

Audience Research (MRTS 4425 & MRTS 5425) Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Xiaoqun Zhang

Class Time: Wednesday 11:00 AM-1:50 PM;

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Office hours: Wednesday 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

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, 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.
- 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 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. This is a hypothetical design from which you train your sampling skills. You are required to design a probability or nonprobability sample that you may use to study your topic. If you choose a probability sample, you need briefly describe what is probability sample and the advantage(s) of probability sample. Then, you should explain several key components of your sampling design including population, sampling frame, sampling method (e.g., simple random sample, systematic random sample, multi-stage random sample), sample size (exact number), recruitment approach, etc. If you choose a nonprobability sample, you need to explain what is nonprobability sample and why you not choose a probability sample. You should also explain several key components including population, sampling method (e.g., quota sample, snowball sample), sample size (exact number), recruitment approach, etc.
- **Two Alternative Assignments:** You have two options: One is to conduct a mini traditional research project, which consists of a survey and an interview. Another is to earn a Google Analytics certificate.
 - **Option 1: A Mini Traditional Audience Research Project:**
 - 1) **Survey.** You are required to design a questionnaire for a survey using multiple types of questions. These questions are used to obtain the information that could answer your research question(s) or test hypothesis/hypotheses. The questionnaire should consist of at least **TEN** questions. You need to recruit at least **FIVE**

respondents to collect survey data and write a **ONE**-page (minimum, not including the questionnaire) paper to report your findings.

- 2) **Interview.** You are required to design an interview question list consisting of at least **FIVE** questions. These questions are used to obtain the information that could answer your research question(s) or test hypothesis/hypotheses. You need to use this question list to interview **TWO** people. You need to write a **TWO**-page paper (minimum, not including interview questions) to report your findings.

- **Option 2: 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.

The course of this certificate can be found at:

https://skillshop.exceedlms.com/student/path/508845-google-analytics-certification?sid=3a186c0b-a4e0-4ee7-b2fc-652fea0f0d06&sid_i=4

- **Social Media Analytics Project.** In this project, you will learn how to use machine learning models 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 choices and true/false questions. These questions come from the primary textbook: Webster, J. G., Phalen, P. & Lichty, L. (2014). *Ratings Analysis: Audience Measurement and Analytics* (4th ed.). New York: Routledge.
- **Short Essay on AI and Audience Research (only for MA and MFA students)**

You are required to writing a short essay on AI and audience research. In this short essay, you need to analyze/discuss at least **FOUR** of following aspects on this topic:

1. What is AI?
2. How is AI generally applied in media industries?
3. How is AI specifically applied in audience research?
4. How does AI help build audience engagement and loyalty?
5. What are the AI tools for audience research in the market? Briefly explain each of them.

At least 10 sources are needed, at least FIVE of which should be scholarly/academic sources. Scholarly/academic sources include journal articles, books/book chapters, research reports/projects, etc. The textbooks and reading should be used as the academic sources (each chapter counts one source). You may add other academic sources to meet the requirement. The length of the reports should be at least **FIVE** pages, excluding abstract and reference pages. Abstract is not required. But it is good if you have one. Writing should be typed and double-spaced in 12 points standard font. Accurate APA documentary style is required.

Evaluation

Assessment weighting

Attendance	100
Classroom participation	100
Leading discussion	100
Research proposal	250 (total)
Topic essay	50
Research proposal-literature review	150
Research proposal-sampling design	50
Two Alternative Assignments	100 (total)
Option 1: A Mini Traditional Audience Research Project	
Survey	50
Interview	50
Google Analytics Project-Certification	100
Social Media Analytics Project	100
Final exam	150
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 write a short essay on AI and audience research. 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
08/23	Introduction and syllabus
Week 2	Introduction to audience research
08/30	Webster, et al. (2014) Chapter 1: An introduction to audience research Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 1: Introduction
Week 3	Audience measurement
09/06	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 09/07 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Turn-it-in assignment on Canvas
Week 4	Audience measurement
09/13	Webster, et al. (2014) Chapter 3: The audience measurement methods
Week 5	Audience measurement
09/20	Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 3: Quantitative Research: Audience Measurement—General Theory and the Basics
Week 6	Audience measurement
09/27	Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 4: Audience and Media Measurement Research Methods in Use Today
Week 7	Audience measurement and qualitative research
10/04	Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 5: Quantitative Online Research Audience Research Proposal-Literature Review due by 10/05 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Turn-it-in assignment on Canvas
Week 8	Audience research methods and theories
10/11	Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 6: Internet Audience Measurement: Passive Methods and Technologies
Week 9	Audience research methods and theories
10/18	Mytton, et al. (2016). Chapter 7: Qualitative research
Week 10	Audience research methods and theories

10/25	<p>Webster, et al. (2014) Chapter 4: Understanding audience behavior.</p> <p>Audience Research Proposal-Sampling Design due by 10/26 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Turn-it-in assignment on Canvas</p>
Week 11	Audience research methods and theories
11/01	Webster, et al. (2014) Chapter 5: Analysis of gross measures
Week 12	Audience research methods and theories
11/08	<p>Webster, et al. (2014) Chapter 6: Analysis of cumulative measures</p> <p>A Mini Traditional Audience Research Project_Survey is due by 11/9 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Canvas</p>
Week 13	Google Analytics
11/15	Google Analytics skills workshop
Week 14	Thanks Giving Holiday. No class.
11/22	Thanks Giving Holiday. No class.
Week 15	Machine learning approach
11/29	<p>Use machine learning model to conduct topic analysis</p> <p>A Mini Traditional Audience Research Project_Interview or Google Analytics Project is due by 11/30 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Canvas</p>
Week 16	Machine learning approach
12/06	<p>Use machine learning model to conduct sentiment analysis</p> <p>Social Media Analytics Project is due by 12/07 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Canvas</p>
	Final exam
12/14	<p>Final exam (available from 12/14 6:00 am-11:59 pm)</p> <p>(For graduate student only): Short Essay on AI and Audience Research due by 12/15 (11:59 P.M.) Submitted through Turn-it-in assignment on Canvas</p>