

PUR 3500

Public Relations Research Methods

Fall 2025

Wed. 12:50pm– 3:50pm, (W 6-8), Weimer 1078

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Office: Weimer 3040C

Office hours: Thursday 2pm to 4pm or by appointment

Phone: 392-3995 (email is generally the fastest way to get a hold of me)

Required Texts

Dainton, M. & Lannutti, P. J. (2021). *Strategic Communication Research Methods*.

**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 Learning Objectives

- Identify strengths and weaknesses of various methods frequently used in PR (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:

- apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located;
- demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts;
- present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Course Policies

Attendance: I will take attendance. I will track whether you miss class, arrive late, or leave early.

Missed Classes

If you miss a class or miss part of a class, you will not be able to complete the in-class activities completed that day. I always offer more than the minimum number of in-class activities, so as long as you don't miss too many classes, you will still get full credit for the in-class component of the points for the class. There are consequences for missing too many classes. First, attendance is tied to whether you can get any extra credit points. If you miss more than two classes, for any reason, you will be ineligible for extra credit. Hence, use your missed classes wisely if you want to get extra credit. Second, I will deduct points from your final grade for missing too many classes. If you miss more than three classes, you will lose 10% of your grade for each additional class you miss during the course of the semester. Even if you do miss classes, I still post all of the content for the week on the Canvas page (e.g., slides, activities, etc.). If you have questions regarding the content, please send me an email.

Arriving Late or Leaving Early

The other thing I track is when people arrive late or leave early. If you are going to be late or need to leave early, I expect that you will send me an email letting me know what is going on. If you do not notify me, and you come more than five minutes late or leave prior to me dismissing class, I will mark this as part of your attendance. If you come late or leave early more than once without notifying me, you will be ineligible for extra credit. Moreover, doing this more than once will result in a 2.5% deduction in your grade for each instance of you coming late or leaving early. Each time you do this, past the first occurrence, will result in a 2.5% deduction. That is, if you arrive late to class three times during the semester, I will deduct 5% from your final grade at the end of the semester. If you are arriving late or leaving early, even with an excuse, there will eventually be consequences relative to your grade in the class. Arriving late or leaving early more than four times, even with an email, will result in losing out on the opportunity for extra credit. Each additional time you leave early or arrive late will result in a 2.5% deduction of points tied to your final grade.

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 visit me in my office to discuss grades. In general, face-to-face 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. In addition, please be aware that email is considered formal communication, which means you should practice professionalism. In other words, try to avoid treating emails like text messages (i.e., don't use text abbreviations). Moreover, only send things via email that you would say to another person in a face-to-face setting.

Honor Code: Please note that all of your work in this class should conform to the university's honor code, which states: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student 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." For more information please see <http://regulations.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/4.040-1.pdf>

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. More than one violation will result in failing the course.

AI Policy: In this class, I want you to produce all your own work without generative AI's assistance. It is important for me to be able to ascertain what you know and can produce unaided on your own. The use of generative AI for your assignments in this class is a violation of the honor code, as you are presenting content as your own that was not fully created by you. There are various AI detection tools available (built within Canvas and externally such as ZeroGPT), and many AI platforms follow very formulaic response patterns. If I am concerned that your work is not your own, I will try to verify the originality of your work and if evidence is found that your work is AI generated I

will submit your assignment as violating the honor code. Penalties for honor code violations apply to use of AI to complete an assignment.

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.

Late Work/Make-up Work: You will hand in assignments to the course drop box. It is your responsibility to hand in the assignments before the due date. You must submit assignments before midnight of the due date. Therefore, if a paper is due Tuesday, it must be in the drop box by 11:59 p.m. **Be sure to verify that your assignment has been downloaded to the drop box. The only way I do not consider an assignment late is if it's in the drop box before the deadline.** In addition, I will consider any assignments that can't be opened as late. **I use a Microsoft computer, which means you should be uploading doc files, not pages files.** Even if you are having computer problems, I would suggest that you take screen shots of what you have and submit those as to avoid a late submission penalty. You could also upload another type of file that I can open on my compute such as a PDF. Basically, if I can't open the file, I will consider it late and will apply a late penalty to the assignment. Twenty-five percent will be deducted from your grade **each day** your paper is late or for each day the correct file type is not uploaded to the drop box (this means a total of 50% if it is handed in two days late). I will NOT accept assignments after the second day (48 hours past the due date). Late assignments will not be given grading priority. They will be handed back by the end of the semester. Late assignments will also receive few, if any, comments.

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 others with your cell phone or computer. If you are using your computer to take notes, only have your notes page open. If technology becomes a distraction for others in class, I reserve the right to ban computer use in the classroom.

How You Get Points

Point Distribution

Exams	500 pts
Research Project (group assignments)	250 pts
Group Contract	15 pts
Background Report	40 pts
Focus Group Protocol	50 pts
Survey Questions	45 pts
Final Report	75 pts
Presentation	25 pts
Research Project (individual assignments)	150pts
Focus Group Report	75 pts
Survey Report	75 pts
In-class activities	50 pts
Online/out of class activities	50 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 do my best to be fair and impartial when it comes to grading assignments. Each of you will be graded on the same basis. In the end, when grades have been posted the assignment has been examined several times. I am just serving as an umpire/referee of the course rules. The grade you received is the grade you have earned based on the criteria outlined in the syllabus, assignment directions, etc. If you have questions or would like to discuss your grade (or a specific assignment), please contact me and we can set up a time to meet.

