MPPR-870-1: COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-Public Relations and Corporate Communications
Mondays, 8:00 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.  (First Class Wednesday, Jan. 7 / Workshop Sat. March. 21 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon) | Spring 2015

Instructor: Barbara Coons
Downtown campus, room C221
  • Office hours are by appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW
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.

COURSE 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.

REQUIRED READING
Primer of Public Relations Research
Stacks, Don W.

ISBN: 978-1-59385-595-6
The Guildford Press
2010
$48.45

E-Book
2011
$48.45

Strategic Planning for Public Relations
Smith, Ronald D
ISBN10: 041550676X
Routledge
Paperback: $59.30
(Also available in Kindle Edition and can be rented from Amazon)

Suggested Reading and Web Resources
Measure What Matters: Online Tools for Understanding Customers, Social Media, Engagement, and Key Relationships
Paine, Katie Delahaye
Kindle
$15.49
Hardcover
$18.94

American Association for Opinion Research -- http://www.aapor.org/
The Holmes Report -- http://www.holmesreport.com/
International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communications -- http://amecorg.com/
Institute for Public Relations -- http://www.instituteforpr.org/
Metrics Man -- http://metricsman.wordpress.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
Roper Center -- www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/

The instructor will also assign specific articles to read as part of the homework. Students must be prepared to discuss any of those assigned readings in class.

ATTENDANCE
As outlined by the university, 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 for 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.

Punctual attendance is critical. If you have to miss a class – family emergency, medical emergency or other act of God – you must let the instructors know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Exceptions will be made only in extraordinary circumstances.

**CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES**

A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. Students should turn off all cell phones, pagers or other communication devices while in class. Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others’ views and opinions. What happens in class stays in class unless you receive permission from the instructor to share something.

Students are expected to arrive on time and to be in attendance for the duration of the entire class session. Leaving early is not acceptable. If you are ill or are experiencing unusual circumstances that cause you to arrive late or leave early, you must notify me via phone or email prior to the start of class if at all possible.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Landscape Analysis: 40 points
Research Tool Reviews Presented in Class: 30 points
Industry News Presented in Class: 20 points
Weekly Class Summaries: 20 points
Group Project: Media Content Analysis: 80 points (Data: 30 points; PowerPoint presentation: 30 points, oral presentation: 10 points, peer evaluation: 10 points)
Class Participation: 10 points

**GRADING**

Your course grade will be based on the following:

**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.

- **Research Tools Reviews** – 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 an overview of what the tool provides, how to use it, and specific examples of how it could be applied to a public relations research task. Students should prepare a brief PowerPoint introduction to the tool, present a live presentation of its use, and suggest how it could be used to inform communications programs.

- **Industry News** – 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 if the example lends itself to being presented using PowerPoint, students are encouraged to do so.

- **Weekly Class Summaries** – 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 Blackboard for reference.

**Landscape Analysis** – 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** – 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.

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<th>Total</th>
<th>200 points</th>
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Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. **There are no grades of C+, C- or D.**

- A: 100-95
- A-: 94-90
- B+: 89-88
- B: 87-83
- B-: 82-80
- C: 79-70
- F: 69-0

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
  http://ldss.georgetown.edu/

