

Audience Research (MRTS 4425 & MRTS 5425) Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Xiaoqun Zhang

Class Time: Wednesday 1:00 PM-3:50 PM;

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Office hours: Wednesday 4:00 pm – 6:00 PM

Office: RTFP 233

Class Location: RTFP 264

Introduction

Audience research is significant for media organizations to find target consumers and formulate their market strategies. This course intends to provide you useful knowledge of audience research. It covers the current audience research methodologies and theories, the ratings industry and analysis processes. The major subjects of this course include sampling methods, data collection methods, quantitative methods, qualitative methods, theories of audience behaviors, gross measures, cumulative measures, Google analytics, Twitter Application Programming Interface (API), and big data and machine learning approaches.

Course Objectives

- Understand basic concepts, theories, and approaches of audience research.
- Provide the knowledge of the audience research, especially audience ratings.
- Understand the development of audience ratings and their commercial applications.
- Acknowledge the research methods applied in the audience research.
- Earn Google Analytics certification and generate Google Analytics reports.
- Grasp the skills of extracting Twitter data from Twitter API.
- Use machine learning models to conduct big data analysis.

Textbook:

- Webster, J. G., Phalen, P. & Lichty, L. (2014). *Ratings Analysis: Audience Measurement and Analytics* (4th ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Mytton, G., Diem, P. & van Dam, P.H. (2016). *Media Audience Research: A Guide for Professionals* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications. Electronic copy is available at UNT library website.
- Other readings will be posted on Canvas.

Course requirements

- You are encouraged to participate in the class activities. There are various kinds of participations including asking questions, responding to questions asked by instructors as well as class members, and making comments.

- All the writing assignments are required to be turned in on time. These assignments should be typed and **double-spaced in 12 points standard font**. Accurate **APA documentary style** is required.

Class Rules and Guidelines

- Regular on-time attendance is required. **Late for the class and early leaving will render the deduction of attendance points.** Please contact me by email if you have reasonable reasons, such as illness, prior to the class. Otherwise, your absence will be taken as the unexcused one. Your unexcused absence will render the deduction of points. **Students with more than THREE unexcused absences will NOT get “A” for this course.** Please notify me before the second week of the class if you will not attend the classes due to the religious holidays/holy days.
- You are expected to respect your peers and the instructor. Mutual respect should be practiced.
- **Late work can only get half of the corresponding points.** I know people give many reasons for late work (e.g., system crash, illness, etc.). You need to plan and schedule to complete work early.

Academic integrity and special needs

- University of North Texas is a community that considers academic integrity essential to its sustenance. It is important to acknowledge and comply with the university academic integrity policy. Any violation of this policy will be punished. The punishment will be a failure for the course, or expulsion from the university. More information about the academic integrity can be obtained from <http://policy.unt.edu/policydesc/student-standards-academic-integrity-18-1-16>.
- The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) at 1167 Union Circle Sage Hall Suite 167 (phone: 940-565-4323) to verify your eligibilities. Information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations are at <http://www.unt.edu/oda/apply/index.html>. Please meet me early in the semester if you have special needs to be accommodated.

Assignment descriptions

- **Classroom Participation.** You are required to read the designated course reading materials carefully. You are required to ask questions that you obtained from the reading, or answer the questions raised by your instructor or classmates.

- **Leading Discussion.** The topic for the discussion may come from the assigned readings of the week of your discussion, your topic essay, or the topic samples posted on Canvas. The leading team discussion consists of two parts: You should first present the relevant information on your topic. The presentation will last approximately **7-10** minutes. After the presentation, you should engage your peers in discussion of the topic you present. You should prepare several questions to be discussed. The discussion will take approximately another **3-5** minutes.
- **Research Proposal.** You are required to design an audience research project during this semester. This proposal consists of three connected components that are explained below:
 - 1) **Topic Essay.** You are required to write a **ONE**-page paper explaining the topics in the area of audience research that you are interested in. You need to list **TWO** topics with a few paragraphs of the explanation for why they intrigue your interests and how they would contribute to your knowledge/skills of audience research.
 - 2) **Literature Review.** You need to select **ONE** topic from your topic essay and write a **THREE**-page (minimum) paper summarizing the previous research that relevant to your research topic/subject not including reference page(s). You should develop research question(s) or hypothesis/hypotheses based on literature review. At least **TEN** sources are needed to be cited/summarized with the accurate APA documentary style, with at least **FIVE** of them coming from academic sources including journal articles, books/book chapters, research reports, etc.
 - 3) **Sampling Design.** You are required to write a **ONE**-page (minimum) paper explaining the sampling design for your audience research project. You must explain your population, sampling frame, sampling method, sampling size, recruitment approach, etc.
- **Google Analytics Project.** You are required to take Google Analytics online course, pass the exam and obtain Google Analytics Certification. You are also required to create Google Analytics reports. The details of this assignment will be posted separately.
- **Twitter Data Analytics Project.** In this project, you will learn how to extract Twitter data via Twitter API. You are required to download the Tweets on a media company (either a local company or a national/international company). You will also learn the Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) model, and apply this model to conduct sentiment and/or topic analyses. The details of this assignment will be posted separately.
- **Exam.** You will a final exam. The exam will consist of 100 multiple choice and true/false questions. These questions come from the textbooks.

