

# MEJO 379.004 – Advertising & Public Relations Research

## Spring 2021

**Instructor:** Lee McGuigan, PhD

Assistant Professor

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**Meeting Times:** Monday & Wednesday 12:30pm-1:45pm

**Meeting Place:** Online via Zoom. See Sakai for the link.

**Office Hours:** Monday 3:45pm-4:45pm and by appointment (see Sakai for Zoom link)

*We will be learning together this semester under conditions of exceptional difficulty. Please approach each other and yourselves with patience, compassion, and care. We will get through this together as best we can.*

**Course Overview:** How do we know what we know? How do we know that we know it? This course will introduce students to theoretical and practical dimensions of research methods for the study of media and communication. The course will help students become critical consumers of social science research, capable of recognizing and evaluating different ways of knowing the social world; and it will prepare students to produce research themselves.

**Course Objectives:** At the end of this course you should be able to:

- ✓ Understand qualitative and quantitative research methods
- ✓ Recognize different research methods and understand their strengths, weaknesses, capabilities, and limitations
- ✓ Critically analyze the implications of research choices and assumptions
- ✓ Select methods best suited to what you want to know and the resources available to you
- ✓ Design and conduct research projects using these methods
- ✓ Analyze, interpret, and draw inferences from the data produced using these methods
- ✓ Apply findings to real-world problems
- ✓ Evaluate scientific claims and the research techniques supporting them

**Attendance:** You are required to be present for all class sessions. If unavoidable circumstances prevent you from attending, please notify me as soon as possible. Unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade.

**Readings:** We will rely primarily on the textbook *Advertising and Public Relations Research* by Jugenheimer and associates (see citation below). It is available at no extra cost to you as an e-book via our library system. You may also purchase the text from an online bookseller if you prefer a hard copy.

**Additional reading materials will be posted to Sakai throughout the term.**

Jugenheimer, D.W., Bradley, S.D., Kelly, L.D., & Hudson, J.C. (2015). *Advertising and Public Relations Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe.

AVAILABLE ELECTRONICALLY THROUGH UNC LIBRARY:

<http://www.tandfebooks.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/isbn/9781315716565>

*Please complete the readings **before** coming to class.*

**Library Resources:** Librarian Stephanie Willen Brown has compiled additional resources specifically helpful for this course: <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/mejo379>

**Research Participation Requirement:** Students in MEJO 379 are required to complete three (3) hours of research over the course of the semester. There are two ways you can fulfill this requirement. The first way is to participate in three hours of academic research studies in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media. Participating in studies is a valuable way for you to receive firsthand experience with mass communication research. You will be able to sign up online to participate in these studies. If you are enrolled in another class that has a research requirement, it may also satisfy the research requirement for this course. If you have questions about the subject pool participation, please contact Professor Joe Bob Hester ([joe.bob.hester@unc.edu](mailto:joe.bob.hester@unc.edu)). You must fulfill your participation in a research study by May 1, 2021.

The second way to fulfill your research participation requirement is to write three (3) two-page summaries and critiques of academic research articles. Each review counts for one hour of research participation, so you can combine participation in the studies with article reviews to fulfill the research requirement. You may summarize any article published in the past two years in the following journals: *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Mass Communication and Society*, and *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*. You must identify the author, date, article title, and journal title on each of your summaries. Article summaries are due May 1, 2021.

**Grading & Assignments:** Much of this class is structured around an ongoing group project. You will be assigned to a group in the second week of class, based on a survey completed in the first class. You will decide on a research problem or a hypothetical client organization that will be the focus of your work throughout the semester. You will collaborate with your group members to delegate responsibilities and complete assignments. Descriptions of the assignments are listed below. For assignments where you are working as group, each group will make one submission and you will receive the same grade, unless exceptional circumstances arise. Each group member will take the “lead” on one of these group assignments, meaning that the person will coordinate the group’s work and be the primary point of

contact with me. Some assignments you will complete individually. In those cases, you will each submit your own independent work and be graded individually.

Grading rubrics and project requirements will be issued when each part of the overall assignment is assigned. This helps students know exactly what they're being graded on for each specific assignment.

There are three phases of research assignments:

- 1) **Secondary Data:** Background study
- 2) **Primary Data:** Qualitative (Focus group, in-depth interview, content analysis)
- 3) **Primary Data:** Quantitative (Survey, experiment)

Your Final Project synthesizes the work from all phases.

