

Public Relations Research

PBRL 4410-001

Fall 2020

Class meeting: MW 2:20-3:45 p.m., MJ 112/Zoom

Teri Del Rosso, Ph.D.

Office: 326 Meeman Journalism Building

Office Hours: By appointment only

Email: t.l.d@memphis.edu

Twitter: @tldelrosso

IG: @dr_powerblazer

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

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

Prerequisites

PBRL 3400

PBRL 3421

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

- Fink, A. (2016). *How to conduct surveys: A step-by-step guide* (6th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Additional readings will be posted to our class's eCourseware page.

COVID-19 Classroom format

Note: This format is subject to change as conditions in Shelby Co. and Tennessee change.

This class will operate as a hybrid lecture. We were originally scheduled to meet Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:20-3:45 face-to-face in Meeman 112. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, you now have the option to attend lecture virtually via Zoom or physically in Meeman.

If you plan to attend lecture in Meeman, please email me by 9 a.m. Monday and Wednesday. I will meet you on campus to open room 112. You are required to wear a mask at all times while on campus, and this includes while in the classroom.

Live lectures and office hours will happen on Mondays and Wednesdays unless otherwise noted. You are not required to attend these sessions, but highly encouraged. Content heavy Zooms will be recorded and posted to eCourseware, team meetings/work-time days will not. Please see the below schedule, but also be ready for things to shift and change.

THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT TO ATTEND CLASS PHYSICALLY. If you do not want to come to campus this semester, I do not want you to come to campus. We can do everything virtually.

Since this is an empowered learning environment, I expect that you show up ready to engage with myself and your classmates. Given the circumstances, a lot of this will be on you to pursue and initiate. It's important to engage so you don't get lost and ask questions if you're confused.

It is my hope that you know and believe that I am always willing to help you. Always ask for clarification(s) if you have any questions or doubts: the sooner the better. It's important to be proactive. If you're having an issue, let's work together to make sure you are doing what you can, when you can. Recognize that there's a difference between reasons and excuses. I'm always willing to work with you if you've got a good reason—see a few examples below.

Note on technology: Students will write and submit assignments to eCourseware, which will be returned with feedback meant to encourage student improvement over the course of the semester. Access to a computer or mobile electronic device (tablet or smartphone) with internet access is required to complete all of your assignments. Please let me know if this is a burden.

Classroom format and expectations

This class will include lecture, discussion, and group assignments. Students will write and submit assignments to eCourseware, which will be returned with feedback meant to encourage student improvement over the course of the semester.

I see this learning environment as one in which I can guide you—a budding public relations professional and researcher—through the coursework without holding your hand. Because this class is halfway through your PR major, with Survey and Writing firmly under your belt, I feel that provides us the opportunity for me to empower you to make smart decisions as it comes to your success in this class.

Since this is an empowered learning environment, I expect that you show up ready to engage with myself and your classmates. Given the circumstances, a lot of this will be on you to pursue and initiate. It's important to engage so you don't get lost and ask questions if you're confused.

It is my hope that you know and believe that I am always willing to help you. Always ask for clarification(s) if you have any questions or doubts: the sooner the better. It's important to be proactive. If you're having an issue, let's work together to make sure you are doing what you can, when you can. Recognize that there's a difference between reasons and excuses. I'm always willing to work with you if you've got a good reason—see a few examples below.

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 - 001 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

Students with disabilities & accommodations

If you will need accommodations through [Disability Resources](#) to meet any of the requirements

of this course, please let me know as soon as possible. Remember, this does not mean you are incapable or receiving special treatment. We all have specific tools we use to do our best work. I encourage you to consider which tools you need to be your best in this class.

Trauma & emotional needs

This class is just one component of your life. It is important, but sometimes we experience trauma and crisis, and we need to reprioritize. As your instructor, I feel your health and well-being is more important than this class, especially under the circumstances. If completing this course or an assignment to the best of your abilities is challenging, please let me know as soon as possible. I am here for you and want to work with you.

