated and Harvested
Military OR Mandated	Explain Shiloh Via Beauregard 's Report	Explain Fort Donelson Via's Grant's Report	Explain Battle of Atlanta Via Sherman's Report	Explain Chickamauga Via Bragg's Report	Explain Battle of Chattanooga Via Grant's Report
Medicine	Explain "DES Daughters"	Explain the Procedure for a Heart Bypass	Explain Prozac's Bad Effects	Explain the Procedure for Cataract Surgery	Explain Cancer Metastasizes
Labor	Issues/Action/Reaction Molly Maguires June 21, 1877	Issues/Action/Reaction Triangle Fire, NY March 25, 1911	Issues/Action/Reaction Haymarket Square Riot May 4, 1886	Issues/Action/Reaction Homestead Strike July 6, 1892	Issues/Action/Reaction Pullman Strike May 11, 1894
Construction	How to Do Drywall	How to Build a Deck	How to Do Brickwork	How to Hang a Door	How to Build a Staircase
Engineering	How a Plane Gets Aloft/Lands	How Car Brakes Work	How Radio Works	How Electricity Works	How a Microwave Oven Works
History	Warren Harding's 5 Misdeeds	'Trail of Tears' 1838	The Rising at Derry Ireland	Warren Hasting's 4 Black Deeds	Mao Tse Tung's "Long March"
Dance	Explain/Show Riverdancing	Explain/Show Tango	Explain/Show Greek Dancing	Explain/Show 3 Ballet Steps	Explain/Show 1 Dance Step of 1994

Exploration	How Funded/Describe Henry the Navigator	How Funded/Describe John Powell Grand C.	How Funded/Describe Lewis & Clark	How Funded/Describe Marco Polo	How Funded/Describe Robert E. Peary
Art	Show 3 Characteristics of Vincent Van Gogh	Explain/Show Why NY Armory Show of 1913 Shocked Folks	Show 3 Characteristics of Edward Hopper	Show 3 Characteristics of Hieronymus Bosch	
	Show 3 Characteristics of Georgia O'Keefe				
Literature	Explain Use of/Illustrate End Stops, Alexandrines & Caesuras in Poetry	Explain Poe's Treatment of Women in 3 Stories	Teach Us How to Write a Shakespearean Sonnet (theme/structure/ rhyme pattern)	Explain How Chekhov Hooks Readers From Start of 3 Short Stories in 1st 2 Paragraphs	
	Who Are Shakespeare's 4 Most Evil Characters & Why (each from a different play)				
Environment	What Happened/Is it Fixed in Chernobyl		What Happened/Is it Fixed in Love Canal	What Happened/Is it Fixed in Agent Orange	
	What Happened/Is it Fixed in Cayahoga River (Cleveland)		What Happened/Is it Fixed in Gulf War (uranium exposure)		
Music	Demonstrate 3 Major Snare Drum Patterns	Demonstrate 3 Characteristics of Bach	Explain Use/Demonstrate Counterpoint and Modulation	Explain/Demonstrate Use of These 4 Beats 4/4, 3/4, 2/2, 6/8	Explain/Demonstrate Use of Quartets in Opera
Government	Explain Scandal of Teapot Dome, 1919	Explain WPA's Origin/Effects	Explain "Trail of Tears"	Explain Internment of Japanese-Americans 1942+	Explain Brown vs. Board of Education
Games	Explain Cricket	Show 5 Classic Blows in Boxing	Explain 3 Offensive Plays in Football	Explain 3 Wrestling Moves & Points	Explain Purpose of All Golf Clubs in a Bag

