JMS 581 (Spring 2016)
PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH METHODS

Instructor: Hongmei Shen, Ph.D., APR
Class Meeting Place & Time: PSFA 326
Lecture 16:00 – 16:50 Mondays/Wednesdays, Activity 17:00-18:40 Mondays
Office: PSFA 340 (619-594-5120)
E-mail: hshen@mail.sdsu.edu
Office Hours: 15:00 – 16:00 (Mondays) and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course introduces you to qualitative and quantitative methods used in research to plan, track, evaluate public relations and communication practices.

PREREQUISITES: Open to undergraduate public relations majors only (Major Code: 05992). Must have completed JMS 310W and JMS 480 (including the strategic planning component) with a C grade (2.0) or better. Concurrent enrollment in prerequisite courses is not allowed. Proof of completion of prerequisite required during the first week of class through a copy of student transcripts. Classified graduate students specializing in public relations are admitted by permission of the instructor.

COURSE PROJECTS-SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES (4 LOs):
1. to develop conceptual and practical research skills in planning, monitoring, and evaluating public relations programs (LO1)
2. to master the conceptual and practical skills required to manage a public relations research project (LO2)
3. to integrate qualitative and quantitative research and report it to public relations clients in an understandable form (LO3)
4. to perform quantitative data analysis for a client (LO4)

ACCREDITATION-SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES (11 LOs):
In addition, by the end of the semester, each student should demonstrate the following 11 ACEJMC accreditation learning outcomes:
1. Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.
4. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
6. Think critically, creatively and independently.
7. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
8. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
9. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
10. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
11. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

**TEXT:**

**GRADING:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Strategizing Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Semester Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Report Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client Report (10% peer eval.)</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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**GRADING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>% Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89%</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
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<td>70-72%</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-67%</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62%</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>LESS THAN 60%</td>
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*Note: All assignments are due at the exact time and on the dates specified in the syllabus. Late assignments receive an automatic zero.*

**ASSIGNMENTS**

1. **PARTICIPATION**

The purpose of this assignment is to assess the students’ ability to master the conceptual and practical skills required to manage a public relations research project (LO2) and to perform quantitative data analysis for a client (LO4).
Assignment Components:
Students should be thoroughly prepared for any assigned readings before coming to class and are expected to contribute to the class discussions and participate in class activities. A class Facebook group will be used to supplement in-class discussions. Students are encouraged to regularly post and comment on current PR issues and trends.

Assignment Grading:
Your participation is evaluated by the instructor each week, based on the following: 1) active participation in class discussions, 2) answering questions posed by the instructor or classmates, 3) raising questions about the readings. If you do not attend class or do not talk at all, 50% of your weekly participation grade will be deducted.

When a student does not attend class, the absence is excused ONLY IF it was caused by (1) religious observance, (2) participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, (3) debilitating illness, or (4) compelling circumstances beyond the student’s control. Unacceptable excuses include crashed computers, traffic, alarm clock not going off, or other technical difficulties, such as malfunctioning printers. All legitimate notes must include phone numbers for verification. Students claiming excused absences are responsible for demonstrating to the instructor that their failure to attend was on account of one of these four causes. Such demonstration shall take the form of a letter signed by a person in a position to make an authoritative determination as to the validity of the cause of absence claimed by the student. Letters related to any planned absences must be presented to the instructor by the end of the second week of classes; letters related to any unplanned absences must be presented to the instructor within one calendar week of the date of absence, regardless of any holidays during that one-week period. The instructor reserves the right to verify the content and authority of such letters.

2. CLIENT STRATEGIZING PRESENTATION
The purpose of this assignment is to assess the students’ ability to master the conceptual and practical skills required to manage a public relations research project (LO2).

During our 2nd week of class, you will self-select into a team. You will provide a no longer than 15-minute presentation to outline your planned actions to help solve the client’s problem(s). You should upload your presentation PPTs to Blackboard (Assignment) prior to the presentation day.

Assignment Components:
PPTs should include:
1) Team member intro (brief)
2) Client problem statement, potential goals and objectives
3) Your planned actions and timeline

Assignment Grading:
Grading rubrics are to be posted on Blackboard (Assignment). The instructor will grade your presentation and provide feedback by next class meeting.

3. EXAM
The purpose of this assignment is to examine the students’ ability to perform quantitative data analysis for a client (LO4).

