

COURSE SYLLABUS

PUR 3500: Public Relations Research Methods

Wednesdays 12:50-3:50 p.m

IN PERSON – WEIMER HALL 1078

Instructor: Luna P. Gonzalez, Department of Public Relations

Course Time & Location: WEIM 1078, Wednesdays 12:50~3:50pm

Contact: lpittetgonzalez@ufl.edu or via text at +1.352.359.5935

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2~4pm or by appointment

Course Overview:

This course is designed to train students in understanding, interpreting, and applying research in public relations and related communication fields. It provides a comprehensive introduction to research methods and results, helping students develop the ability to critically evaluate studies, translate their findings, and design their own research projects. Through practical training, students will gain experience in every step of the research process, from conceptualizing questions and designing studies to collecting, analyzing, and reporting data. No prior experience in research, statistics, or mathematics is required; this course is open to anyone interested in learning how to use research to inform and improve strategic communication practice.

Required Materials:

We do not have a specific textbook for this course. As the course materials, research and submissions are conducted online, having access to a computer or tablet with an internet connection is required.

Suggested Reading:

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

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of major research methods used in public relations, including surveys, focus groups, and content analyses.
- Design data collection instruments that align with specific research questions and public relations objectives.
- Analyze and interpret quantitative and qualitative data to draw evidence-based conclusions about communication strategies and outcomes.
- Synthesize and communicate research findings in clear, accessible, and actionable formats for both professional and academic audiences.

College of Journalism & 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 Grades:

Final grades will be based on the following scale:

- 93 – 100 percent A
- 90 – 92 percent A-
- 87 – 89 percent B+
- 80 – 86 percent B
- 77 – 79 percent C+
- 70 – 76 percent C
- 60 – 69 percent D

- 0 – 59 percent E

For any questions regarding a given grade, please contact me **within 48 hours after the grade is received.**

Components of the final grade

Class Participation (20 percent):

Your grade will be based on *attendance, participation in discussions, engagement and performance in in-class activities*. This approach is designed to foster active involvement with the course materials, encourage meaningful interaction with your classmates, and facilitate a dynamic exchange with me.

Exams (40 percent):

You will complete two exams in this course: one at midterm and one at the end of the semester. Both exams will consist entirely of multiple-choice questions and will be open-book. However, you are not permitted to seek outside help or use the internet during the exams. These assessments are designed to evaluate your understanding of key research concepts, methods, and applications covered throughout the course, so in-class reviews and clarifications can be proposed for challenging elements.

Research Project (40 percent):

Your research project will be an in-depth investigation of a research question of your choice, conducted in a team of your choosing, to simulate how research is carried out in professional public relations settings. Throughout the semester, your at-home assignments will serve as building blocks for this project, allowing you to develop each component step by step. This scaffolded approach is designed to help you refine your ideas, apply course concepts in practice, and incorporate feedback as you progress. By the end of the semester, you will

submit a final, revised report and propose a presentation that integrates all sections and reflects the improvements made based on instructor and peer feedback.

Extra Credit:

Throughout the semester, you have the chance to earn extra credit for this course by participating in research studies via the college's SONA system. Engaging in these studies not only contributes to the advancement of our field but also provides you with a firsthand look at the ongoing research initiatives within our college. Your participation in these studies is optional and anonymous. Other extra-credit opportunities may be offered upon request.

Course Professionalism:

The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional institution that requires students to maintain a high level of professional behavior at all times. This includes being honest, ethical, and respectful towards fellow students and instructors while adhering to the UF Student Conduct & Honor Codes. Additionally, all class members must observe basic etiquette when communicating via email, threaded discussions, and chats. All students should review the The Netiquette Guide for Online Courses by [clicking here](#).

Submissions:

The deadlines for exams and assignments are definitive, as they usually are in the professional world. Late submissions can be accepted up to 24 hours after the due date if you can provide me with an acceptable excuse for the late submission. Late submissions will not be accepted beyond 24 hours after the due date and will result in a 0. I recommend you contact me as soon as you realize you might not reach the deadline so we can work on a solution together. Up to 10 points per hour may be deducted from your grade in case of a late submission.

