

Advertising and Public Relations Research Methods

MEJO 379 | Scheduled: M/W 3:00 - 4:15 p.m. (Remote) | Fall 2020

Instructor: Jacob Thompson, M.A.
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Office hours: Wednesdays, 3:00 - 4:15pm
Other times by appointment

Course Overview

Prerequisite: You must have passed Principles of Ad/PR to take this course.

Objectives: After the student has completed this course, she/he should be able to:

- Understand quantitative and qualitative research options in the area of strategic communication (PR and advertising)
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods
- Select methods that are most appropriate to answer specific client needs
- Plan and conduct research using these methods
- Analyze data obtained by these research methods and apply findings to real-world issues
- Expand knowledge of publics/consumers/organizations/issues through primary and secondary research

ACEJMC Core Competencies: The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain [core values and competencies](#). This course is particularly relevant to the following competencies:

- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use of images and information
- Think critically, creatively and independently
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work

Course Policies

Communication policy: You are encouraged to e-mail me with any questions or comments you have throughout the semester. I will do my best to answer within 24 hours. If your e-mail relates to your group project, please copy your group members on the e-mail. It is your responsibility to check your e-mail and Sakai regularly for messages and updates.

The Honor Code: It is my duty to report any and all suspected Honor Code violations to the Student Attorney General. If you are not familiar with the Honor Code, please review it at <http://instrument.unc.edu>. As stated in the Honor Code, “It shall be the responsibility of every student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to obey and support the enforcement of the Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing when these actions involve academic process or University student or academic personnel acting in an official capacity.”

A special note about plagiarism: the Instrument of Student Governance at UNC defines plagiarism as “deliberate or reckless representation of another’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise.” Copying-and-pasting from online sources without citing the source from which you obtained the content is clearly an instance of plagiarism. However, it may also be plagiarism if you rely too heavily on the structure and reasoning of another piece (for example, if you rely too much on swapping out synonyms or making only very superficial changes to content that is not yours). This type of extensive paraphrasing is not acceptable in this course, which requires you to demonstrate original thinking and analysis. If you have any questions about whether your use of reference material is appropriate, please see me. If any part of your work is judged by me and an independent faculty member to reflect inappropriate use of reference material, I reserve the right to adjust assignment and course grades downwards, in addition to reporting suspected violations as described in the preceding paragraph.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a diagnosed or suspected disability that you think might affect your performance in this course, you should contact Accessibility Resources & Service to determine whether and to what extent services or accommodations are available. If you think this might apply to you, please contact Accessibility Resources & Service at 962-8300 or visit the department’s Website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>. Please understand that I’m not qualified or permitted under University policies to provide any disability-related accommodations without authorization from ARS.

Diversity and Inclusion: The School of Media and Journalism adopted [diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements](#) in spring 2016 with accompanying goals. It complements the University policy on [Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination](#). In summary, 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 on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies.

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 if you prefer a hard copy. In addition, there will be readings outside of the text that will be made available within the weekly lesson pages on Sakai..

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

AVAILABLE ELECTRONICALLY THROUGH UNC LIBRARY:

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

Sakai: Sakai will serve as the main hub for our online course this semester. Weekly modules will be posted to Sakai with overviews of our work for the week, links to discussion forums, required readings, and additional materials that you may find useful as you learn about new research methods. I will also post syllabus updates, announcements, assignments, and other important information. The UNC Sakai service can be found at <http://sakai.unc.edu>. Updates will be frequent, so check back often. You are responsible for any course changes that may be made on Sakai, including changes to the syllabus or assignments.

Research participation requirement: Students in all sections of MEJO 379 are required to complete three 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 School of Media and Journalism. Participating in studies is a valuable way for you to receive first-hand experience with basic mass communication research. You will be able to sign up online to participate in these studies.

The second way to fulfill your research participation requirement is to write three one-page (single-spaced) summaries and critiques of academic research articles. Each review counts for one hour of research participation, and you may combine participation in the studies with article reviews to fulfill the research requirement. I will post full instructions on Sakai for those who wish to write summaries.

If you are enrolled in other MEJO classes that have research requirements, your fulfillment of the three hours for 379 may satisfy the requirements for the other course(s) provided the other course(s) do not require more than three hours. If you have any questions about the subject pool participation, please contact me or Professor Joe Bob Hester at joe.bob.hester@unc.edu.

Attendance and Participation: In the professional world, there's no such thing as not attending a meeting or workday "just because." I expect you to attend all meetings scheduled with your team – please do not disrespect your classmates by agreeing to a meeting time and fail to show up. Since we will not meet synchronously every week, you will also demonstrate your continued engagement in the course by contributing to the Class Summary Guide that we will build together and by participating in weekly discussion forums on Sakai. Each week I will post a prompt related to our current course topic. You are expected to respond thoughtfully, on time, each week.