COVID-19 illness accommodations

I hope that this is the most worthless syllabus section I've ever written. I hope that COVID-19 comes nowhere near you or your loved ones, and doesn't affect you in any way, including physically, emotionally, spiritually, financially, and mentally. COVID-19 will likely affect one of us in one of those ways, however. Here's how we'll adapt:

If you get sick:

I recommend you take an incomplete for the semester. Given that it's hard to know how your body will react, and cases range from asymptomatic to months of illness to death, we should prepare for you to dedicate a substantial amount of your time to feeling better. Your health is more important than this course. *Honor code: no documentation required.*

If you need to take care of someone who gets sick:

Depending on the severity of their illness, I recommend you consider taking an incomplete. If you are the primary caretaker of someone who tests positive for COVID-19 with symptoms, your priority should be remaining healthy and supporting that person. *Honor code: no documentation required.*

If you are exposed to someone who tests positive:

You must isolate and monitor your symptoms. Please let me know as soon as possible if that affects your access to resources and technology. *Honor code: no documentation required.*

Resources specific to physical health and wellness:

[Mental health Services](#)

[UofM Student Health Center](#)

[Sexual, domestic, and intimate partner violence resources](#)

If you are affected financially because of COVID-19:

There are many resources available through the Dean of Students including:

[Dr. Rosie Phillips Bingham Student Emergency Fund](#)

[Emergency Food Resources](#), which includes [Tiger Pantry](#)

[Emergency Housing](#)

[Specific COVID-19 relief funds](#)

Course and Assignment Expectations

Course work will be accomplished every week, including readings, discussion posts, and quizzes

to check your learning and comprehension. Each assignment must be completed by its due date and time (Central Time), which may vary by assignment, so make sure to check each individual due date and time to ensure that you post by the deadline.

Class discussion will involve the history, contemporary status, and future of the public relations field, along with the public relations four step process. Students will write and submit assignments that will be returned with feedback meant to encourage student improvement over the course of the semester.

Quality of Work

All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar, and language. A large part of public relations is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. This includes all class work and presentations. Problems in these or other areas will result in the deduction of points.

I expect your work to be good and to be yours. What is not yours should be fully cited. In documenting sources, you must use APA formatting. 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>.

Repetition of Courses and Coursework

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 resume and logo).

Questions about Grades

If you would like to ask about a grade, please make an appointment to meet with me outside of class time, as I will not discuss grades via email or during class. If you have a question or problem with a grade, exam question, or assignment, you have 48 hours after the assignment is returned to you to contact me, or the grade stands. Your question or appeal must be stated in writing, citing your position and why you feel the mark is incorrect. The appeal should be turned in to the professor or sent via email within the stated time frame.

Additionally, you are responsible for tracking your grade online and meeting with me early in the semester if you are concerned about your overall grade. Meeting early and often can help both parties involved find ways to improve student-instructor understanding and quality of work.

Plagiarism policy

First offense: Redo for 50%, plus meet with Teri

Second offense: Automatic 0, no redo

Third offense: Automatic class fail

Final assignment, regardless of which offense: Automatic 0 on assignment

Late work

<24 hours late: -10% (perfect = 90% A)
24-48 hours late: -20% (perfect = 80% B)
48-72 hours late: -30% (perfect = 70% C)
Final call: Up to 50% credit (perfect = 50% F)

Grading

A+ = 97-100%; A = 93-96%; A- = 90-92%
B+ = 87-89%; B = 83-86%; B- = 80-82%
C+ = 77-79%; C = 73-76%; C- = 70-72%
D+ = 67-69%; D = 60-66%
F 0-59%

Emailed assignment policy

I will not accept assignments via email unless I *tell* you to email it to me.

Your deliverables

Individual Assignments (55% of final grade)

Group contract + Peer evaluation	5 points
Survey questionnaire draft	5 points
Focus group or interview guide draft	5 points
Implementation plan	5 points
Component #1*	5 points
Component #2*	5 points
Component #3*	5 points
Google Analytics certification	5 points
Discussion board/check-ins	15 points

*You will decide as a team who is responsible for what (see below)

Team Assignments (45% of final grade)

Final draft of survey + implementation	10 points
Final focus group or interview guide + implementation	10 points
Final research plan	25 points

***Research plan components (Component #1, 2, 3)**

Each team member will be responsible for signing up for three of the plan components (listed below). In addition to working individually on three of the components, you will work as a peer editor for one additional component.

The goal is to chip away at the work and provide each team with two ways of approaching the section. This gives those who hate group work more autonomy over their grade, while also recognizing that you're all working towards the same goal (completed research plan).

