

**Georgetown University
Master of Continuing Studies
Communications Research
MPPR 870**

**Professor: Barbara Coons
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Office Hours: Available by appointment before or after class
Class: Mondays, 7:45 p.m. –9:45 p.m.
Term: Spring 2010**

Course Description:

Research is an integral part of any communications program. This course will explore current trends and issues associated with communications research and will investigate the most commonly used research methodologies employed by successful public relations practitioners. These include traditional and social media analysis and measurement, competitive intelligence and fact-finding, 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 / Learning Goals:

By the end of this course, students can expect to:

- 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.
- Know the legal and ethical issues surrounding research for public relations.

Teaching Philosophy: Students are expected to demonstrate a high level of dedication, discipline, intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm – attributes essential to become successful communications professionals. The course requires active participation and knowledge-sharing. Participants will be required to follow current communications and public relations research-and evaluation-related issues in the press and professional journals and to cite examples and key learnings. They will also be required to stay current with homework and reading assignments and come prepared to raise questions and knowledgeably discuss the topics addressed in each week's class. The quality and quantity of student participation will be a major part of each student's performance evaluation for this course.

Attendance and Tardiness: Students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, and to be in attendance for the duration of the entire class session. Leaving early is not accepted. If you are very ill or are experiencing unusual circumstances that prevent you from attending class or cause you to arrive late, you must notify me via phone or email prior to the start of class. Failure to do so will be counted as missing class without a legitimate excuse. If you miss more than two classes, each additional class missed will lower your final grade one letter. If a class is missed, you are still required to turn in written assignments on time and to meet the goals for the week. You will be required to register your attendance by signing an attendance sheet at the beginning of each class.

Written Assignments: Students will be required to submit all written assignments (including PowerPoint presentations) to me by email prior to class on the day they are due. Hardcopies should be turned in at the start of class. All written work must be "client-ready" and conform to the Associated Press Stylebook.

Honor System: Students are expected to adhere to the letter and intent of the Georgetown University Honor System (<http://www11.georgetown.edu/programs/gervase/hc/index.html>). Any conduct that is academically dishonest or lacks academic integrity is prohibited and will result in a failing grade in this course.

Academic Resource Center: If you believe you have a disability, you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@Georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. It is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

Required Reading (Note: Specific required reading is noted below under "Assignments"))

Stacks, Don W.
Primer of Public Relations Research
The Guildford Press
ISBN 1-57230-726-9
2002

Smith, Ronald D.
Strategic Planning for Public Relations
Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
ISBN 10: 0-415-99422-5 (pbk)
ISBN 10: 0-203-89118-X (ebk)
Third Edition, 2009

Suggested Reading and Web Resources

Paine, Katie Delahaye
Measuring Public Relationships: The Data-Driven Communicator's Guide to Success
KDPaine & Partners, LLC
ISBN 978-0-9789899-0-3
2007

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

Institute for Public Relations -- www.instituteforpr.org

The Measurement Standard -- <http://www.themeasurementstandard.com>

Metrics Man -- <http://metricsman.wordpress.com>

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

Roper Center -- www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/

IABC Measurement Blog -- <http://commons.iabc.com/measure/>

Grading – 200-Point Scale

Class Participation: 20 points

Landscape Analysis: 50 points

Research Tool Reviews Presented in Class and Posted to Blackboard: 20 points

Industry News Presented in Class and Posted to Blackboard: 20 points

Weekly Class Summaries Posted to Blackboard: 20 points

Group Project: Media Content Analysis: 70 points (Paper/PowerPoint presentation: 40 points, oral presentation: 20 points, peer evaluation: 10 points)

Assignments

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.

Landscape Analysis –Each student will prepare a four- to five-page (typed double-space) communications analysis of a company, non-profit organization, individual or product. This analysis will be drawn from publicly available sources and will detail the both communications challenges and opportunities.

Research Tools Reviews – Each week one students (or two depending on class size) will present a 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 and present a live presentation of its use.

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 post one interesting example of PR research or evaluation news to the Blackboard and discuss its significance in class. 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 Summaries – One student each week will be tasked with taking detailed class notes and posting them to Blackboard the day before the next class. They will also be expected to provide a brief overview at the beginning of the following class.

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.

