

**SYLLABUS**  
**PUR 3500 (SECTION 19591): PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH**

**Instructor**

Leticia Solaun  
Department of Public Relations, College of Journalism and Communications  
University of Florida  
Email - lsolaun@ufl.edu  
Office Hours – Weimer 1070 before and after class or by appointment

**Course Description**

Understanding the role and practice of conducting and integrating research into public relations is a fundamental skill necessary for public relations practitioners, as it forms the basis for campaign development, monitoring, and evaluation. In this course, you will learn the differences, strengths/limitations, and application of key qualitative and quantitative research methods. I will teach this course from the perspective of a practitioner and make use of extensive real-life examples.

As much as is possible in a classroom environment, lessons will be relevant to the contemporary practice of public relations and communications management. This course represents an opportunity to learn the fundamental and critical functions that are part of effective communications and that will be critical to you as a public relations practitioner. This course is centered on you and your learning needs, with ample time and opportunity for hands-on learning. To ensure student understanding and clarity of topics, there is time reserved at the end of every class to work directly with the instructor on questions or assignments that the students have.

Through readings, lectures, exercises, handouts, and discussions, students will study in-depth the essential steps of the research planning and implementation process: secondary research, primary research design, implementation, analysis, evaluation, and documenting results. Several guest speakers will join the class to demonstrate how scholarly principles are related to the professional practice of public relations research.

**College of Journalism and Communications Objectives**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (AEJMC) requires that by graduation all students should be able to:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the US
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications

- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style, and grammatical correctness
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world

### **Student Learning Objectives**

The student learning objectives for this course align with and support the professional values and competencies required of graduates by the ACEJMC.

### **Required Texts**

There is one required text for this course.

Wimmer, R. and Dominic, J. (2011). *Mass Media Research: An Introduction. 9th Edition (Preferred)*. Boston, MA: WADSWORTH Cengage Learning. ISBN-13: 978-1439082744

This textbook will be very useful in this class and in your career. You should be able to find this text used. If you cannot find the text used, please talk to the instructor. The 9<sup>th</sup> Edition is preferred but the 2006 edition may be used, if necessary. There may be content in the previous version that is not the latest version, but the concepts – which are critical - will be the same.

**The instructor does not want purchasing this book to be a source of financial stress for students! As such, please see the instructor if you have difficulty finding a used book to purchase or have found a previous edition.**

Chapters from the text are assigned in the Weekly Course Plan section of this syllabus. Additional assigned readings related to student presentations on current events may be issued throughout the semester. They will be handed out in class, available online, or e-mailed to you. All readings must be **read in advance** of the class dates for which they are assigned. Students also are expected to monitor trade publications and the mass media for local, national, and international news related to public relations, which will be used in class discussions.

## **Assignments, Exams, and Grade Distribution**

The course grade will be determined on a 100-point scale as follows:

| <b>Assignment</b>   | <b>Percent of Grade</b> |
|---|-------------------------|
| Attendance and Class Participation  | 10%                     |
| Situation Analysis (Secondary Research)                                   | 5%                      |
| Qualitative Research Plan   | 15%                     |
| Quantitative Research Plan  | 15%                     |
| Qualitative or Quantitative Research<br>Implementation and Results Report | 15%                     |
| Exam 1  | 20%                     |
| Exam 2  | 20%                     |

### **Attendance and Class Participation (10%)**

Attendance and class participation counts for a total of 10% of the student's final grade. Students are expected to arrive to class on time. Class participation is determined by such efforts as discussion of assigned readings, performance in ungraded in-class exercises, and participation in raising timely and relevant issues to the attention of the class.

Arriving 5 minutes after the start of class or leaving early will result in the lowering of the student's grade. There are two excused absences for this class. Beyond the first two, each unexcused absence will result in a loss of one percentage grade for the total attendance/participation grade. However, perfect attendance alone will not provide students with the full 10% for attendance/class participation. Students must be fully present during class, contribute to discussions, and demonstrate through their comments that they have read and understood assigned readings and benefited from previous class discussions. It is the student's responsibility to sign in. If the student's signature is not on the sheet for that day, the student will be marked absent. Students may not sign in for other students. Attendance may also be taken through roll calls and quizzes.

### **Situation Analysis (5%)**

Students will develop a Situation Analysis of a current public relations issue or challenge facing an organization. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate an understanding of conducting secondary research, critically assessing a situation based on research, and identifying primary research that should be conducted to complete the analysis. Time permitting, students will be expected to provide a 3- to 5-minute summary of their topic and research that they completed to the class in addition to submitting a summary of the research.