Business	Explain "Day Trading" a Takeover in Stocks	Explain the Process Required in Starting a Small Business	Explain Paperwork Required in Starting a Small Business	Explain 3 Common Tax Write-Offs for a Small Business	Explain How a Business Goes Through Chapter 13 Bankruptcy
Major News	Explain Sinking of Sultana, 1865	Describe Events of Riots at 1968 Chicago Convention of Democrats	Explain How Sputnik Was Lofted into Space in 1961	Describe Origins and Spread of the Great Chicago Fire, Oct. 8-11, 1871	Explain the Case of Sacco & Vanzetti 1927
Geography	Map Out/Explain 5-Day Scenic Car Trip Through China	Map Out/Explain 5-Day Scenic Car Trip Through Southern France	Map Out/Explain 5-Day Scenic Car Trip Through Brazil	Map Out/Explain 5-Day Scenic Car Trip Through Russia	Map Out/Explain 5-Day Scenic Car Trip Through North Africa
Microfilm NY Times	4 Major Things That Happened on the Day I was born (international/ national/sports/ entertainment)	4 Major Things That Happened on the Day I was born (international/ national/sports/ entertainment)	4 Major Things That Happened on the Day I was born (international/ national/sports/ entertainment)	4 Major Things That Happened on the Day I was born (international/ national/sports/ entertainment)	4 Major Things That Happened on the Day I was born (international/ national/sports/ entertainment)
Public Records	Valuation/Taxes of Building I Live in From 1988-98	Valuation/Taxes of Building I Live in From 1988-98	Valuation/Taxes of Building I Live in From 1988-98	Valuation/Taxes of Building I Live in From 1988-98	Valuation/Taxes of Building I Live in From 1988-98

Appendix H

A Quiz Sampler for MCOM 481

Quiz, Chapter 1: Journalism and the Scientific Tradition

[3 out of 6 of these questions will be asked in the Thursday Quiz]

1. Scientific research about circulation also contributed to what discovery that *USA Today* has used to build a readership of millions?

2. When the author moves you gently into the research world, he gives you a string of words that mean almost the same thing (*constructs, frames, implicational molecules, theoretical model*). What is he really describing?

3. Why do you agree—or disagree—with the author's view on "thought experiments" (please don't just definie what they are although you have to know that to lay out your viewpoint)?

4. The author lists the 5 characteristics that media people share with scientists. Of these, which three do you think you have?

5. What is the author's definition of scientific 1) "openness" and 2) "humility"?

6. The author uses the Dade County exposés as an example of a "theoretical model" that he "operationalized". Using the "theoretical model" that textbook companies rip off students, how would you"operationalize" it (ensure you know what "operationalize" means)?

Quiz, Chapter 2: Some Elements of Data Analysis

[3 out of 6 of these questions will be asked in the Thursday Quiz]

1. Using the example of a lemonade stand—**and in simple words that your six-year-old niece/nephew would understand**—explain: 1) how to find the baseline of the amount of sales (make up a number) in her/his lemonade stand between the summer of 1997 and the summer of 1996 and 2) the percentage of sales increase (or decrease). In your math calculations, please circle the baseline and round up the percentage to 4 digits.

2. The author's main thrust in this chapter is to begin educating you about how stories containing research can be doctored or seriously marred so readers will assume one thing while the exact opposite might be true—or that there's such a wide hole in the data the author accidentally or deliberately omitted in the findings. Select one of the following and explain how that factor can "confound" research findings:

Inflation **Population** **The Seasons**

3. This question involves the irksome dilemmas of "times greater"/"times as" and "older than you/as old" (or taller/as tall, *etc.*). Movie starlet Scarlet Fifer's take-home pay for FY (fiscal year) 1989 was $10,500 compared to FY 1997 when it was $150,500. Do the math calculations for a statement that : her earning power today is 00 times greater than when she started in the business in 1995.

4. This question involves "detrending" (p. 27) figures in a news release accompanying an annual report sent over to you by the public information officer, Patti Neverwrong, for the Megabucks Company. To conceal a terrible year, she's used the old device of comparing second-quarter 1998 earnings per share with those of 1970 when the company was founded. In 1970, second-quarter earnings were $1 per share; in 1998, second-quarter earnings were $5 per share. The CPI-U index for the worth of constant dollars in 1970 then was 38.8; on June 30, 1998, it was 153.0 What's she trying to hide from the folks (stockholders, prospective stockholders, employees)? Do the calculations on the back of your quiz, based on Meyer's system, and then make your statement.

