

**Public Relations Research**

JOUR 4410-M50

Spring 2014

Online Course

Instructor: Darrin M. Devault, M.A.

Office: Meeman Journalism Building, Room 332

Office hours: By appointment

Office Phone: (901) 678-2405; Cell Phone: (901) 569-6353

E-mail: [darrin.devault@memphis.edu](mailto:darrin.devault@memphis.edu)

Twitter: @DarrinDevault

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS****CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Identifying, characterizing and evaluating stakeholder groups and alternative channels of communication; formal research procedures include sampling, instrument design, information gathering, data processing, analysis and reporting.

**PREREQUISITES:**

JOUR 3400 and JOUR 3421

**TEXTBOOKS:**

*How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) by Fink, A. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2013). ISBN 978-1-4522-0387-4

*Moderating Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Group Facilitation* by Greenbaum, T. (Sage Publications, Inc., 2000). ISBN 0-7619-2043-9 or ISBN 0-7619-2044-7

**CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

This course is delivered online in an asynchronous format. You must have Internet access and Microsoft Word or other word processing software that generates a “.doc” extension.

You must have Microsoft Word software. I must be able to open your work to grade it. Work submitted in a software package not noted as acceptable in this syllabus (Microsoft Word) may result in point deductions being assessed to your work.

**COURSE WEBSITE ADDRESS: (The course page will be open from January 16 to May 11, 2014.)**

1. Go to the University of Memphis home page: <http://www.memphis.edu>
2. Click on the “MyMemphis” link at the bottom of the left column menu.
3. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
4. Click on the “eCampus Resources” tab.
5. In the center column of the page, click on the blue UofM eCourseware link
6. Down on that page, in the Spring 2014 course list available to you click on the link for JOUR 4410-M50 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page.

**GRADING:**

**Testing Procedures:** Course work will be accomplished each week. Six exams will be part of your final grade; each one will cover material in your two textbooks. Each must be completed by its due date and time (Central Standard Time), which varies by exam. Check each due time to ensure that you post by the deadline. Exams will consist of true/false and multiple-choice questions, which will contain one or more units of study. Exams will have a time limit. Desire2Learn will cut you off at the end of the prescribed time period, regardless of whether you have completed all questions. You may use your textbooks to confirm an answer, but be aware that time limits will not allow you to spend much time flipping through them. You should read and be familiar with each section before taking its exam.

Other parts of your grade will come from participation in weekly online discussions and group projects. (The group projects include a peer evaluation component.) This work must be submitted per instructions; no credit will be given outside of the proper submission guidelines.

**Grading Procedure:**

**\*\*\*ONLINE SUCCESS:** Your success in this online course will depend on your willingness to read the textual material, successfully complete exams, and complete written work and group projects as scheduled.

All work submitted will be considered final, as each student has unlimited access to the course to ask questions. There will be no re-submission of papers to increase the initial grade given. You are required to ask via e-mail, set up an appointment in the chat room, or call me with your questions as to the proper completion of coursework. It is your responsibility to ensure clarification of instructions.

All work submitted must reflect critical thinking and knowledge of the material; that is, examples found within or outside of class, along with elaboration, are required to achieve an "A" grade. Material on all exams and most of our assignments come from our textbooks; check these resources first for your material.

No work will be accepted after the final day of class.

**Grading Scale:**

Six Exams Covering Textbooks — 300 points

Individual Participation in Class Discussions — 300 points

Focus Group Guide Project — 200 points

Survey Group Project — 200 points

**TOTAL: 1,000 points**

**A** = 900-1,000 points

**B** = 800-899 points

**C** = 700-799 points

**D** = 600-699 points

**F** = 599 and fewer points

## **TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:**

### **Individual Participation in Class Discussions**

- Participation #1 (25 points):** January 20-26
  - Participation #2 (25 points):** January 27 - February 2
  - Participation #3 (25 points):** February 3-9
  - Participation #4 (25 points):** February 10-16
  - Participation #5 (25 points):** February 17-23
  - Participation #6 (25 points):** February 24 - March 2
  - Participation #7 (25 points):** March 3-9
  - Participation #8 (25 points):** March 17-23
  - Participation #9 (25 points):** March 24-30
  - Participation #10 (25 points):** March 31 - April 6
  - Participation #11 (25 points):** April 7-13
  - Participation #12 (25 points):** April 14-20
- PARTICIPATION TOTAL: 300 points**