The written analysis will be no more than five pages in length excluding references, double-spaced, and typed. It will account for 5% of the course grade. Details of this first major assignment will be discussed in class. We will discuss examples of possible topics during class. **You MUST cite all sources meticulously using in-text citations and a compiled list of sources at the end of your written work.**

### **Qualitative Research Plan (15%)**

Students will be required to assess a given topic and develop a research plan that includes or is based on a qualitative research method. The following sections should be included in this plan: purpose (or research question), research method selected and why, research protocol (specifically how you intend to carry out the research including stages of the process, developing the research instrument

such as the set of questions to ask interviewees, sampling technique and sample, data gathering, and analysis). The written Qualitative Research Plan must be no more than five pages in length excluding references, double-spaced, and typed. This plan will account for 15% of the course grade. **You MUST cite all sources meticulously using in-text citations and a compiled list of sources at the end of the written work.**

### **Quantitative Research Plan (15%)**

Students will be required to assess a given topic and develop a research plan that includes or is based on a quantitative research method. The following sections should be included in this plan: purpose (or problem statement), research method selected and why, research protocol (specifically how you intend to carry out the research including stages of the process, developing the research instrument, sampling technique and sample, data gathering, and analysis). The written Qualitative Research Plan must be no more than five pages in length excluding references, double-spaced, and typed. This plan will account for 15% of the course grade. **You MUST cite all sources meticulously using in-text citations and a compiled list of sources at the end of the written work.**

### **Qualitative OR Quantitative Research Implementation Report (15%)**

You can choose whether you want to implement the Qualitative Research Plan or Quantitative Research Plan that you developed. After selecting one, students will conduct the research and report back on the research completed. The written Quantitative or Qualitative Research Implementation Report and Results Analysis should provide the research findings and analysis (specifically sample selection and description (demographics), summary of findings, and answer to problem statement (research question). The report should be no more than five pages in length excluding references, double-spaced, and typed. This plan will account for 15% of the course grade. **You MUST cite all sources meticulously using in-text citations and a compiled list of sources at the end of the written work.**

### **Exams (40%)**

Two exams – each valued at 20% - for a total of 40% of the course grade. Exam 1 will be given during class on October 15, 2018 and will comprise 20% of your grade. Exam 2 will be given on December 3, 2018 and will comprise of 20% of your grade. The exams will cover all course readings (textbook), weekly PowerPoint slides, handouts, class discussions, guest speakers, and student presentations.

Make-up exams must be approved and scheduled in advance and are only available for students who provide documented and acceptable excuses. Failure to provide a documented excuse prior to the exam date will result in a grade of zero on the exam.

### **Grades**

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

| <b>Grade</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--------------|----------------|
| A            | 92-100         |
| A-           | 90-91          |
| B+           | 89             |
| B            | 82-88          |
| B-           | 80-81          |
| C+           | 78-79          |
| C            | 72-77          |
| C-           | 70-71          |
| D            | 60-69          |
| E            | 59 or less     |

Each assignment will be graded on a 100-point scale and weighted accordingly. Letter grades are based on the total points accumulated over the term. Students who earn a “C” or better will fulfill the PUR 3500 requirement for graduating with a degree in public relations and will not be required to retake the course.

### **Appointments**

Please stop by during the instructor office hours to discuss assignments, materials or other concerns related to the course. Students may also schedule a meeting or ask questions via email. Office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus. You are encouraged to use the instructor as a thought partner as you learn and develop research skills. Please reach out to me if you have questions or need help.

### **Speakers**

During the semester, the class will have the opportunity to discuss aspects of the public relations research with senior public relations practitioners. The purpose of inviting speakers to participate in class is to provide hands-on perspectives on role, realities, challenges, and opportunities when the research process is placed in practice. Students are encouraged to consider speaker’s experience and background, and develop discussion questions and topics.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory. Each student is allowed one absence for the semester. Absences beyond one will result in a reduction of the course grade by one percentage grade for each unexcused absence from your total attendance/participation grade. Students are responsible for all class work missed. They should consult with classmates, rather than the instructor, to obtain information on lectures, assignments, and other matters.

Several classes will be taught online this semester, requiring students to post three times to discussion topics on Canvas to receive credit for attendance that day. At least one post should be a direct response to the discussion topic. The topics will involve current situations in public relations.

