



Public Relations Research Method: PUR3500 – Section 0UFO/15409 (Online)

Fall 2025

(Syllabus subject to change based on the best interests of students' learning in the course)

Instructor: Dr. Chris Chu

Class format: Online

Email: chu.h@ufl.edu (preferred contact method; please include PUR3500 in the email subject line)

Office: Weimer 3052

Office hours: Monday 12:00 – 2:00 pm

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 that when you encounter it in almost any PR-related job, you can understand and apply the information to your project with reasonable 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 in your professional careers. 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, and fairness;
- 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 FORMAT

As an online class, you will be able to access all course materials via Canvas. Time will be spent engaging with material independently, with classmates, and directly with the instructor. There are no set times that all students must meet online. However, **regular check-ins ARE REQUIRED** to increase group interaction and keep up with due dates throughout the course.

WHAT YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND ABOUT ONLINE COURSE

1. Be realistic about the time needed to complete assignments
2. Schedule time just like you are attending class
3. Turn work in on time
4. Participate actively in the course
5. Do not fall behind in your assignments. Online does not mean easier
6. Use email to keep in contact with the instructor
7. Plan to spend two clock hours for every one hour of lecture
8. Ask for help when needed

Required Texts

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

**Supplemental readings will be made available through the course website*

Learning Materials

- Each week, a learning module will be posted on Canvas under “Modules”.
 - Each learning module will include PowerPoint slides over the reading materials and discussion/assignment instructions that will be due the same week.
 - Some learning modules will include one or more video recordings of a lecture.
 - Some learning modules will include a discussion board in which you can discuss with your classmates and the instructor based on the instruction.
 - Some learning modules will include a quiz. You may only take the quiz once and within one sitting (you will NOT be able to save and resume the quiz). See grading criteria for more information.
- Exams will be posted on Canvas under “Exams”. Exam availability will be announced on Canvas under “Announcement” and via email.

Please Note:

- This syllabus and other course content (e.g., due date and learning modules) are subject to change based on the best interest of student learning. Changes will be announced under “Announcement” on Canvas and via email. It is **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to check your UF email regularly**.
- A reliable internet connection is **REQUIRED** to take timed assessments.
- Try not to use public Wi-Fi. A secure connection is encouraged.
- If you are unsure how to securely connect to the Wi-Fi on campus, please use this: <https://it.ufl.edu/ict/documentation/network-infrastructure/wireless/>
- If you experience problems, I encourage you to use the library on campus.

Grade Criteria

- **Weekly Activities** (250 points / 25 percent)
 - In most weeks, we will complete some activities designed to help you understand the course material. The activities will take a variety of forms, including short essay assignments, quizzes, and discussions. Each student is expected to complete the activities independently.
 - Each activity is worth 25 points and will be graded based on merit. Among all activities, the IRB assignment and UF App assignments are compulsory assignments that will be counted toward the final grade. The EIGHT highest grades of all other in-class activities will be counted toward the final grade.
- **Exams** (400 points / 40 percent)
 - We will have three exams, including two unit exams and one final exam. Unit exams in principle, will be non-cumulative, but 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. The final exam will be cumulative, meaning that you will have to re-study what was covered in the unit exams for the final exam.
 - Two of the three exams will count toward your final grade, but there will be NO MAKE-UP EXAM. 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 for the lectures. Combined, the reading and lecture review guides will serve as your study guide for each unit exam.
 - Each exam may include multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and discussion questions.
- **Research Project** (350 points / 35 percent)
 - 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 conduct secondary research on an organization of interest and develop instruments to collect both focus group and survey data. Further, you will collect survey data for analysis. The research project for this course is an independent assignment designed to allow you to explore your research interests more deeply and to take full ownership of your project. This approach emphasizes the importance of individual initiative and responsibility, skills that are highly valued in communication professions. I will provide you with an overview of the entire project on the course website along with specific directions for each assignment.
- **Extra credit** (50 points / 5 percent)
 - 50 points (or 5 percent; please note that POINT and PERCENTAGES are different units) extra credits will be offered for research participation through CJC's SONA research management system (<https://ufl-cjc.sona-systems.com>). Please register a SONA account and choose studies to participate in to receive extra credits for this class. Check SONA regularly to see what studies have become available. Typically, it is not until around the third week of the semester that studies will become available. Please DO NOT wait until the last minute to sign up for participation because research opportunities may be filled up by the end of the semester. In fact, it is probably wise to participate early in the semester when your course loads are the lightest. Please see this video below for how to set up your SONA account: https://youtu.be/_1OnT2ZU6QQ
 - If you have any questions, please contact the CJC SONA administrator directly through this email: uf-cjc-sonasystems@jou.ufl.edu