If you are struggling with the course material, exams, having problems with members of your group, etc., it is imperative that you talk to me as soon as you think you're having a problem. In essence, if you're struggling with an assignment, talk to me before you have to hand in the assignment. 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

There will be three exams given during the semester: Two-unit exams and one final exam. Two of the three exams will count toward your final grade. There will be no make-up exams. 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. The exams will cover the material in the readings and lectures – this includes the textbook chapters, and any supplemental material posted on the course website. I will provide you with reading guides for each week's readings. These will serve as the study guide for the course readings. I will also provide review guides each week for the lectures. Combined, the reading and lecture review guides will serve as your study guide for each unit exam. The unit exams will not be cumulative. That being said, some content/concepts might rely on the cumulative knowledge you have built up during class. For the most part, these will be topics that are important to the course. However, I will try to make note of situations where cumulative knowledge is important for the upcoming exam. **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.

All exams will be worth 250 points. You must be on time for exams. **As soon as one person has completed their exam (or 15 past the start time if taking it online), you will not be allowed to take the exam.** Only students enrolled in the course may be present during exam days.

You can choose to take the exam in person or online. If you choose to take the exam online, you will have 20 minutes to complete the test. The test will open when the class starts and will end/close after 35 minutes (this includes the 15-minute window where you can still start the exam). If you start the exam past the 15-minute window, then you will just have less time to complete the test. In essence, if you start the test 25 minutes late, then you will only have 10 minutes to complete the exam. You should check that you can take the exam online. Technical problems will not result in a time extension or a make-up exam. If you have accommodations and need

additional time to take the exam, then the only way to get the time extension is to take the exam in person in class or in the testing center.

Research project

A key objective of this class is to provide you with hands-on experience conducting research utilizing methods that are commonly used across various communication professions. During the semester, you will develop instruments to collect focus group and survey data. You will then collect both types of data and analyze them. A number of the assignments tied to the research project will be a group assignments. As you may know already (or will soon learn), much of the work you do in communication professions happens in groups. I will provide you with specific directions for each assignment on the course website. As part of this project, you will fill out peer evaluations. If you fail to hand in peer evaluations, you will lose 10 points from your grade. In addition, low peer evaluations will result in deductions from your grade in class. The number of points lost on peer evaluations will be outlined in the peer evaluation directions. I reserve to overrule the peer evaluations (either add points back or remove them) based on the additional information I gather during the course of the semester.

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 at least one (or more) activity in class. These are designed to get you to apply the knowledge you've learned to a real-world type of situation. You will get full credit for these as long as you put forth a reasonable amount of effort. In addition to the in-class activities, there will be a couple of brief assignments/activities you will finish outside of class. For the in-class activities, I typically offer one or two more than the minimum number needed to get full credit for this component of your grade. Therefore, if you miss a class, there won't be make-up assignments. Instead, you should be able to get full credit if you keep attending class throughout the semester.

Extra credit

I will offer a maximum of 20 extra credit points if you talk during class when I propose questions or we go over in-class activities. I will give you 1 point for talking in class, up to two points for a day. You can get a maximum of 20 points during the semester. This is the only extra credit offered in this class. Moreover, you can only miss two classes if you want to earn these points. Missing more than two classes will result in forfeiting these points.

University Policies & Resources

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>. 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.)

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Policy on Course Syllabi 3 UF, Academic Affairs, July 28th, 2021 Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

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.).

Tentative Course Schedule*

WEEK	TOPICS	READINGS
Week/Dates		
1 8/27	Intro to course, purpose of research, Info Sheet Due	Chapter 1 & 2
2 9/3	Intro to focus groups	Chapter 5
3 9/10	Focus groups continued, Group Contract Due, IRB Assignment Due	Chapter 9
4 9/17	Other qualitative methods, Background Report Due	Chapter 6, Chapter 11 pgs. 211-216
5 9/24	Measurement, Focus Group Protocol Due	Chapter 3 & Supplemental Reading
6 10/1	Exam #1	Ch. 1, 2, 5, 9, 6, 3, and selected pages of Ch. 11
7 10/8	Survey design	Chapter 8
8 10/15	Survey Design cont. & Sampling, Focus Group Report Due, Midterm Group Eval Due	Chapter 4
9 10/22	Sampling cont. & Content analysis, Qualtrics Assignment Due	Chapter 7
10 10/29	Descriptive statistics, Survey Questions Due	Chapter 11 pgs. 217-226; Supplemental Reading
11 11/5	Hypothesis Testing, Descriptive Stats Due	Supplemental Reading
12 11/12	Experimental design, Inferential Stats Due	Chapter 10
13 11/19	Report creation, Survey Report Due	Chapter 12

14 12/3	Exam #2 Presentations, Final Group Eval, Final Report Due to Canvas by 11:59pm	Ch. 8, 4, 7, 10, 12, selected pages of Ch. 11, and supplemental readings
Final	Final Exam 12/11 1230pm, to 230pm	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.