### **Makeups, Late Assignments, and Extra Credit**

The practice of public relations hinges on meeting deadlines. Missing deadlines not only damages a public relations professional’s credibility, but also can lead to termination of a relationship with a client or to dismissal. Thus, deadlines are treated seriously in this class. All written assignments are due by the date of the deadline, unless otherwise instructed. A student may not submit a late assignment and will receive a grade of zero for that assignment. There will be no make-up exams or extensions of deadlines. Dates have been announced in advance in the Weekly Course Plan so that students can schedule other activities around these deadlines. Exceptions will be rare and made only in cases of extraordinary, documented circumstances, as determined by the instructor. No extra credit will be given for additional work.

### **Academic Honesty**

The University of Florida is committed to the highest standards of academic and professional ethics and expects its students to adhere to those standards. Each student is bound by the academic honesty guidelines of the University and the student conduct code. The penalty for violation of academic honesty is an “E” for the course, at minimum.

Students are expected to observe the University of Florida’s policy on academic honesty in fulfilling all course requirements. The work you submit for this course must be your own. It must be original for this course. You must never use direct or paraphrased material from any source, including Web sites, without attribution. You may not submit anything that you wrote for another class, or that you wrote as a volunteer or intern. You may not submit anything that was written for any purpose other

than the given assignment. Having someone else do your work or sign your name/initials on the attendance sheet is considered academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty includes the following: use of materials from another author without citation or attribution, extensive use of verbatim materials from another author with citation and attribution, and extensive use of one's own writing from past assignments or from assignments in other, current classes (called "double dipping"). Any time you complete an assignment for this course you will clearly attribute the source of your information, including information obtained from organizations' Web sites or internal documents.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code." On all work submitted for credit, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

Furthermore, students are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. For more information about the student honor code, violations, and sanctions, go to the Dean of Students Office website at (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>). If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

### **Intellectual Property Protection**

Lectures given in this course, including handouts and PowerPoint® slide decks, are the property of the instructor and the University of Florida. Class lectures may not be recorded in any form without prior permission from the instructor and any guest lecturers that may speak to this class. Recordings, including class notes, may not be used for commercial purposes.

### **Diversity**

All discussions will be ruled by mutual respect—for people and their opinions. Effective public relations practice relies on the ability to recognize and embrace diversity in all its forms, including viewpoints. Furthermore, professionalism requires an appreciation for the multicultural society and global economy in which students plan to work. Throughout the course, students will have opportunities to see how different life experiences and cultural perspectives influence public relations practice. You are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities in your own work and to learn from the information and ideas shared by other students.

### **Course Professionalism**

The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional school and professional decorum is expected at all times. I expect you to adhere to workplace norms of collegial and respectful interaction. That specifically means you will arrive on time, not speak when another student or the instructor are speaking or use cell phones, lap tops or other electronic devices for anything other than note taking.

### **Classroom Conduct**

- Cell phones must be turned off during class.
- Photos and other recordings are prohibited unless approved in advance by the instructor.
- Reading unrelated material or talking while others are speaking is prohibited.
- Anyone violating these rules or disrupting class in other ways will be asked to leave the classroom.

- Students are urged to meet in-person with the instructor if they have questions or are having problems. Office hours are listed on p. 1 of the syllabus. Conversations immediately following class are welcomed.

### **Format for Written Assignments**

All written work submitted for this course must be coherent, logical, and carefully edited. Writing proficiency is necessary to pass this course. Misspellings, syntax, and grammar errors as well as other writing problems are unacceptable in upper-division college writing, especially in work by public relations students. Please do not submit materials with editing marks on them; all assignments must be “client-ready.”

Unless otherwise specified, all written assignments must be typed with a 12-point serif font (e.g., Times New Roman), in APA style, double-spaced, and framed by 1-inch margins. No additional consideration will be given to written work accompanied by artwork or any other kind of design element. However, a well-designed piece for your portfolio will be an advantage as a tool to assist in an internship or job search.

### **Additional Final Notes**

The instructor reserves the right to make changes as necessary to the grading system and schedule for this course.

Computers are great tools, and we’ll obviously be using them in this course, but they can also be distracting, **Laptop computers and iPads are welcome in class only for taking notes.** Because your classmates and the professor and guest lecturers will need your full attention during our brief class time together, you may not eat, chat, email, text message, tweet, surf, check Facebook or other social media, etc. during class time. If you simply must engage in these activities, please excuse yourself from class or you’ll be asked to leave.

