



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
School of Continuing Studies  
Public Relations and Corporate Communications

**Georgetown University, MPS PR/CC | SPRING 2017**

## **MPPR-870-01: Communications Research**

**Class Meets:** Thursday, 5:20 PM – 7:50 PM

**Class Location:** 640 Mass Ave Washington, DC 20001 | Room: C220

**Professor :** Barbara Coons

**Office Hours:** Arranged by appointment.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Research is an integral part of any public relations program. This course will explore current trends and issues associated with public relations research and will investigate the most commonly used research methodologies employed by successful public relations practitioners. These include competitive intelligence and fact-finding, media analysis and measurement, focus group and custom survey research, market and industry research, media segmentation and targeting, computer-assisted research as well as text mining analytics.

Students will learn how these methodologies are used to:

- Inform communication program strategies and message development.
- Select, strengthen and refine tactics.
- Assess return on investment based on measureable objectives.

Attention will also be given to the ethical and legal considerations involved in conducting research for communications programs. Readings and assignments are designed to enable students to conduct qualitative and quantitative research and to critically evaluate research conducted by others.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the semester, students will:

- Understand how a variety of research methods can be utilized to inform communications strategies and shape and refine the programs and tactics employed to achieve measureable communications objectives.
- Develop a working understanding of the most commonly used qualitative and quantitative research tools.
- Design and execute research projects to effectively support evidence-based communications programs. Present actionable communications research findings in a compelling manner.
- Evaluate the value and validity of research produced by others.
- Understand the legal and ethical issues surrounding research for public relations

### **ATTENDANCE**

In-class discussion and practice are essential to mastering the content of this course. Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. If you are detained from attending a class or arriving before it begins, you are responsible for notifying me via email prior to the start of class. Missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to

an A-). Absences from classes, beyond the initial two, will result in further reduction of the final grade. If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

## **WORK SUBMITTED**

You will be responsible for submitting a variety of assignments in a number of different formats.

- Landscape Analysis – Word Document in Calibri 11 font with one-inch margins
- Research Tool Review – PowerPoint presentation and online demonstration of tool
- Industry News Presentation – PowerPoint and Word Document or PDF on the news item you are presenting
- Class Summary Presentation – Oral presentation and Word Document summarizing previous week's class in Calibri 11 with one-inch margins
- Group Project: Media Content Analysis – PowerPoint presentation and Excel spreadsheet of analysis

You will be required to submit assignments by email to me at least two hours before the beginning of class on the night they are due. If you cannot submit an assignment on time, the following late policies will apply.

- Landscape Analysis – One-level grade reduction for each day late. Papers will not be accepted after 5 days.
- Research Tool Review – One-level grade reduction for each week review is postponed. If delayed more than two weeks, the review will not be accepted.
- Industry News Presentation – One-level grade reduction for each week presentation is postponed. If delayed more than two weeks, the presentation will not be accepted.
- Class Summary Presentation – One-level grade reduction for each week presentation is postponed. If delayed more than two weeks, the presentation will not be accepted.
- Group Project: Media Content Analysis – This presentation must be presented the last scheduled day of class. If there are conflicts beyond your control, your group will present on the second to last day of class.

The American Psychological Association (APA) style should be used for references and citations. For guidance please refer to <http://www.library.georgetown.edu/citations>.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

- Cell phones should be silenced and not used during class. Laptops may be used to take notes or to log onto websites or research resources referenced in class, but for no other purpose.
- Classroom discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions.
- I will not offer incomplete grades, except in the most exceptional, unforeseeable circumstances. Job requirements do not qualify.
- You are responsible for classroom information and instructions, whether you are present in class or not. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to obtain class notes.
- I encourage you to ask questions and contribute to class discussions. Part of your final grade will be based on class participation.

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

The resources for this course include articles, book excerpts, RFPs, sample contracts and chapters from two key books. The readings are chosen to give you a solid foundation for understanding and internalizing the coursework

Stacks, Don W. (2010). *Primer of Public Relations Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, New York: The Guildford Press.

ISBN 9781593855956 □ \$51.00 (Also available in PDF e-book.)

Smith, Ronald D. (2013). *Strategic Planning for Public Relations* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, New York: Routledge. ISBN 9780415506762 □ \$69.95 (Also available as e-book and can be rented from Amazon.)

All articles, book excerpts, cases, and multimedia listed on the course schedule will be distributed in advance, via the class Canvas group. Readings not included in the initial syllabus will be provided later in the semester, so we can review real-time cases and current events.

### **Recommended Readings and Web Resources**

Paine, Katie Delahaye, (2011). *Measure What Matters: Online Tools for Understanding Customers, Social Media, Engagement, and Key Relationships*, Hoboken, N.J.

