

SYLLABUS
PUR 3500: PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH

INSTRUCTOR

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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.

Student Learning Objectives

As a result of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of public relations research and the process through which it is strategically practiced.
- Recognize the key core components of essential qualitative and quantitative research methods.
- Select appropriate research methods to conduct based on research needs and develop a plan that includes the design and implementation of research methods.
- Develop strategies that are informed by research.
- Think critically, creatively, and independently about public relations research.

- Write, formulate, and execute fundamental components of a public relations research plan.

The course specifically supports 6 of the 12 professional values and competencies required of graduates by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC):

1. Think critically, creatively, and independently
2. Conduct research and evaluate information using appropriate methods
3. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the public relations profession
4. Critically assess your work to ensure that you express yourself accurately and professionally (using correct grammar and style)
5. Understand and apply basic numerical and statistical concepts
6. Understand and apply appropriate public relations techniques

Required Texts

There are no required texts for this course; however, the following text is recommended for reference. Readings from this text may be provided during the semester.

Stacks, D. (2017). *Primer of Public Relations Research. 3rd Edition*. New York: The Guilford Press. ISBN: 9781462522705.

Chapters from the text may be 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:

Assignment	Percent of Grade
Attendance and Class Participation	10%
In Class Group Research Sessions	20%
Secondary Research Report	25%
Qualitative Research Plan	20%
Quantitative Research Plan	25%

Attendance and Class Participation (10%)

Attendance and class participation counts toward 10 percent 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 five minutes after the start of class or leaving early will result in the lowering of the student’s grade. There is one excused absence for this class. Beyond the first, each unexcused absence will result in a loss of one percentage grade for the total attendance/participation grade. However, perfect attendance does not ensure that the student will receive the full 10 percent for 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.

In Class Group Research Sessions (20%)

During two class periods, students will be divided into teams to discuss a topic and identify the secondary research to be collected and qualitative and/or quantitative research that should be completed to provide a basis for public relations actions. Zoom breakout rooms will be used. Each session will be worth 12% of your final grade. Of that 10% for each session, 5% will be given for participation in the group and 5% will be given for the completeness of the report out. Each student must contribute to the group report out.

Situation Analysis (25%)

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 25% 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 (20%)

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 would 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 3 pages in length excluding references, double-spaced, and typed. This plan will account for 20% 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 (25%)

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 Quantitative Research Plan must be no more than 3 pages in length excluding references, double-spaced, and typed. This plan will account for 25% 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.**

Grades

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

Grade	Percent
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 my office hours to discuss assignments, materials or other concerns related to the course. Students may also schedule a meeting with me via email. My office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus. I have an open-door policy to meet with my students! 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, laptops 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 – SUMMER A 2021
PUR 3500: PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH
WEEKLY COURSE PLAN

Week	Date	Topic	Readings from Assigned Text	Due
1	5/12/2021	Syllabus Review and Introduction to the Course; Role of Research in Public Relations Planning/Execution; Qualitative and Quantitative Research; Key Concepts and Definitions.		
2	5/19/2021	Elements of Research; Situation Analysis and Secondary Research; Research Ethics and Bias Small group activity in breakout rooms	Links: Research Basis for Public Relations Situation Analysis in Public Relations Campaign Planning Situation Analysis	
3	5/26/2021	Qualitative Research Methods – Interviews, Focus Groups, Case Studies Conducting Qualitative Research (Implementation) Small group activity in breakout rooms	Links: Qualitative Research Methods Daymon, C. & Holloway, I. (2011). Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications. Second Edition. Writing Focus Group Results Sample of Focus Group Results by Theme	Situation Analysis
4	6/2/2021	Review of Quantitative Methods and Application; Surveys, Content Analyses Analyzing and Writing Research Results	Links: Reliability and Validity Sampling	Qualitative Research Plan
5	6/9/2021	Practical Challenges to Conducting Research – When Clients Say No to Research; In-class exercise – survey Final Exam Prep	Course slide decks and readings for weeks 1 – 5; final exam deck	Quantitative Research Plan
Please submit instructor evaluations!!!!				