

## MEJO 379.06: Advertising and Public Relations Research, Fall 2024

Time & location: M/W 12:20-13:35 pm, Carroll 305

Some sessions are designated as independent or remote work days (see schedule) Should the need arise to hold sessions remotely, we will use Zoom (<https://unc.zoom.us/j/91765680427>)

Instructor: Dr. Xinyan (Eva) Zhao (she/her), <http://xinyanzhao.org/>  
[ezhao@unc.edu](mailto:ezhao@unc.edu) (best way to reach me)  
mobile: 919-579-4695

Office hours: In office (356 Carroll Hall) on M/W 14:30 -15:30 pm  
On zoom (<https://unc.zoom.us/j/91765680427>) by appointment

---

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

**Course Objectives:** Upon course completion, you should be able to:

- Understand qualitative and quantitative research options in strategic communication (PR & advertising)
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods
- Select methods that are most appropriate to address specific client needs
- Plan and conduct research using these methods
- Analyze data obtained by these research methods and apply findings to real-world issues
- Understand, apply, and critically engage with AI technologies in primary and secondary research

**Communication policy:** You are encouraged to email me with any questions or comments you have throughout the semester. I will strive to reply within 24 hours 9:30 am to 5:30 pm Monday through Thursday. During other times, I will respond within 48 hours as I will work on research projects and grants. Please treat emails to me as professional correspondence. If your email relates to your group project, please copy your group members on the e-mail. It is your responsibility to check your email and Canvas regularly for messages and updates.

**Honor Code:** I expect that all students will conduct themselves within the guidelines of the [University Honor System](#). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. To ensure full understanding and compliance, it is advised to complete [the student module](#) at the beginning of the semester. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. Always use quotations and citations for direct excerpts over three words. Ensure all sourced material is properly cited both in text and in the references following a certain (e.g., APA, Vancouver, Harvard) style. Be aware that any form of dishonesty, including plagiarism, will result in severe consequences. This may include grade reductions and/or referral to the University's Honor Committee. 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 Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies Julie Dixon-Green, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

**AI Usage:** Following [UNC's guidelines on AI usage](#), you are expected to use the technologies (e.g., [ChatGPT](#) 4o mini or [Copilot](#)) responsibly and ethically:

- Acknowledge the use of AI technologies and models in your work, specifying their roles (e.g., brainstorming, outlining, media creation, or refining content).
- As AI-generated information can be inaccurate or outdated, always validate it against original sources, citing the original sources whenever possible.
- AI output is based on existing data (often scraped from online sources) and may reflect biases that should be acknowledged, such as underrepresentation of women or people of color.
- As AI-generated information is generic, always adapt and paraphrase the information to fit your purpose.

- Relying on AI for essay writing might not improve the quality of your work (see [this Nature](#) research); developing your critical thinking and writing skills remains crucial.

**Accessibility resources and services:** The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu/> or email [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu).

**Counseling and Psychological Services:** CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. At the Hussman School, we are fortunate to have Carolyn Ebeling as the CAPS embedded counselor in-house. Carolyn offers a warm and non-judgmental space for undergraduate and graduate students to explore their thoughts and feelings. Email them at [cebeling@email.unc.edu](mailto:cebeling@email.unc.edu) to get connected. You may also explore resources at the CAPS website (<https://caps.unc.edu/>) or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more. Also visit the Heels Care Network for additional mental-health and self-care resources: <https://care.unc.edu/>.

**Title IX:** Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/> Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator ([titleixcoordinator@unc.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@unc.edu)), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office ([reportandresponse@unc.edu](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu)), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators ([gvsc@unc.edu](mailto:gvsc@unc.edu); confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu).

**Non-discrimination:** The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on NonDiscrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied. If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at [safe.unc.edu](http://safe.unc.edu)) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

**Diversity statement:** I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve; I appreciate any suggestions. More broadly, our school has adopted diversity and inclusion [mission and vision statements](#) with accompanying goals. These complement the university non-discrimination policy described above, as well as [broader university goals](#) for diversity. 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.

**Textbook & Readings:** (Required) Jegenheimer, 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. (Free e-textbook available through the Park Library <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/books/9781317507376>)

In addition, there will be readings outside of the text that will be made available on Canvas under the weekly module.

**Canvas:** I will use Canvas to post syllabus updates, announcements, PowerPoint slides (posted before class), assignments, and other important information. Updates will be frequent, so check back often. You are responsible for any course changes that may be made on Canvas, 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 is to participate in three hours of academic research studies in the school. 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 Canvas for those who wish to write summaries.

If you are enrolled in other MEJO classes that have research requirements, your fulfillment of the 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](mailto:joe.bob.hester@unc.edu).

## Attendance

University Policy: No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by [Accessibility Resources and Service](#) and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office \(EOC\)](#)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by [the Office of the Dean of Students](#), [Gender Violence Service Coordinators](#), and/or [the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office \(EOC\)](#).

