

## **PR 302: Public Relations Research**

Section 2; Spring 2012

101 Field House

Tuesday/Thursday

9:20 a.m. to 10:50 a.m.

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*Please type PR 302 in the subject line*

Office Hours  
M & W: 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.  
Tu & Th: 11 a.m. to Noon  
I am also available by appointment

### **Major Objectives:**

Students majoring in public relations will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Write persuasively, in a variety of formats, for a variety of media
2. Use diverse research methods and analyze data to develop and support various PR functions
3. Apply PR strategies and tactics to solve problems creatively
4. Use PR principles and practices to guide management effectively and ethically
5. Practice oral communication skills professionally in a variety of situations

### **Course Description:**

Research is vital to the field of public relations. Practitioners use it to monitor and track everything from media content to trends and public opinion, to formulate objectives, to assess campaign messages and elements, and to evaluate success. Over the course of the semester, you will learn to use various types of qualitative and quantitative research methods that are associated with the public relations field.

### **Course Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Describe the importance of research in public relations
2. Use research to plan and evaluate public relations efforts
3. Gather information using qualitative research methods
4. Gather information using quantitative research methods
5. Interpret and report research results
6. Use appropriate sampling strategies to conduct research
7. Work effectively with others in a group setting
8. Manage simultaneous projects in order to meet deadlines

### **Required Text:**

Stacks, D.W. (2011). *Primer of public relations* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

There will also be articles posted on MyWestminster that will be required reading for this course.

### **Recommended Text:**

Harris, M. (2008). *Prentice Hall reference guide* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.  
or

Harris, M., & Kunka, J.L. (2011). *Prentice Hall reference guide* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.

## **Class Policies:**

- 1. Attendance is required!** You must attend class and actively participate in order to achieve the goals of this course. After your second absence, you will lose 50 points for each additional absence. If you have an emergency situation, and will be missing class, please notify me as soon as possible. *If you are frequently late for class you will be warned and continuing to arrive late will result in a loss of points. Habitual sleeping in class will also be considered an absence. If you are texting in class, you will be marked absent. If you are sleeping or texting in class, you may be here physically, you aren't here mentally—you're preoccupied.* In-class activities and quizzes cannot be completed as make-up work.
- 2. Absences during exams & presentations:** The only absences that will be considered excused are a death in the family, severe documentable personal illness, and participation in university sponsored activities (e.g., intercollegiate activities or sports). **Whenever possible, please notify me in advance if you will need to miss class during an exam or presentation. You must contact me prior to or within 24 hours of the missed class. If you (or someone acting on your behalf) fail to notify me within 24 hours of the missed class you will not be allowed to make up the missed exam. If you are absent for a group presentation, you will not be able to make up your portion of the presentation.**
- 3. Cell Phones & Computers:** As a matter of courtesy, all cell phones must be turned off when you enter the classroom. Please refrain from text messaging during class; it is disruptive to your classmates. **Students who are text messaging in class will be marked absent.** I do not mind if students use computers for taking notes during class. However, I reserve the right to prohibit computer use during class if I feel a student is using the computer for other purposes during class or I feel the use of a computer is disruptive in any way.
- 4. Reading assignments:** You are expected to complete all reading assignments before coming to class. **I may not cover all of the information discussed in an assigned reading but that does not mean you do not need to be familiar with the material.** Some class periods will consist of activities based on the day's reading and coming to class unprepared will inhibit participation.
- 5. Written assignments:** Unless otherwise noted, your work should be typed, doubled-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font. **Sloppy work communicates something about you and your level of professionalism.** Please use paragraphs, introductions, conclusions, and transitions accordingly. If an assignment requires you to cite your sources in an academic manner please use either MLA or APA format, which can be found in the *Prentice Hall Reference Guide*. **Be sure to proofread your papers for typos and grammatical errors. If you have questions about the requirements for an assignment, please contact me.** The Learning Center located in 212 Thompson-Clark Hall (ext. 6700) is a valuable resource where students can receive additional help with writing and study skills.
- 6. Submitting Assignments:** The public relations industry is a fast-paced, deadline driven industry. If you don't complete a particular project on time, the results could be detrimental for your client and could cost you your job. **Late work will not be accepted. Be sure to allow enough time to print your papers if a hard copy is required for submission. Assignments that do not adhere to the assignment guidelines given in class may receive a zero.** If you have questions about the proper format for an assignment, please feel free to contact me to clarify the assignment or for additional instructions.