There will be a mid-semester exam. It will be based upon all course materials, including lectures, articles, and audio/visual materials that have been covered up to the time of the test. It is the responsibility of the student to be informed of the date and time of the exam. A study guide will be posted on Blackboard and explained in class.

The exam CANNOT BE MADE UP unless the absence is a fully documented University-excused absence. In general, make-up exams will be given ONLY in documented cases of (1) religious observance, (2) participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, (3) debilitating illness, or (4) compelling circumstances beyond the student’s control (reasons such as forgetting exam time and exam room will not be accepted). It is the responsibility of the student to provide documentation for missed tests within one calendar week of the date of absence, regardless of any holidays during that one-week period. All legitimate notes must include phone numbers for verification. The instructor reserves the right to verify the content and authority of such notes. If you anticipate missing an exam, it is your responsibility to notify me two weeks before the exam date to make alternate arrangements. Students who miss the test failing to provide a sufficient reason or failing to follow the above procedure will receive a zero in grade for the missed test.

Assignment Grading:
The instructor will grade your exam and provide feedback by next class meeting.

4. CLIENT REPORT & PRESENTATION
The purpose of this assignment is to evaluate the students’ conceptual and practical skills in planning, monitoring, and evaluating public relations programs (LO1), in managing a public relations research project (LO2), integrating qualitative and quantitative research and report it to public relations clients in an understandable form (LO3) and perform quantitative data analysis for a client (LO4).

Each student team will conduct original research for a client organization, perform data analysis, and report findings to the client representative.

Assignment Components:
- **(Client Report):** The report will be in PPT format, with visuals and charts summarizing findings. The report will include the following components:
  1) Client organization overview
  2) Problem statement, goals, and objectives (brief)
  3) Research procedure and participant demographic information
  4) Research findings
  5) Recommendations (strategies and tactics) for client

- **(Client Report Presentation):** Students are expected to represent their client report in no more than 25 minutes. All team members must be present for the presentation.

Assignment Grading:
Grading rubrics for both the report and the presentation are to be posted on Blackboard (Assignment). The instructor will grade your presentation and provide feedback by next class meeting.

Note: Peer evaluations will count **10% (3.5 pts)** of the total client project grade. Please see the Peer Evaluation Form addendum (Posted on Blackboard) for specifics. Peer evaluations should be submitted to Blackboard (Assignment).

**Team Management:**
Students will elect a team leader, propose a team name, and develop your own team contract. Your team contract should include the following **components:**
1) Team name, 2) Names, phone numbers, and email addresses of each member, 3) Identification of a team leader who will serve as the liaison between the instructor and the team, 4) An overview of what team members expect to gain from the project, 5) Regular group meeting times outside of class, absence policy, and provisions for enforcement of absence policy, 6) An explanation for how the group will divide the work, 7) An explicit and concrete explanation of how group members who fail to meet the standards set forth above will be dealt with by his/her fellow group members; 8) A firing mechanism: Should your group choose to fire a team member who fails to meet specified group expectation, specifics must be written out in the contract. All firings are subject to approval by the instructor in her capacity as the team supervisor. Fired team member(s) will be expected to complete the whole project on their own and be judged against the same criteria as a team.

**Team leaders must check in with Instructor twice (Re: Semester Schedule for Due Dates), debriefing Instructor on project progress and team management issues (if any).**

**CLASS POLICIES**

**General:**
- Classes should not be recorded unless special arrangements are made with the instructor’s approval.
- Cell phones should NOT be used in class, unless approved by instructor. Laptops can only be used for note-taking purposes. Students engaging in activities not related to note-taking, such as texting, IM, Facebooking, Twittering, and emailing, will be denied further use of laptops. **IN ADDITION, 1% grade point** will be deducted from your course grade for cell phones and laptop uses that disrupt lecture or lab activities.
- Professional behavior is expected in the classroom. Students should not engage in distracting behaviors, such as sleeping, reading newspapers, moving about the classroom, obstructing class with irrelevant questions, and disregarding class activities.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**
Students are expected to behave honorably in an academic environment. Academic dishonesty, including cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Confirmation of such incidents can result in suspension or expulsion from the University. Students who are uncertain as to what constitutes academic dishonesty should consult the University’s Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities (www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr) or check with the instructor. Specific definitions for terms pertaining to academic dishonesty, as well as procedures for handling such cases, are defined in the SDSU Senate Policy file, available from
the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities. You are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by this policy.

