

PR 504: Strategic Public Relations Research, Evaluation and Insights 3.0 units

Fall 2019 – Tuesdays – 6:30-9 p.m.

Section: 21319D

Location: ANN 413

Dave Quast

Office: ANN lobby or classroom

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 5-6 p.m.

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I. Course Description

A major component of the public relations practitioner's work is to find and utilize facts, figures and opinions in a thoughtful and productive manner. Successful practitioners can observe and examine an array of information ranging from consumer perceptions to voting trends to spending habits and, most importantly, can draw useful and actionable conclusions based on those data. This course is designed to introduce students to the research and evaluation tools available to them as well as to the ways in which practitioners use these tools to draw appropriate and useful insights.

The goals of the class are twofold. The first goal is to produce professionals who understand the need to measure and evaluate data to inform communications strategies and to be able to use data analysis and insight to inform the evaluation of communications efforts. Students will leave the course prepared to evaluate assignments they encounter as professionals; find, interpret, synthesize and present research, to direct a research project, and to package and present research.

The second goal of the class is to develop in students an "eye for data," to understand that we are surrounded (if not bombarded) by information every day – online and offline -- that, when viewed through the eye of a researcher, can provide actionable information for a professional communicator.

Over the course of the semester, you will gain a toolkit of research methodologies and analysis techniques that you can apply in a variety of professional contexts. You will apply that toolkit to a series of real-world data collections, culminating in the presentation of a project that includes team and individual components.

Classes will generally consist of the following components:

- Lectures (including guest lectures)
- Discussion
- Exercises
- Student presentations

Note that full engagement during class, and participation in class discussions and presentations, is essential and can significantly influence your final grade. This is particularly true when we have guest lecturers, some of which fly in from the other side of the country just to speak with you. You owe them your full engagement, and you should get as much out of them as you can by picking their brains.

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the basic tenets of public relations research
- Demystify research and data analysis for various stakeholders
- Match research/findings to an organization's business objectives
- Identify an array of target audiences and create appropriate research design/questions to analyze them
- Provide accurate and quantifiable evaluation of public relations techniques/campaigns

- Investigate and use social media monitoring tools
- Conduct a thorough competitive analysis
- Package and present research findings for an array of stakeholders

III. Description and Assessment of Assignments

Short written assignments

Throughout the course, you will be assigned three relatively short written assignments designed to evaluate your understanding of course content. You'll receive a handout describing the details of the task and a grading rubric that will explain how the assignment will be evaluated. In addition, quizzes and in-class projects will affect your participation grade.

Quiz

There will be one in-class quiz on statistical reasoning given during the second half of the semester.

Group research project, presentation and report

The final project in this course is a **group research project**. Together with your group, you will produce your own empirical study of some aspect related to a product, brand, issue, or political issue. This project includes several components: 1) A 3-5 page project plan/presentation including research objectives and ongoing individual contribution updates (see due dates marked below); 2) a professional-quality group presentation and 3) a sophisticated 15-20 page persuasive group research report advocating for a course of action for a "client" based on your group's primary and secondary research. The presentation and report will contain your group's research objective, research results, analysis and recommendations.

Both the in-class presentation and the written parts of the assignment that will be graded both on the quality and thoroughness of information and thought presented as well as innovation and quality in presentation style (e.g., use of multimedia, PowerPoint/ Keynote/Prezi, clarity, visual impact). You will receive a single group grade for the project, however your individual grade on the project will factor-in evaluations of your individual contribution to the final projects. You will have an opportunity to evaluate your group members— each group member is expected to make a strong contribution.

IV. Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Class participation	150	15%
Written Assignment #1 – Situation Analysis & Objectives	200	20%
Written Assignment #2 – Survey Design	50	5%
Midterm Exam	250	25%
Quiz (in class) – Statistical Analysis	50	5%
Final Written Research Report	200	20%
Final Group Presentation	100	10%
TOTAL	1000	100%

b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

There are 1,000 points officially available in the course. This will make it very easy for you to determine your current grade at any point during the class based on the scale below. I will also offer a small number of extra credit opportunities.

c. Grading Standards

“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.

While each student will get an individual grade on the Final Project, you will be working in groups and turning in only one written report and doing only one final presentation. As such, there are elements of the project that will be evaluated on a “group” basis, while taking into account personal contributions.