7. **Academic Integrity:** In accordance with Westminster College's policy, violations of academic integrity include cheating, misconduct, plagiarism, and providing false information. Please refer to your student handbook for a detailed description of Westminster's Academic Integrity Policy. Work that violates the college's policy in whole, or in part, will receive an F and the assignment or test will be turned over to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for further disciplinary action. Please remember that violating the Academic Integrity Policy is grounds for dismissal from the university. If you have questions about properly citing source material or what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me.

8. **Accessibility:** Westminster College actively strives for the full inclusion of all our students. Students with disabilities who require access solutions for environmental or curricular barriers should contact Corey Shaw, Director of Disability Resources, located in 209 Thompson-Clark Hall, ext. 7192.

9. **Ethical Communication:** As participants in a collegiate learning community, it is important to respect others' right to express themselves. It is quite possible that you may not agree with every comment or opinion expressed in class. While you are not obliged to agree with others, you are asked to be respectful of everyone's right to their own comments or opinions. Scholarly debate can be a valuable educational tool. However, racist, sexist, or other oppressive language will not be tolerated. It is important to remember to disagree in a respectful manner and not resort to personal attacks on those who may see things differently and/or have opinions that are different than yours.

10. The information contained in this syllabus is subject to change. If you miss class, you may want to check with a classmate to make sure that there have been no additions/subtractions to the coursework.

### **Assignments/Evaluations:**

More detailed assignment information and guidelines will be provided for each assignment during the semester.

1. **Quizzes.** There will be three quizzes over the semester. Questions may be matching, True/False, multiple choice, or short answer.
2. **Questionnaire design & report.** You will be designing a brief questionnaire and administering it. Following your data collection, you will present a brief report of your findings to the class.
3. **Homework.** There will be a number of small assignments during the semester that are designed to help reinforce what we have talked about in class. Typically, they will be due at the start of the next class period.
4. **Secondary Research Summary.** You will be conducting secondary research over the course of the semester and reporting your findings to the class at the end of the semester.
5. **Client research project.** This has two components and will require you to work with a group of other students to design and conduct a focus group as part of a larger-scale research project. You will also be part of a group that will complete a section of the final research report that our client will receive. There will be both individual and group components to the project scores.

**Grading Criteria:**

- A** The work is outstanding. I think the work exceeds the assignment description, demonstrating creativity, enthusiasm, and overall excellence.
- B** The work is very good. Papers and presentations in this range demonstrate work above average and approach the quality necessary to earn an A.
- C** The work is judged to be “average.” It demonstrates enough competency and accomplishment to simply meet the requirements of the assignment.
- D** The work is poor. Papers and presentations earning a D do not meet the expectations for the assignment; papers and presentations lack professionalism, completeness, and critical thought.
- F** The work is unacceptable. It does not follow the assignment guidelines and/or has major issues regarding professionalism, completeness, and critical thought.

**Assignment Point Breakdown:**

Assignment	Points Possible	Points Earned
Quizzes (point values vary)	100	
Questionnaire Design & Report	150	
Homework	200	
Secondary Research Project	200	
Client Research Project Client Report Section (150 pts) Focus Group (200 pts)	350	
<b>Total Points Available</b>	<b>1000</b>	

**Evaluation:** Points to arrive at a final grade.

A: 1000-915 pts    B+: 894-865 pts    C+: 794-765 pts    D+: 694-665 pts    F: 594-0 pts  
 A-: 914-895 pts    B: 864-825 pts    C: 764-725 pts    D: 664-625 pts  
                           B-: 824-795 pts    C-: 724-695 pts    D-: 624-595 pts

I will not be using half points in this class and I do not negotiate grades.

