

University of Southern California
JOUR 463 - Public Relations Research and Evaluation
ASC 230
Fall Semester 2007 - William G. Ostedt
Syllabus

Course: JOUR 463 – Research and Analysis (M, 6:00 pm – 9:20 pm), ASC 230

Instructor: Will Ostedt

Office hours: By appointment (24 hours in advance) – email encouraged.

Course description:

Use of social science research techniques in contemporary reporting and public affairs, including both interpretation and reporting of existing data and conducting of surveys. This course is designed to provide a theoretical and practical/applied understanding of the roles research can play in public relations and marketing. We will cover research methodologies, techniques, design, and analysis with a focus on application, and the applied use of research for strategic direction, messaging and evaluation.

The course will include the following:

- Class discussion
- Presentations by students
- Selected readings
- Written assignments
- Guest lecturers

School of Journalism Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or writings from another and passing them off as one's own; in journalism, this includes appropriating the reporting of another without clear attribution. The following is the School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity as published in the University catalog: "Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations or purchasing papers or examinations will immediately receive a failing grade in the course and will be dismissed as a major from the School of Journalism. There are no exceptions to the school's policy. "

Grading:

The course grade will be based on several components:

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Class participation | 10% |
| Class Writing Assignments | 30% |
| Mid-Term Project | 30% |
| Final Project | 30% (15% group presentation/15% written) |

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Policy on grading and assignments

Public Relations practitioners collaborate at all times with their colleagues and peers to achieve program and project goals. Therefore participation in class discussions, individual assignments and group activities are critical elements in the learning process. It is expected that students come to class having read the assignment(s), are prepared to join class and small group discussions, have questions and comments about the material, and make valuable contributions. Experiential learning and the case study method will be used as the class progresses. We will adhere to the adult learning principle that class members are valuable resources for learning, hence interaction among members is crucial.

Confidentiality of classroom discussions will be the responsibility of all students, meaning what is discussed in class regarding students' (and instructor's) work-life and personal life experiences can not be shared outside the classroom without the explicit consent of the appropriate person(s).

Policy on lateness, absences and participation

Students are expected to attend and participate in all classes. If it is necessary to miss a class you are responsible for making up the work. If you plan to miss a class, you must communicate with the instructor at least 2 hours in advance of the class start time. Students will receive a "no credit" mark for any in-class assignments that are missed due to an absence without proper notice. Classes begin promptly at 6:00.

Assignments are due at the start of class on the date provided by the professor. Late assignments will receive one full grade reduction unless pre-approved by the instructor. Unless pre-approved, assignments that are more than 24 hours late will not receive credit.

Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course who undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to one percent of the total available semester points for this course.

Academic Accommodations

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained for DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. The office is located in the Student Union room 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

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Professional conduct expected during class

You will be expected to treat this class as you would a business meeting. You must arrive early, be prepared, provide value to the class discussion, conduct yourself professionally and remain courteous and sensitive to the interests of others in the meeting. **All cell phones MUST be turned off or to silent mode so as to not disturb the session.**

Calendar Overview

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Aug. 27 | Fall semester classes begin |
| Aug. 27-31 | Late registration and change of program |
| Sept. 3 | Labor Day, University holiday |
| Sept. 18 | Last day to drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a 100% refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit |
| Nov. 16 | Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" |
| Nov. 22-24 | Thanksgiving recess |
| Dec. 7 | Fall semester classes end |
| Dec. 12-19 | Final examinations |

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Course Schedule

This outline of the class content and assignments is subject to change as the semester progresses. This schedule is an initial plan subject to modification based on student interests and guest speaker availability. Selected reading assignments and homework will be assigned in class.

August 27

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the course, introduction of students, their interests, and experience followed by a discussion of PR's role in the marketing mix and the importance of consumer insight. Class will conclude with a viewing of the *Frontline Show* "The Persuaders."

September 10

GET TO KNOW YOURSELF FIRST! THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PR; THOUGHT TENDENCIES AND THE RIGHT MESSAGES

Inside every one of us is a consumer trying to get out, and the best PR strategies and tactics are derived by practitioners that are able to connect to their target audience. In this class we will review some basic PR theory and discuss the study of consumer attitudes and persuasion as a method for garnering better insight into the target consumer.

September 17

AUDIENCE RESEARCH AND AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

Demographic, psychographic and geographic segmentations are a good start, but today's PR practitioners must delve deeper into the lifestyles and values of the target audience. In this session, we will look at the "Big Three" variables and discuss their validity in today's complex marketplace. We will also review some of the segmentation techniques and tools available to PR professionals to gain insight into the target consumer.

September 24

INFORMAL AND FORMAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

In this class we will discuss the two sides of research with a focus on techniques, and methodology, and real world applications. We will also explore research based messaging, SWOT analysis and develop an in-class survey to send to your friends.

October 1

DATA TO INFORMATION TO INSPIRATION: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

In order to develop an effective PR strategy, PR practitioners need to understand the marketplace. Specifically, how big it is, how much it has grown, who the competition is and how successful they are, what trends are effecting the marketplace, who the target consumer is, and most importantly, how they see the brand. In this session we will look beyond the statistics to find the unique consumer insights that in-turn lay the groundwork for understanding the target consumer.

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October 8

INTERNET RESEARCH: GOOGLE IT?

Online and consumer generated media has changed the way PR research is conducted. In this class we will discuss methods and tools for using social media and the internet to your advantage when conducting research.

October 15

TREND SPOTTING

Trend Spotter Debra Stevenson, President of The Skyline Studios, a brand development consultancy, will tell us about the relatively new field of trend research and share some of her case studies. The remainder of the class will be used as a chance to work on your mid-term projects.

October 22

MID-TERM PROJECTS

October 29

THAT SURE IS A BIG CLIP BOOK YOU GOT THERE!

Measuring PR effectiveness is one of the industries biggest challenges. PR practitioners are being asked to prove their value to the CEO's and VP's in the boardroom. In this class we will review the history and challenges of PR measurement including the pro's and con's of common measurement tools used by PR practitioners today, and the future of PR measurement.

November 5

SURVEY SAYS! WHEN RESEARCH BECOMES A PR TACTIC

Research is a great tool for creating news. Consumer surveys are seen everyday in major media, and are an ideal tool for establishing thought leadership. We'll discuss the process of devising and conducting different types of consumer research as a PR tactic, and look at what's new and what's been done to death.

November 12

BRANDING AND POSITIONING IN A PR WORLD

Once reserved for the market research firms, today's PR professionals are being called upon to implement brand research studies of vary depths for their clients. In this class, we will dissect the process of developing a brand from a PR standpoint.

November 19

COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE

Guest speaker, Seena Sharp of Sharp Market Intelligence will provide insight into the often-misunderstood field of Competitive Intelligence, and explain how CI can be used to develop strategic PR. The remainder of the class will be used to work on the final projects.

November 26

IN-CLASS WORK

Work on your final group projects, and get guidance from your instructor.

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December 3

FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS IN-CLASS

December 12 - Wednesday

FINAL PROJECT WRITE-UPS DUE 7:00 PM VIA E-MAIL