- **Counseling and Psychiatric Services**
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; http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm) 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 journalism, 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.
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<tr>
<th>DATE/TOPIC</th>
<th>READING DUE</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT DUE</th>
<th>IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES</th>
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| WEEK 1 (Wed., Jan. 7)            | None        | **Assignment 1:** A short two- to three-paragraph bio describing your educational background, work experience in public relations and career goals. Please include a picture. | • Personal Introductions  
• Syllabus Review  
• Success Factors  
• Schedule of Weekly News, Tools and Class Summary Assignments  
• Lecture: Introduction to Research and Its Application in Public Relations  
• Introduction to Blackboard and resources available through the Georgetown University Library |
| **Introduction to Communications Research** |            |                                                                                 |                      |
| WEEK 2 (Monday, Jan. 12)         | • Stacks, Chapter 1. Understanding Research: An Introduction with Public Relations Implications and Chapter 7. Qualitative Research Methodology: Historical and Secondary Methods  
• Applications  
• Tools  
• Lexis/Nexis |
| **Secondary Research and Competitive Intelligence** |            |                                                                                 |                      |
| WEEK 3 (Monday, Jan. 26)         | • Smith, Formative Research, Step 1, Analyzing the Situation and Step 2, Analyzing the Organization | **Assignment 2:** Email me the topic you have chosen for your landscape analysis of a company, individual, organization or product | **Landscape/Situation Analysis Overview**  
• Applications  
• Design  
• Tools  
• Factiva |
<p>| <strong>Landscape/Situation Analysis Overview</strong> |            |                                                                                 |                      |
| WEEK 4                           | • IPR, Guidelines for Setting |                                                                                 | <strong>Setting Measurable</strong> |
|                                  |             |                                                                                 |                      |</p>
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<th>(Monday, Feb. 2) Setting Measurable Objectives and Measurement Standards</th>
<th>Measurable Public Relations Objectives <a href="http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/setting-measurable-Objectives/">link</a> • Smith, Establishing Goals and Objectives</th>
<th>Objectives and Measurement Standards • Defining objectives • Applying appropriate measures</th>
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<tr>
<td>WEEK 5 (Monday, Feb. 9) Defining Stakeholders and Audiences</td>
<td>• Prioritizing Stakeholders for Public Relations by Brad L. Rawlins <a href="http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/prioritizing-stakeholders/">link</a> • Smith, Formative Research: Step 3, Analyzing the Publics.</td>
<td>Defining Stakeholders and Audiences • Stakeholders • Publics • Influencers • Audiences</td>
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<td>WEEK 6 (Monday, Feb. 23) Traditional Media Content Analysis</td>
<td>• Smith, Content Analysis. • 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/">link</a></td>
<td>Traditional Media Content Analysis • Content Selection and Sampling • Analysis parameters • Tools • Text Analytics</td>
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<td>WEEK 7 (Monday, Mar. 2) Measuring Online and Social Media</td>
<td>• 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/">link</a></td>
<td>Assignment 3: Landscape analysis due – emailed to Barbara before the beginning of class.</td>
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<td>WEEK 8 (Monday, Mar. 16) New and Traditional Public Opinion/Survey Research</td>
<td>• Stacks Chapter 11. Quantitative Research Methodology: Survey and Poll Methods. • Mobilizing Market Research <a href="http://issuu.com/researchshare/docs/mobilizing-market-research_final">link</a> • Explore: American Association for Public Opinion Research website <a href="http://www.aapor.org">link</a> especially sections on Poll and Survey FAQs</td>
<td>New and Traditional Public Opinion/Survey Research • Sampling Omnibus Surveys • Focus Groups In-depth propriety research • Dial Testing MROCs (Market Research Online)</td>
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<td>WEEK 9 (Saturday, Mar. 21)</td>
<td><strong>Workshop on preparing compelling reports and presentations</strong></td>
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| | • Excel Charts  
• PowerPoint presentations  
• Data visualization |

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<th>WEEK 10 (Monday, Mar. 23)</th>
<th><strong>Syndicated Surveys and Understanding Crosstabs</strong></th>
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| **Explore:** Simmons One View, an extension of Simmons Survey of Media and Markets National Consumer Study of more than 22,000 households. [https://oneview-experian.com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/UniversityAccess?uid=5179](https://oneview-experian.com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/UniversityAccess?uid=5179)  
**Explore:** the following websites: Nielsen, “My Best Segments.” [http://www.claritas.com/MyBestSegments/Default.jsp?ID=100&menuOption=learnmore](http://www.claritas.com/MyBestSegments/Default.jsp?ID=100&menuOption=learnmore)  
**The Futures Company** [http://www.thefuturescompany.com/](http://www.thefuturescompany.com/)  
| | • Simmons  
• MRI  
• The Futures Company  
• Mendelsohn |

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<th>WEEK 11 (Monday, Mar. 30)</th>
<th><strong>Presenting and Applying</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Stacks, Chapter 15. Writing and Presenting the Final Research Report.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Presenting and Applying Research Results</strong></td>
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| | • Knowing your audience  
• Thinking about the... |
| Research Results | data  | • Telling a story  
|                  |       | • Overcoming nervousness |
| WEEK 12 (Monday, April 13) | Ethics and Law | Ethics, Law & Theory  
| • Stacks, Chapter 5. Ethical Concerns in Public Relations Research.  
| • Contracts  
| • Conflict of Interest |
| WEEK 13 (Monday, Apr. 20) | Award-Winning Public Relations Programs | Award-Winning Public Relations Research Programs  
| • Explore: PRSA Silver Anvil Award winning submissions for examples of research use: [http://www.prsa.org/Awards/Search](http://www.prsa.org/Awards/Search) | • IPR Golden Ruler Award  
| • AMEC Award  
| • PRSA Silver Anvil Award  
| • The Holmes Report Sabre Awards  
| • PR Week Awards  
| • Cannes Lions and Grand Prix Awards |
| WEEK 14 (Monday, Apr. 27) | Purchasing Research and Research Suppliers | Purchasing Research and Research Suppliers  
| • Explore: O’Dwyer’s Director of PR Services for Research [http://www.odwyerpr.com/pr_services_database/research.htm](http://www.odwyerpr.com/pr_services_database/research.htm) | • Requests for Research Proposals  
| • Evaluating Proposals  
| • Key Suppliers |
| WEEK 15 (Monday, May 4) | Student Presentations of Media Analysis Projects | Assignment 4: Final group presentations |