If you need to miss class for any of these reasons, you may submit a request for a University Approved Absence at the [University Approved Absence Office](#).

Class Policy: I take roll for each class where there is an in-person meeting. In the professional world, there's no such thing as not attending a meeting or workday "just because." So, treat attendance as a requirement (in line with university policy above). That said, I understand that life happens. If you need to miss class but are not able to seek a University Approved Absence, the class policy is that everyone will get THREE absences with no penalty. They can be for any reason. However, please note that free absences cannot be used for the exam session in this class. 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 class beyond three absences, 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:** I expect you to come to each class having completed assigned readings and being ready to discuss them. In the interest of hearing everyone's perspectives, I may call on individuals who do not regularly participate on their own. Please act professionally in the classroom. This means being fully engaged in class discussions, team meetings, presentations, and client interactions. If you show a consistent pattern of disengagement or disrespect, this will be addressed with verbal and/or written warnings. Failure to improve behavior will negatively influence your final grade.

**Grading and assignments:** This class is structured around an ongoing group project, either client-based (e.g., a brand) or problem-based (e.g., corporate social advocacy). 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 form a group in the second week of class, based on the surveys you turn in after the first day. Your group will then select the problem or organization that you will focus on for the semester.

Grading rubrics and project requirements will be issued with each assignment. This will help you know exactly what you're being graded on for each specific assignment. We will cover three categories of research:

1. Secondary Data (Secondary research project)
2. Primary Data: Qualitative (focus group, in-depth interview)
3. Primary Data: Quantitative (survey, experimental design)
4. Final Project: An enhanced and integrated version of your chosen past assignments using primary data. There is no need to include detailed background reviews from secondary research.

All reports should contain an independent section in which each participant outline they contributions, what they did, and what they learned. While it is understood that there will be synergism in doing a combined project and that all participants may contribute ideas to various aspects of the project, an attempt should be made to clarify the work efforts.

Summary of Graded Items:

**1. Secondary research (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 Canvas. You will need to coordinate with each other and share individual findings so that all group members see the "big picture." ONE SUBMISSION PER GROUP

**2. Focus group (10 points):** Your group will conduct a focus group and participate in focus groups for other groups. 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 observers. Your group will submit an analysis of the findings. This analysis should integrate both manual thematic analysis and AI-assisted analysis of the focus group conducted by your team. ONE SUBMISSION PER GROUP

**3. In-depth interviews (10 points):** This project will require you to interview an individual to get their thoughts on your client's product or problem. You will need to submit your interview questions and your findings from your interview. INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSION

**4. Survey (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, and critically engage with AI to generate strategies for addressing the problem. The survey will be an online survey administered by Qualtrics and will be taken by everyone in class. The group will then analyze the data and submit the findings. Grades will be based on the group-submitted report. ONE SUBMISSION PER GROUP

**5. Experimental Design (10 points):** This project will require you to design an A/B test on your client's problem or product. The stimuli for the A/B test should be image-based and is expected to utilize AI for image generation. The goal of this assignment is to guide you through theory-based experimental design with the support of AI technologies. You will submit a brief write-up and protocol (including stimuli and questions) for grading. INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSION

**6. Final project and presentation (15 points):** The final group project should be an enhanced and integrated version of your chosen past assignments using primary data. You can use the data already collected for your problem or client, but it is expected that the final project will demonstrate significant improvement upon the work you've previously submitted and researched. Assessment will be focused on the extent and quality of enhancements made based on my comments. A detailed grading rubric of final project expectations will be given out mid-semester. All groups will present their projects to the class at the end of the semester. If you cannot make a presentation date, please alert me and your group members at least three weeks before that date! ONE SUBMISSION PER GROUP

**7. Peer evaluations mid-semester (5 points) and end of semester (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.

**8. Research participation requirement (5 points):** See description provided above. You must fulfill the three hours (or equivalent) to earn full points. Partial completion of the three hours will result in partial points.

**9. Exam (20 points):** Multiple choice and short answer exam to review key concepts throughout the semester.  
\* If you are unable to take the exam in class on the scheduled date, please contact the instructor at least two months in advance. This absence will not count toward 3 free absences allowed.

**TOTAL: 100 POINTS = 55 points from individually graded items + 45 points from group assignments**

**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. No exceptions.

**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.

**Syllabus changes:** I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates, to account for unexpected events or needs. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

#### Point-Grade Scale

Points	Grade	Descriptions
94.5-100	A	Mastery of course content at highest level; Excellent attainment.
90-94.4	A-	
87-89.9	B+	
83-86.9	B	Strong performance; Good attainment.
80-82.9	B-	
77-79.9	C+	
73-76.9	C	Average performance; Satisfactory attainment of the subject.
70-72.9	C-	
67-69.9	D+	
60-62.9	D-	
59.9 or below	F	Failed performance; Unacceptable attainment.

\* subject to minor changes based on the distribution of total points.

## Weekly Class Schedule

- This schedule represents a good faith effort to outline our work over the course of the semester. However, because our needs may change, the timeline and assignments are subject to change. I will alert you via e-mail and Canvas of any changes in readings, assignments, due dates, etc., over the course of the semester. Thank you for your flexibility.
- Submission of assignments is on Canvas under Assignments unless otherwise noted.

In-person Lecture

Remote

No class - holiday

Date	Topic	Read	Do
Aug 19, M	Course overview Why research? Research basics	Ch 1-2	In class: Complete pre-class online survey. Link posted on Canvas under Assignments (optional) Complete the Honor Code Module
Aug 21, W	More on research basics Research processes	Ch 3-4	
Aug 26, M	Introduce secondary research assignment Library resources and search tools	Ch 5-8 Assignment brief on Canvas	In class: Team forming, select topic, set ground rules.
Aug 28, W	<i>Group work on secondary research report</i>	See Canvas for examples	
Sept 2, M	Labor Day – No Classes		
Sept 4, W	<i>Group work: Finalize Secondary research report</i>		Group check-in through Zoom <b>DUE:</b> Secondary research report (one per group, due Friday 12:20 PM).
<b>Qualitative Research Unit</b>			
Sept 9, M	Intro to qualitative research research ethics	Ch 9, 14, 37 See Canvas	Group work: Plan for focus group and complete focus group moderator's protocol in class
Sept 11, W	Focus groups	Ch 10	Group work: Plan for focus group and complete focus group moderator's protocol in class
Sept 16, M	DATA COLLECTION/in class: Conduct your focus groups!		
Sept 18, W	Focus group data analysis	Ch 15 See Canvas	Group work: <i>Complete worksheet on focus group debrief + analysis</i>
Sept 23, M	Well-being Day – No Classes		
Sept 25, W	<i>Group work: Focus Group Assignment</i>		Group check-in <b>DUE:</b> Focus group report (one per group, due Friday 12:20 pm).
Sept 30, M	Interviews	Ch 12, 13 Assignment brief on Canvas	Group work: Complete interview protocol in class.

Oct 2, W	Remote data collection/independent work: Conduct your individual interviews.		Optional drop-in via Zoom
Oct 7, M	<i>Individual Work: Interview Assignment</i>		Assignment check-in <b>DUE:</b> Interview report, due Wednesday by 12:20 PM.
<b>Quantitative Research Unit</b>			
Oct 9, W	Survey research, sampling, measurement, question wording	Ch 16-19 pp. 283-289	Peer evaluations on Canvas under Assignments
Oct 14, M	Obtaining accurate responses Strategy generation through AI & prompt engineering	Ch. 21 See Canvas	Group work: Input survey questions into Qualtrics in class Submit Qualtrics link for feedback by Friday 5 pm (ungraded)
Oct 16, W	Group consultations on surveys. Sign up for a time		Revise survey with feedback
Oct 21, M	Survey finishing touches. Pretest surveys in class. Data Collection in class.		Incorporate feedback, pretest and launch survey
Oct 23, W	Lecture: Data analysis, statistics, and software	Ch 22, 32	
Oct 28, M	<i>Group work: Survey Data analysis</i>		Group check-in + worksheet
Oct 30, W	<i>Remote group work: write up survey assignment</i>		<b>DUE:</b> Survey report (one per group, due Friday by 12:20 PM).
Nov 4, M	Experimental design	Ch 24, 25 Assignment brief on Canvas	Follow the guide and design an A/B test in class
Nov 6, W	More on experiment Image generation and editing using AI	See Canvas	
Nov 11, M	<i>Individual work: write up experimental design</i>		
Nov 13, W	Exam review, integrating concepts throughout the semester	See Canvas	<b>DUE:</b> experiment design write-up and protocol, due Wednesday by 12:20 PM
Nov 18, M	<i>Independent remote work: Exam prep</i>		Optional drop-in via Zoom
Nov 20, W	Exam		
<b>Final</b>			
Nov 25, M	Final project review & consultations	See Canvas for project brief	
Nov 27, W	Thanksgiving Recess – No Classes		
Dec 2, M	Final presentations (3-4 groups)		<b>DUE:</b> Presentation slide deck (one per group) by start of class.
Dec 4, W	Final presentations (3-4 groups)		<b>DUE:</b> Presentation slide deck (one per group) by start of class. By Wednesday: If needed, submit alternate assignment in lieu of research participation

FINAL PAPERS DUE FRI Dec 6th AT 5 PM PEER EVALS ALSO DUE Dec 6th.

(END OF SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM PERIOD FOR THIS CLASS).

Although we are not having a traditional final exam during this period, we are required to have a scheduled meeting per university policy. Please meet with your group to self-assess your work. Read through your final report as a group; edit for flow, clarity, and adherence to rubric. Submit by the deadline of Dec 6th.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK! HAVE A GREAT HOLIDAY BREAK!