That said, I understand that life happens and that this semester many of us will be faced with unique challenges as we navigate remote learning and the consequences Covid-19. Family issues, health issues, interview opportunities, etc., may arise. To help accommodate these situations, everyone may miss 3 discussion posts with no penalty. This can be for any reason. Use them wisely because anything beyond these absences – whether there is a good reason or not, and whether you tell me in advance or not – will result in point deductions. For every week beyond three in which you do not contribute, you will lose 2 points or 2% of your overall grade! If you are late to class, there is no guarantee that you will be marked as present. If you are absent, it is important to coordinate with your group so you can contribute to any group work.

Participation and Professionalism: When we meet synchronously, I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings. In addition, you should make sure you have completed necessary readings before meeting with your team so that you can contribute meaningfully to group work. Please act professionally. This means being fully engaged in discussions, team meetings, and presentations. If you show a consistent pattern of disengagement or disrespect whether in synchronous meetings, group work, or discussion forums, this will be addressed with verbal and/or written warnings. Failure to improve behavior will negatively influence your final grade.

Use of Laptops and Other Technology: Technology is an essential component of engaging in an online course and can be an asset to you both as a student and professionally. That being said, please minimize use of your laptop for non-class purposes during course meetings. It's particularly important to be respectful when we have guest speakers because they have made a special effort to visit with us and deserve our undivided attention.

Grading and Assignments

This class is structured around an ongoing client-based group project. Some are individual assignments whereas others are group assignments. This arrangement allows for collaboration and teamwork while also promoting individual learning, individual accountability, and individualized grades. You will be assigned to a group in the second week of class, based on the surveys you turn in during the first week. Your group will then select the brand or organization that you will focus on for the semester.

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 research project)
- 2) Primary Data: Qualitative (Focus group, in-depth interview, participant observation/ethnography)
- 3) Primary Data: Quantitative (Survey, experiment)

Your Final Project includes synthesis of all the above assignments with additional components.

Summary of Graded Items:

1) Secondary data/background research (Group; 10 points): This project will require your group to find appropriate secondary data (i.e., existing data) and other background information related to your problem or brand. Your group will create a written report that will be turned in on Sakai. You will need to coordinate with each other and share individual findings so that all group members see the “big picture.”

2) Focus group (Group; 10 points): Your group will conduct a focus group in class. Groups will take turns facilitating and serving as participants. When it is your group’s turn to facilitate, one of you will act as a moderator while the others will serve as note-takers and participants. You will be joined by members of another group. After the first round of focus groups is completed, teams will switch, with the other group serving as facilitators and your group serving as participants. Your group will turn in an analysis of the findings from the focus group conducted by your group.

3) In-depth interviews (Individual; 10 points): This project will require you to interview two individuals to get their thoughts on your product or problem. You will need to submit your interview questions and your findings from your interview.

4) Participant observation and ethnography (Individual; 10 points): This project will require you to take field notes on your observations of people/situations around a problem that you define. You will then write up your field notes and share them with your peers. You will write-up an analysis of your own notes and of the ethnography process.

5) Survey (Group; 10 points): Your group will develop a survey that will apply to your problem. Use findings from your earlier projects to help inform question development. The survey will be an online survey administered by Qualtrics and will be taken by everyone in our class. The group will then analyze the data and submit the findings. Grades will be based on the group-submitted report.

6) Split run experiment (Group; 10 points): This project will require your group to come up with two versions of an ad, PSA, persuasive message, visual, or other stimulus that would apply to your client/issue. The experiment will be administered via a Qualtrics online instrument and will be taken by everyone in our class. The group will then analyze the data and report the results.

7) Final project (Group; 10 points) and presentation (Group; 5 points): The final group project is a culmination of your previous assignments. You can use the data already collected for your problem or client, but it is expected that the final project will be an improved and consolidated version of what you have already turned in and researched. A detailed grading rubric of final project expectations will be given out mid-semester and may be slightly tailored, depending on groups. All groups will submit a presentation of their findings to Sakai at the end of the semester.

8) Peer evaluations and at mid-semester (Individual; 5 points) and end of semester (Individual; 5 points): Your teammates will be evaluating your contributions to the group, and the average of these scores across your teammates will constitute your grade. Mid-semester evaluations are a good opportunity to revisit group work expectations to ensure effective work for the remainder of the class.

9) Research participation requirement (Individual; 5 points): See the description provided above.

10) Reflection papers mid-semester (Individual; 5 points) and end of semester (Individual; 5 points): This project will require you to use the class summary guide to reflect on your progress in the course. You will write or video record responses to questions that ask you to evaluate the knowledge you have found valuable throughout the semester, relate key concepts to your personal/professional/academic journey, and inquire about aspects of the course material that need further clarification.

