

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

S.79-4

To.....Senate.....
New Course Proposal - CMNS 360-4
 Subject: Fundamentals of Communication.....
 Research.

From....N.R. Reilly, Chairman.....
 Senate Committee on.....
Undergraduate Studies.....
 Date....4 December 1978.....

Action taken by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies at its meeting of November 21 gives rise to the following motion:

MOTION I

That Senate approve and recommend approval to the Board of Governors the new course proposal CMNS 360-4, Fundamentals of Communication Research, as proposed in S79-4 .

The possibility of having a prerequisite statement that would recommend that students take an introductory statistics course such as MATH 101 or its equivalent prior to taking CMNS 360 was discussed at the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies but was not favoured since it was felt that such a prerequisite statement would discourage students from taking the course. The question of overlap with PSYC 201 and EDUC 429 was also explored by the Committee. It was felt that in the absence of an established University policy on statistics/methods courses there were no grounds on which to deny the Communication Studies Department its own methods course.

The introduction of CMNS 360 leads to further changes in the Communication Studies Program.

Action taken by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies at its meeting on November 21, 1978 gives rise to the following motion:

MOTION II

That Senate approve and recommend approval to the Board of Governors the following changes in the Communication Studies Program:

- i) That CMNS 360 be added to the list of research methods courses (presently CMNS 361, 362; S.A. 358; and POL 415) from which a student may choose in order to satisfy the upper division requirement that students take a course in research methods.
- ii) That CMNS 360 be added as a "highly recommended" pre-requisite for CMNS 402.

Norman R. Reilly
 N.R. Reilly

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

SCUS 78-7

MEMORANDUM

To..... Mr. H. M. Evans,
..... Registrar & Secretary of SCUS..
Subject..... I.S.C. 78-3, New Course
..... Proposal.

From..... J. Blanchet, Secretary of the
..... Faculty of Interdisciplinary
..... Studies Undergraduate Curriculum
..... Committee.
Date..... October 31/78.

CMNS 360-4, Fundamentals of Communication
Research.

The above-noted course proposal, which was approved by the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies Undergraduate Curriculum Committee on February 28/78, is now being re-submitted for inclusion on the agenda of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies.

J. Y. Blanchet.
Janet Blanchet.

Attachment.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Harry Evans, Registrar;
Win Roberts, Chairman Faculty of Arts
Undergraduate Curriculum Committee

From: Bill Richards, Chairman Dept. of
CMNS Undergraduate Curriculum Cttee.

Subject: CMNS 360

Date: 30/10/78

We are bringing CMNS 360 forward for consideration again at this time. You will recall that it was held up last year for overlap considerations. The main objection was from the Math department, which objected that the proposed CMNS 360 overlapped with MATH 101. After much discussion, the statistics content of CMNS 360 was removed. The revised course proposal was brought back again. This time it was held up in SCUS, after the Education Department brought up the question of overlap with EDUC 429. The Psychology Department also raised the question in regards to PSYC 201. The proposed CMNS 360 was deferred at that time.

Subsequent discussions with the Psychology department and the Education department have led to what we believe to be a satisfactory resolution of the problem. Memos from Marvin Wideen and Roger Blackman are attached. Our argument for accepting CMNS 360 can be summarized as follows:

A course in the fundamental concepts of empirical research methods is necessary for our curriculum, since much of the work in the field depends on such research. If students are to be able to read the literature and understand it, they must know enough about the research methods used to be able to critically appraise what they are reading.

There are a number of research methods courses offered in the university. The departments of Economics, Archaeology, Psychology, Education, and Math all offer courses that are concerned with various aspects of conducting research. Most of these courses are unsuited for our needs, either because they require too many prerequisites, or because they do not cover the material that we consider important. We examined each of these potential substitutes for the proposed CMNS 360 last year. The results of this comparison are available on request.

Of all the courses that overlap with CMNS 360, there are two that are closer to suiting our needs, in terms of the area they cover and the number of prerequisites they require. These are EDUC 429 and PSYC 201. Discussion with the departments offering these courses has led us to the conclusion that they are not adequate for our needs either.

