

PUR 3500
Public Relations Research Methods
Fall 2020

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Class Meeting on Zoom: Wednesday 3pm-6pm (W 8-10), section 11GG

Zoom office hours: Wednesday 2-3 pm, or by appointment

Required Texts

Stacks, D. W. (2016). *Primer of public relations research*, (3rd Ed.). New York: Guilford.

**Supplemental readings will be made available to you through the course website.*

Course Goals

This course has two goals. The first is to provide you with a general framework for understanding and evaluating social science research so when you encounter it in almost any PR-related job you can understand and apply the information to your own project with a reasonable level of competence. The second goal is to provide you with some first-hand experience in conducting a research project. This practical experience will be beneficial both in future courses you take in the CJC and your professional careers. Given my desire for this course to be practically useful we will spend the majority of our time learning how to collect and analyze data from surveys and focus groups, which are the most commonly used methods for public relations professionals. We will also spend some time briefly learning about other common techniques used by PR researchers.

Course Format

This course will be a “flipped classroom”:

- Before the weekly meeting: Most lectures will be pre-recorded and uploaded to Canvas. You need to watch the videos, do the readings and finish any required assignments before our weekly meeting. Slides, due dates, any announcements, changes, etc. will be posted on the course website.
- Weekly meeting: We will meet via Zoom during our scheduled class time. We will use our class time to go over activities, deal with course updates and questions, and most importantly you will have time to work with your group members which will have a large impact on your grade. On most weeks, we won't use up the three-hour block, but you are still responsible for reserving the full scheduled time for the class.

Course Learning Objectives

- Identify strengths and weaknesses of various methods frequently used in communication (e.g. focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Practice creating various data collection tools used in PR research
- Practice interpreting common types of data used in PR research
- Practice reporting PR research in an easily understood format

College of Journalism and Communications Objectives

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications 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.

Course Policies

Attendance: It's important to attend our weekly Zoom meeting! You will have the opportunity to gain points by completing in-class activities and use the time to work with your team on the group project. If a participation activity is done in class, and you are not present, those points cannot be made up for any reason. Professionalism is important as a public relations student, and I expect a professional demeanor in our course Zooms (i.e., camera on, fully clothed, sitting up, in a quiet environment and/or using headphones, etc.). These Zoom course will not be recorded. Straight lecture material will be pre-recorded for you to view on your own schedule. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

Honor Code: Please note that all of your work in this class should conform to the university's honor code. I will document and report all honor code violations, including cheating and plagiarism. The minimum penalty for a violation of the honor code is a zero on the assignment or exam but may be higher depending on the severity of the violation.

Email Policy: As a state employee, my email is considered a public record. Therefore, it can be requested via an open-records request. Because emails are considered public records, federal privacy laws prevent me from discussing grades or other personal matters via email. As a result,

you will need to call me via Zoom to discuss these matters. In addition, please be aware that email is considered formal communication, which means you should practice professionalism.

Late Work/Make-up Work: All written assignments must be turned in to Canvas by 11:59pm the day the assignment is due. Late work will be assessed with a **10% penalty** for each day it is late. No work will be accepted **two days** after the due date. There are no make-ups for exams or in-class activities, for any reason beyond university or religious excused absences.

How You Get Points

Point Distribution

Exams	400 pts
Research Project	500 pts
Group Contract	10 pts
Background Report	50 pts
Focus Group Protocol	50 pts
Focus Group Report	80 pts
Mid-term Peer Evaluation	20 pts
Survey Questions	50 pts
Survey Report	80 pts
Final Report	100 pts
Final Report Presentation	20 pts
Final-term Peer Evaluation	40 pts
In-class activities	100 pts
TOTAL	1000 pts

Letter grades will be calculated using this formula:

Letter	Course Points	Percentage	Grade Points
A	1000-930	100-93	4.0
A-	929-900	92.9-90	3.7
B+	899-870	89.9-87	3.3
B	869-830	86.9-83	3
B-	829-800	82.9-80	2.7
C+	799-770	79.9-77	2.3
C	769-730	76.9-73	2
C-	729-700	72.9-700	1.7
D+	699-670	69.9-67	1.3
D	669-600	66.9-60	1
F	599-0	59.9-0	0

Overview of Course Components

I will be as fair and impartial as is humanly possible in the grading process. Each of you will be graded on the same basis. Normally, by the time I return your graded assignment, I have looked at each person's work at least several times and feel comfortable with the grade assigned to it. Grades are earned; they are not gifts, nor are they negotiated. Grades are awarded on the basis on the quality of the work performed, not the amount of time expended.

I will work my hardest to make this course enjoyable and interesting. However, some students struggle with the material. Please see me if you are having problems understanding the concepts covered in class. I am your resource for this class, see me in office hours or make an appointment if you can't come to office hours. I will do all I can to help you before a deadline. After a deadline has past, or an exam has been given, there is nothing I can do to help you.

Exams

Two open book unit exams will be given on Canvas. All exams will be worth 200 points. The exams will cover the material in the lectures, in-class activities, and readings – that includes the textbook chapters and any supplemental material posted online to Canvas. The exams will not be intentionally cumulative, but some chapters will utilize concepts from previous chapters. I will try to point these instances out when covering the material in lecture. The tests will be multiple choice/true-false/matching, and I will provide exam guides.

The exams will be active during our scheduled class time on the exam day. You must be on time for exams. As soon as one person has completed their exam, no more exams can begin. No make-up exams are given regardless of the reason. **No collaboration is allowed.**

Research project

A key objective of this class is to provide you with hands-on experience conducting research that is commonly used in various communication professions. Students will be required to engage in creating, conducting and analyzing information from both a focus group and a survey. Students will be allowed to choose their own client and research question for the semester within their assigned teams. Yes, this will require group work, but life is a group project, and communication research in the real world almost always will require group work. There will be multiple assignments related to the research projects that will be completed throughout the semester. There is an overview of the entire project on Canvas. These projects will be discussed in significant depth later in the course and materials will be provided in class and is available on the course website.

In-class activities

I believe, and research has shown, that active participation in learning is crucial for long term learning. Most weeks we will complete some sort of activity during our meeting time. These are designed to help you understand the course material. Some are individual, and some are group activities. These assignments will together make up 10% of your final grade.

Tentative Course Schedule*

Week/Dates	Topics	Readings
1 9/2	Intro to course; Purpose of research	Chapter 1 & 2
2 9/9	Intro to focus groups	Chapter 11
3 9/16	Focus groups continued, Group Contract Due	Focus Group Supplement
4 9/23	Other qualitative methods, Background Report Due	Chapter 9 & 10
5 9/30	Measurement, Focus Group Protocol Due	Chapter 4 & 5
6 10/7	Exam #1	Ch. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 & Supplement
7 10/14	Survey design	Chapter 13
8 10/21	Sampling, Focus Group Report Due, Midterm Peer Evaluation Due	Chapter 12
9 10/28	Content analysis	Chapter 8
10 11/4	Experimental design, Survey Questions Due	Chapter 14
11 11/11	No class -Veterans Day	
12 11/18	Descriptive statistics & Hypothesis testing	Chapter 6 & 15
13 11/25	No class -Happy Thanksgiving! Survey Report Due	
14 12/2	Report creation	
15 12/9	Presentations Final Report Due Final Peer Evaluation Due	Chapter 16
16 12/16	Exam #2	Ch. 6, 8, 12-15

*This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Changes to the schedule will be discussed in class. You are responsible for attending all classes unless it is marked as a holiday.

Standard UF Policy Information and Links

University Honesty Policy

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 by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Online Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last 2-3 weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

UF Grading Policy

[http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#grades site.\)](http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#grades%20site.)
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>