5. This question is involved with your knowing how Standard Deviation sums are calculated for the string of marker lines on either side of the mean line in those curve distributions. There are two things to complete in the calculations below: 1) fill in the missing numbers where question marks now appear, and 2) then compute Standard Deviation number:

Newspaper	% of Misspelling	Subtracting Variation from the Mean	Squaring the Variation for a Base
Los Angeles Times	2.9	2.9 -12.1 9.2-	?
Washington Post	4.5	? -12.1 ?	57.76
New York Times	11.0	11.0 -12.1 1.1-	?
Detroit Free Press	30.0	? -12.1 ?	320.41

TOTAL SUM ($\sum$) = _____

DIVIDE THE TOTAL SUM BY NUMBER OF PAPERS (4) 4

TOTAL SUM ($\sum$) _____

The Square ROOT of the SUM is: _____

ERGO, Standard Deviation ("S")from the Mean is: _____

6. This question has to designing one of John Tukey's stem-and-leaf charts for a study concerning McNeese commuters from the College of Engineering. You need to 1) do a such a chart with the data below, 2) give the range, 3) tell which number of the student subjects is the "median" and 4) in which level of commuter miles does s/he belong? The data is:

40 drove 1-5 miles	**31 drove 10 miles**		**18 drove 15 miles**
15 drove 20 miles	**5 drove 25 miles**	**8 drove 30 miles**	**5 drove 50 miles**
2 drove 60 miles	**2 drove 70 miles**	**1 drove 120 miles**	**1 drove 140 miles**

Quiz, Chapter 3: "Harnessing the Power of Statistics" (pp. 60-69)

[3 out of 6 of these questions will be asked in the Thursday Quiz]

1. Set up a cross-tabulation table with phony data for a categorical (nominal), measurement that demonstrates you know how to lay in the Independent Variable and its spinoff Dependent Variables. Don't plagiarize the textbook author's examples.

2. Set up a cross-tabulation table for a continuum (interval ratio) measurement that demonstrates you know how to lay in the Independent Variable and its spinoff Dependent Variables. Don't plagiarize the textbook author's examples.

3. Set up a cross-tabulation table for an ordinal measurement that demonstrates you know how to lay in the Independent Variable and its spinoff Dependent Variables. Don't plagiarize the textbook author's examples.

4. Why is does the textbook author consider a continuum measurement far meatier than a categorical system?

5. The professor will issue you data and a scatterplot form for you to apply the regression measurement. Be sure you put the the Independent Variable on the "*abscissa*" axis.

6. When all is said and done about the correlation coefficient (C), 1) what is its purpose in research, and 2) why does the textbook author consider it so paramount in measuring statistical data?

Quiz, Chapter 5: "Surveys" (pp. 101-17)

[3 out of 6 of these questions will be asked in the Thursday Quiz]

1. What's the textbook author's basic statistical rule of survey sampling?

2. What's the author's "weight" technique in telephone surveys?

3. Give 2 reasons why you might prefer to do phone sampling over household sampling, or why you prefer household sampling over telephone sampling according to information provided on pp. 103-110.

4. You've just been hired by the state Democratic leaders for $20,000 and expenses to get an idea of the Mayor's potential as a gubernatorial candidate among registered Democrats outside Imperial Calcasieu. You use the author's census system to get your 5-person polling staff to do 1500 interviews—hoping for a 70% response rate—spread over the 59 parishes north and east of Southwestern Louisiana.
Determine: 1) how many interviews will have to be conducted, and 2) with 5 interviews per cluster, how many clusters will you have to assign to each of your overworked five pollsters?

5. The Republican party leadership learns about your fine work in Question 4 above and offers you $35,000 and expenses to widen the survey to 1500 of <u>all</u> the 1,673,342 who went to the polls in November 1996 from those 59 parishes. They tell you the "random start" will be the first person on the Acadia parish election rolls and ask you what your "skip interval" will be after that first respondent is interviewed. Following

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