Evaluation

Assessment weighting

Attendance	100
Classroom participation	100
Leading discussion	100
Research proposal-topic essay	50
Research proposal-literature review	150
Research proposal-sampling design	50
Google Analytics Project-Certification	100
Google Analytics Project-report	50
Twitter Data Analytics Project-download data	50
Twitter Data Analytics Project-sentiment analysis	150
Final exam	100
Total	1000

Final grading scale: A=900-1000; B=800-899; C=700-799; D=600-699; F=below 600

Graduate students (MA or MFA) are required to do an extra analysis on Twitter data analytics. They are required to use BERT based topic model to conduct topic analysis on Twitter data. This extra assignment counts extra 100 points. The final grading scale for graduate students is:

Final grading scale: A=1000-1100; B=900-999; C=800-899; D=700-799; F=below 700

Course Schedule:(Subject to change)

Week 1	Introduction and overview
08/31/22	Introduction and syllabus
Week 2	Introduction to audience research
09/07/22	Webster, et al. (2014) Chapter 1: An introduction to audience research Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 1: Introduction
Week 3	Audience measurement
09/14/22	Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 2: History of audience research Webster, et al. (2014) Chapter 2: The audience measurement business Audience Research Proposal-Topic Essay due by 09/15/22 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Turn-it-in assignment on Canvas
Week 4	Audience measurement
09/21/22	Webster, et al. (2014) Chapter 3: The audience measurement methods Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 3: Quantitative Research: Audience Measurement—General Theory and the Basics
Week 5	Audience measurement
09/28/22	Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 3: Quantitative Research: Audience Measurement—General Theory and the Basics Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 4: Audience and Media Measurement Research Methods in Use Today
Week 6	Audience measurement
10/05/22	Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 4: Audience and Media Measurement Research Methods in Use Today Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 5: Quantitative Online Research
Week 7	Audience measurement and qualitative research
10/12/22	Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 5: Quantitative Online Research Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 6: Internet Audience Measurement: Passive Methods and Technologies Audience Research Proposal-Literature Review due by 10/13/22 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Turn-it-in assignment on Canvas
Week 8	Audience research methods and theories
10/19/22	Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 6: Internet Audience Measurement: Passive Methods and Technologies Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 7: Qualitative research

Week 9	Audience research methods and theories
10/26/22	<p>Zhang. (2018). Analyzing people's media use behaviors using mail survey method.</p> <p>Zhang & Ha (2018). Are busy people more or less likely to use social networking sites.</p> <p>Webster, et al. (2014) Chapter 4: Understanding audience behavior.</p>
Week 10	Audience research methods and theories
11/02/22	<p>Webster, et al. (2014) Chapter 5: Analysis of gross measures</p> <p>Audience Research Proposal-Sampling Design due by 11/03/22 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Turn-it-in assignment on Canvas</p>
Week 11	Audience research methods and theories
11/09/22	<p>Webster, et al. (2014) Chapter 6: Analysis of cumulative measures</p> <p>Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 8: Audience opinion and reaction</p>
Week 12	Google Analytics
11/17/22	Learn Google Analytics skills
Week 13	Audience analytics
11/23/22	<p>Conduct Google Analytics project</p> <p>Google Analytics Certification and reports due by 11/23/22 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Turn-it-in assignment on Canvas</p>
Week 14	Twitter API
11/30/22	Learn the process of applying Twitter API and extract data via API
Week 15	Machine learning approach
12/07/22	<p>Learn BERT model and use this model to conduct sentiment and/or topic analyses</p> <p>Twitter Data Analytics Project-download data due by 12/07/22 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Turn-it-in assignment on Canvas</p>
Week 16	Final exam
12/15/22	<p>Final exam (available from 12/15/22 6:00 am-11:59 pm)</p> <p>Twitter Data Analytics Project- sentiment analysis due by 12/15/22 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Turn-it-in assignment on Canvas</p> <p>(For graduate student only): Twitter Data Analytics Project- topic analysis due by 12/15/22 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Turn-it-in assignment on Canvas</p>