- Extra credits, as the name indicates, are not counted toward the 1,000 base points. They are not counted toward the denominator of the percentage points either. For example, if your total point was 890 out of 1,000 without the extra credit and you received 40 points extra credit, your final grade will be 930 (890+40) out of 1,000, which is 93%.

Course Grading Scale and Percentages

Grading Items	Points	Percentage Allocation	
Activities	250 pts	25%	
IRB Training	25 pts	2.5%	
UF App Activity	25 pts	2.5%	
All other activities	200 pts (25 × 8)	20%	
Exams	400 pts	40%	
Research Project	350 pts	35%	
Organization confirmation	25 pts	2.5%	
Secondary Research Report	75 pts	7.5%	
Focus Group Protocol	75 pts	7.5%	
Survey Questions	75 pts	7.5%	
Final Report	72 pts	7.5 %	
Presentation	25 pts	2.5 %	
Total	1,000 pts	100%	
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	3.0
B-	829-800	82.9-80	2.7
C+	799-770	79.9-77	2.3
C	769-730	76.9-73	2.0
C-	729-700	72.9-70	1.7
D+	699-670	69.9-67	1.3
D	669-600	66.9-60	1.0
F	599-0	59.9-0	0.0

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 were posted, the assignment was 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 or exams or are 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 the deadline. After a deadline has passed or an exam has been given, there is nothing I can do to help you.

You do not receive a grade for how hard you worked; you only receive it on the final product. I grade your work on the degree of excellence it demonstrates. Make no mistake about the relationship between the two, as hard work often results in solid evaluations. That said, just because you spent “10 hours in the library” before a test or a group project doesn’t guarantee you a good grade. You have to study properly, address assignment requirements, and the like in order to ensure a solid grade. I will help out in every way I can along the way and ALWAYS want you to do well. Don’t hesitate for a second to reach out to me (just don’t do it at the last second!).

Course Policies

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 email 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.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI): In this course, we emphasize the importance of independent effort and original thought. While generative AI tools offer innovative ways to assist in various tasks, their use is restricted in this course. Students are expected to be the primary creators of all submitted work. If a student chooses to utilize AI for copyediting or proofreading purposes, they must clearly disclose the type and extent of AI involvement in their submissions. Any other use of AI, including content generation, is strictly prohibited and may be treated as a breach of academic integrity. Any suspected use of AI in assignment creation will be thoroughly investigated and may result in academic penalties.

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: All written assignments must be turned in via Canvas by 11:59 pm ET the same day the assignment is due. Canvas will automatically mark assignments as late if they are uploaded even one second after 11:59 pm. You have 24 hours after the due date to turn in your assignment for a 15% grade deduction and 48 hours after the due date for a 30% grade deduction. I will NOT accept assignments after the second day (48 hours after 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. It is your responsibility to make sure you properly upload your paper, and I will consider any assignments that can’t be opened as late. That is, if you upload a file type I can’t open, or your assignment is broken due to an unfinished uploading process, I will consider the assignment late. I would strongly advise you to upload

a .docx or .rtf file, as these are the ones that can be opened on most computers. **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.

Copyright Statement: Materials in this course—unless otherwise indicated—are protected by United States copyright law [Title 17, U.S. Code]. Materials are presented in an educational context for personal use and study and should not be shared, distributed, or sold in print—or digitally—outside the course without permission.

Effort vs. Excellence: You do not receive a grade for how hard you worked; you only receive it on the final product. Instructor grades your work to the degree of excellence it demonstrates. Make no mistake about the relationship between the two, as hard work often results in solid evaluations. That said, just because you spent “10 hours in the library” before a test or a group project doesn’t guarantee you a good grade. You have to study properly, address assignment requirements, and the like in order to ensure a solid grade. I will help out in every way I can along the way and ALWAYS want you to do well. Don’t hesitate for a second to reach out to me (just don’t do it at the last second!).

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> (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.)

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 email 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.).

Online Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process> (Links to an external site)