Students are not permitted to bring guests to class unless special arrangements have been made with the professor prior to class. You are expected to maintain comprehensive class notes because class lectures and discussions often contain information that is not contained in the readings or class slide decks.

### **Online Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. These evaluations are conducted online and typically are conducted during the last 2 weeks of the semester. Time has been allocated in the Weekly Course Plan for students to complete evaluations. Summary results of assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office, which will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide the documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Requests should be made at a private meeting during the instructor’s office hours.

### **Useful University of Florida Services**

Disability Resource Center: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Reading and Writing Center: <http://www.at.ufl.edu/rwcenter/>

Counseling Center: <http://www.counsel.ufl.edu/>

**SYLLABUS – FALL 2018**  
**PUR 3500 (SECTION 19591): PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH**  
**WEEKLY COURSE PLAN**

| <b>Week</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Topic</b>  | <b>Readings</b>   | <b>Assignment Due</b>                 |
|-------------|-------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1           | 8/27/2018   | Syllabus Review and Introduction to the Course; Role of Research in Public Relations Planning/Execution; Qualitative and Quantitative Research; Key Concepts and Definitions. | None  | NA                                    |
| 2           | 9/3/2018    | Labor Day – NO CLASSES  | Review syllabus   | NA                                    |
| 3           | 9/10/2018   | ONLINE CLASS ONLY – WE WILL NOT MEET IN THE CLASSROOM<br><br>Elements of Research; Situation Analysis and Secondary Research; Research Ethics and Bias.                       | Text: Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4<br>Articles will be posted to e-Learning. Links:<br><a href="#">Research Basis for Public Relations Reliability and Validity Sampling</a><br><a href="#">Situation Analysis in Public Relations Campaign Planning</a>                   | NA                                    |
| 4           | 9/17/2018   | Discuss Situation Analyses; Finish Week 2   | <a href="#">Situation Analysis</a>  | NA                                    |
| 5           | 9/24/2018   | Qualitative Research Methods – Interviews, Focus Groups, Case Studies, Ethnographic Research  | Chapter 5<br>Links:<br><a href="#">Qualitative Research Methods</a><br>Daymon, C. & Holloway, I. (2011). Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications. Second Edition. (Part I: 1; Part II: 7; Part II: 13, 14, 15; Part IV: 18, 19) | Situation Analysis                    |
| 6           | 10/1/2018   | Review of Qualitative Methods; Conducting Qualitative Research (Implementation); Analyzing and Writing Research Results; In-class Exercise                                    | Links:<br>Review Daymon & Holloway material from Week 4. Be prepared to apply lessons.<br><a href="#">Writing Focus Group Results Sample of Focus Group Results by Theme</a>  | Qualitative Research Plan             |
| 7           | 10/8/2018   | Exam Review   | Exam study guide; Course slide decks and readings for weeks 1 – 5; Exam review slide deck for week 6  | NA                                    |
| 8           | 10/15/2018  | Exam 1  |   | Exam 1 (Exam taken during class time) |
| 9           | 10/22/2018  | Review of Quantitative Methods and Application;   | Chapters 6, 7, and 9  | NA                                    |



| Week  | Date       | Topic   | Readings   | Assignment Due   |
|---|------------|---|--|--|
|   |            | Surveys, Content Analyses, Experiments  |  |  |
| 10  | 10/29/2018 |   | Chapter 12, 13, and 14<br>Links:<br><a href="#">Survey Research</a>                                    | Quantitative Research Plan   |
| 11  | 11/5/2018  | Statistical Analysis  | Chapter 10   | NA   |
| 12  | 11/12/2018 | Veteran's Day – NO CLASSES  | None   | NA   |
| 13  | 11/19/2018 | Practical Challenges to Conducting Research – When Clients Say No to Research               |  | Qualitative or Quantitative Research Implementation and Results Report |
| 14  | 11/26/2018 | Exam 2 Review; Summary and Discussion of Future of Research in Public Relations Exam Review | Exam study guide; Course slide decks and readings for weeks 1 – 14; Exam review slide deck for week 14 | NA   |
| 15  | 12/3/2018  | Exam 2  |  | Exam 2 (Exam taken during class time.)                                 |
| <b>Please submit instructor evaluations!!!!</b> |            |   |  |  |

Notes:

NA = not applicable