### **Summary of Assignments (we will discuss in more detail during class):**

- 1) **Secondary Research** (10 points): Working in a group, find and retrieve secondary data related to your research problem. Secondary data means that the data already exists (i.e., someone else has produced it). This is a form of background study that may not be motivated strictly by a hypothesis but that informs your research moving forward. Your group will produce a written report and submit it on Sakai. Please submit one report per group.
- 2) **Focus Group** (10 points): Working in your group, conduct a 30-minute focus group during class time. Groups will take turns facilitating and serving as research subjects. One member of each group will act as moderator, while others take notes. Each group will submit an analysis of the findings from the focus group they facilitated. Please submit one report per group.
- 3) **In-depth Interviews** (10 points): Working individually (not in your group), each of you will interview two people to learn about their knowledge, attitudes, or opinions as they relate to your research problem. Interview subjects may be classmates, roommates, family members, or friends. Please submit your interview questions and an analysis of your findings.
- 4) **Content Analysis** (10 points): Working individually, each of you will conduct a *qualitative* content analysis. Specifically, you will write a “semiotic” analysis of a print or video advertisement or public relations message selected from a list of options.
- 5) **Survey** (10 points): Working in your group, you will design a survey and administer it to your classmates via Qualtrics. Each group will submit the survey instrument and an analysis of the findings (including instructive visual presentations of the data – e.g., in charts or graphs). Please submit one report per group.
- 6) **Split-run Experiment** (10 points): Working in your group, create two versions of an advertisement, a persuasive message, or a visual image. Via Qualtrics, you will run an experiment with the class to compare the two options you've created. This assignment is intended to showcase your skills at research design and analysis, not your skills at creative production; and, so, I will not be judging, for example, the graphic design of your message. **However**, your choice

of ad or message should be motivated by what you have learned in prior assignments. You will submit a report that includes an analysis of the data created through this test as well as an explanation of how prior research assignments informed your design choices with respect to the qualities of your message. Please submit one report per group.

- 7) **Final Project** (10 points) and Presentation (10 points): Working with your group, prepare a report that synthesizes the cumulative findings from all the preceding research assignments. An important aspect of research is being able to communicate—to justify methodological choices, and to explain the key findings from your results. Each group member should participate in the presentation; and the presentation should include visual aids that help communicate what you learned. You will submit one written report per group.
- 8) **Research Participation** (5 points): You will either complete three hours of research within the Hussman School of Journalism and Media, or complete three two-page summaries and critiques of academic research articles. See the description above for more details.
- 9) **In-class Activities** (10 points): Throughout the semester we will use class time for activities that test your comprehension of concepts and/or your ability to apply concepts and techniques. These will be done both in groups and independently. The work will be assigned, completed, and submitted during class.
- 10) **Self- and Peer-evaluations** (5 points): At the halfway point and the conclusion of the semester, you will complete an evaluation form that assesses the contributions you and your peers made to your groups. This will be, primarily, an opportunity for you to reflect on your own work and the challenges and benefits of working in a collaborative group. It is also important that everyone exhibits a commitment to their team, sharing responsibility and being accountable; but this assessment is not intended to police team members. We will try to address any problems that arise within teams through open and respectful dialogue among team members and, if necessary, with myself. These sorts of negotiations—whether about delegating work or resolving failures of communication—are critical aspects of working in teams. Good communication within teams will be especially important for working together in a virtual learning environment.

**Late assignments:** Assignments submitted within 24 hours after the submission site closes will incur a 10% penalty, based on the overall point value of that assignment. An additional 10% will be deducted for assignments submitted within each additional 24-hour period of lateness.

**Mental Health:** Your mental and emotional health are important, not only to your success as a student at UNC but also as a student of life. What you may be going through at school and outside of school matters. Please consider taking advantage of the resources provided through the University via CAPS (<https://caps.unc.edu>).

**Nutrition:** Your physical health and wellness will enable you to put forth your best efforts in this class. If you are facing food insecurity, please consider the Carolina Cupboard, an on-campus food pantry that provides food at no cost to students (<http://carolinacupboard.web.unc.edu>).

