



PR 504: Strategic Public Relations Research, Evaluation & Insights

3.0 Units

Spring 2017—Thursday 6:30 – 9:10 p.m.

Section: 21320D

Location: ASC 328

Instructor: Laura Min Jackson, MSOD

Office: ASC 401

Office Hours: 5-6 p.m. on Thursdays by Appointment

*24 hours' notice required

Contact Info: laurajac@usc.edu; (714) 745-9526

I. Course Description

Covers use of primary and secondary research methods, analysis, web monitoring and analytics, pre- and post-campaign testing, and other techniques in program planning and evaluation. Prerequisite: JOUR 508 or PR 508.

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

This course explores the role of research in Public Relations, with a particular focus on understanding different forms and methods for collecting, analyzing, and utilizing data to effectively plan and evaluate PR activities. The objectives of this course include helping students:

- Understand the role of research in Public Relations and Marketing
- Distinguish between various research methodologies and techniques
- Learn to plan, design, use and analyze research relating to PR projects, with an emphasis on interpretations that contribute to strategic insights
- Explore techniques for evaluating the effectiveness of PR activities

III. Description of Assignments

During the semester, students will be participating in:

- Reading, research and writing assignments
- Class discussion and interactive/experiential exercises
- Supplemental learning through readings/multimedia formats beyond the text
- Designing and implementing research projects
- Preparing research-based PR recommendations

IV. Grading Breakdown

A total of 445 points is available in this class, allocated as follows:

	Points Possible	% of Grade
Class Assignments	45	10%
Primary Research Materials	50	11%
Midterm Presentation	50	11%
Midterm Exam	50	11%
PR Program Recommendations/Presentation	100	23%

Final Paper	50	11%
Class Discussion/Participation	100	23%
TOTAL	445	100.00%

a. Grading Scale

A = 92-100% of points **A-** = 90-91% of points
B+ = 83-89% of points **B** = 81-82% of points **B-** = 79-80% of points
C+ = 73-78% of points **C** = 71-72% of points **C-** = 69-70% of points
D+ = 63-68% of points **D** = 61-62% of points **D-** = 59-60% of points
F = <58% of points

A minimum grade of C (2.0) is required in a course to receive graduate credit. Work graded C- or below is not acceptable for subject or unit credit toward any master's or doctoral program. A grade point average of at least 3.0 (B) on all units attempted at USC toward a graduate degree is required for graduation. In addition, a grade point average of at least 3.0 on all graduate work attempted at USC, whether or not all such units are applied toward the degree, is required.

b. Grading Standards

Throughout the semester, students will be asked to complete written assignments. The specifics and due date of each assignment will be discussed during class. Submissions will earn points based on overall quality, encompassing: (1) proper organization, style and presentation; (2) appropriate research and citation of sources; (3) demonstration of sound PR judgment; (4) creativity; and (5) timely submission.

“A” projects have writing near professional quality; one or no mistakes; clearly proofread and edited material. All required elements included (catchy headline, solid lead, varied vocabulary; supporting facts/figures; quotes as required). Excellent organization and flow; original thinking. Showed creativity in packaging/distribution method. High end of scale: publishable today as is.

“B” projects have two to five spelling, grammar or AP Style mistakes. One or more required elements missing or poorly displayed (i.e., boring headline; confusing lead, etc.). Shows potential as a good writer. Adhered to inverted pyramid. High end of scale will have at least one extraordinary element such as astonishing lead or little-known facts or pithy quote. Some creativity shown. Publishable with medium editing.

“C” projects have more than five errors (spelling, grammar, AP style). Poorly edited and/or proofread. May have adhered to inverted pyramid but strayed at beginning or end. Hackneyed elements such as trite headline or uninteresting lead. Little or no facts/figures included. Passive rather than active verbs become the norm. Little or no creativity shown. Publishable with major editing.