Basically, plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional presentation of another person’s idea or product as one’s own. Students can avoid unintentional plagiarism by following carefully accepted scholarly practices. Notes taken for papers and research projects should accurately record sources of material to be cited, quoted, paraphrased, or summarized, and papers should acknowledge these sources. The penalties for plagiarism include a zero or a grade of “F” on the work in question, a grade of “F” in the course, suspension, or expulsion.

**POLICY ON INCOMPLETES**
The grade of “incomplete” is given only to a student whose work in a course has been qualitatively satisfactory when, because of illness or other circumstances beyond the student’s control, he/she has been unable to complete some small portion of course work. In no case will an incomplete (I) be recorded for students who have not completed major course assignments.

**DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES**
If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at 619-594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Student Disability Services is located in Suite 3101 of the Calpulli Center on Hardy Ave. (near Cox Arena). More information is available at [http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/sds/](http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/sds/). Students who need accommodation of their disabilities should contact me privately by the second class period to discuss specific accommodations for which they have received authorization.

Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

**AMENDMENTS AND ADDENDA**
The instructor reserves the right to amend the course syllabus at any time during the semester; students will be informed of the changes either in class or via email. For example, topics listed in the syllabus may be covered on different days to accommodate guest speakers, natural disasters, or class needs. Students who choose to remain enrolled in this course after the regular schedule adjustment period indicate by their continued enrollment that they have read and understood the syllabus for this course, and that they accept and agree to abide by its procedures and policies.
Semester Schedule

Week 1 (1-20): Introduction to Course

Week 2 (1-25 & 1-27): Understanding Research in PR
Text: Chapter 1, 15
Due: Form Team on Monday, Team contract due on Wednesday

Week 3 (2-1 & 2-3): RFPs, Ethics & Client Meeting

FIRST CLIENT MEETING ON WEDNESDAY: You’ll be provided an overview of the client organization, its key publics, and the larger issues/problems/opportunities that drive the class research project.

Text: Chapter 2, 5, 14
To-dos: Create a research plan (Chapter 2 practice problem)
Review and locate a research report and a RFP

Week 4 (2-8 & 2-10): Historical, Secondary Research & Case Studies
Text: Chapter 7, 8
To-dos: Chapter 7, 8 practice problems
Prepare Client Strategizing Presentation

Week 5 (2-15 & 2-17): Qualitative Research: Interviews & Focus Groups
Text: Chapter 9
To-dos: Practice interviews and focus groups
Due: Wednesday Client Strategizing Presentation

Week 6 (2-22 & 2-24): Quantitative Research: Variable & Measurement
Text: Chapter 3, 4
To-dos: Review Pew research report understanding variables and measures

Week 7 (2-29 & 3-2): Quantitative Research: Sampling, Survey & Questionnaire Construction
Text: Chapter 10, 11
To-dos: Practice constructing questionnaire

Week 8 (3-7 & 3-19): Quantitative Research: Analysis (Crosstabs & Correlation)
Text: Chapter 13
To-dos: SPSS practice; Build questionnaire for client

Week 9 (3-14 & 3-16): Quantitative Research: Experiment
Text: Chapter 12
To-dos: SPSS practice
SURVEY IN FIELD STARTING WEEK 9: Data will be collected over a two-week period.

Week 10 (3-21 & 3-23): Exam Review and Examination in Class
EXAM REVIEW in lecture on Monday. EXAM is in class on Wednesday.
Week 11 (4-4 & 4-6): Quantitative Research: Content Analysis
Text: Chapter 6
To-dos: Discuss problems in data collection; Start data analysis

Week 12 (4-11 & 4-13): Analyzing Data
To-dos: SPSS practice; Start work on Client Report

Week 13 (4-18 & 4-20): Analyzing Data
To-dos: Prepare Client Report

Week 14 (4-25 & 4-27): Reporting to Client
To-dos: Prepare Client Report Presentation

Week 15 (5-2 & 5-4): Client Project Presentations
Due: Monday Client Report Presentations, Peer Evaluation
      Wednesday: Work on finalizing report

Week 16 (5-9): Client Project Submission
Due: Client Report Submission (Blackboard) at 3 p.m.