The problem with PSYC 201, which was designed to provide an introduction to research methods for Psychology students, is that it has a much greater emphasis on experimental techniques than does the proposed CMNS 360. At the same time, it has a correspondingly lesser emphasis on correlational and descriptive methods, which are crucial in most communication research. The difference in emphasis is to be expected: Many psychological studies can be carried out in the laboratory, where there are greater opportunities to exert the kind of control that allows true experimental research to be done. Communication research, on the other hand, is almost all done in the field, where experiments are difficult if not impossible to carry out in any meaningful way. Thus the necessity for a greater emphasis on descriptive and coreelational methods in the CMNS course.

Education 429 is directed at teachers who may wish to do research in classroom situations. The problems and research questions faced by this group are quite different from those faced by communication researchers doing a study of mass media usage patterns in the rural north. Furthermore, the kinds of students who would be taking EDUC 429 are not likely to have backgrounds that are similar to those of communication students. This would cause some difficulty for our students who would be taking EDUC 429. Finally, the research situations used as examples throughout the courses are likely to be quite different as well as the approaches taken to those situations.

To summarize:

1. Many of the research methods courses offered at SFU are not suited for our needs because they require too many prerequisites and because multiple courses would have to be taken if our students were to get the same material that they would get in the proposed CMNS 360.
2. The introductory methods courses PSYC 201 and EDUC 429 do overlap considerably, but there are very significant differences in the approaches and content of these courses that make them unsuited for students in Communication.

For these reasons we argue that CMNS 360 should be accepted into our curriculum.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

NEW COURSE PROPOSAL FORM

NEW COURSE

1. Calendar Information

Department: Communication

Abbreviation Code: CMNS Course Number: 360 Credit Hours: 4 Vector: 2-2-0

Title of Course: Fundamentals of Communication Research

Calendar Description of Course: This course introduces the fundamental principles of empirical methods as used in the study of communication; theory and hypothesis testing, experimental and nonexperimental research designs, surveys and field experiments, measurement and assessment techniques, attitude scales, interviews, observational methods, sampling, and ethical considerations. This course is intended for students who have had no previous experience with research methods or statistics. Illustrations are drawn from

Nature of Course Lecture/Tutorial the field of communication to prepare students for advanced work.

Prerequisites (or special instructions):

45 hours; at least two lower division courses in communication.

What course (courses), if any, is being dropped from the calendar if this course is approved: None

2. Scheduling

How frequently will the course be offered? Once a year

Semester in which the course will first be offered? 1978-3

Which of your present faculty would be available to make the proposed offering possible? Richards, Anderson, Melody

Objectives of the Course

To give students sufficient background in empirical methods as used in communication research so that they can: (a) understand and evaluate the research reported in the communication literature, and (b) design their own communication research projects and assist others in the process of communication research.

4. Budgetary and Space Requirements (for information only)

What additional resources will be required in the following areas:

Faculty - See cover memo

Staff - If enrollment exceeds 15 or 20, a TA will be needed

Library - None

Audio Visual - None

Space -

Equipment -

5. Approval

Date: 31 Oct 78

31 Oct 78

W. Melody

J. W. Balser

Department Chairman

Dean

Chairman, SCUS

COMMUNICATION 360 - Fundamentals of Communication Research

Students majoring in Communication come into contact with a wide variety of research problems and methods. While many students only read of the research that leads to certain policy decisions, others will be actively engaged in research that is aimed at gaining a better understanding of the communication process in a variety of situations, and still others will be attempting to use research data and conclusions based on that data to develop plans of action. An understanding of the basic techniques and assumptions of empirical research methods is necessary if any of these uses of research is to be done competently.

This course introduces the fundamental principles of empirical methods as they are used in the study of communication. It begins with a section discussing research from the broadest perspective. What sorts of questions can be studied effectively? How should a question be posed if it is to be answered? What are the basic goals of research?

The second section focusses on different types of studies. First is the exploratory study, in which the general outlines of a problem area are explored, impressions are formed, and hypotheses are formed. Second is the descriptive study, which attempts to discover accurately the characteristics of a group or situation. Third is the experimental or quasi-experimental study, which attempts to explore the causal relations among a set of variables. Obviously, different data gathering and analysis techniques are used in the different kinds of study. These measurement techniques are covered in the third section of the course. The use of attitude scales, interviews, observational methods, and existing data is discussed. Specific problems and strengths associated with the various methods are described and exemplified. The role of sampling is examined, and several sampling strategies are examined.