“D” projects have more than 10 errors (spelling, grammar). Needs to be completely rewritten. Poorly organized with little or no understanding of journalistic style/standards. Needs to work with writing coach.

“F” projects are not rewritable, late or not turned in.

Class Assignments (10%): Throughout the semester, students will be asked to complete written assignments. The specifics and due date of each assignment will be discussed during class. Submissions will earn points based on overall quality, encompassing: (1) proper organization, style and presentation; (2) appropriate research and citation of sources; (3) demonstration of sound PR judgment; (4) creativity; and (5) timely submission.

Midterm Presentations & Exam (11% each): Students will be required to provide a mid-term presentation on their semester-long project, including an overview of preliminary findings and insights likely to impact the overall scope of work. They also must complete an in-class mid-term examination that evaluates their understanding of key concepts and applications presented to date through course-related lectures and readings. Additional details will be discussed in class. Attendance at the mid-term presentation and examination are mandatory; there are no make-ups for this requirement.

Primary Research Materials - Focus Group Discussion Guide & Reflection and Quantitative Survey (11%): During the semester, students will apply knowledge gained from the course to develop and implement 2 primary research instruments: a Focus Group Discussion Guide and an online Quantitative Survey. Additional details will be discussed in class.

PR Program Recommendations/Presentation (23%): Students will be expected to participate in a group project to develop PR Recommendations supported by research and evaluation elements. All teams will be required to develop a research plan and instrument, and conduct secondary as well as primary qualitative and quantitative research (outside of the classroom) to support their final recommendations. All team members must participate in presenting the final proposals, using rationale from the research to substantiate their recommendations. Additional details will be discussed in class.

Final Paper (11%): Students will be asked to submit a 1,000-word final paper that reflects their critical thinking, comprehension of key concepts presented during the course and synthesis of their learning and broader applicability to PR practices and the PR industry overall. Details will be discussed in class. As PR practitioners, we strive for impeccable quality, and all materials will be evaluated according to the same standards. All written materials should represent one's best quality work, be error-free and meet the quality standards of this school, reflecting proper editing, grammar, spelling, and formatting. Students who struggle with language, grammar, spelling, or writing should speak with me about the Annenberg School's designated Writing Coaches.

Attendance/Class Discussion/Participation/Research COW (23%): It is important to attend class and actively participate, since class activities and interaction with peers encourage creative dialogue and diversity of perspective, and enhance learning. It is expected that students will come to class having read the assignment(s) and prepared to join class discussions, contributing questions and comments about the materials. Classes begin promptly, so please arrive on time. In addition, students may receive up to 25 of the designated Participation Points based on the quality of their presentation of a unique "Research Case of the Week" (COW); details and the schedule for presentations will be discussed in class.

If a student is unable to attend class for some reason, please notify the instructor as soon as possible, and assume personal responsibility for gathering notes from other classmates. Unexcused absences, tardiness, and failure to meet deadlines will have a negative impact on the student's final grade. At the end of the semester, students will be allotted points based upon:

- Consistent demonstration that they have read the material for scheduled class discussion
- Contribution to class discussion; answering questions, asking relevant questions
- Demonstrating respect for fellow classmates and instructor
- Mature classroom behavior that supports learning

V. Assignment Submission Policy

- A. All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be given a grade of F.
- B. Unless otherwise specified, assignments must be submitted as PDF documents via email to laurajac@usc.edu using the file naming convention of **Student Last Name. Assignment Name**

VI. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- TEXT: Michaelson, David and Stacks, Don. (2014). *A Practitioner's Guide to Public Relations Research, Measurement and Evaluation*, **2nd Edition**. New York, NY. Business Experts Press. ISBN: 978-160649984-9
- TEXT: Halfpenny, Peter and Procter, Rob (eds.) (2015). *New Innovations in Digital Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA. SAGE Publications. ISBN: 9781446203095
- Textbooks may be purchased from the USC Bookstore or online resources such as Amazon, half.com, etc.
- Additional readings from handouts, multimedia/websites, and other sources (TBA), as well as announcements, assignment details, lecture PowerPoint slides, supplemental resources, interim Grade Center, and other information will be posted on the Blackboard site for this class.