For example, Robbie and David will work on the executive summary, and their teammate Jolene will edit it. Robbie will then edit Justin and Katy's SWOT analysis. Those are pass/fail.

Org. background	Due: 9/6
SWOT/Situation analysis	Due: 9/13
Secondary research	Due: 9/20
Summary of findings from primary research	Due: 11/1
Publics + target persona	Due: 11/8
Exec. Summary/Next steps	Due: 11/15

COURSE SCHEDULE

This course is a hybrid lecture. That means you should make yourself available Mondays/Wednesdays 2:20-3:45 p.m. CT to participate in live, synchronous conversations. You are NOT required to physically show up to Meeman 112 at any point in the semester. That said, the room will be open and available to you if you need a place to work. If you would like to attend class in Meeman, please let me know by 9 a.m. the day of class so I can go to campus to open up the room.

You can expect that Mondays and Wednesdays will be time for you to work with your groups and meet with me. My intention is to record and post the lectures weekly on Monday and reserve our “live” class time for discussions, meetings, and brainstorming. We’ll see how it goes, and I thank you in advance for your patience.

Week 1, August 17: Welcome to PR Research

Readings: Book: Introduction

Assignment: No assignment

Week 2, August 24: The Process of PR research + final project, teams, expectations, deadlines

Readings: See eCourseware

Assignment: Pulling our lives together (no credit, but essential)—see discussion board/eCourseware
Group contract due 8/30

NOTE: August 30 is the LAST DAY TO DROP.

Week 3, August 31: Working with a client and understanding their situation

Readings: Read up on your client (website, social media, news articles)

Book: Phase 1/Step 1: Analyzing the Situation

Book: Phase 1/Step 2: Analyzing the organization

Assignments: Organization background due 9/6

Week 4, September 7: Secondary research

Readings: See eCourseware

Assignments: SWOT/Situation analysis due 9/13

Week 5, September 14: Primary research and research ethics

Readings: See eCourseware

Book: revisit ethics section (p. 41)

Assignments: Secondary research due 9/20

Week 6, September 21: Research proposal, sample, and publics

Readings: Book: Phase 1/Step 3: Analyzing the publics

Assignments: Implementation plan due 9/27

Week 7, September 28: Survey research

Readings: See eCourseware

Assignments: No formal assignment

Week 8, October 5: Focus groups research

Readings: See eCourseware
Assignments: Individual survey due 10/11

Week 9, October 12: Midterm/"Fall Break"/Collect that data!

Readings: No assigned readings
Assignments: Individual focus group/interview guide due 10/18 → start scheduling!
Group survey due 10/18 → send it out after approval!

Week 10, October 19: Understanding your data

This week you should be sending out your surveys, conducting your focus groups or interviews

Readings: See eCourseware
Assignment: Group focus group/interview guide due 10/25 → start conducting after approval!

Week 11, October 26: PRSSA Conference week

This week you are encouraged to attend the PRSSA virtual conference

Readings: No readings
Assignments: Summary of findings due 11/1

Week 12, November 2: Understanding your data

Readings: See eCourseware
Assignments: Publics due 11/8

Week 13, November 9: Next steps + bringing it all together

Readings: See eCourseware
Assignments: Exec. Summary/Next Steps due 11/15

Week 14, LAST CLASS: November 16

M 11/16: Debrief
W 11/18: This is the first day of finals. Note: there is no reading day this semester
Assignment: Google Analytics due on 11/22

Exams week: November 18-24

Assignments: Final plan is due Monday, November 23 at 11:59 p.m. This is exempt from the late policy.
Peer/self-evaluations due Tuesday, November 24 at noon

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 UUIDs 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.

COVID-19 protocols for this course

Student Accommodations

Students with accessibility issues or learning accommodation issues due to a disability should contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) to submit an official request for course accommodations. Contact DRS at 901.678.2880 or at drs@memphis.edu. (<https://www.memphis.edu/drs/index.php>)

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. Students guilty of academic misconduct, either directly or indirectly, through participation or assistance, are immediately responsible to the instructor of the class in addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions which may be imposed through the regular institutional disciplinary procedures. (<https://www.memphis.edu/osa/students/academic-misconduct.php>)

Student Health

Students who have a positive COVID-19 test should contact the Dean of Students at deanofstudents@memphis.edu.

Student Resources

Students who need additional resources can visit the Dean of Students Office website at <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php>.