ISBN 9780470920107 \$27.95 (Also available as E-book for \$18.99.)

American Association for Opinion Research -- <http://www.aapor.org/>

Institute for Public Relations -- <http://www.instituteforpr.org/>

International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communications -- <http://amecorg.com/>

PR News Online -- <http://www.prnewsonline.com/>

PR Week -- <http://www.prweek.com/>

Regan's PR Daily -- <http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Home.aspx>

The Holmes Report -- <http://www.holmesreport.com/>

### **LIBRARY RESOURCES FOR MPPR-870-01**

<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/researchcourseguides>

<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/prcc>

<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/marketing>

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

You are expected to submit work on time and of high quality. Please refer to the course schedule and plan your timetable for completing assignments in advance. I encourage you to actively ask questions prior to submitting any assignment. Feedback on all final assignments will be provided in a timely manner; no more than 2 weeks after the assignment was turned in. All grading criteria, including page length and essential content, will be distributed in advance and discussed in class.

**Weekly Assignments** -- Keeping current with each week's reading or exploration assignments will be an essential element of success in the course. Each student will be expected to complete each weekly assignment on time and to come to class prepared to actively participate in discussions relating to the topics covered. Each student will be assigned a class to individually present a research tool, an industry news item and a summary of the previous class.

- **Research Tool Review: 30 points**

Each week one student will present an assigned research tool to the class. The tools will include news retrieval services, social media analysis tools, media directories, and other reference services available online or through the Georgetown University Library. Students will provide a PowerPoint presentation describing what the tool provides and how to use it. Students should also present a live presentation of its use and provide specific examples of how it could be used to inform communications programs.

- **Industry News Presentation: 20 points**

In addition to the prescribed reading, students will be expected to actively track news relating to public relations research and evaluation in the general press, trade publications or on practitioners' blogs. Each student will be required to share one interesting example of news relating to public relations and the use of research or evaluation news with the class and lead a discussion of its significance. Handouts of the item should be shared with the class and presented using PowerPoint.

- **Class Summary Presentation: 20 points**

One student each week will be tasked with taking detailed class notes and presenting them in class the following week. The notes will be posted to Canvas for reference.

**Landscape Analysis: 50 points**

Each student will prepare a five- to six- page (single-spaced) landscape analysis of a company, non-profit organization, individual or product. This analysis will be drawn from a wide variety of publicly available secondary research resources, many of which will be explored in class. Students will analyze the data and provide their assessments of the subject's communications challenges and opportunities. A bibliography and citations to specific sources referenced in the text will be required.

**Media Content Analysis: 70 points**

As a group project, student teams will design, execute and present an in-depth media content analysis. Teams will be able to choose the topic and type of analysis they will prepare.

**Class Participation: 10 points**

**Total** **200 points**

**GRADING**

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C, and F. **There are no grades of C+, C-, or D.**

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Research Tool Review	30
Industry News Presentation	20
Class Summary Presentation	20
Landscape Analysis	50
Media Content Analysis	70
Class Participation	10
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Total =	200

**Grading Metrics:**

Students will have the opportunity to earn a **total of 200 points** this semester. Please reference the below grading scale and assignments:

**Grading Scale:**

<b>A</b>	<b>100 - 93</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>92 - 90</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>89 - 87</b>

<b>B</b>	<b>86 - 83</b>
<b>B-</b>	<b>82 - 80</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>79 - 70</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>69 and below</b>

The instructors will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

### **UNIVERSITY RESOURCES**

Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on main campus or at the downtown location:

- MPS Writing Resource Program  
202-687-4246  
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>
- Academic Resource Center  
202-687-8354 | [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)  
<http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services  
202-687-6985  
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>
- Institutional Diversity, Equity & Affirmative Action (IDEAA)  
(202) 687-4798  
<https://ideaa.georgetown.edu/>

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY**

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (202-687-8354; [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu); <http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

### **GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM**

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

## PLAGIARISM

Stealing someone else’s work is a terminal offense in the workplace, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