Assignment/Exam Make-Ups

To ensure consistency with university policies, the requirements for make-up assignments and other work in this course can be found by [clicking here](#). If you experience technical issues and need to request a make-up, you must provide the ticket number received from LSS when reporting the problem. This ticket number will document the date and time of the issue. To request a make-up, you must email me within 24 hours of the technical difficulty. The UF Help Desk is available 24/7 to assist with any technical issues and can be contacted at:

- <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>
- (352) 392-HELP (4357)
- helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Academic Honesty:

The work you submit for this course must be your own and any external source must be cited appropriately. These citations must be done in-text and in a reference section, following the APA citation method. Other citation methods can be accepted if previously discussed with myself.

Submitted work must be original. You may not submit anything that was previously made and used for any other purpose than this class, unless we have first discussed it and I have given you permission to do so. In addition, while I encourage you to use any tools available, including technology, to improve your work, I must insist that any submitted work must be your own.

Artificial Intelligence

You are allowed to use generative AI tools like ChatGPT to correct your writing. No other use of these tools is allowed unless explicitly indicated in the assignment's instructions. In any case, the use of generative AI tools **must be reported** in your assignment. You must

indicate what AI was used for and provide a copy of your prompt. **Not correctly reporting the use of generative AI, or claiming external sources as your own will result in a 0 on the assignment and could lead to disciplinary action.** In compliance with the UF Honor Code, instances of academic misconduct, which include cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, and fabrication may result in a failing grade for the course, and additional punishment might occur based on university policies.

Recordings

You are allowed to record this course's lectures for personal educational use, in connection with a complaint to the university, or as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. You may not use the recordings of the lectures for any other purpose and you may not publish or share access to the lectures without my written consent.

I strongly encourage you to review the UF Honor Code regularly and contact me if you have any other questions regarding the application of the code in this course. [Click here to review the UF Honor Code.](#)

Class Culture:

The practice of communication requires us to be open to diverse backgrounds, opinions and experiences. Exposing ourselves to various perspectives enriches our understanding of the world and enhances our ability to engage with and understand diverse audiences. Therefore, it is crucial for us to be able to have open and respectful dialogues that allow for diverse perspectives and experiences to be shared and heard. I aim to make this class a safe and welcoming space for all and celebrate the differences in our classroom as it is essential to the practice of effective communication.

My goal as an instructor is to help you learn. As we are all different individuals, our needs when it comes to learning can differ. For this reason, I am happy to meet with every student

to discuss these needs and set up a strategy to support your success in this class. I would be glad to work on classroom accommodations as well if you are registered with the DRC, as long as you can provide documentation to help me set up these accommodations. You can visit the [Disability Resource Center's Website](#) if you have any questions on accommodations or documentation. Make sure to contact me as early as possible to make sure these accommodations can be set up in time.

Online Course Evaluation Policy:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. You can find the online evaluations portal [by clicking here](#). These evaluations help us improve the courses and our teaching methods, and are therefore extremely important. 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. You can [click here](#) to see summary results of these assessments.

Schedule:

Note: This schedule is subject to change at any time. Students will be notified within 24h of any changes.

JANUARY 14	
Topics	Due
Syllabus Overview Class Introduction and Group Formations	Information Sheet (01/16)
JANUARY 21	
Topic: Scientific Research	Group Contract (01/23)

JANUARY 28	
Topics	Due
Topic: Focus Groups	Background Report (01/27) Focus Group Transcript (01/30)
FEBRUARY 4	
Topics	Due
Topic: Qualitative Methods	Focus Group Protocol (02/03)
FEBRUARY 11	
Topics	Due
Topic: Measurement	Validity & Reliability (02/13)
FEBRUARY 18	
Topics	Due
Topic: Surveys	Qualtrics Activity (02/20)
FEBRUARY 25	
Topics	Due
Topic: Content Analysis	Qualtrics Survey (02/24) Content Analysis Activity (02/27)
MARCH 4	
Topics	Due
Topic: Sampling	Sampling Activity (03/06)
MARCH 11	
MIDTERM EXAM	
MARCH 18	
No Class Spring Break	
MARCH 25	

Topics	Due
Topic: Descriptive Statistics	Descriptive Statistics Activity (03/31)
APRIL 1	
Topics	Due
Topic: Hypothesis Testing	Inferential Statistics Activity (04/03)
APRIL 8	
Topics	Due
Topic: Experiments	Inferential Statistics Assignment (04/07)
APRIL 15	
FINAL EXAM	
APRIL 22	
FINAL PRESENTATIONS, FINAL REPORT	