Public Relations Research Methods: PUR3500

Fall 2024

Course info

Instructor: Qiuyue (Cho) Li
Class time: Mon. 4:05 -7:05 pm, Williamson Hall 0202
Email: qiuyueli@ufl.edu (preferred contact method; please include PUR3500 in the email subject line)
Office: TBD
Office hours: Thurs. 10- 12 am. or by appointment (email is generally the fastest way to reach me)

Required Readings

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 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, 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.

Grade Criteria

Points distribution	Percentages
Exams	**500 pts /50%**
Research Project	**400 pts /40%**
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	75 pts
Presentation	25 pts
In-class activities	**50 pts /5%**
Online/out of class activities	**50 pts /5%**
Total	**1,000 pts /100%**

Grading scale

Letter	Percentage
A	100-93
A-	92.9-90
B+	89.9-87
B	86.9-83
B-	82.9-80

C+	79.9-77
C	76.9-73
C-	72.9-70
D+	69.9-67
D	66.9-60
F	59.9-0

*I do not round up grades. Grades will be regularly updated on Canvas, and it is your responsibility to check them and stay informed about your current standing.

Exams (500 points / 50 percent)

There will be three exams given during the semester, 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, covering the whole semester and must be taken during the scheduled final exam period. **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. The exams will be multiple choice/true-false/matching.

Research Project (400 points/ 40 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 develop instruments to collect focus group and survey data. You will then collect both types of data and analyze them. The research project for this course will be a group assignment.

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 an overview of the entire project on the course website, along with specific directions for each assignment. 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 the right 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 and Out of Class activities (100 points / 10 percent)

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 a few 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 (20 points)

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.

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 880 out of 1,000 without the extra credit and you received 20 points extra credit, your final grade will be 900 (880+20) out of 1,000, which is 90%.

Course Policies

AI Policy for Student Work (AI is NOT allowed/integrated into assignments)

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 the evidence is found that your work is AI-generated I will submit your assignment as violating the honor code.

Attendance

I will have you sign an attendance sheet during each class. You must arrive on time and stay through the whole class session to get full credit for in-class points that day. Attendance will be tied to whether you can accrue bonus/extra credit points. If you fail to notify me about coming late or leaving early, you will not get credit for any in-class points that day and get marked as missing class. If you miss more than two classes, you won't be eligible for bonus/extra credit points. If you miss more than three classes, you will lose 10% of your grade for each additional class you miss during the semester. Please be courteous and arrive to class on time, and do not leave until you are instructed that the class is over.

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. 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. 15% will be deducted from your grade each day your paper is late or for each day the correct file type is not uploaded (this means a total of 30% 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.

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. 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.

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 it may be higher depending on the severity of the violation.

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.

Effort vs. Excellence

I will assess your work to the degree of excellence it demonstrates. It's important to understand that putting in effort often leads to positive 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 correctly and properly, address assignment requirements, and the like in order to ensure a solid grade. I will help 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

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/.

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 regard to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see: http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html

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, 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/.

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.

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. https://career.ufl.edu/.

Library Support, http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask. 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/.

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/.

Student Complaints Campus:
https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf

Online Students Complaints: http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process

Tentative Course Schedule*

WEEK	DATES	TOPICS	READINGS
1	8/26	Intro to course, purpose of research, **Info Sheet Due**	Chapter 1 & 2
Labor Day	9/2	**No Class**	
2	9/9	Intro to focus groups	Chapter 11
3	9/16	Focus groups continued, **Group Contract Due, IRB Assignment Due**	Focus Group Supplement
4	9/23	Other qualitative methods, **Background Report Due**	Chapter 9 & 10
5	9/30	Measurement, **Focus Group Protocol Due**	Chapter 4 & 5
6	10/7	**Exam #1** Survey design	**Ch. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 & Supplement,** Chapter 13
7	10/14	Survey Design cont. & Sampling, **Focus Group Report Due, Midterm Group Eval Due**	Chapter 12
8	10/21	Sampling cont. & Content analysis, **Qualtrics Assignment Due**	Chapter 8
9	10/28	Descriptive statistics, **Survey Questions Due**	Chapter 6
10	11/4	Hypothesis Testing, **Descriptive Stats Due**	Chapter 15
Veterans Day	11/11	**No Class**	
12	11/18	Experimental design, **Inferential Stats Due**	Chapter 14
Thanksgiving Break	11/25	**No Class**	
13	12/2	Report creation, **Survey Report Due**	Chapter 14
14	12/9	**Exam #2 Presentations, Final Group Evaluations, & Final Report Due to Canvas by 11:59pm**	**Ch. 6, 8, 12-15**
Final	12/12	**Final Exam 12/12 16:00pm to 18:00pm**	**ALL CONTENT**

*This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Changes to the schedule will be discussed in class and announced on Canvas. You are responsible for attending all classes unless it is marked as a holiday.