## SYLLABUS MODIFICATION

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of guest speakers may require some shifting of the agenda. The instructors will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE/TOPIC	READING DUE	ASSIGNMENT DUE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES
<b>MEETING DAY 1</b> <b>(Thursday, Jan. 12)</b>  <b>Introduction to Communications Research</b>	None	<b>Assignment 1:</b> A short two- to three-paragraph bio describing your educational background, work experience in public relations and career goals. Please include a picture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Introductions</li> <li>• Syllabus Review</li> <li>• Success Factors</li> <li>• Schedule of Weekly News, Tools and Class Summary Assignments</li> <li>• Lecture: Introduction to Research and Its Application in Public Relations</li> <li>• Introduction to Canvas and resources available through the Georgetown University Library</li> </ul>
<b>MEETING DAY 2</b> <b>(Thursday, Jan. 19)</b>  <b>Secondary Research and Competitive Intelligence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stacks, <b>Chapter 1.</b> Understanding Research: An Introduction with Public Relations Implications and <b>Chapter 7.</b> Qualitative Research Methodology: Historical and Secondary Methods</li> <li>• Explore “Research Tools and Reference Resources for PR Practitioners and Lexis/Nexis Advanced Search Tips (Posted on Canvas)</li> </ul>		<b>Secondary Research and Competitive Intelligence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications</li> <li>• Tools</li> <li>• Lexis/Nexis</li> </ul>
<b>MEETING DAY 3</b> <b>(Thursday, Jan. 26)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smith, Formative Research, Step 1, Analyzing the Situation and Step 2, Analyzing the Organization</li> </ul>	<b>Assignment 2:</b> Email me the topic you have chosen for your landscape analysis of	<b>Landscape/Situation Analysis Overview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applications</li> <li>• Design</li> </ul>

<b>Landscape/Situation Analysis Overview</b>		a company, individual, organization or product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tools</li> <li>Factiva</li> </ul>
<b>MEETING DAY 4 (Thursday, Feb. 2) Setting Measurable Objectives and Measurement Standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IPR, Guidelines for Setting Measurable Public Relations Objectives <a href="http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/setting-measurable-objectives/">http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/setting-measurable-objectives/</a></li> <li>Smith, Establishing Goals and Objectives</li> </ul>		<b>Setting Measurable Objectives and Measurement Standards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining objectives</li> <li>Applying appropriate measures</li> </ul>
<b>MEETING DAY 5 (Thursday, Feb. 9) Defining Stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritizing Stakeholders for Public Relations by Brad L. Rawlins <a href="http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/prioritizing-stakeholders/">http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/prioritizing-stakeholders/</a></li> <li>Smith, Formative Research: Step 3, Analyzing the Publics.</li> </ul>		<b>Defining Stakeholders and Audiences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders</li> <li>Publics</li> <li>Influencers</li> <li>Audiences</li> </ul>
<b>MEETING DAY 6 (Thursday, Feb. 16) Traditional Media Content Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smith, Content Analysis.</li> <li>Reading Assignment: Guidelines for Measuring the Effectiveness of PR Programs and Activities by Dr. Walter K. Lindenmann <a href="http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/effectiveness-programs-activities/">http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/effectiveness-programs-activities/</a></li> </ul>		<b>Traditional Media Content Analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content Selection and Sampling</li> <li>Analysis parameters</li> <li>Tools</li> <li>Text Analytics</li> </ul>
<b>MEETING DAY 7 (Thursday, Feb. 23) Measuring Online and Social Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading Assignment: Katie Delahaye Paine, "How to Measure Social Media Relations: The More Things Change, the More They Remain the Same," <a href="http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/measure-social-media-relations/">http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/measure-social-media-relations/</a></li> </ul>	<b>Assignment 3:</b> Landscape analysis due – emailed to Barbara before the beginning of class.	<b>Measuring Online and Social Media</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content Selection and Sampling</li> <li>Analysis parameters</li> <li>Tools</li> </ul>
<b>MEETING DAY 8 (Friday, March 2) Workshop on preparing compelling presentations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore Canva <a href="https://www.canva.com/">https://www.canva.com/</a></li> <li>Explore 10 free tools for creating infographics <a href="http://www.creativeblog.com/infographic/tools-2131971">http://www.creativeblog.com/infographic/tools-2131971</a></li> </ul>		<b>Workshop on preparing compelling presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excel Charts</li> <li>PowerPoint presentations</li> <li>Data visualization</li> </ul>
<b>MEETING DAY 9 (Thursday, March 16) New and Traditional Public</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stacks Chapter 11. Quantitative Research Methodology: Survey and Poll Methods.</li> <li>Explore: American Association for Public Opinion</li> </ul>		<b>New and Traditional Public Opinion/Survey Research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sampling Omnibus Surveys</li> <li>Focus Groups</li> </ul>

