

PUR 3500

Public Relations Research Methods

Spring 2021

M 12:50 – 3:50 (M 6-8), section 03CG

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Phone: 273-4163 (email is generally the fastest way to get a hold of me)

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 serves two goals. One is to provide you with a critical framework for understanding and evaluating social science research so when you encounter it in almost any PR-related job you can interpret and report social science research with a reasonable level of competence. Think of the course material as professional survival skills. 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, but also in your professional careers. Given my desire for this course to be practically useful we will spend the majority of our time learning how to conduct and analyze quality 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 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: Our class is scheduled as a fully face-to-face course this spring, and we will meet in our classroom during class time. I expect that you attend class, and you will have the opportunity to gain points by completing in-class assignments, but I do not take formal attendance. I do post slides on Canvas, but recommend that if miss class you obtain notes from a classmate. **If you miss class please do not ask me if you missed “anything important.”** Of course you did! I think every day is important. If what you mean to ask is if I made any announcements about changes to due dates or something of that nature, those types of announcements will always be posted on the course website.

What happens if we have to switch to an online format at some point due to the COVID-19 pandemic? We will meet via Zoom during our scheduled class time, and I do expect that you are there and ready to participate, although as with regular class, formal attendance will not be taken. If a participation activity is done in class, and you are not present, those points cannot be made up for any reason. 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. 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 course Zooms 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.**

Email Policy: As a state employee, my email is considered a public record, and can be requested via an open-records request. Because of this, federal privacy laws prevent me from discussing grades or other personal matters via email, and you must schedule a time to speak with me to discuss these matters. In general, face-to-face (or Zoom-to-Zoom) meetings tend to take less time, and result in less confusion than emailed conversations. While you are welcome to email me, I may indicate that you need an in-person meeting depending on the complexity of the issue. Also, please be aware that email is considered formal communication, and it is important to

practice professionalism. Make sure that you do not treat email as text (i.e., don't use text abbreviations) and never email something that you would not say to your boss' face.

Late Work/Make-up Work: All written assignments must be turned in to Canvas by 11:59pm the day the assignment is due. Canvas will automatically mark assignments as late if they are uploaded even one second after 11:59pm. You have 24 hours after the due date to turn in your assignment for a 10% grade reduction. It is your responsibility to make sure you properly uploaded your paper, blaming a group member doesn't work as it is the group's joint responsibility. There are no make-ups/late exceptions for exams or in-class activities, for any reason beyond university or religious excused absences.

Professionalism: As PR students I expect you to maintain a high level of professionalism in all of our interactions. This includes being courteous and respectful to all members of the course. Being respectful includes making sure you are not distracting to others via your cell phone or computer usage, talking with others during lecture, or arriving or leaving late – practice your professionalism now!

How You Get Points

Point Distribution

Exams	500 pts
Research Project	425 pts
Group Contract	15 pts
Background Report	40 pts
Focus Group Protocol	50 pts
Focus Group Report	75 pts
Survey Questions	45 pts
Survey Report	75 pts
Final Report	100 pts
Presentation	25 pts
In-class/Online activities	50 pts
IRB Training	25 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

I don't round up. I will keep grades posted on Canvas - it is your responsibility to check it and make sure you know where you are at.

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. Because of this, no extra work or special assignments will be given. 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 unit exams will be given, in addition to the **OPTIONAL** final, which if taken would replace your lowest unit exam grade. All exams will be worth 250 points and will be administered online via Honorlock. Honorlock requires that you have a working webcam, and you must download the Chrome extension prior to the exam. There will be a practice exam posted to make sure you are comfortable with the program and requirements. You must be on time for exams. **No make-up exams are given regardless of the reason.** If you do well on the two unit exams, and are satisfied with your grade, you can skip the final exam without consequence. If you miss an exam, or do poorly on an exam, you can take the final to replace the earlier exam grade that you may not be pleased with. The exams will cover the material in the readings and lectures – that includes the textbook chapters and any supplemental material posted online to Canvas. The unit 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 final exam will be cumulative, covering the whole semester and must be taken during the scheduled final exam period.** The tests will be multiple choice/true-false/matching.

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/online 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 designed to help you understand the course material. These assignments – which could include content quizzes – will together make up 5% of your grade. Your top 10 weekly scores will count, which will provide you with a cushion if you need to miss a class.

IRB Training

Not only is it important to learn the nuts and bolts of conducting research, but it is important to make sure that the research you do meets ethical standards. Prior to engaging in any research, you need to complete UF's module on ethical research, and upload a screenshot of your completed training certificate. You can complete the training by going to <http://irb.ufl.edu/index/requiredtraining.html>.

Tentative Course Schedule*

WEEK	TOPICS	READINGS
Week/Dates		
1 1/11	Intro to course, purpose of research	Chapter 1 & 2
2 1/18	UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY – no class	
3 1/25	Focus groups, IRB Training Due	Chapter 11, Focus Group Supplement
4 2/1	Other qualitative methods, Group Contract Due, Background Report Due	Chapter 9 & 10
5 2/8	Measurement Focus Group Protocol Due	Chapter 4 & 5
6 2/15	Exam #1	Ch. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 & Supplement
7 2/22	Survey design	Chapter 12
8 3/1	Sampling, Focus Group Report Due, Midterm Group Eval Due	Chapter 13
9 3/8	Content analysis	Chapter 8
10 3/15	Experimental design, Survey Questions Due	Chapter 14
11 3/22	Descriptive statistics	Chapter 6
12 3/29	Hypothesis testing	Chapter 15
13 4/5	Report creation, Survey Report Due	
14 4/12	Exam #2	Ch. 6, 8, 12-15
15 4/19	Presentations, Final Report Due, Final Group Eval Due	Chapter 16
Final Wednesday 4/28	Final Exam, Wednesday 4/28 12:30-2:30	ALL CONTENT

*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

UF Grading Policy

<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#grades> (Links to an external site.)

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> (Links to an external site.)

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://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.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals> (Links to an external site.). Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three 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/> (Links to an external site.).

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.

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see: <http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html> (Links to an external site.)

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care:

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc> ([Links to an external site.](#)), and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)

Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask> ([Links to an external site.](#)). Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Student Complaints

Campus: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf ([Links to an external site.](#)).

On-Line Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

COVID Policies

We will have face-to-face instructional sessions to accomplish the student learning objectives of this course. In response to COVID-19, the following policies and requirements are in place to maintain your learning environment and to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions.

- You are required to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings. Following and enforcing these policies and requirements are all of our responsibility. Failure to do so will lead to a report to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.
- This course has been assigned a physical classroom with enough capacity to maintain physical distancing (6 feet between individuals) requirements. Please utilize designated seats and maintain appropriate spacing between students. Please do not move desks or stations.
- Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
- Follow your instructor's guidance on how to enter and exit the classroom. Practice physical distancing to the extent possible when entering and exiting the classroom.
- If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms ([Click here for guidance from the CDC on symptoms of coronavirus](#)), please use the UF Health screening system and follow the instructions on whether you are able to attend class. [Click here for UF Health guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to or are experiencing Covid-19 symptoms](#).
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work. [Find more information in the university attendance policies](#).