Final Group Project Grading: Criteria	Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group produces sound, thought-provoking analysis grounded in research on a singular organizational area of interest. • Thoroughly examines all pertinent aspects of a given organization with a singular, clear purpose. • Formulates innovative, valid conclusions grounded in empirical evidence. • Effectively delivers engaging, informative multimedia presentation on research findings. • Provides defensible implementation plan for the organization, including themes, messages, channels, sources etc. • Optimally structures and organizes content in written product and presentation. • Delivers professional quality paper and presentation, without grammatical errors, typos, etc. • Accurately cites all source material • Meets all posted deadlines for project deliverables. 	A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group produces sound, interesting analysis grounded in research on a singular organizational area of interest. • Examines all pertinent aspects of a given organization with a singular, clear purpose. • Formulates innovative conclusions grounded in sound empirical evidence. • Delivers engaging, informative presentation on research findings. • Effectively structures and organizes content in the written product 	B

<p>and the presentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivers professional quality paper and presentation, with few grammatical errors, typos, etc. • Little original insight • Accurately cites all source material • Meets all posted deadlines for project deliverables. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group produces interesting analysis grounded in research on a singular organizational area of interest. • Examines some pertinent aspects of a given organization without identifying a singular, clear purpose or clear objectives • No original insight • Paper/presentation lacks in the professional quality and standards expected of today's PR professionals. • Meets all posted deadlines for project deliverables. 	C

d. Grading Timeline

Assignments will be graded within one week of their due date.

V Assignment Submission Policy

Late papers and assignments are not accepted without prior written consent of the professor, and, then, they are only received by the new due date with 5 points minimum deducted from what the number grade would have been if turned in on time.

Assignments must be submitted via email and/or hard copy to the instructor by the beginning of class on their due date. It is preferred that assignments be sent by email to the professor.

VI. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Course Text: Stacks, D., & Michaelson, D. (2nd Edition). *A Practitioner's Guide to Public Relations Research, Measurement and Evaluation.*

You are expected to read a daily newspaper (online is fine) or otherwise keep up on current events in the news. Additional readings will be posted to Blackboard.

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 Digital Lounge](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website.

VIII. Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/26/19 – 12/6/19)

Friday, September 13: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 13: Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W," except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001

Tuesday, September 17: Last day to drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund for Session 001

Friday, October 11: Last day to drop a course without a mark of "W" on the transcript for Session 001. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, October 11: Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade for Session 001. [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Friday, November 15: Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001

IX. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

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

Reading assignments are for the following week (so, Chapters 1, 4-5 are to be read in preparation for our second class, for example).

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 Date: 8/27	<p>Overview of course, readings and syllabus.</p> <p>Personal introductions</p> <p>Introduction to data and research: Why do we do research in public relations?</p> <p>“Data” and “Insights”</p> <p>Introduction to determining business, PR and research objectives.</p> <p>We will also do in-class exercises.</p>	<p>Text: Chapters 1, 4-5</p> <p>Next Wednesday we will form groups for the final project and you will start a discussion of potential “clients” (internal or external) from a list provided and the nature of your research. If you miss this class session, you will not have input into your group’s client. Think about potential “clients” for final project. Product, institution, political cause, etc.</p>	
Week 2 Date: 9/3	<p>Introduction to Secondary Research</p> <p>Situation and SWOT analyses</p> <p>Goals vs. objectives</p> <p>Final Project: Group Assignments and First Meeting</p> <p>Competitive analysis</p> <p>Revisiting objectives, measuring business outcomes</p> <p>Introduction to quantitative analysis</p> <p><i>NOTE: We will spend the first half of next week’s class with a USC research librarian reviewing research strategies.</i> Attendance is necessary for you to</p>		<p>Assignment #1 (handout) – Situation Analysis & Objectives - DUE: 9/10, beginning of class</p> <p>Bring one data-related item from the news to share with the class – this and every week. <i>If it is something to be shown on the projector, please email it to me at least one hour before class begin</i></p>