<p><b>Opinion/Survey Research</b></p>	<p>Research website  <a href="http://www.aapor.org/">http://www.aapor.org/</a>          especially sections          Standards/Ethics  <a href="http://www.aapor.org/Standards-Ethics.aspx">http://www.aapor.org/Standards-Ethics.aspx</a>          and Education/Resources  <a href="http://www.aapor.org/Education-Resources.aspx">http://www.aapor.org/Education-Resources.aspx</a></p>		<p>In-depth propriety research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dial Testing MROCs (Market Research Online Communities)</li> <li>• Mobile Research</li> <li>• Prediction Markets</li> </ul>
<p><b>MEETING DAY 10 (Thursday, March 23)</b>  <b>Syndicated Surveys and Understanding Crosstabs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore: Simmons One View, an extension of Simmons Survey of Media and Markets National Consumer Study of more than 22,000 households. <a href="https://oneview-experian-com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/UniversityAccess?uid=5179">https://oneview-experian-com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/UniversityAccess?uid=5179</a></li> <li>• Explore: the following websites: Nielsen, <a href="http://www.nielsen.com/us/en.html">http://www.nielsen.com/us/en.html</a>, especially its Top Ten lists <a href="http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/top10s.html">http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/top10s.html</a></li> <li>• Ipsos <a href="http://www.ipsos.com/">http://www.ipsos.com/</a></li> </ul>		<p><b>Syndicated Surveys and Understanding Crosstabs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simmons</li> <li>• MRI</li> <li>• Ipsos</li> </ul>
<p><b>MEETING DAY 11 (Thursday, March 30)</b>  <b>Presenting and Applying Research Results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stacks, Chapter 15. Writing and Presenting the Final Research Report.</li> </ul>		<p><b>Presenting and Applying Research Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing your audience</li> <li>• Thinking about the data</li> <li>• Telling a story</li> <li>• Overcoming nervousness</li> </ul>
<p><b>MEETING DAY 12 (Thursday, April 6)</b>  <b>Ethics and Law</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stacks, Chapter 5. Ethical Concerns in Public Relations Research.</li> <li>• American Statistical Association, 1994: The Maintenance of Ethical Principles in Marketing Search: <a href="http://www.amstat.org/Sections/Srms/Proceedings/papers/1994_019.pdf">http://www.amstat.org/Sections/Srms/Proceedings/papers/1994_019.pdf</a></li> <li>• Ethics and Public Relations, by Shannon Bowen, Institute</li> </ul>		<p><b>Ethics, Law &amp; Theory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry standards</li> <li>• Contracts</li> <li>• Conflict of Interest</li> </ul>



	<p>for Public Relations  <a href="http://www.instituteforpr.org/ethics-and-public-relations/">http://www.instituteforpr.org/ethics-and-public-relations/</a></p>		
<p><b>MEETING DAY 13</b>  <b>(Thursday, April 20)</b></p> <p><b>Award-Winning Public Relations Programs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore IPR-sponsored awards.  <a href="http://www.instituteforpr.org/awards/">http://www.instituteforpr.org/awards/</a></li> <li>• Explore: PRSA Silver Anvil Award winning submissions for examples of research use:  <a href="http://www.prsa.org/Awards/Search">http://www.prsa.org/Awards/Search</a></li> <li>• Explore Holmes Report Sabre Award Winners  <a href="http://www.holmesreport.com/events-awards/sabre-awards/global-sabre-awards/2016-global-sabre-awards">http://www.holmesreport.com/events-awards/sabre-awards/global-sabre-awards/2016-global-sabre-awards</a></li> </ul>		<p><b>Award-Winning Public Relations Research Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IPR Awards</li> <li>• AMEC Award</li> <li>• PRSA Silver Anvil Award</li> <li>• <i>The Holmes Report Sabre Awards</i></li> <li>• <i>PR Week Awards</i></li> <li>• Cannes Lions and <i>Grand Prix Awards</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>MEETING DAY 14</b>  <b>(Thursday, April 27)</b></p> <p><b>Purchasing Research and Research Suppliers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stacks, Chapter 14. Writing and Evaluating the Request for Research Proposal.</li> <li>• Explore: Research Service Directory (MRA Blue Book)  <a href="http://www.bluebook.org/">http://www.bluebook.org/</a></li> <li>• The Green Book  <a href="http://www.greenbook.org/">http://www.greenbook.org/</a></li> <li>• Quirks.com &amp; Quirk's Researcher Source Book  <a href="http://www.quirks.com/directory/sourcebook/">http://www.quirks.com/directory/sourcebook/</a></li> <li>• O'Dwyer's PR Services Database  <a href="http://www.odwyerpr.com/pr_services_database/index.htm">http://www.odwyerpr.com/pr_services_database/index.htm</a></li> </ul>		<p><b>Purchasing Research and Research Suppliers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests for Research Proposals</li> <li>• Evaluating Proposals</li> <li>• Key Suppliers</li> </ul>
<p><b>MEETING DAY 15</b>  <b>(Thursday, May 11)</b></p> <p><b>Student Presentations of Media Analysis Projects</b></p>		<p><b>Assignment 4:</b>  Final group presentations</p>	