

Research Methods in Advertising and Public Relations
Fall 2021
COMM 420.1 Lecture – 417 Forest Resources Building
T/TH – 9:05 AM – 10:20 AM

The Pennsylvania State University
Department of Advertising and Public Relations

Instructor: Jin Chen
Virtual office hours via Zoom: by appointment
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Course description

Advertising and public relations practice involves using research to make decisions – often big decisions with big price tags. This course provides students with the tools to outline, execute and evaluate mass media research. The primary focus is on using research for advertising and public relations program and campaign management—planning, monitoring and evaluating. You will learn the most important research methods used in the field – content analysis, focus groups, in-depth interviews, surveys, and experiments – and gain experience with the statistical and textual analysis methods most often used to analyze results.

Course objectives

By the end of this semester, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of audiences in relationship to communications;
2. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically;
4. Think critically, creatively and independently;
5. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
6. Write correctly and clearly;
7. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
8. Apply tools and technologies commonly used in communications practices;
9. Know the difference between primary and secondary research, and their uses;
10. Develop a primary research project including research objectives, sample justification, data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation;
11. Use statistical software (e.g., SPSS) to analyze data;
12. Present both secondary and primary research in a comprehensive, well-organized report.

Recommended text (otherwise required readings will be available on Canvas):

Wimmer, R. D. & Dominick, J. R. (2014). Mass media research: An introduction, 10-edition. Wadsworth Publishing.

Return to in-person classes

I hope you are all as excited as I am to be back in the classroom! We will be:

- **Masked:** In accordance with Penn State policy, everyone in any Penn State building in the classroom must be masked, regardless of vaccination status. The mask must be worn properly, covering both the nose and mouth.
- **A Food-Free Zone:** With the exception of bottled water, all food and drink consumption is prohibited in classrooms. Those drinking water should be especially conscious of maintaining social distancing and minimizing the time their mask is moved aside; straws are recommended for this purpose.

Course requirements

The requirements for the course have been designed to provide students with the concepts and experience needed to meet the above-stated objectives and to measure the amount of success achieved toward reaching those objectives. Homework and written group assignments are due to your instructor on the dates indicated in the syllabus. **NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED VIA EMAIL.**

Quizzes (30%)

There will be 12 scheduled quizzes during the semester. All will cover the most recent materials presented in class lectures, slides and/or videotapes, and class discussions. Quizzes will be administered in Canvas, where they will be available for 24 hours after class. You will have 20 minutes to complete each quiz once it is opened. The two lowest grades will be dropped in the final calculation of quiz grades. That means you can miss two quizzes with no penalty. Therefore, there will be **no makeups**.

Homework/Assignments (20%)

Students will have the opportunity to work on homework or assignments during class time, when I am available to help students through the process. Detailed instructions for each assignment will be available on Canvas. Homework will be completed by the students and handed in on the date indicated on the syllabus. **Each assignment is due by 11:59 pm on the day indicated (unless otherwise specified in the syllabus or on Canvas).**

Methodology 1: Interview (10%)

Working with the professor, the class will create an interview schedule, recruit participants, collect and transcribe interview data, pool the data, and analyze the data.

Methodology 2: Survey (10%)

Working with the professor, the class will create survey questions, create a Qualtrics online survey instrument, recruit participants, collect data, and analyze the data.

Methodology 3: Experiment (5%)

Each group will create/find stimulus materials, modify the survey instrument for experiment, collect data in class, and analyze the data.

Methodology 4: Content analysis (5%)

Following the class demo, students will collect and analyze the comments of one YouTube video.

Final Report (10%)

Each group will create a report outlining the findings of research methods, weighing their relative importance, and making communication recommendations based on the results of the social science.

Participation (10%)

Participation is an important part of being in a learning community, so I expect that you engage actively in class. You start off with 0 participation points, and you **earn** points over the course of the semester (e.g., answering my questions and asking questions in class). I will give everyone ample opportunity throughout the semester to earn full credit for this.

Note: group work is minimum during the first two projects (interview and survey) as they will be carried out as class projects. At this phase, research groups mostly serve to provide peer support and connections. Collaboration and group submissions occur during the last two mini-projects (experiment and content analysis).