### **Exams**

- Exam #1 (50 points):** available February 10-16
  - Exam #2 (50 points):** available March 3-9
  - Exam #3 (50 points):** available March 24-30
  - Exam #4 (50 points):** available April 7-13
  - Exam #5 (50 points):** available April 14-20
  - Exam #6 (50 points):** available April 21-30
- EXAMS TOTAL: 300 points**

**Focus Group Guide (200 points):** due by March 23

**Survey Group Guide (200 points):** due by April 27

**TOTAL POSSIBLE SEMESTER POINTS: 1,000 points**

## **ASSIGNED TEXTBOOK READINGS**

Here are the assigned readings from your two textbooks:

- Chapters 1-2:** *Moderating Focus Groups*, January 20-26
- Chapters 3-4:** *Moderating Focus Groups*, January 27 - February 2
- Chapters 5-6:** *Moderating Focus Groups*, February 3-9
- Chapters 7-8:** *Moderating Focus Groups*, February 10-16
- Chapters 9-10:** *Moderating Focus Groups*, February 17-23
- Chapters 11-12:** *Moderating Focus Groups*, February 24 - March 2
- Chapters 13-15:** *Moderating Focus Groups*, March 3-9
- Chapters 16-17:** *Moderating Focus Groups*, March 17-23
- Chapters 1-2:** *How to Conduct Surveys*, March 24-30
- Chapters 3-4:** *How to Conduct Surveys*, March 31 - April 6
- Chapter 5:** *How to Conduct Surveys*, April 7-13
- Chapters 6-7:** *How to Conduct Surveys*, April 14-20

## **ASSESSMENT**

### **PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR 4410:**

- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of people and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication in a global society;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

### **HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 4410:**

#### **Cognitive Objectives To Be Mastered (Ability to Explain, Analyze, Understand, Think Critically):**

- Describe secondary and primary research procedures in the behavioral and communication sciences.
- Describe environmental assessment processes and their use in strategic planning.
- Explain survey research techniques, including sampling, interviewing and instrument construction.
- Know the tools used to analyze the results of survey research.
- Describe how experimental designs may be used to support public relations objectives.

#### **Performance Standards To Be Met (Demonstrable Skills, Abilities, Techniques, Applied Competencies):**

- Earn a passing score on periodic exams.
- Write a critique of published public relations research.
- Select and apply appropriate formal and informal research in support of public relations objectives.
- Design and conduct secondary research using computer databases.
- Select and apply appropriate survey research techniques including focus groups, sampling, interviewing and instrument construction.
- Frame a research question and/or write and test hypotheses.
- Construct an SPSS file appropriate to your survey form.
- Correctly enter data into SPSS and “clean” the data.
- Print out frequencies and do Chi Square comparisons. Determine levels of significance for compared variables.
- Analyze the results of survey research and communicate the results in a final report.

### **HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 4410:**

The course is designed to equip students with knowledge necessary to successfully apply research methods and principles used in public relations.

#### *Awareness:*

- Identify different types of research methods and applications through online discussions, group projects and exams.

#### *Application:*

- Correctly incorporate and apply audience segmentation principles in research design/presentation. Final report will be graded.
- Apply ethical principles in research execution. Peer grade.
- Design research, create research tools and interpret results. Peer grade.
- Contribute to and produce a focus group guide. Final guide will be graded (including a peer grade).
- Contribute to and produce a survey group guide. Final guide will be graded (including a peer grade).

### **PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:**

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation. Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- Awareness: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.

- Understanding: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- Application: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

## **DEPARTMENT POLICIES**

### **EMAIL:**

You must have your UM email account activated. If you are using another provider such as Google, you are required to have your UM email forwarded to that account. Go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UM email. You are required to check your email daily. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the University.

### **CELLPHONES:**

You must turn them off during class.

### **ATTENDANCE:**

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements, which are acceptable to your professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence due to illness or other catastrophic emergency such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). This is a professional program for journalists who are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. If you have some problem making it to class on time make arrangements to fix the problem or consider taking another class. You should consider this class your "job" in the educational process and be on time just as you would elsewhere.

### **CHEATING:**

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, or a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. That may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the university.

"Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all." (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

### **ONLINE SETEs:**

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this. Once your instructor has posted your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that class. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and email password; click on the gray "Student" tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

**DISABILITY:**

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at (901) 678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.