	successfully complete your first assignment.		
Week 3 Date: 9/10	<p>Secondary research</p> <p>Competitive analysis</p> <p>Revisiting objectives, measuring business outcomes</p> <p>Objectives and setting measurable goals (continued)</p> <p>Short video: what is the strategy and objective?</p> <p>Introduction quantitative analysis</p> <p>Introduction to survey methodology</p>	<p>Text: Part III Intro., Chapter 8</p> <p>Guest speaker: Chimene Tucker, USC Research Librarian</p> <p>Sign-up for a Qualtrics account (free for USC students)</p>	<p>Assignment #1 (handout): Objectives/Secondary Research – Deeper Dive – DUE 9/24, beginning of class</p> <p>Bring one data-related item from the news to share with the class – this and every week. <i>If it is something to be shown on the projector, please email it to me at least one hour before class begins.</i></p>
Week 4 Date: 9/17	<p>Surveys, contd.</p> <p>Content analysis</p> <p>Sampling</p> <p>Audience segmentation</p>	<p>Text: Chapters 7 and 10, review Chapter 8</p>	<p>Bring one data-related item from the news to share with the class – this and every week. <i>If it is something to be shown on the projector, please email it to me at least one hour before class begins</i></p>
Week 5 Date: 9/24	<p>Review surveys, sampling</p> <p>Audience segmentation</p> <p>Assignment #3</p> <p>Introduction to focus groups</p> <p>In-class focus group assignments</p> <p>Field trip preview/rides</p>	<p>Text: Chapter 6</p> <p>(Handout) Prepare group presentation for next week.</p> <p>Prepare for specific focus group role, if given one</p>	<p>Assignment #1 DUE.</p> <p>Assignment #3 (handout) – Survey (in Qualtrics) – Due: 10/4 via email</p> <p>Bring one data-related item from the news to share with the class – this and every week. <i>If it is something to be shown on the projector, please email it to me at least one hour before class begins</i></p> <p>Develop Group survey</p>
Week 6 Date: 10/1	<p>Focus group guest facilitator: Eric Miller, San Marino Venture Group</p> <p>In-class focus group!</p>	<p>Text: Chapter 7</p> <p>Other readings will be posted on Blackboard</p> <p>Begin drafting survey with your group</p>	<p>Bring one data-related item from the news to share with the class – this and every week. <i>If it is something to be shown on the projector, please email it to me at least one hour before class begins</i></p>

	Midterm preview and study guide	<p>Survey must be approved by professor before going “into the field.”</p> <p>Put survey in the field (if not already done)</p> <p>Study for Midterm</p>	
<p>Week 7 Date: 10/8</p>	<p>Q&A on Midterm</p> <p>Data in Politics/Opposition Research</p> <p>Guest speaker:</p> <p>Jason Stanford, Founder and CEO, Stanford Campaigns and SVP at Hill & Knowlton (Austin, TX).</p>	<p>Text: Review Chapter 9</p> <p>Conduct qualitative research</p> <p>Gather/analyze survey data</p> <p>Group work - Design surveys, focus group scripts, conduct individual interviews, etc.</p> <p>Study for Midterm</p>	<p>Assignment #3 DUE via email before class begins.</p> <p>Bring one data-related item from the news to share with the class – this and every week. <i>If it is something to be shown on the projector, please email it to me at least one hour before class begins</i></p> <p>Your group’s quantitative and qualitative data should be flowing in at this point!</p>
<p>Week 8 Date: 10/15</p>	MIDTERM EXAM		
<p>Week 9 Date: 10/22</p>	<p>Data in the entertainment industry</p> <p>Guest speaker:</p> <p>Sandy Padula, SVP. Research, Turner Entertainment</p>	<p>Groups: Keep collecting data</p>	<p>Bring one data-related item from the news to share with the class – this and every week. <i>If it is something to be shown on the projector, please email it to me at least one hour before class begins</i></p> <p>Your group’s quantitative and qualitative data should be flowing in at this point!</p>
<p>Week 10 Date: 10/29</p>	<p>Guest speaker:</p> <p>Matthew Le Veque, USC Annenberg</p> <p>Social media content analysis</p> <p>Traditional content analysis</p>	<p>Text: Review Chapter 9</p> <p>Conduct qualitative research</p> <p>Gather/analyze survey data</p>	<p>Bring one data-related item from the news to share with the class – this and every week. <i>If it is something to be shown on the projector, please email it to me at least one hour before class begins</i></p>
<p>Week 11 Date: 11/5</p>	<p>Statistical analysis</p> <p>Data workshop</p> <p>Making your own Infographics</p>	<p>Bring your group’s data to class – very important!</p> <p>If selected to do presentation for extra credit, prepare.</p>	<p>DUE: Quiz (in-class)</p> <p>Bring one data-related item from the news to share with the class – this and every week. <i>If it is something to be shown on the projector, please email it to me at least one hour before class begins</i></p>