Course evaluation

Your final grade will be determined by the following scale:

Course Evaluation Break Down	Percent
Quizzes (best 10 of 12)	30%
Assignments/Homework	20%
Interview questions, implementation, analysis	10%
Survey questions, implementation, analysis	10%
Experimental design, implementation, analysis	5%
Content analysis, coding, analysis	5%
Final Report	10%
Participation	10%
Total	100 %

Grading scale

A = 94-100; A- = 90-<94; B+ = 87-<90; B = 83-<87; B- = 80-<83; C+ = 77-<80; C = 70-<77; D = 60-<70; F=<60.

General policies

Assignments. Late work is accepted with PRIOR PERMISSION only. Faulty computer equipment does not constitute a valid reason for late work. No credit will be given for unexcused late work. All work submitted should be in **12-point Times Roman font**, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. So that we can get the most out of lecture time, students are expected to complete any reading and research assignments prior to class meetings.

Class conduct. I expect you to arrive in class on time and to stay for the entire class. Random arrivals and exits only serve to distract other students and the instructor. It should go without saying that talking in class disrupts your classmates and impedes their learning experience. Those engaging in distracting behaviors may be asked to leave the classroom.

Cell phones, computers, and other technological distractions. All students are expected to mute their cell phones and other interactive devices at the beginning of class. It is inconsiderate to classmates to allow a cell phone to ring during lecture. Personal use of computers/cell phones/SMS/iAnythings during lecture is not permitted.

Contacting your instructor via email. I am happy to answer simple questions via email, usually within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. I will not answer emails if the answer is on the syllabus. I will also not answer any email asking if something is “on the test.” If it was discussed, it may be on the test. Complex questions and explanations should be handled with face-to-face, or at least voice-to-voice communication.

Office hours. I am happy to meet with all of you for office hours. Don't hesitate to ask for meetings if you have questions or concerns about the course, we can always figure out a time that works for both of us. **Please email me at least 24 hours before you wish to meet.**

Canvas. CANVAS will be used in the administration of this course. Any changes to the course schedule, in addition to other announcements, will be posted on CANVAS, so students are encouraged to check in often. I routinely communicate with the class through CANVAS' mail function – please make sure your CANVAS mail account is forwarded to your preferred email account if you do not check CANVAS often.

Research participation. As students of research, it is a good learning experience to participate in studies conducted by scholars as a way of expanding your knowledge of the research process. Students may participate in **up to 3 research opportunities for extra credit in SONA** – the points will be added to your exam grades. Detailed instructions will be posted on Canvas.

Tentative Schedule

The tentative course outline is listed below. If changes in the schedule are necessary, they will be announced in class and you will be held responsible for such changes.

Week	Date	Topic	Materials/Outcomes
1	T – 8/24	Introduction to course	-Syllabus -Class Survey
	TH – 8/26	The importance of research to the Ad and PR fields	-PowerPoint
2	T – 8/31	Research ethics	-PowerPoint -Groups assigned
	TH – 9/2	Measuring social and psychological phenomena	-PowerPoint -Quiz 1 open after class
3	T – 9/7	Retrieving and evaluating secondary research	-“How to Read a Research Paper”
	TH – 9/9	Qualitative methods: Field observation/ethnography	-PowerPoint -Quiz 2 open after class
4	T – 9/14	Qualitative methods: Focus Groups and Interviews	-PowerPoint -Quiz 3 open after class -Interview Assignment distributed
	TH – 9/16	Interview Work Day	-Work on interview protocol
5	T – 9/21	Quantitative methods: Levels of Measurement	-PowerPoint -Quiz 4 open after class
	TH – 9/23	Quantitative methods: Non-probability and Probability Sampling Methods	-PowerPoint -Quiz 5 open after class
6	T – 9/28	Quantitative methods: Survey	-PowerPoint -Quiz 6 open after class -Qualitative Transcripts Due -Qualitative Data Analysis Assignment distributed
	TH – 9/30	Survey Work Day	-Write survey questions