VII. Laptop Policy

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the [Annenberg Virtual Commons](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website.

VIII. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Following is a detailed course calendar that provides a thorough list of deliverables—readings, assignments, examinations, etc.

Important note: *Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change – and probably will change – based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.*

<i>Session</i>	<i>Title & Topic(s)</i>	<i>Readings/Assignments/Deliverables</i>
<i># 1</i>	<i>Course Overview</i>	
<i>01-12</i>	Introductions; Common Research Types, Formal vs. Informal; Why Research Matters; The Research Conundrum; Data vs. Insight	<i>None</i>
<i># 2</i>	<i>Basic Concepts of Research</i>	<i>Michaelson: Ch. 1-2</i>
<i>01-19</i>	Ethical Considerations; Setting Comm Goals & Objectives; Messaging Strategies; Rational vs. Emotional Appeals; Information Processing, Perceptions & Beliefs; Message Testing; Barcelona Principles	<i>Halfpenny: Ch. 1, 12</i>
<i># 3</i>	<i>Secondary Research and Qualitative Research Methods</i>	<i>Michaelson: Ch. 5</i>
<i>01-26</i>	Levels of Secondary Research; Methodologies & Tools; Applications in PR: Content, Program Development, SWOTs; Principles of Netnography	<i>Halfpenny: Ch. 2</i> <i>Other Readings</i> Assignment #1 DUE – Questioning Thinking
<i># 4</i>	<i>Qualitative Primary Research Methods</i>	<i>Michaelson: Ch. 6</i>
<i>02-02</i>	Comparing Qualitative & Quantitative Methodologies: Purpose, Philosophy & Mechanics; Focus Groups & In-depth Interviews; Discussion Guide Development; Advanced Facilitation Technique; Applications in PR	<i>Halfpenny: Ch. 3</i> <i>Other Readings</i> Assignment #2 DUE – Secondary Research

# 5 02-09	<i>Audience Segmentation & Sampling</i> Segmentation Approaches & Methods: Demographic, Attitudinal, Geodemographic & Psychographic; Sampling Methodologies & Tools; Probability & Nonprobability Sampling; Size Guidelines & Calculators; Sampling Myths	Michaelson: Ch. 8 Halfpenny: Ch. 4 Other Readings Assignment #3 DUE – Individual FG Discussion Guide
# 6 02-16	<i>Quantitative Primary Research Methods</i> Methodologies & Key Concepts in Instrument Design; Writing Quality Questions; Measurement Types & Scales; Applications in PR	Michaelson: Ch. 7 Other Readings
# 7 02-23	In-Class Focus Groups	Other Readings Final Group FG Discussion Guide DUE
# 8 03-02	<i>Measurement & Evaluation of PR</i> Creating Measurement Plans; Methods & Tools; Paine’s “10 Questions” for Planning & Evaluation; LARA Model; 7 Steps to ‘Perfect’ Measurement; Measuring ROI vs Measuring Relationships; “4 Reasons for Bad Data”; Applications in PR	Michaelson: Ch. 4, 11 Other Readings Assignment #4 DUE – Individual Quant Instrument
# 9 03-09	<i>Mid-term Presentation & Exam</i>	Group Presentation DUE – Preliminary Qualitative Findings
<i>SPRING BREAK – No class</i>		
03-16		
#10 03-23	<i>Content Analysis – I (Traditional Media)</i> Qualitative & Quantitative Methodologies; Coding vs. Contextual Analyses; Applications in PR	Michaelson: Ch. 8 Halfpenny: Ch. 8 Other Readings Ongoing Primary Research / Data Analysis
#11 03-30	<i>Content Analysis – II (Social Media)</i> Outputs, Outtakes & Outcomes; PESO Metrics; Google Analytics; “8 Considerations for Measuring Blog Posts;” The Evolving World of DIY Tools	Halfpenny: Ch. 10 Other Readings Ongoing Primary Research / Data Analysis
#12 04-06	<i>Data Analysis Workshop</i> Searching For Insights: Finding Meaning in Data; Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis Approaches; Confidence Levels and Projectability; Methods and Tools	Michaelson: Ch. 9 Halfpenny: Ch. 5 Other Readings Ongoing Primary Research / Data Analysis / Plan Development
#13 04-13	<i>Telling Stories With Data</i> Interpreting & Presenting Data; Effective Storytelling; Data Visualization Methodologies and Tools	Halfpenny: Ch. 11 Other Readings Ongoing Data Analysis / Plan Development

