

**College of Professional Studies
Graduate School of Political Management
Strategic Public Relations Master's Degree Program**

Campus Course Syllabus

PMGT 202.11 – Public Relations Research and Measurement

Fall 2008

Meeting Dates: Thursdays, September 4-December 14

(Thanksgiving Day, November 27, is holiday)

Class Hours: 7:10 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Location: PHIL 110, 801 22nd Street

Instructor: Suzanne Holroyd, PhD, APR

- BA, Political Science, University of Missouri
- MA, International Affairs, George Washington University
- PHD, Political Science, University of Southern California

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Suzanne Holroyd has more than 20 years of agency and non-profit experience in public relations, marketing, and research. Her work includes servicing clients with market research, brand development, media relations, crisis communications, and strategic planning.

Course Overview

This course will provide an overview of research techniques with an emphasis on planning and evaluating public relations and other communications campaigns. The course provides a hands-on look at several popular research techniques used in supporting communications, such as focus groups, surveys, and media analysis. Recent case studies will be used to illustrate how research results have influenced public relations and communications campaigns.

Guest Speakers

Periodically, we invite senior level guest speakers representing area agencies, corporations, and not-for-profit associations. You will be expected to listen, participate, and apply the lessons learned in the course in subsequent assignments.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, you should be able to develop a strong rationale in support of doing research and measurement for communication projects. You will know how and where to incorporate research into the development of your communications plan. You will be able to identify the pros and cons of qualitative versus quantitative research and when to use each. In addition to learning the basics of how to actually field test qualitative (e.g., focus group) and quantitative (e.g., phone survey) approaches, you will learn how to interpret results and apply them to communications planning. Finally, you will be exposed to a variety of ways to present your research findings to help move your client or organization towards developing research-based recommendations.

Course Methods and Rules

Course Work

All work for this class should be typed, double-spaced, spell-checked, have 1" margins, and use 12-point Times-Roman font. Associated Press style should be used. Late work will receive a grade of "0." If you have

acceptable extenuating circumstances, please contact the instructor before the due date. Work is due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. Neatness, punctuation, and grammar count as part of your grade.

Class Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. Since class participation is a very important part of this course, you are expected to read the assigned text and handouts prior to every class in order to analyze the authors' views with your classmates and instructor. Unexcused absences will result in an "0" for the classes in question.

Ethics Policy

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor. Anyone breaching this policy is subject to expulsion from the master's degree program.

Disability Statement

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact GW's Disability Support Services – 202-994-8250, dss@gwu.edu.

In Case of Emergency

If you suspect there may be a closing, please visit the University home page and look for an announcement or call the University emergency hotline (202-994-5050). If there is a closing or class cancellation for any reason – bad weather, my illness, power outage, etc. – I will attempt to send a group e-mail and post the closing or cancellation on our announcements page in Blackboard. Regardless of the circumstances, you should still submit all assignments due that day. You should also be prepared to make up the class via Blackboard.

Course Texts and Readings

Required Texts

The Market Research Toolbox: A Concise Guide for Beginners, Edward F. McQuarrie, Sage Publications, 2nd edition, 2006. ISBN 1-4129-1319-5

Qualitative Market Research: A Comprehensive Guide, Hy Mariampolski, Sage Publications, 2001. ISBN 0-7619-6954-3

Public Relations Research for Planning and Evaluation, Walter Lindermann, Institute for Public Relations (*Free download from www.instituteforpr.org/research_single/relations_research_planning*)

Case Studies

Selected case studies will be reviewed in class and form the basis for short papers and/or quizzes

Course Handouts

In addition to your text you will be expected to read miscellaneous articles, essays, and research studies that will be given out in the class.

Course Assignments

In this course you will complete four major assignments:

- 1) Management memo summarizing why research and measurement are critical parts of a public relations effort.
- 2) Phone survey questionnaire.

- 3) Project proposal recommending a research and measurement approach for a local or national client, company or organization. (Selected subjects must be approved in advance by professor.)
- 4) Final exam

These assignments are designed to sharpen your skills in research planning and implementation and help you “sell through” the merits of spending time and money on this critical aspect of any communications effort.

1. Management Memo (15 points)

You are the public relations director at a non-profit agency that has received a grant to help reduce teen smoking. Since you have taken this class, you know the importance of research but your boss does not.

Write a short memo (two pages) to her, laying out:

1. Why is it important to spend the organization’s limited funds on research.
2. What general topics are important to research and why.
3. An objective rationale and statement for your research.
4. Your planning process; i.e., what steps you would follow with your internal audiences as you develop your research plan.

2. Phone Survey Questionnaire (20 points)

You are the PR director for an electricity utility. You have been asked to assess the impact of the utility’s ongoing outreach campaign to build support for a potential investment in wind technology. The campaign has been underway for about six months.

Recently your customer relations department has gotten several calls from customers regarding the investment’s impact on service pricing. Now senior leadership wants to know what messages and outreach strategies have been most effective in ensuring positive customer reaction to the investment. (A potential downside is that consumer bills may rise slightly to raise the investment capital.)

To provide answers you decide to do a phone survey to assess customer reaction to the utility’s messages and outreach strategies – i.e., who supports, where they live, negative and positive comments– as well as determine the best approach for informing the public about the wind-generation program.

Your boss has given you one week to write the phone survey questionnaire. Based on the budget, you estimate the survey would have 20-25 questions, 4-5 open ended, the rest yes/no or multiple choice. In addition to writing the questionnaire, you will need to capture select demographics of the respondents. Write the questionnaire for submission to your boss and, where appropriate, the reasoning behind questions that you think need amplification.

3. Project Proposal (25 points)

For this paper you need to identify an organization and problem for which you will develop a research proposal. You will need to get your project idea approved by the instructor.

You will not do the actual research, but your paper will outline the steps in the process, including:

- Justification for why research is necessary;
- Your expected focus (e.g., general categories of questions);
- Desired implementation approach and rationale (must include both qualitative and quantitative techniques);
- Draft tools for the qualitative and quantitative portions; and
- Budget estimate and timeline for implementation.

You will present the essentials of your proposal in the next to last class. Your written paper is due this same evening. The paper should address all necessary and key topic but not exceed 12 pages.

4. Final Exam

During the final class you will be given a 90-minute wrap-up exam that covers course readings and class discussion. (20 points)

Class Participation (20 points)

In addition to grades on assignments and projects, you will be awarded 20 points total across the semester for your participation in class discussions and activities. Therefore, it is critical that you read all assigned texts and handouts in advance of class and prepare your assignments according to the course guidelines. As noted herein, attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will result in a “0” discussion grade for the classes in question.

Points Summary

Total points available = 100

- Paper One – 15 points
- Paper Two – 20 points
- Paper Three – 25 points
- Final exam – 20 points
- Class participation – 20 points

Course Evaluation

Letter Grades

A	93-100	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	C	73-76	D	63-66
B+	87-89	C-	70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	D-	60-62
B	83-86			F	59 or below
B-	80-82			I	Incomplete:

I will grant an “I” grade if you fail to complete a small, discrete amount of work due to circumstances I deem legitimate and sufficient, your prior performance has been satisfactory, and you have a plan for completing the work. The “I” will convert to an “F” if you do not submit the missing work by the agreed-upon submission deadline.

Grading Standards

- **A:** In a business environment this assignment would distinguish you as a top communications professional in your organization. It represents work that is outstanding in every way; e.g., strong research, smart thinking, appropriate style, syntax, and grammar and demonstrates the strategic use of media relations to achieve a communications objective.
- **B:** In a business environment this work would reflect well on you and your organization. You completed the assignment, fulfilled all requirements, and contributed additional ideas and/or insights but the likely results would be relatively ordinary and not meet your communications objectives. The assignment would be judged as adequate but undistinguished.
- **C:** You completed the assignment and fulfilled the requirements but the work would not achieve all of your media relations/communications objectives without major revisions in logic, target media selection or approach strategy.
- **D:** You fulfilled some of the requirements of the assignment, but not all. This work would need to be completely reworked before it would represent you or your company professionally and achieve any meaningful media relations objectives.
- **F:** You did not submit the assignment.

2008 Course Schedule

Date	Topic Covered	Readings (Chapter)
9/4	Introduction to course	
9/11	Why are planning and measurement needed in public relations? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research, measurement and evaluation? Do they differ? • Role of research in the planning process • Evaluation of what can/cannot be measured Components of an effective research plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing clear, actionable research objectives • Writing a plan to conduct your research 	McQuarrie 1, 2 Mariam. 2.1-2.4 Lindenmann – All <i>(We will refer to this booklet throughout the course)</i>
9/18	No class	
9/25	Secondary research – Using what already exists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where to find • “Watch outs” to keep in mind when reviewing Introduction to Primary Research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative vs. Quantitative Starting with Qualitative Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When to use and not use Assignments One (management memo) due	McQuarrie 3 Mariam. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.7, 1.9
10/2	Varieties of Qualitative Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual In-Depth Interviews • Dyad and Triad Creativity Sessions • Ethnographic and Observational Research 	Mariam. 1.6
10/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Content Analysis 	Copies provided
10/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When appropriate and when not ○ Uses with quantitative research ○ Developing a facilitation guide ○ Recruiting participants ○ Implementation tips 	McQuarrie 5
10/23	Quantitative research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When desirable and when not • Types: Surveys, customer visits, etc. Approaches to sampling – Probability vs. non-probability sampling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many are enough? 	McQuarrie 5, 6 9, 10

10/30	Designing a questionnaire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question types • Writing good questions. • Structure (flow) of interview tool 	McQuarrie 8
11/6	Fielding your survey – merits of various approaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone, online, mail, in-person • Timing and cost considerations Assignment Two (phone survey questionnaire) due	McQuarrie 7
11/13	Analyzing the data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence level • Error rate • Sample size • Implementation method • Timing • Questions 	McQuarrie 11
11/20	Translating your research findings into actions: Addressing the “So what?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying audiences • Clarifying messages • Preferences for implementation tactics 	McQuarrie 12
11/27	No class – Thanksgiving	
12/4	Project presentations and written Assignment Three due	
12/11	Final exam	