			-Qualtrics demonstration -Mail out survey links
7	T – 10/5	Qualitative Data Analysis	-PowerPoint -Survey request emails due -Quiz 7 open after class
	TH – 10/7	<i>Release time to Complete Qualitative Data Analysis Assignment</i>	-Qualitative Data Analysis Assignment due
8	T – 10/12	Data analysis with SPSS: Descriptive statistics	-PowerPoint -Survey Data Analysis Assignment distributed
	TH – 10/14	Data analysis with SPSS: Inferential statistics	-PowerPoint -Quiz 8 open after class
9	T – 10/19	Survey Data Analysis Work Day	
	TH – 10/21	<i>Release time to complete Survey Data Analysis Assignment</i>	-Survey Data Analysis Assignment Due
10	T – 10/26	Quantitative methods: Experimentation	-PowerPoint -Quiz 9 open after class
	TH – 10/28	Experimentation Work Day	-Decide on hypothesis for experiment -Work on Experimental stimulus materials -Experiment recruitment post
11	T – 11/2	Applied research in Advertising and Public Relations & Keys to effective research presentations	-PowerPoint -Experiment data -Quiz 10 open after class
	TH – 11/4	Experiment Data Analysis Work Day	
12	T – 11/9	<i>Release time to complete Experiment Data Analysis Assignment</i>	-Experiment Data Analysis Assignment Due

	TH – 11/11	Quantitative methods: Content Analysis	-PowerPoint -Quiz 11 open after class
13	T – 11/16	Content Analysis Work Day	
	TH – 11/18	<i>Release time to Complete Content Analysis Assignment</i>	-Content Analysis Assignment Due
	Nov. 21-27 THANKSGIVING BREAK		
14	T – 11/30	Writing Up Research; Data Visualization	-PowerPoint -Quiz 12 open after class
	TH – 12/2	Work Day	
15	T – 12/7	<i>Release time to Complete Final Report</i>	
	TH – 12/9	Research Presentation	
16	T – 12/16	Final Written Reports due at 12 NOON	

Faculty Senate Mandated Syllabus Materials:

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

Cheating – including plagiarism, falsification of research data, using the same assignment for more than one class, turning in someone else's work, or passively allowing others to copy your work – will result in academic penalties at the discretion of the instructor. In serious cases, it could also result in suspension or dismissal from the University or in the assignment of an "XF" grade (failed for academic dishonesty).

As students studying communications, you should understand and avoid plagiarism (presenting the work of others as your own.) A discussion of plagiarism, with examples, can be found at <http://tlt.psu.edu/plagiarism/student-tutorial/>. The rules and policies regarding academic integrity should be reviewed by every student, and can be found online at: <http://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/47-00-48-00-and-49-00-grades/#49-20> and in the College of Communications document, "Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures." Any student with a question about academic integrity or plagiarism is strongly encouraged to discuss it with his or her instructor.

Educational Equity/Reporting Bias: Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the [Report Bias webpage](http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/) (<http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/>).

Disability Accommodations: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. For information, go to the Student Disability Resources website: <http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources>.

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: [See documentation guidelines](http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/guidelines) (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/guidelines>). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the

accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

Counseling and Psychological Services: Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The University offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

- [Counseling and Psychological Services at University Park \(CAPS\)](http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/) (<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>): 814-863-0395
- Counseling and Psychological Services at [Commonwealth Campuses](https://senate.psu.edu/faculty/counseling-services-at-commonwealth-campuses/) (<https://senate.psu.edu/faculty/counseling-services-at-commonwealth-campuses/>)
- Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400
Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741

Food Insecurity Resources: I realize that many students at Penn State face periods of food insecurity. Penn State, along with local government and non-profit organizations, offer resources to ensure that students can meet their basic needs while continuing to meet their academic goals. For a list of resources, please visit <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/involvement-student-life/living-campus/food-insecurity-resources>. If you need my help to navigate these resources, please let me know.

Masking policy (Fall 2021): Penn State University requires everyone to wear a face mask in all university buildings, including classrooms, regardless of vaccination status. ALL STUDENTS MUST wear a mask appropriately (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) while you are indoors on campus. This is to protect your health and safety as well as the health and safety of your classmates, instructor, and the university community. Anyone attending class without a mask will be asked to put one on or leave. Instructors may end class if anyone present refuses to appropriately wear a mask for the duration of class. Students who refuse to wear masks appropriately may face disciplinary action for Code of Conduct violations. If you feel you cannot wear a mask during class, please speak with your adviser immediately about your options for altering your schedule.

Final thoughts

We are living in times of challenge and uncertainty. It makes sense that none of us are okay all the time. If you are struggling with materials, need extra help or extra time, reach out to me. Don't panic. Don't cheat. Don't give up. I strive to make it easy for you to learn, to stay connected, and to succeed. As a community, we can get through this together. Always be kind, be helpful, and be respectful.