## Class Schedule:

***PLEASE check Sakai frequently throughout the semester, as the schedule may change, and new items or information may be added.***

Week	Theme	Date	Readings
<b>Introduction</b>			
1	Course overview	Wed 1/20	No reading
2	Introduction to research	Mon 1/25	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 1-2 See Sakai for additional reading
	Planning & designing research	Wed 1/27	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 3-4
<b>Secondary Research</b>			
3	Secondary research	Mon 2/01	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 5-6
	Syndicated sources	Wed 2/03	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 7-8
4	Tutorial on library resources	Mon 2/8	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 36, 37
	Secondary research work	Wed 2/10	See Sakai for reading
<b>Qualitative Research</b>			
5	<b>NO CLASS</b>	<b>Mon 2/15</b>	
	Qualitative research uses, handling qualitative data	Wed 2/17	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 9, 14, 15
6	Focus Groups	Mon 2/22	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 10, 29
	Focus group work	Wed 2/24	See Sakai for reading

7	Interviews	Mon 3/01	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 12, 13, 20
	Ethnography	Wed 3/03	See Sakai
8	Content analysis	Mon 3/08	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 11 See Sakai for additional reading
	Research ethics, and historical and critical approaches	Wed 3/10	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 28, 37 See Sakai for additional reading
<b>Quantitative Research</b>			
9	Quantitative research; surveys	Mon 3/15	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 14, 23 See Sakai for additional reading
	Surveys, Sampling	Wed 3/17	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 16, 17
10	Measurement instruments, Questions	Mon 3/22	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 18, 19
	Obtaining reliable answers	Wed 3/24	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 20, 21
11	Data analysis, statistics	Mon 3/29	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 22, 32, 33
	Conduct surveys, analyze results	Wed 3/31	See Sakai for reading
12	<b>NO CLASS</b>	<b>Mon 4/05</b>	
	Experiments	Wed 4/07	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 24, 25
13	Work on experiments	Mon 4/12	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 26, 27
	Conduct experiments, analyze results	Mon 4/14	See Sakai for reading

14	Practical aspects of research	Mon 4/19	<i>Advertising and Public Relations Research</i> Ch. 34, 35
	Work on final projects	Wed 4/21	No reading
15	Work on final projects	Mon 4/26	No reading
	Presentations	Wed 4/28	No reading
16	Presentations	Mon 5/03	No reading
	Presentations & Wrapping Up	Wed 5/05	No reading
Final exam time	<b>NO EXAM</b>	Sat 5/08 12pm	<b><u>FINAL PROJECTS DUE BY 12:00pm</u></b>

**Grade Scale:** Your final grade will be calculated using the University's grading scale: A, B, C, D, F. The University describes the expectations for attaining each grade as follows:

- **A**  
Mastery of course content at the highest level of attainment that can reasonably be expected of students at a given stage of development. The A grade states clearly that the students have shown such outstanding promise in the aspect of the discipline under study that they may be strongly encouraged to continue.
- **B**  
Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The B grade states that the student has shown solid promise in the aspect of the discipline under study.
- **C**  
A totally acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The C grade states that, while not yet showing unusual promise, the student may continue to study in the discipline with reasonable hope of intellectual development.
- **D**  
A marginal performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment. A student has given no evidence of prospective growth in the discipline; an accumulation of D grades should be taken to mean that the student would be well advised not to continue in the academic field.
- **F**  
For whatever reason, an unacceptable performance. The F grade indicates that the student's performance in the required exercises has revealed almost no understanding of the course content.

A grade of F should warrant an advisor's questioning whether the student may suitably register for further study in the discipline before remedial work is undertaken.

A	= 93–100
A-	= 90–92
B+	= 87–89
B	= 83–86
B-	= 80–82
C+	= 77–79
C	= 73–76
C-	= 70–72
D+	= 67–69
D	= 60–66
F	= 59 & Below

**Honor Code:** I expect that all students will conduct themselves within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

**Seeking Help:** If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

**Diversity:** The Hussman School of Journalism and Media adopted Diversity and Inclusion Mission and Vision statements in spring 2016 with accompanying goals - <http://www.mj.unc.edu/diversity-and-inclusion>. UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities based on age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.



**Special Accommodations:** If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>.

**Accreditation:** The Hussman School of Journalism and Media's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here: <http://hussman.unc.edu/accreditation>

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on these bullet dots under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above:

- ✓ understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- ✓ think critically, creatively and independently;
- ✓ conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- ✓ write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve