

# Public Relations Research

PBRL 4410-501

Fall 2019

Class meeting: MW 9:10-10:35 a.m., Varnell-Jones 205

**Tori Cliff, M.A.**

**Office:** Varnell-Jones 302

**Office Hours:** TR 12:50-2:50 and 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 PBRL 3421

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Fink, A. (2016). *How to conduct surveys: A step-by-step guide* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

### Classroom format

The class will be presented in discussion format. It is a hybrid class, meaning work will be accomplished inside the classroom in a traditional format, and outside the classroom using various digital platforms.

There will be considerable discussion in this class, so coming prepared for an intellectual exchange of ideas is important.

This class has numerous materials in eCourseware organized by week. It is critical that you read supplemental materials and watch any videos weekly.

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis eLearn home page: <http://elearn.memphis.edu>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JRSM 4410-501 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page.

### Course Requirements

Coming to class well prepared is critical. This means reading the assigned material, completing

any work with excellence on or before deadline, and staying informed about current events as they relate to our course content.

The basic requirements for this course include these elements:

1. Complete assigned readings each week;
2. Arrive to each class punctually and prepared;
3. Check campus email each weekday morning by 8 a.m.;
4. Complete all work on deadline and with excellence;
5. Do well on class exams;
6. Be respectful of classmates and professor at all times; and
7. Participate meaningfully in class discussion and activities/exercises.

### **DEADLINES:**

Meeting deadlines is essential for media professionals. Regular attendance is vital in class. Late work will not be accepted. If a student knows about an absence in advance, students are encouraged to check with the professor to see if arrangements may be made to turn the work in early at the professor's discretion.

### **Grading**

Your grade will come from participation in class discussions, activities, assignments, projects and exams. (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.

Your success in this course will depend on your willingness to read the textual material, consistently participate, intellectually discuss textbook materials, successfully complete exams, and complete written work and projects as scheduled.

All work submitted will be considered final. There will be no re-submission of papers to increase the initial grade given unless they are listed as drafts, in which case you'll be given a grade for the draft, and another grade for the final product. You are required to ask questions via e-mail, or at the end of the class period when questions are addressed. 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.

#### *Grading Scale:*

Tests = 20%

Activities/Homework/Participation/Assignments = 25%

Survey Project = 10%

Focus Group Project = 10%

Final Research Report & Presentation = 25%

Portfolio = 5%

Google Analytics Certification = 5%

A = 90-100%  
B = 80-89%  
C = 70-79%  
D = 60-69%  
F = 0-59%

### **ATTENDANCE:**

Students who enter the classroom late are required to sit in the closest seat available near the front of the class by the door to minimize distraction. If a student is late more than four times, the professor may ask that if they are going to be late again, not to enter the classroom on that day.

Students who miss more than three classes are subject to drop one letter grade per absence at the discretion of the professor. Students with more than two tardies are subject to have their final grade reduced by one percentage point per additional tardy. Attendance is mandatory. It is also important not to miss class because unannounced quizzes, exercises and activities will take place periodically.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

*Week 1, Aug. 26-Sept. 1: Introductions / The role of research in PR & the process of PR research: objectives, research questions & evaluation*

Review Week 1 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Familiarize yourself with course content and requirements

*Week 2, Sept. 2-8: Research ethics & virtual teams*

Review Week 2 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: What questions would you ask the client assignment NLT 11:59 p.m., Sept. 4

*Week 3, Sept. 9-15: Data-driven PR – Client TBD*

Review Week 3 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Take Quiz 1, NLT 11:59 p.m. Sept. 9 / Begin Secondary Research & Media Audit / Due: Team Roles Assignment NLT 11:59 p.m., Sept. 11

*Week 4, Sept. 16-22: Final research project, teams and deadlines*

Review Week 4 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Due: Group Assignment - Research Q assignment NLT 11:59 p.m. Sept. 18

*Week 5, Sept. 23-29: Developing a research plan & research issues*

Review Week 5 Content in eCourseware

*Week 6, Sept. 30-Oct. 6: Sampling*

Review Week 6 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Quiz 2, NLT 11:59 p.m., Sept. 30 / Begin Google Analytics Certification efforts if haven't

already / Due: What sampling method would you use? NLT 11:59 p.m. Oct 2 / Secondary research & media audit assignment NLT 11:59 p.m. Oct. 6

*Week 7, Oct. 7-13: Survey research*

Review Week 7 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Due: Email link to online portfolio to [tmcliff@memphis.edu](mailto:tmcliff@memphis.edu) NLT 11:59 p.m. Oct. 9 / Due: Case Study Assignment & Presentations

*Week 8, Oct. 14-20: Fall Break (Monday)*

Review Week 8 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Prepare for Quiz 3 / Survey design, NLT 11:59 p.m., Oct. 14

*Week 9, Oct. 21-27: Focus groups & interview*

Review Week 9 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Take Quiz 3, NLT 11:59 p.m., Oct. 21 / Due: Focus group questionnaire NLT 11:59 p.m., Oct. 23

*Week 10, Oct. 28-Nov. 3: Focus groups & interviews / mid-term online portfolio review*

Review Week 10 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Due: Google Analytics Certification, NLT 11:59 p.m., Nov. 3

*Week 11, Nov. 4-10: Analyzing data*

Review Week 11 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Draft report NLT 11:59 p.m., Nov. 6

*Week 12, Nov. 11-17: Evaluating data*

Review Week 12 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Take quizzes 4 & 5 NLT 11:59 p.m., Nov. 11

*Week 13, Nov. 18-24: Reporting data*

Review Week 13 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Due: Final Research Report (11:59 p.m., Nov. 20)

*Week 14, Nov. 25-Dec. 1: Client Presentations*

Review Week 14 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Due: Presenting research to the client Nov. 25, regular class time

*Week 15, Dec. 2-8: Final Portfolio*

Review Week 15 Content in eCourseware

Assignments: Due: Final portfolio link submitted NLT 11:59 p.m. Dec. 2

*Week 16, Dec. 9-11: Final Portfolio*

Due: Peer Review NLT 11:59 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 11

## ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

### Five Pillars in PBRL 4410

- *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*: Students develop 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.
- *Multimedia*: Students prepare a final client presentation of research findings from the semester.
- *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*: Student address writing skills related to conducting research, including instrument design and reporting results to the client.

### Professional values and competencies for PBRL 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 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 current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

### How professional values and competencies will be met

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

- 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 (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)*

- 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.
- Analyze the results of focus group research.
- Analyze the results of survey research.
- Communicate the results in a final report/presentation.

**How assessment of student learning will be met**

*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
- Present research to client

**JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA 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 graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix or Squarespace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they 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 lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

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 writing 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**

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the University.

### **Electronic devices**

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

### **Attendance**

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class 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). Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a "job" in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

### **Course repetition**

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade ("C-") in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon

discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor, and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

### **Academic integrity**

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 students receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on their own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, as this is a journalism and strategic media 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 rating originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. *(Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018)*

### **Online SETEs**

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIIDs and email passwords; click on the gray "Student" tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

### **Deadlines**

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the 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 must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

### **Disability and accommodations**

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable

accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### **Diversity and inclusivity**

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. Media 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.

### **Student support**

Students who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting with campus or community support.