

“Research Methods in Public Relations”

Professor/instructor:	XXXX
Office:	XXXX
Phone:	XXXX
Fax:	XXXX
E-mail:	XXXX
Office Hours:	XXXX
Virtual Office Hours	XXXX
Web Site:	MSVU Moodle Live site

Course Overview

Research in public relations is a fundamental part of both the practice and study of the field. In practice, research is used for program planning as well as evaluation of programs, campaigns and projects. In the academic world, research is focused on improving public relations as a discipline and a practice. PBRL 3016 is designed as an introduction to research in public relations, providing you with a basic understanding of concepts and principles so that you are equipped as beginning PR researchers in practice. It also provides you with an appreciation of academic research and its application to the real world.

Pre-Requisite Knowledge

A half-unit course in statistics is a pre-requisite for this course and there is a reasonable expectation that all students are familiar with the mathematical concepts covered in that course. If you require statistics remediation, it is your responsibility to seek that help.

Course Objectives

On successful completion of PBRL 3016, you should be able to:

1. discuss the importance of basic research to public communication fields;
2. design ethically-sound research projects;
3. articulate the value of research in PR projects;
4. differentiate between primary and secondary research, and primary and secondary sources;

5. evaluate critically sources and research results;
6. understand sampling strategies and how to use them;
7. select and apply appropriate research tools in support of PR research and objectives;
8. demonstrate an understanding of quantitative and qualitative applications to research conduct;
9. identify appropriate research methods for specific PR and communication challenges;
10. interpret research results and report the findings.

Online Organization of Workshops

[See Moodle site for workshop dates]

Part 1: Fundamentals of Research & Evaluation in Public Relations

Workshop 1: Research & its place in managing public relations

Workshop 2: Review of measurement and statistical reasoning

Part 2: Research Methodology

Workshop 3: Qualitative research methods

Workshop 4: Quantitative research methods

Part 3: Research Applications

Workshop 5: Applications of research design and methodology to PR practice

Workshop 6: Understanding and using scholarly research

Student Responsibilities & Notes

Each individual student is responsible for the following:

- To meet the objectives set out for this course it is mandatory that you do the assigned reading, complete all assignments to the best of your ability, that you participate in all online discussions, and that you attend all real-time session conducted online through Collaborate/Blackboard.
- This course requires self-direction and self- motivation in addition to adherence to all deadlines.
- Treat everyone in the class, including the prof with respect. It is possible to create an online learning community if everyone treats all others with respect.

- All assignments have strict deadlines to which we will adhere firmly. If you are going to have difficulty meeting a deadline, discuss it with me in advance and it may be possible for us to make other fair arrangements if I am convinced of the validity and seriousness of your problem.
- "Correct use of language is one of the criteria included in the evaluation of written assignments." MSVU Calendar
- "Students who have a disability and who require academic accommodations must register with Disability Services as early as possible in order to receive accommodations." (<http://www.msvu.ca/disabilityservices>)
- "University regulations on plagiarism and cheating and other academic offences will be strictly enforced." These regulations including applicable procedures and penalties are detailed in the University Calendar and are posted on department notice boards and on the website at www.msvu.ca on the Current Students page under Academic Offenses."

Please note that your *perception of your effort*, by itself, is not enough to justify a high grade. You will have to meet course objectives.

Student Commitments & Deliverables

- Complete all text book readings assigned
- Read all documents posted on the Moodle site
- Explore of all online links posted
- Watch all posted videos
- Participate in three real-time Collaborate sessions
- Participate in three asynchronous online discussion on specific questions
- Complete three major written assignments

Department of Communication Studies Writing Competence Requirement

[At the time of this writing, this policy is under revision. Update as necessary.]

BASIC WRITING COMPETENCE IS A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR PASSING THIS COURSE

Since writing is an important part of our field's professional practice, the Department of Communication Studies cannot allow its students to graduate or intern if they do not have the ability to write correct English. Consequently, writing competence is a requirement in all department courses, and it must be demonstrated in all classes. This means that students who fail more than one assignment in this course as a result of a lack of writing competence will not pass, regardless the accumulation of points they achieve through team work, class participation, etc.

The department plays a significant role in developing student writing; however, it does not offer instruction in basic writing skills because these skills are beneath the academic level at which undergraduate courses occur. The faculty presumes that every student's general education included a minimum of twelve years of writing-skills training, and therefore reasonably expects an English language competence in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and semantics. The responsibility to achieve that minimal standard lies with the student.

The professor will not suspend this requirement by virtue of a student's willingness to obtain remedial writing instruction. Public communication practice is writing intensive, and employers expect graduates to excel as writers, in comparison with the general public. Consequently the department requires the actual existence of writing skills, rather than the hope or the promise of these skills, as a condition for academic progress.

Intellectual Property Protection Statement

The lectures and materials provided to students in this course are the property of the university, course creator or current instructor unless otherwise acknowledged. Recordings, class notes, slides and other materials provided may not be used for anything other than study purposes and may not be reproduced in any manner without permission. Materials may be downloaded from the class site and single copies made for personal academic use.

Assigned Textbook

Stacks, D. (2011). *Primer of public relations research*. 2nd ed. New York: The Guilford Press. [ISBN 978-1-59385-595-6]

Our Virtual Classroom

The Moodle site is our virtual classroom. It is here that you will find content-related materials as well as discussion forums, access to real-time sessions, chat rooms, new posts and assignment upload centres.

