

Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations
COMM 420 – Spring 2012
120 Earth & Eng. Sci. –W/F – 12:20 PM to 2:15 PM

The Pennsylvania State University
Department of Advertising and Public Relations

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Prerequisites: COMM 320 or 370 AND STAT 200

Course description

This course provides students with the tools to outline, execute and evaluate mass media research. The primary focus is on using research for advertising and public relations program/campaign management—planning, monitoring and evaluating. You will learn the most important research methods used in the field – content analysis, focus groups, in-depth interviews, surveys and experiments – and gain experience with the statistical methods most often used to analyze results.

Course objectives

By the end of this semester, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of audiences in relationship to communications;
2. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically;
4. Think critically, creatively and independently;
5. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
6. Write correctly and clearly;
7. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
8. Apply tools and technologies commonly used in advertising practices;
9. Know the difference between primary and secondary research, and the appropriate uses of each;
10. Develop a primary research project including research objectives, sample justification, data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation;
11. Use SPSS to analyze data;
12. Present both secondary and primary research in a comprehensive, well-organized report.

Course requirements

The requirements for the course have been designed to provide students with the concepts and experience needed to meet the above-stated objectives and to measure the amount of success achieved toward reaching those objectives. In-class lab assignments are due at the end of class. Written individual and group assignments are due **at the beginning of class** on the day they are due.

Exams

There will be **three in-class examinations** scheduled during the semester. In-class exams will cover materials presented in class lectures, slides and/or videotapes, textbook chapters, in-class exercises and class discussion. The format for each exam will be a combination of short answer and multiple choice questions. A study guide will be provided for each exam. Examination materials cover major terms, concepts and issues affecting media research, including basic statistics.

Extra Credit

Extra credit opportunities will be announced during the semester.

In-class lab exercises

Students will work on lab exercises in class, so that I can be available to help students through the process. **If you miss class for any reason without prior approval from me, you cannot make up an in-class lab exercise.**

Literature Review

Each group will research and write up a brief situation analysis, including a literature review relevant to the product/service/idea being researched.

Research proposal

Based on their review of literature and research questions and/or hypotheses, each group will design a research instrument and training manual for one qualitative or quantitative research method—such as a focus group, in-depth interviews, experiment, or telephone, face-to-face, or Internet survey.

Data collection

Each group will plan and conduct one qualitative or quantitative research project. The data (transcripts, surveys, etc.) must be collected before the group meeting.

Final report

Each group will write and present a report of findings, including an oral presentation for the class. The final report grade will include peer review grades from each team member, as well as a grade for the oral presentation.

Race Relations Project (NOW CALLED WORLD IN CONVERSATION)

The Race Relations Project (RRP) is a peer-facilitated diversity program that employs trained undergraduate students from Penn State to lead small group discussions on topics of race relations relevant to you and the other students participating. Two facilitators from the RRP encourage participants in your group to express their views and experiences on these issues. Because our mission is to expand the multicultural dialogue, our facilitators do not teach or tell you what you should think. Instead, they encourage you to uncover for yourself what you actually think. RRP programs occur outside of the regular meeting times of your class. Most programs are held in the evenings, although we do have some day time programs throughout the week to accommodate your schedule. For more information on the RRP, visit our website:

www.racerelationsproject.psu.edu

Participation in RRP is worth 5% of your grade.

Be aware, the programs for this class will only be offered during specific weeks of the semester. One week before the start date you will receive an email explaining how to register for the RRP program. All questions regarding the RRP should be directed to the RRP staff at: racerelationsproject.psu.edu. Students who have already been through the RRP project in another course will have the opportunity to participate in an advanced discussion.

Class participation and attendance

Students are expected to attend each class, and to participate in class discussion. Other commitments such as class schedule conflicts and work are not acceptable excuses for missing class. Additionally, because quizzes and lab exercises will be completed in class, poor attendance will have a direct, negative impact on your grade.

Course evaluation

Your final grade will be determined by the following scale:

ASSESSMENT	PERCENT	POINTS
Exams (15% each)	45%	90
In-class exercises	10%	20
Literature review	5%	10
Research proposal	5%	10
Data collection	5%	10
Final report	20%	40
Race Relations Project	5%	10
Class participation and attendance	5%	10
TOTAL	100%	200

Grading scale

A = 95-100; A- = 90-<95; B+ = 87-<90; B = 83-<87; B- = 80-<83; C+ = 77-<80; C = 70-<77; D = 60-<70; F=<60.

General policies

Assignments. Late work is only accepted after showing valid proof of absence excuse, at the discretion of the instructor. Faulty computer equipment does not constitute a valid reason for late work. No credit will be given for unexcused late work. All work submitted should be in **12-point Times Roman font**, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. No cover page is necessary. So that we can get the most out of lecture time, students are expected to complete reading assignments prior to class meetings.

Class conduct. I expect you to arrive in class on time and to stay for the entire class. Random arrivals and exits only serve to distract other students and the instructor. It should go without saying that talking in class disrupts your classmates and impedes their learning experience. Those engaging in distracting behavior may be asked to leave the classroom.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly and creative activity in an open, honest and responsible manner, free from fraud and deception, and is an educational objective of the College of Communications and the university. Cheating, including plagiarism, falsification of research data, using the same assignment for more than one class, turning in someone else's work, or passively allowing others to copy your work, will result in academic penalties at the discretion of the instructor, and may result in the grade of "XF" (failed for academic dishonesty) being put on your permanent transcript. In serious cases it could also result in suspension or dismissal from the university. As students studying communication, you should understand and avoid plagiarism (presenting the work of others as your own). A discussion of plagiarism, with examples, can be found at:

<http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cyberplag/cyberplagstudent.html>. The rules and policies regarding academic integrity should be reviewed by every student, and can be found online at: www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20, and in the College of Communications document, "Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures." Any student with a question about academic integrity or plagiarism is strongly encouraged to discuss it with his or her instructor.

Cell phones, pagers, computers, etc. All students are expected to turn off their cell phones and pagers at the beginning of class. It is inconsiderate to classmates to allow a cell phone to ring during lecture. Personal use of computers during lecture is not permitted.

Contacting your instructor via email. If you can't make it to my office hours, I will be happy to answer your questions via email, within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. I usually check my email frequently during the day. However, I usually do *not* check my email after 9:00 PM. Please do not expect an immediate response to your emails, especially late in the evening. Email is an appropriate medium for short, simple questions or messages. It is NOT productive to put long, complex questions, requests or messages in email. Pick up the phone or visit my office!

Tentative schedule

The tentative dates for exams are listed below. If changes in the schedule are necessary, they will be announced in class and you will be held responsible for such changes.

Feb. 10– Exam 1

March 16 – Exam 2

April 4 – Exam 3

March 30 – Final project due

ANGEL

ANGEL will be used in the administration of this course. Any changes to the course schedule, in addition to other announcements, will be posted on ANGEL, so students are encouraged to check in often.

Research participation and extra credit

From time to time, I hear about opportunities for students to participate in faculty or graduate student research. As students of research, I believe these opportunities represent a valuable means of expanding your knowledge of the research process. Students who participate in research opportunities will have the opportunity for extra credit points that will be added to your total exam grade. These opportunities will be announce in class and via ANGEL as they come up.

NOTE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services, ODS located in room 116 Boucke Building at 814-863-1807(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit their web site at www.equity.psu.edu/ods/. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable academic adjustments.