

## **Public Relations Research**

JOUR 4410-M50

Spring 2016

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**

### **CATALOG 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* (5th ed.) by Fink, A. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2013). ISBN 978-1-4522-0387-4

*Focus Groups: Theory and Practice* (3rd ed.) by Stewart, D. and Shamdasani P. (SAGE Publications Inc., 2014). ISBN 978-1452270982

### **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 WEB SITE ADDRESS: (The course page will be open from January 19 to May 8, 2016.)**

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 2016 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 19-24
  - Participation #2 (25 points):** January 25-31
  - Participation #3 (25 points):** February 1-7
  - Participation #4 (25 points):** February 8-14
  - Participation #5 (25 points):** February 15-21
  - Participation #6 (25 points):** February 22-28
  - Participation #7 (25 points):** February 29 - March 6
  - Participation #8 (25 points):** March 14-20
  - Participation #9 (25 points):** March 21-27
  - Participation #10 (25 points):** March 28 - April 3
  - Participation #11 (25 points):** April 4-10
  - Participation #12 (25 points):** April 11-17
- PARTICIPATION TOTAL: 300 points**

### **Exams**

- Exam #1 (50 points):** available February 8-14
  - Exam #2 (50 points):** available February 22-28
  - Exam #3 (50 points):** available March 14-20
  - Exam #4 (50 points):** available March 28 - April 3
  - Exam #5 (50 points):** available April 11-17
  - Exam #6 (50 points):** available April 18-24
- EXAMS TOTAL: 300 points**

**Focus Group Guide (200 points):** due by March 20

**Survey Group Guide (200 points):** due by April 24

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

## **ASSIGNED TEXTBOOK READINGS**

Here are the assigned readings from your two textbooks:

- Chapters 1-2:** *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*, January 19-24
- Chapter 3:** *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*, January 25-31
- Chapter 4:** *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*, February 1-7
- Chapters 5-6:** *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*, February 8-14
- Chapter 7:** *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*, February 15-21
- Chapter 8:** *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*, February 22-28
- Chapters 9-10:** *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*, February 29 - March 6
- Chapters 1-2:** *How to Conduct Surveys*, March 14-20
- Chapters 3-4:** *How to Conduct Surveys*, March 21-27
- Chapter 5:** *How to Conduct Surveys*, March 28 - April 3
- Chapter 6:** *How to Conduct Surveys*, April 4-10
- Chapter 7:** *How to Conduct Surveys*, April 11-17

## **FIVE PILLARS FOR JOUR4410**

- *Professionalism*: Students learn the professional standards and strategies of conducting research for public relations practice. Additionally, students understand the ethics involved in conducting human subject research.
- *Writing*: JOUR4410 addresses writing skills related to conducting research, including instrument design and reporting results to the client.
- *Multimedia*: Students prepare a Storify of interview quotes from local professionals regarding research as a step in the public relations process.
- *Critical Thinking*: Students must demonstrate an understanding of the methods used to conduct research in public relations, including surveys, focus groups, interviews and observation.
- *Media Literacy*: JOUR4410 addresses media literacy by exposing students to the vocabulary and tools of the public relations industry. Students learn how to conduct research to solve a client's communication problem, gathering information beneficial for strategic campaign planning.

## **ASSESSMENT**

### **PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR4410:**

- 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 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.

### **HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:**

#### **Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically):**

Students will:

- Describe preliminary and detailed research procedures in the behavioral and communication sciences;
- Describe environmental assessment processes and their use in strategic planning;
- Describe how to organize, moderate, and use information obtained from a focus group;
- Describe how to organize, moderate, and use information obtained from an interview;
- Explain survey techniques, including sampling, interviewing, and instrument construction;
- Describe the tools used to analyze the results of survey research;
- Describe work groups and ways to make them effective.

**Performance standards to be met (demonstrate skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies):**

Students will:

- Select and apply appropriate research tools in support of public relations objectives;
- Design and conduct preliminary research using libraries, company records, and computer databases;
- Work effectively in a group;
- Frame research questions;
- Determine levels of significance for compared variables;
- Analyze the results of survey research;
- Communicate the results in a final report/presentation.

**HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR4410:**

The class is designed to develop the skills necessary to design and execute public relations research for a client. During the class, students will work both independently and in teams.

*Awareness:*

- Learn about the important role of research in public relations.

*Understanding:*

- Understand how to conduct, analyze and present research findings.

*Application:*

- Conduct public relations research to include: interviewing clients to assess needs; writing research questions; develop strategies for research implementation; client relationship-building to gain input and approval; instrument design; conduct research; use standard methods for documentation; analyze data; draw conclusions based on data; write research report; and present research to client.

### **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**

### **PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:**

All Department of Journalism undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 and contribute to it during every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their concentrations.

### **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 <http://iam.memphis.edu> 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.

### **MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:**

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone to be used during class or to complete class assignments. Others do not allow them. Your instructor will set the policy for her/his specific 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. Students are permitted three total unexcused absences without penalty. After three absences, the student's final grade will be deducted one letter grade for each absence. After seven unexcused absences, the student will fail the course. Absences for illness and other catastrophic emergencies, such as a death in the family, must be documented (e.g. doctor's note or obituary) to be excused from the total absence count. Students with excessive unexcused absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

### **DEADLINES:**

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communications. Assignments turned in late will NOT be graded. Late work is not accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Students are NOT permitted to make up assignments, quizzes, tests, etc. that occurred during an unexcused absence. Students who will miss class and/or a deadline because of an excused absence are expected to notify the instructor immediately upon knowing the absence will occur; exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances. Students who are absent during the final exam are not permitted to make up the exam and will earn a grade of 0, which might result in failure of the course.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

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, a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, and violations of copyright law as acts of academic dishonesty punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions or 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)

### **Intellectual property and copyright guidelines**

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but the way they are described can.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

**Plagiarism: From UM Student Handbook:** The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

### **ONLINE SETEs:**

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. 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 to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### **DIVERSITY:**

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Mass communications reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.



**WEATHER POLICY:**

Check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the university is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day's work.

**AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:**

All written work in this class should follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. If you don't know the style for a particular phrase, look it up or ask your classmates or the instructor.