It is your responsibility to login to all real-time sessions before they begin and to check the static materials every three days for updates.

Marking Scheme

	Assignment	Worth...	Due Date...
W/S 1 & 2	Paper: <i>Identifying Qualitative & Quantitative Research in Public Relations</i>	25%	
W/S 3 & 4	Research Proposal: * A qualitative approach * A quantitative approach	25%	
W/S 6	Analytical Paper: <i>Scholarly research report analysis</i>	25%	
Participation (real-time sessions W/S 1, 3 & 5; online forum discussions W/S 2, 4, and 6)	Engagement in online discussion	25%	

Assignment Descriptions

1 - Paper: Identifying Qualitative & Quantitative Research in Public Relations

This assignment, worth 25% of your grade, provides you with an opportunity to synthesize the content in workshops 1 & 2 and is due at the end of Workshop 2.

Using the list of PR-research related journals that follows, you will use the MSVU library database to find the following:

- One example of a qualitative research report
- One example of a quantitative research report

For each of these two reports, you will provide the following:

- A summary of the research
- An identification of the kinds of data-gathering instruments selected
- Description of the approach to statistical analysis

The completed paper should be between 1500 and 2000 words and conform to the style requirements of the American Psychological Association. A checklist for this style guide is posted on our Moodle site. Use it before submission.

This paper is due to be uploaded to the W/S 1-2 Assignment Centre by XXXX.

List of public relations research-related journals from which to select papers:

- *Public Relations Review*
- *Journal of Public Relations Research*
- *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*
- *Public Relations Inquiry*
- *Public Relations Research Annual*

2 - Research Proposal:

*** A qualitative approach**

*** A quantitative approach**

This assignment, worth 25% of your final grade, requires you to demonstrate your ability to develop well-constructed research questions and your understanding of the different kinds of data and analyses that can emanate from quantitative and qualitative approaches to research.

Using the case study provided, you will prepare a 2-part research proposal:

1. A research question and a qualitative approach to answering it. Include the following:
 - a. Description of the kind(s) of data collection methods you'd propose
 - b. Rationale for the data collection methods
 - c. Five (5) sample questions for data collection
 - d. Description of the way you'd propose analyzing the data
 - e. Rationale for the data analysis
 - f. Limitations of the conclusions you might be able to achieve.
2. A research question and a quantitative approach to answering it. Include the following:
 - a. Description of the kind(s) of data collection methods you'd propose
 - b. Rationale for the data collection methods
 - c. Five (5) sample questions for data collection
 - d. Description of the way you'd propose analyzing the data
 - e. Rationale for the data analysis
 - f. Limitations of the conclusions you might be able to achieve

The proposal should be written as a business report in a style that your client would understand. The completed paper should be between 1500 and 2000 words and conform to the style requirements of the American Psychological Association. A checklist for this style guide is posted on our Moodle site. Use it before submission.

This paper is due to be uploaded to the W/S 3-4 Assignment Centre by XXXX.

Case for consideration:

Your client is the 35-year-old owner of a successful gym in Halifax. He is interested in running for the provincial legislature, but he has a problem. He isn't sure how someone with the reputation of what he calls an "entrepreneurial jock" would be viewed by various kinds of voters. His ideology is that of a liberal-conservative and plans to put his hat in the ring for nomination as the liberal candidate in downtown Halifax depending upon the results of your research. Prepare two proposals for him.

3 - Analytical Paper: Scholarly research report analysis

Worth 25 % of your final grade, this assignment provides you with an important opportunity to become more familiar with sources and types of scholarly research in the field of public relations. Further, it provides you with an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to analyze scholarly papers and consider their practical utility to your future professional practice.

You will select one of three scholarly research papers below, and conduct an examination of the paper including detailed analyses of the following:

1. research question
2. methodology and its rationale

3. results
4. data analysis
5. potential contributions to practice
6. your personal reflections on what this research would contribute to individual practitioners and how you would convince practitioners that they should read the paper

Articles for Analysis

(You will choose one of the following research reports as a basis for your analysis assignment for this workshop)

Daugherty, E. (2011). The public relations internship experience: A comparison of student and site supervisor perspectives. *Public Relations Review*, 37 (5): 470–477.

LaMarre, H. & Suzuki-Lambrecht, Y. (2013). Tweeting democracy? Examining Twitter as an online public relations strategy for congressional campaigns. *Public Relations Review*, 39(4): 360–368.

Paek, H., Hove, T., Jung, Y. & Cole, R. (2013). Engagement across three social media platforms: An exploratory study of a cause-related PR campaign. *Public Relations Review*, 39 (5): 526–533.

4 – Participation

It is very important that you participate in your own learning. In the case of this course 25% of your grade, which is a substantial portion, will be based on specific kinds of participation. Your participation will be graded according to the **quality rather than the quantity** of your engagement.

Your participation in the following three components of the course will provide the basis for evaluation:

1. Real-time sessions: You will have an opportunity to discuss content of the course with your professor/instructor and your peers during the three Collaborate sessions at the beginning of workshops 1, 3 and 5. .
2. Online forum discussions based on specific question posed in workshops 2, 4 and 6.