

University of Southern California
JOUR 504 Public Relations Research and Evaluation

Fall Semester 2007 – Jeffrey A. Hall, Ph.D.
Syllabus

Course: JOUR 504 – Public Relations Research and Evaluation
Tuesday: 3:30-6:10
Room ASC 231

Instructor: Jeffrey A. Hall, Ph.D.

Course description:

This course is designed to introduce the role research can play in public relations, with a particular focus on how to collect, analyze, and present quantitative data. We will cover research methodologies, techniques, design, and analysis with a focus on the utility of data in Public Relations. This will provide opportunities to discuss the applied use of research and evaluation. The Generally Accepted Practices (GAP) study will serve as the primary case study and source of example data.

The uses of research in various industries
The types and methods of research
How to plan for, design, execute and analyze research projects
How to collect research data – sampling, survey research, validity and its threats
How to present and analyze data
New approaches to measuring public relations impact

The course will include the following:

Class discussion
Presentations by students
Assignments toward a final paper
Progressive research design and data collection

Required reading:

1. *Strategic Public Relation Management: Planning and Managing Effective Communication Programs* by Erica Weintraub Austin & Bruce E. Pinkleton/ Pub.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates/Nov. 2001/**ISBN 0-8058-3160-6**

Additional readings will be passed out in class.

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Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas of writings from another and passing them off as one's own; in journalism, this includes appropriating the reporting of another without clear attribution.

Important Statement - School of Journalism Academic Integrity Policy

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.”

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.

Grading:

The course grade will be based on several components:

- 10% Class participation
- 10% Part 1 Research Project – Topic and objectives (9/18)
- 10% Part 2 Research Project – Methods and research questions (10/9)
- 15% Part 3 Research Project – Instrument (10/23)
- 15% Part 4 Research Project – Data Analysis (11/13)
- 20% Part 5 Research Project – Presentation (11/27 & 12/4)
- 20% Final exam

Policy on lateness and absences

I expect that students will attend class. If it is necessary to miss a class, it is respectful to inform me (through email or in person) that you will be missing class. More than two absences will adversely affect your grade. Classes begin promptly at 3:30. If you are late, please come in and join us. Assignments are due by the date indicated. Late assignments must be arranged with and approved by the professor in order to receive credit.

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Participation/discussion:

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.

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.

Assignments, projects and presentations

Project and Presentation

You will be expected to develop a research project that will be the focus of your assignments and the final presentation. The research project is meant to give you the experience of conducting research in an abbreviated yet meaningful way. Topics will be self-selected, and it is hoped that you will choose a project that is valuable to either you or your employer. The end deliverable for this project is a presentation that you will deliver in front of the entire class.

Presentations will be scheduled for the final two class periods, and should last no more than 30 minutes (combining presentation and questions/answers). Each individual must use visual aids, supply handout for the class as appropriate, and provide a written copy of all materials for the instructor. Grading will be based on your presentation style, i.e., speaking style, visual presentation and thoroughness of the topic.

Each student will conduct a quantitative survey or experiment that will be a concept test, opinion measurements, or audience analysis – all from a PR research perspective. You cannot do interviews or focus groups for your final project, but you may collect open-ended or qualitative survey data in addition to quantitative data. Using the goal, strategy, tactic, measurement model, you will prepare a presentation and complete professional package that would be given to a client, agency or media outlet. The purpose of this project/presentation is to prepare you to be conversant in advanced research methodologies. Specific requirements will be handed out throughout the semester.

Final Exam

There will be one comprehensive final exam. The questions will come from the text, class materials, lectures, exercises and discussions. The exam will be a combination of short answer, short essays, case study analysis, and forced choice questions.

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Calendar Overview

August 27	Fall Semester classes begin
August 28	1st day of JOUR 504 class
September 14	Last day to register or add classes
September 18	Last day to drop a class without mark of “W”, and receive 100% refund
November 16	Last day to drop class with a mark of “W”
December 7	Fall semester classes end
December 18	Final Exam 2-4

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Course Schedule

This outline of the class content and assignments is subject to change as the semester progresses.

August 28

Overview of the course.

Instructor's background and experience.

Introduction of students, their interests, and experience.

Role of public relations in strategic planning

Multiple roles of research

Reading/Assignment

Austin & Pinkleton

Chapter 1

~~September 1~~ **September 4**

The Need for Research in PR

~~1-3~~

Defining campaign goals

Different views of customers

External and internal information sources

Reading/Assignment

Austin & Pinkleton ~~Chapters~~

“Strategic Public Relations

Management”

Chapters 1, 2

September 11

Research Design & Research Questions

Setting objectives

Use of theory

Defining and measuring outcomes

Reading/Assignment

Austin & Pinkleton:

Chapters 3, 4, 13

September 18 – Part 1 Research Project Due

Data Collection

~~7~~

Data Collection & Sources

Reliability and Validity

Selecting appropriate collection procedure

Reading Assignment

Austin & Pinkleton ~~Chapters 6-~~

Chapter 5, Chapter 15

Appendix C (377-388)

September 25

~~s 4-5~~

Informal and Qualitative Research Methodologies

Use of focus groups

Use of depth interviews

Reading/Assignment ~~Chapter~~

Austin & Pinkleton:

Chapters 7 & 8

October 2

Reading/Assignment

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Formal Research Methods

Sampling
Confidence Level
Survey & Experiments

Austin & Pinkleton:
Chapter 6 & 9

October 9 - Part 2 Research Project Due

Survey methods

Modes of collection
Sampling
Limitation

Reading/Assignment
Austin & Pinkleton:
Chapters 10

October 16

Instrument Design

Questions – Item response theory
Measurement
Concept to question match

Reading/Assignment
Austin & Pinkleton:
Chapter 11

October 23 – Part 3 Research Project Due

Will workshop questionnaires and methods of class members
I will get feedback to everyone within 2 days

Reading/Assignment:
Will hand out readings for
March 29 and April 5

START COLLECTING DATA

October 30

Data Presentation

Reporting Basic Statistics
Examples drawn from data collection

Reading/Assignment:

Austin & Pinkleton:
Chapter 12

November 6

Statistics

Tabulation
Group comparison

Reading/Assignment
Selected Readings

November 13 – Part 4 Data analysis

Inferential Statistics

Correlation
Relationships between variables

Reading/Assignment
Selected readings

Thanksgiving Week

No Class

November 27

Class Presentations

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~~December 1~~ December 4
Class Presentations

December 18 – Final Exam 2-4 PM