#14 04-20	<i>From Research to Actionable Insight</i> Principles of Sense-Making; 360-degree Thinking; Developing Insight-Driven Strategies; the New World of Neural Marketing, Haptic Explorations, The Maker Economy, and More	<i>Other Readings</i> Ongoing Data Analysis / Plan Development
#15 04-27	<i>FINAL PRESENTATIONS</i>	Final Group Presentations DUE
05-04	<i>FINAL PAPER DUE</i>	Final Individual Paper DUE by 9 p.m.

IX. Policies and Procedures

Use of Technology

Cell phones, PDAs, and other electronic equipment are to be turned off before class. Answering the phone, sending/receiving email or IMs, or any other form of electronic communication during class are a significant distraction from the learning process and should be avoided. The use of computers in class for any purpose other than taking notes and/or researching topics under discussion at the time, will result in a full grade reduction for the entire course.

Confidentiality

In this class, case studies or projects of a sensitive nature may be discussed; the information is considered confidential and should not be shared outside of the classroom without the explicit consent of the person(s) involved.

Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words - is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/b/11-00-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

"Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an 'F' on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators."

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

b. Support Systems

Equity and Diversity

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* (<http://equity.usc.edu/>) or to the *Department of Public Safety* (<http://dps.usc.edu/contact/report/>). This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community - such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member - can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The *Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services* (<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/>) provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage (<https://sarc.usc.edu/>) describes reporting options and other resources.

Support with Scholarly Writing

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* (<http://ali.usc.edu/>) which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs (<http://dsp.usc.edu/>) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.

Students requesting test-related accommodations will need to share and discuss their DSP recommended accommodation letter/s with their faculty and/or appropriate departmental contact person at least three weeks before the date the accommodations will be needed. Additional time may be needed for final exams. Reasonable exceptions will be considered during the first three weeks of the semester as well as for temporary injuries and for students recently diagnosed. Please note that a reasonable period of time is still required for DSP to review documentation and to make a determination whether a requested accommodation will be appropriate.

Stress Management

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at (213) 740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

Emergency Information

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* (<http://emergency.usc.edu/>) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

X. About Your Instructor

Laura Min Jackson is an award-winning communications pro who's worked with global corporations, start-ups and nationally-ranked PR agencies. As an independent PR consultant, her clients have included Beckman Coulter; Miocean; Össur, and Sony Pictures Entertainment Corp.

Previously, she was VP/Global Communications for Baxter Healthcare and Edwards Lifesciences, overseeing Corporate Branding; Internal Communications; Media and Community Relations and Crisis Management, as well as the \$50 million nonprofit Edwards Lifesciences Fund. She also was SVP/West Coast Director of the national Healthcare practice at Porter/Novelli, and specialized in Healthcare and Crisis Communications as VP at PainePR. She began her agency career at Burson-Marsteller after working in the Government and Nonprofit sectors.

Laura earned her M.S. in Organization Development from Pepperdine University, and her bachelor's in Communications/PR from Cal State Fullerton. In addition to teaching at USC, she's been a consultant, guest speaker and facilitator for public health, educational and policy organizations worldwide.