Week	Discussion Topics	Assignments
Week 1: Jan. 13 (Follow Monday Schedule)	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Introductions • Syllabus Review • Success Factors • Lecture: Introduction to Research and Its Application in Public Relations 	
Week 2: Jan. 25 (No class Jan. 18 – Martin Luther King Day Holiday)	Secondary Research and Competitive Intelligence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications • Tools Schedule of Weekly News, Tools and Class Summary Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written Assignment: A short two to three paragraph bio describing your educational background and work experience in public relations. • Reading Assignment: Stacks, Chapters 1 and 4 • Explore: The National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting guide to the Internet http://www.ire.org/training/nettour/
Week 3: Feb. 1	Landscape/Situation Analysis Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications • Design • Tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Assignment: Smith, Formative Research, Step 1, Analyzing the Situation and Step 2, Analyzing the Organization, pp. 19-47

<p>Week 4: Feb. 8</p>	<p>Setting Measurable Objectives and Measurement Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining objectives • Applying appropriate measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email me topic of landscape analysis before class • Reading Assignment: IPR, Guidelines for Setting Measurable Public Relations Objectives: An Update (Sept. 2009) http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/Setting_PR_Objectives.pdf • Reading Assignment: Smith, Establishing Goals and Objectives, pp. 79 -92
<p>Week 5: Feb. 22 (No class Feb. 15th – Presidents’ Day)</p>	<p>Defining Stakeholders and Audiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders • Publics • Influencers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written Assignment: Communications Landscape Analysis of Company, Individual, Organization or Product (Due Oct. 12) • Reading Assignment: Prioritizing Stakeholders for Public Relations by Brad L. Rawlins http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/2006_Stakeholders.pdf • Reading Assignment: Smith, Formative Research: Step 3, Analyzing the Publics, pp. 48-75
<p>Week 6: Mar. 1</p>	<p>Media Content Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Selection and Sampling • Analysis parameters • Tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Assignment: Mark R. Phillips and Katie Delahaye Paine, “Doing Measurement Right: One Organization’s Experience Creating a Best-In-Class Measurement Program from Scratch.” http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/DoingMeasurementRight.pdf • Assignment: Smith, Content Analysis, pp. 295 – 301 • Landscape analysis due – posted in Blackboard by the beginning of class.
<p>Week 7: Mar 15 (No class Mar. 8 – Spring Break)</p>	<p>Measuring Online and Social Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Selection and Sampling • Analysis parameters • Tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Assignment: Katie Delahaye Paine, “How to Set Benchmarks in Social Media: Exploratory Research for Social Media, Lessons Learned.” http://www.instituteforpr.org/files/uploads/SetBenchmarks_SocialMedia.pdf
<p>Week 8: Mar. 22</p>	<p>Public Opinion / Survey Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sampling • Omnibus Surveys • Focus Groups • Dial Testing • In-depth propriety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Assignment: Stacks Chapters 9 -10, pp. 150-194 • Explore: American Association for Public Opinion Research Web Site http://www.aapor.org/ especially sections on Poll and Survey FAQs and Resources for Researchers:

	research	Best Practices
Week 9: Mar. 29	Syndicated Surveys and Understanding Crosstabs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simmons • MRI • Yankelovich • Mendelsohn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the following Web sites: Claritas http://www.claritas.com/claritas/Default.jsp?ci=3&si=1&pn=mriprofiles; Yankelovich http://www.yankelovich.com/; Mendelsohn Affluent Survey Ipsos Mendelsohn » The Mendelsohn Affluent Survey
Week 10: Apr. 5	Presenting and Applying Research Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing your audience • Preparing compelling reports and/or PowerPoint presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Assignment: Stacks, Writing and Presenting the Final Research Report, pp. 295-307 • Explore: Just Plain Data Analysis: Companion Website http://iit.ilstu.edu/jpda/charts/chart%20tips/Charttip%204.htm
Week 11: Apr. 12	Ethics, Law & Theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry standards • Case studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Assignment: Stacks, Ethical Concerns in Public Relations Research, pp. 33-50. • Reading Assignment: American Statistical Association, 1994: The Maintenance of Ethical Principles in Marketing Search: http://www.amstat.org/Sections/Srms/Proceedings/papers/1994_019.pdf
Week 12: Apr. 19	Award-Winning Public Relations Research Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPR Golden Ruler and PRSA Silver Anvil Award winners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Assignment: Jack Felton Golden Ruler Award winning entry submissions 2004-2007: http://www.instituteforpr.org/awards/golden_ruler • Explore: PRSA Silver Anvil Award winning submissions for examples of research use: http://www.prsa.org/Awards/SilverAnvil/SilverAnvil_PrPro_Past_Recipients/
Week 13: Apr. 26	Purchasing Research and Research Suppliers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for Research Proposals • Evaluating Proposals • Key Suppliers Student Presentations of Media Content Analysis Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Assignment: Stacks, Writing and Evaluating the Research for Research Proposal, pp. 281 – 294 • Explore: O'Dwyer's Director of PR Services for Research http://www.odwyerpr.com/pr_services_database/research.htm • First group presentations
Week 14: May 3	Student Presentations of Media Content Analysis Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final group presentations