

Public Relations Research

PBRL 4410-M50

Spring 2018

Instructor: Kim Marks, APR

Office: Meeman Journalism Building, Room 332

Office hours:

Monday & Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Tuesday & Thursday, by appointment

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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:

PBRL 3400 and 3421

TEXTBOOK:

Fink, A. (2016). *How to conduct surveys: A step-by-step guide* (6 ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications. (ISBN: 9781-483378480)

MEDIA DIET:

As you know, the very nature of our profession requires us to stay on top of today's happenings. Our responsibility is to assess their relevance to – and their implications for – our clients and employers. Knowledge of current events, government, history and media is becoming more and more crucial. While your undergraduate education will provide a strong base of understanding in these areas, your proactive efforts to continue learning about them will greatly benefit your career. Continue to feed your media diet with a good mix of traditional, specialized and Internet news sources.

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 7, 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 2018 course list available to you click on the link for PBRL 4410-M50 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page.

DEADLINES:

Understanding and working with deadlines is a critical part of the public relations process. **No late assignments will be accepted.**

QUALITY OF WORK:

I expect your work to be good and to be yours. What is not yours should be fully cited. In documenting sources, you should use APA formatting (both internal and external). If you need help with writing and citing sources, please see me for resources. In addition, Purdue University's Online Writing Lab is an excellent resource, and can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

I am always willing to help you. Always ask for clarification(s) if you have any questions or doubts: the sooner the better. Email typically is not the best way to connect with me to discuss course material. Email is good for when you have administrative questions, not for when you are having difficulty understanding the course material. Hence, I strongly recommend that you make use of office hours. I look forward to working with you!

GRADING:

Testing Procedures: Course work will be accomplished each week. Six quizzes will be part of your final grade. Quizzes will cover reading assignments and material in presentations. 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. Quizzes 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.

Quizzes (drop lowest grade)	50 points
Class participation/discussion boards	250 points (25 pts ea)
Client media audit	75 points
Survey design	100 points
Focus group questionnaire	100 points
Google Analytics Certificate	75 points
Research project rough draft	50 points
Final research project	250 points
Presentation	50 points
Peer evaluation	50 points
Portfolio	50 points
Interview with PR professional	50 points
Team Meeting	25 points
Total	1,350 points

Your **final grade** in the course will be calculated as follows:

A = 1,215 – 1,350 points

B = 1,080 – 1,214 points

C = 945 – 1,079 points

D = 810 – 943 points

F = 809 and fewer points

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

(Subject to change)

Week 1: Jan. 16 – 21

The role of research in PR & the process of PR research: objectives, research questions & evaluation

Reading assignments (eCourseware)

- Ch. 5 Sage: problem statement
- PR Research for planning and evaluation
- Introduction to communication research
- PR research methods

Assignments

- **Discussion board (due Jan. 21)**
- **Google Analytics Certification (due April 1)**
- **Online portfolio (first look due Monday, March 19; final due Monday, April 16)**
- **PR professional interview (due April 22)**

Week 2: Jan. 22 – 28

Final research project, (virtual) teams and deadlines & (T) (virtual) client meeting

Client: Graduate Memphis

Reading assignments (eCourseware)

- Belbin's team roles
- The five dysfunctions of a team I
- The five dysfunctions of a team III

Quiz 1 available (ends 11:59 p.m., Jan. 28)

Assignments

- **Discussion board (due Jan. 28)**
- **Client meeting reflection (due TBD)**
- **Final research report (rough draft due, Tuesday, April 3; final due Friday, April 20)**

Week 3: Jan. 29 – Feb. 4

Data-driven PR & Research ethics

Reading assignments (eCourseware)

- Understanding research
- Management of research in PR
- Exploring the roles of ethics in PR program evaluation

Assignments

- **Discussion boards (due Feb. 4)**
- **Client media audit (due Feb. 25)**

Week 4: Feb. 5 – 11

Developing a research plan & conducting secondary research

Reading assignments (eCourseware)

- How to develop a research plan
- Conducting secondary research

Quiz 2 available (ends 11:59 p.m., Feb. 11)

Assignments

- **Discussion boards (due Feb. 11)**
- **Draft research plan (due Feb. 18)**

Week 5: Feb. 12 – 18

Sampling

Reading assignments

- How to Conduct Surveys, CH3, Getting it Together
- How to Conduct Surveys, CH4, Sampling
- How to Conduct Surveys, CH5, Survey Design

Assignments

- **Discussion boards (due Feb. 18)**
- **Survey design (due March 4)**

DUE: Draft research plan (Feb. 18)

Week 6: Feb. 19 – 25

Survey research

Reading assignments

- CH8 Sage, Survey Research (eCourseware)
- How to Conduct Surveys, CH1, Conducting Surveys
- How to Conduct Surveys, CH2, Survey Form (pp. 29-55)

Quiz 3 available (ends 11:59 p.m., Feb. 25)

Assignment

- **Discussion boards (due Feb. 25)**

DUE: Client media audit (Feb. 25)

Week 7: Feb. 26 – March 4

Focus groups & interviews

Reading assignments (eCourseware)

- Moderating Focus Groups, CH3, CH7, CH9
- Interviews
- Online vs. in-person interviews

Quiz 4 available (ends 11:59 p.m., March 4)

Due: Survey design (March 4)

Assignments

- **Discussion boards (due March 4)**
- **Focus group questions (due March 18)**

Week 8: March 5 – 11 – Spring Break (No new content will be posted)

Week 9: March 12 – 18

How do focus groups work?

Reading assignments TBD

Quiz 5 available (ends 11:59 p.m., March 18)

Assignment: Discussion boards (due March 18)

DUE: Focus group questions (March 18)

Week 10: March 19 – 25

Analyzing data

Reading assignment

- Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data (eCourseware)

Quiz 6 available (ends 11:59 p.m. March 25)

Assignment: Discussion boards (March 25)

DUE: Focus group questionnaire, NLT midnight, March 26

Week 11: March 26 – April 1

Work Week (No new content will be posted)

Review previous readings and assignments as required for final research report

DUE: Google Analytics Certificate (April 1)

Week 12: April 2 – 8

Rough draft research report due / Reporting data

Reading assignment

- How to Conduct Surveys, CH7, Presenting the Survey Results, pp. 145-167

DUE: Final research report rough draft, Tuesday, April 3)

Week 13: April 9 – 15

Team meetings / Presenting research to the client

Assignment: Lynda.com: Visualizing and Documenting Your Research

Assignment: Peer evaluation (due, Thursday, April 26)

Week 14: April 16 – 22

Work week (No new content will be posted)

DUE: Final online portfolio, Monday, April 16

DUE: Final research report, Friday, April 20

DUE: PR professional interview, April 22

Week 15: April 23 – 29

Final thoughts

Assignment: Discussion boards (due April 29)

DUE: Research report client presentation, Wednesday, April 25

DUE: Peer evaluation, Thursday, April 26

FIVE PILLARS OF PBRL4410

- *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 PBRL4410:

- 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 PBRL4410:

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.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and contribute to it from every course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from his/her courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their majors.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. The department requires students to use WordPress to build their portfolio sites. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail or Yahoo.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files, and Storify pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

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.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. 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 because of 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 and Strategic Media 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.

Further, as this is a journalism/mass communication class, students are expected to comply with copyright law, and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

"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 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.

DEADLINES:

Remember there's a reason "DEAD" makes up half the word "deadline." All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. If you get into trouble, talk to your instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

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.

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact your instructor 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.

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:

Always 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.