	<p>Guest speakers: Aimee Yang, USC Annenberg</p> <p>In-class quiz (50 points)</p> <p>Sign-up for extra credit presentations</p>		
<p>Week 12 Date: 11/12</p>	<p>Data in Crises</p> <p>Guest speaker: Ellen Barry, SVP Global Corporate Communication, Aon (Chicago).</p>	<p>Text: Review Chapter 9</p> <p>Work in groups</p>	
<p>Week 13 Date: 11/19</p>	<p>Data in Public Affairs Campaigns</p> <p>Guest speaker: Julianne Hines VP, Public and External Affairs, Planned Parenthood of Pasadena & the San Gabriel Valley</p>	<p>Work in groups</p> <p>Prepare extra credit presentations or assignments</p>	<p>Data in Politics/Opposition Research</p> <p>Guest speaker: Jason Stanford, Founder and CEO, Stanford Campaigns and SVP at Hill & Knowlton (Austin, TX).</p>
<p>Week 14 Date: 11/26</p>	<p>Presentation training</p> <p>Applying data, analysis and insight in different career environments</p> <p>Extra-credit presentations</p>	<p>Work in groups</p>	
<p>Week 15 Date: 12/3</p>	<p>FINAL GROUP PRESENTATIONS!</p>	<p>Extra-credit presentations</p>	
<p>FINAL EXAM PERIOD Date: 12/17, 7-9 p.m.</p>	<p>Final class – “summative experience” – come by to discuss anything you’d like!</p>	<p>FINAL RESEARCH REPORTS DUE</p>	

XI. Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

- This course will feature robust in-class discussion, debate, simulations, and student presentations. The class will get to know each other as the semester progresses and a sense of camaraderie will hopefully emerge. You are encouraged to embrace the opportunity to share your professional goals and ambitions, as the class will be tailored to these needs as much as possible, particularly in the context of the final project.

- Expect to discuss a wide range of issues in class including those that are controversial and about which students (and the professor) may have strongly held, and possibly differing, views. There are virtually no topics off-limits as long as they advance understanding of the course material and as long as discussions are characterized by civility and mutual respect. You are expected to act as adults at all times, being courteous and sensitive to the interests of your fellow classmates.
- You are expected to be well prepared for each class meeting and to provide value to the class discussion.
- Students having any doubt or questions regarding assignments, schedules, etc. should consult this syllabus first, then check with fellow students and only then contact the professor if something remains unclear.

Communication

I am committed to being readily available to my students. My goal is to ensure that you learn the course material -- and have fun doing it -- and I encourage you to talk to me if you have questions at any time. Please write (quast@usc.edu) or call (213.452.6348) and if I cannot respond immediately, I promise to get back to you within 24 hours; it will usually be much sooner! Please also feel free but not obligated to track me down on Twitter @davequast or on LinkedIn.

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 or public relations 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://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>). 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

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421

studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

XIII. About Your Instructor

I am an adjunct professor at USC Annenberg with more than 25 years of experience as a public relations practitioner counseling clients in the corporate, legal and political arenas. My expertise includes corporate communications; corporate positioning and messaging; issues, crisis and reputation management; litigation support; and, media and presentation coaching.

I am currently a senior vice president in the Los Angeles office of FTI Consulting. I have led engagements in a variety of sectors including energy, industrials, professional services, financial services, health care, technology and non-profit. Notable among recent activities, I served as California Director of Energy in Depth, an education and research campaign focused on correcting misinformation about oil and gas development in California, particularly on the issue of hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”).

In addition to work, teaching, and being a father of four (including triplets), I also serve on the Board of Directors of both Planned Parenthood of Pasadena and the San Gabriel Valley and Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California.

As a working public relations practitioner who has worked in almost every environment (corporate, agency, politics, government, etc.) on challenging and often-controversial assignments, I try to bring a “real world” perspective to my classes so that students understand how the concepts we discuss and skills we develop will apply after graduation.

I hold a B.A. in Politics and Government from the University of Puget Sound, an M.A. in British Government from the University of Essex (U.K.) and I attended the Georgetown University Law Center.