**45 points from individual assignments
+ 55 points from group assignments**

100 points TOTAL

Additional Grading Policies

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 (e.g., one point off for an assignment worth 10 points). An additional 10% will be deducted for assignments submitted within each additional 24-hour period of lateness.

Extra credit: It's unlikely you will receive any extra credit opportunities in this course. In the rare and unlikely event that they occur, they will be class-wide, so please don't ask for individual extra credit assignments.

Course schedule

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS
INTRODUCTION			
1	8/10	Course Introduction; Need For Research and Key Concepts	<i>Read:</i> Ch. 1, 2 Due 8/16: Project Preferences Survey
2	8/17	Need for Research; Key Concepts; Planning Using, Designing Research <i>Group Work:</i> Team Assignments, Select Client, Set Expectations	<i>Read:</i> Ch. 3,4 Due 8/23: Submit Team Charter
SECONDARY RESEARCH			
3	8/24	Secondary Research <i>Group Work:</i> Discuss needs and assign roles for background research assignment.	<i>Read:</i> Ch. 5, 6
4	8/31	Syndicated, Online, and Other Resources <i>Group Work:</i> Continue working on secondary research reports	<i>Read:</i> Ch. 7, 8 <i>Reminder: Don't forget to fulfill your Research Participation requirement</i>
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH			
5	9/7	Qualitative Research and Research Ethics	<i>Read:</i> Ch. 9, 37 Due 9/13: Secondary Research Assignment (Group)
6	9/14	Focus Groups; Qualitative Data Analysis <i>Group Work:</i> Assign roles and prepare to conduct focus groups.	<i>Read:</i> Ch. 10, 15 SYNCHRONOUS WEDNESDAY 9/16: Conduct Focus Groups

7	9/21	Interviews <i>Group Work:</i> Plan out interviews (conduct individually)	<i>Read:</i> Ch. 12, 13, 10 Due 9/27: Focus Group Assignment (Group)
8	9/28	Ethnographic Observation <i>Group Work:</i> Plan out observations (conduct individually)	<i>Read:</i> Required Readings from Sakai Due: Reflection #1 (Individual) <i>Reminder: Don't forget to fulfill your Research Participation requirement</i>
QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH			
9	10/5	Surveys Research and Sampling <i>Group Work:</i> Brainstorm survey focus that builds upon qualitative research	<i>Read:</i> Ch. 16, 17 Due 10/11: Interview Assignment (Individual) Due by MONDAY 10/12: Mid-semester peer evaluations on Sakai (Individual)
10	10/12	Survey Measurement and Questions <i>Group Work:</i> Refine Survey Questions, Work on Survey Draft	<i>Read:</i> Ch. 18, 19 Due 10/18: Observation Assignment (Individual) Due MONDAY 10/19: Survey Draft
11	10/19	Obtaining Accurate Responses <i>Group Work:</i> Submit Draft Survey, Refine Final Survey	<i>Read:</i> Ch. 21 Due 10/25: Finalized Survey
12	10/26	Data, Statistics, and Excel <i>Group Work:</i> Analyze Survey Data	<i>Read:</i> Ch. 22, 32 By WEDNESDAY 10/28: Take all surveys Due 11/1: Survey Assignment (Group)

13	11/2	<p>Experimental Research</p> <p><i>Group Work:</i> Design Simple Experiment in Qualtrics; Submit Draft Experiment</p>	<p><i>Read:</i> Ch. 24, 25</p> <p>Due WEDNESDAY BY 3:00 pm 11/4: Draft Experiment</p> <p>Due 11/8: Final Experiment in Qualtrics</p> <p><i>Reminder: Don't forget to fulfill your Research Participation requirement</i></p>
PRESENTATIONS AND WRAPPING UP			
14	11/9	<p>Preparation for Final Projects/Presentations</p> <p><i>Group Work:</i> Analyze Experiment Data</p>	<p>SYNCHRONOUS MONDAY 11/9</p> <p>By WEDNESDAY 11/11: Participate in Experiments</p>
15	11/16	<p>Wrap-Up</p> <p><i>Group Work:</i> Work on Final Project (written & presentation)</p>	<p>Due 11/16: Experiment Assignment (Group)</p>
EXAM	TBD	<p>Guest Speaker (s)</p> <p><i>Group Work:</i> Work on Final Project (written & presentation)</p>	<p>SYNCHRONOUS</p> <p>Due: End-of-semester peer evaluations on Sakai (Individual)</p> <p>Due: Final Projects (Group)</p> <p>Due: Reflection #2 (Individual)</p>