Unfortunately, MyWestminster only allows me to select certain default grading options to display in the gradebook. The score you see may not accurately reflect your score for the course. If you have questions about your progress, feel free to talk to me.

**If you have any questions or concerns about this course or a particular assignment, please contact me. I want you to succeed!**

## Course Calendar

The course calendar may change over the course of the semester. If there are any major changes, I will distribute a new version. However, it is your responsibility to be aware of minor changes that may occur from week-to-week.

	<b>Class Date: Topic(s)</b>	<b>Reading(s)</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
<b>Week 1</b>			
	Jan. 17: Introductions		
	Jan: 19: Syllabus; Understanding Research	Chapter 1	“Researching the Class”
<b>Week 2</b>			
	Jan. 24: Understanding Research		
	Jan. 26: Management of Research	Chapter 2	
<b>Week 3</b>			
	Jan. 31: Ethical Concerns Discuss Client Project	Chapter 5	Ethics Training cert.
	Feb. 2: Ethical Concerns Discuss Secondary Research Project		
<b>Week 4</b>			
	Feb. 7: Library Presentation		Informed Consent Form
	Feb 9: Measuring Outcomes	Chapter 3	
<b>Week 5</b>			
	Feb. 14: Measuring Outcomes		Annotated Source
	Feb. 16: <b>Quiz #1</b> Quantitative Research: Sampling	Chapter 10	
<b>Week 6</b>			
	Feb: 21: Quantitative Research: Surveys & Polls Discuss Questionnaire Assignment	Chapter 11	
	Feb. 23: Quantitative Research: Surveys & Polls		Question list
<b>Week 7</b>			
	Feb. 28: Quantitative Research: Experiments	Chapter 12	
	Mar. 1: Quantitative Statistics: Descriptive & Inferential Statistical Reasoning	Ch. 4 & 13	Secondary Research: Progress Report
<b>Week 8</b>			
	Mar. 6: <b>Spring Break—No Class</b>		
	Mar. 8: <b>Spring Break—No Class</b>		
<b>Week 9</b>			
	Mar. 13: <b>Questionnaire Reports</b>		<b>Questionnaire Reports</b>
	Mar. 15: <b>Quiz #2</b> <b>Questionnaire Reports</b> Discuss Focus Groups		
<b>Week 10</b>			
	Mar. 20: Qualitative Research: Methods of Observing	Chapter 9	
	Mar. 22: Qualitative Research: Methods of Observing		FG guide

	<b>Class Date: Topic(s)</b>	<b>Reading(s)</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
Week 11			
	Mar. 27: Qualitative Research: Case Studies	Chapter 8	
	Mar. 29: Qualitative Research: Case Studies		Case Study
Week 12			
	Apr. 3: Qualitative Research: Historical & Secondary Research	Chapter 7	<b>Last Day for FG to be completed</b>
	Apr. 5: <b>Easter Break—No Class</b>		
Week 13			
	Apr. 10: <b>Monday Classes Meet--No Class</b>		
	Apr. 12: Qualitative Research: Content Analysis	Chapter 6	
Week 14			
	Apr. 17: Qualitative Research: Content Analysis		
	Apr. 19: Obtaining & Reporting Research	Ch. 14 & 15	Client Report Drafts
Week 15			
	Apr. 24: <b>Quiz #3</b> & Rehearse Client Presentation		
	Apr. 26: <b>Secondary Research Presentations</b>		
Week 16			
	May 1: <b>Secondary Research Presentations</b>		Client Report Finalized
	May 3: <b>Secondary Research Presentations</b>		
Week 17 FINAL EXAM			
	<b>Research Presentation to Client: Tuesday, May 8 from 3 to 5:30 p.m.</b>		