This course is intended for students who have had no previous experience with research methods or statistics, although some background in introductory statistics would allow a more sophisticated understanding of some of the concepts to be obtained. Illustrations are drawn from the field of communication in order to help prepare students for more advanced work in the field.

COMMUNICATION 360: RESEARCH METHODS IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

S = Selltitz, et. al.

B = Blalock

WEEK	READING	
1	Introduction Why do research?	S: ch 1, B: ch 1
2	Basic principles of research	S: ch 2
3	Explanatory and descriptive studies	S: ch 3, B: ch 3
4	Causal relations among variables	S: ch 4, B: ch 2
5	Explanation and theory	S: ch 5, B: ch 4
6	Measurement	S: ch 6, B: ch 5
7	Ethical issues	S: ch 7
8	Data collection	S: ch 8, 9
9	Available data	S: ch 11, Appendix B
10	Scaling and analysis	S: ch 12, 13
11	Interpretation and the report	S: ch 14, 15
12	Sampling	S: Appendix A
13	Summary	B: ch 6

Selltitz, Claire; Wrightsman L.; and Cook, S. Research Methods in Social Relations, 1976, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston

Blalock, Herbert M. An Introduction to Social Research, 1970, Prentice-Hall

Additional reading materials will be provided from time to time by the instructor.

See distribution below

W.D. Richards, Chairman
Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
Communication Studies Dept.

I.S.C. 78-5, New Course Proposal
CMNS 360-4 Fundamentals of
Communication Research

March 1, 1978.

Last fall, one of our proposed new courses, CMNS 360, (Fundamentals of Communication Research) was held up at SCUS in order to allow a decision to be made concerning the teaching of statistics through the university. CMNS 360 was held up because it included an introduction to some elementary concepts in statistics. Because the need for an introductory research methods course is still evident, I am offering for the approval of the department curriculum committee, a revised outline and description for the course. The only difference between the present outline and the one previously approved is that the statistics has been removed from this version. This will allow us to spend more time with the general questions of research methods in the course, and to illustrate more of the concepts with examples drawn from the literature.

In accordance with the ruling of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, the attached papers are forwarded to faculty curriculum committees for review in terms of course overlap.

W.D. Richards

WDR:cl
Attach.
Distribution:

Dr. L. Boland, Chairman, Arts Curriculum Committee
Dr. M. Wideen, Chairman, Education Curriculum Committee
Dr. D. Ryeburn, Chairman, Science Curriculum Committee

c.c. H.M. Evans, Registrar & Secretary of Senate
Committee on Undergraduate Studies

b.c.c. Sheila Roberts.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

To..... H. Evans, Registrar

From..... M. Wideen, Director
Undergraduate Programs
Faculty of Education

Subject..... CMNS. 360

Date..... October 18, 1978

When CMNS. 360 originally came to S.C.U.S., the Faculty of Education representatives observed that considerable overlap existed with EDUC. 429 "Research for the Classroom Teacher". Subsequent communication between representatives from the Faculty of Education and the Department of Communications suggest that because of the different clientele served by the two courses, the degree of content overlap (30-40%) should not hold up approval of CMNS. 360. The two are aimed at different groups of students. CMNS. 360 is seen as a prerequisite to advanced coursework in the Department of Communications. EDUC. 429 is directed at teachers.

MFw:kg

M. Wideen

RECEIVED

OCT 19 1978

**REGISTRAR'S OFFICE
MAIL DESK**

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

Dr. Wyn Roberts, Chairman, Faculty
of Arts Curriculum Committee
Subject... CMNS360: Research Methods in
Communication Studies

From... Dr. Roger Blackman
Psychology Department
Date... October 27, 1978

Last year, Communication Studies submitted a new course proposal for CMNS 360: Research Methods in Communication Studies. We were asked whether the proposed course overlapped with PSYC 201: Research Methods in Psychology and/or PSYC 210: Data Analysis in Psychology. At a SCUS meeting it was argued that there was considerable overlap, particularly with PSYC 201. In addition, concerns were raised by other departments and faculties (Math, Economics and Commerce, Education, and others) regarding overlap with their courses.

The proposal was withdrawn, and a modified proposal (reduced statistical content) was resubmitted earlier this year. Some objectors (including Psychology and Education) maintained that their concerns about overlap were not resolved by the new proposal. I understand from Dr. Richards that further discussion with Dr. Wideen (Education) have reached a satisfactory conclusion. This memo reports on my discussion with Dr. Richards regarding the overlap between the revised CMNS 360 proposal and the existing PSYC 201 course.

It is clear from the documentation accompanying the CMNS 360 proposal that the course is intended to cover the fundamentals of research methods. A description of "COMMUNICATION 360 - Fundamentals of Communication Research", circulated by Harry Evans on March 2, 1978, includes the following:

"Students majoring in Communication come into contact with a wide variety of research problems and methods... An understanding of the basic techniques and assumptions of empirical research methods is necessary if any of these uses of research is to be done competently".

This understanding is also what PSYC 201 is intended to achieve. For this reason, I believe that the overlap between CMNS 360 and PSYC 201 is considerable. I find it difficult to quantify this, but I suggest that it remains in excess of 50%.

It will be useful to identify the areas in which the two courses differ. There are two such areas; measurement, and emphasis on method.

1. Measurement:

The major modification made to CMNS 360 since its first proposal was the reduction of content pertaining to measurement. The revised CMNS course still includes (as it must) a section on the concepts of measurement, but makes little reference to the techniques of measurement and their use in pursuing various methods of research. PSYC 201 also includes coverage of the concepts of measurement. We have another course (PSYC 210: Data Analysis in Psychology) which deals with techniques. I do believe, however, that there is more time spent in PSYC 201 than there would be in CMNS 360 in demonstrating the application of these measurement concepts to simple data sets.

2. A more important difference between the two courses lies in their methodological emphasis. Two principal methodological foci in research are the experiment and the descriptive or correlational approach. PSYC 201 is biased towards the former, while CMNS 360 is biased towards the latter. Dr. Richards and I agree that it is fundamental to an appreciation of research methods in general that a student be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of both these approaches. I would be just as disturbed at the existence of a course purporting to cover the fundamentals of research that lacked reference to the logic of the experiment as would Dr. Richards be if such a course failed to acknowledge the methodology of descriptive research. It is nonetheless clear that, by emphasis and choice of examples, the two courses would provide students with a different perspective on a common core of issues.

Dr. Richards is in a difficult position. He has found it impossible to "sell" to his colleagues the idea that PSYC 201 could serve the needs of CMNS students for a basic grounding in research methodology. While he himself is sympathetic to the aims of PSYC 201, his colleagues are apparently adamant that a course (PSYC 201) with such a "heavy" emphasis on the experiment - a research approach which they deem largely irrelevant to their needs - would be inappropriate for CMNS students. If one accepts the situation that, in the absence of a course such as CMNS 360, the Communication Studies department would not direct their students to PSYC 201, one must face the consequence that failure to approve CMNS 360 would deny CMNS students exposure to material which I think is necessary. I find that consequence unacceptable.

Course overlap is largely an economic problem. But when the problem is resolved in such a way as to have serious academic implications, our decision should be guided by academic not economic concerns. If approving CMNS 360 is the only way to ensure that Communication Studies students receive exposure to the fundamentals of research methodology, then it should be approved. In summary: yes, we still believe that there is considerable overlap between PSYC 201 and the proposed CMNS 360; no, we do not believe that the proposal should be rejected.

ARB/jh

cc. Dr. Richards, Communication Studies



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Scus 78-79

MEMORANDUM

Harry Evans, Registrar

From Bill Richards, Chairman Dept. of
CMNS Undergrad. Curriculum Cttee.

Subject CMNS 360 fit into Major program

Date 31/10/78

This memo explains where the proposed CMNS 360 fits into the CMNS major program.

1. There is an upper division requirement that students take a course in research methods. The list of courses from which a student may choose now includes the following: CMNS 361, 362; S.A. 358; and POL. 415. CMNS 360 is to be added to this list as an additional alternative.

2. CMNS 360 is to be added as "highly recommended" for CMNS 402.