

# PBRL340 Public Relations Research Methods Spring 2016

School of Advertising and Public Relations  
College of Communication and Information  
University of Tennessee

## Course & Instructor Information

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Class Hours & Location: TR 12:40 p.m. – 1:55 p.m. @ AMB33

	Instructor	Teaching Assistant
	Moonhee Cho, Ph.D.	Ms. Gawon Kim
Office	469 Communications Building (Located within the School of Advertising & Public Relations office suite 476 Communications Building)	467 Communications Building
Phone	865-974-5721	N/A
E-mail	<a href="mailto:mcho4@utk.edu">mcho4@utk.edu</a> <i>To help us keep track of email messages, please include "PBRL340/Spring2016: Your name" in the subject line of any email message you sent to us.</i>	<a href="mailto:gkim10@vols.utk.edu">gkim10@vols.utk.edu</a>
Office Hours	TR 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. or by appointment	TBD

## Course Description

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This course provides an introduction to and experience with social science research methods used in the public relations and strategic communication fields. This course reviews the crucial role of research to develop informed strategy, monitor communication programs, and to evaluate overall campaign effectiveness. Students will learn the basic fundamentals of primary and secondary research this semester.

- Prerequisites (1) Have Advertising or Public Relations major status  
(2) Have passed either ADV250 or PR270  
(3) Have passed STAT201  
*If you do not meet all three of these requirements, you will not be allowed to stay in this course this semester.*

## Course Objectives

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Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the role of scientific research methods that are commonly used for advertising and public relations
- Display sensitivity to ethical concerns in conducting research
- Learn major quantitative research methods (e.g., survey, experiment, and content analysis, etc.) and qualitative research methods (e.g., interview, focus group, etc.)
- Apply research methods to specific situations and execute various forms of original advertising/public relations research
- Understand basic numerical and statistical concepts on empirical data
- Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate research problems correctly and clearly
- Write persuasive research reports and deliver the results successfully in a professional oral presentation

## Textbooks & Readings

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- Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2013). *Mass media research: An introduction* (10th Edition). [Recommended]
- Stacks, D. W. (2011). *Primer of public relations research* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press. [Recommended]
- Some supplemental readings (SR) may be provided throughout the course in hard copies or available on Blackboard.

## Course Structure

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This course is administered through a combination of lectures, class discussions, and class exercises. The lectures are designed to reinforce –not reiterate— information obtained from the readings. You are expected to read, but also share your opinions in class. A high level of individual participation is expected throughout the semester.

**\*\* Collaborative Learning.** Students learn more if they are open to sharing their thoughts and opinions. In the spirit of collaborative learning, students are encouraged to:

- Find one or two classmates to share notes from class and discuss the readings and assignments.
- Proof-read and comment on each other's work
- Share resources that they find relevant to the topics being discussed in class
- Work together to prepare for exams

### **Online Course Management**

Blackboard will be used to administer all course communication, including grades and assignment submission. You are expected to check the site before every class meeting for materials, schedule changes and announcements. Class notes will be uploaded by 9 a.m. as long as students comply with classroom policies. Students are responsible for bringing a hard copy of class notes.

**Students will use SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for data analysis.**

You are responsible for accessing the software. You can access SPSS/PC for Windows in labs at CCI. A free SPSS trial version can also be downloaded online.

## Course Requirements and Evaluations

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### **I. Exams (100 points X 2 = 200 points)**

Two exams during the term will be held during the regularly scheduled class periods (03/01 & 04/19). The exams will cover all course readings, handouts, guest speakers, and class discussion as specified in the syllabus. The exams will be a combination of multiple-choice and true/false. The tests are not cumulative. Exam grades will be posted on Blackboard.

### **II. Team Project (250 points)**

#### **1) Team member & client selection (10 points) DUE 1/26/2016**

For your final project of this course, you will work with team (3 or 4 members) to conduct a variety of research methods for your chosen client. In this memo, you will 1) list the names of your team members, 2) notify the team leader of the group, and 3) outline the client/organization you propose for the final project (e.g., name of organization, rationales to choose such organization, and how relevant/significant the organization is to your primary publics, college students). This memo helps you better prepare your final project and provides an opportunity for the professor to provide guidance early. Your extensive research on the organization and information availability is required to fulfill the assignment successfully.

#### **2) Situational analysis (40 points) DUE 2/09/2016**

Situation analysis (minimum 10 double-spaced pages, Times Roman 12, margins 1") supported by secondary research and a brief communication analysis using an online application of your choice. The analysis should include academic and/or trade (professional and news media) references that follow the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)*. The components of this analysis are: background of the situation and organization, problem/opportunity statement, communication techniques and efforts, strategic key messages, targeted publics, communication analysis, and SWOT analysis of the campaign (i.e., strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). Additional details will be provided.

#### **3) Planning phase of qualitative research method (25 points) DUE 2/18/2016**

Design qualitative research methodology, which include purpose statement, description of the method (e.g., focus group, in-depth interviews, etc.), research protocol (stages of the process),

instrument construction (present a set of questions to be asked to participants), sampling technique and sample, data gathering and analysis.

**4) Conducting qualitative research and reporting/presenting research findings (50 points)  
DUE 3/10/2016**

Report qualitative research findings and analysis, including method used and brief research protocol (stages of the research process), sample description (demographics), summary of findings, interpretation, and limitations/future qualitative research.

**5) Planning phase of quantitative research method (25 points) DUE 3/24/2015**

Design quantitative research methodology, which include purpose statement, research questions or hypotheses to be tested, description of the method (i.e., survey), research protocol (stages of the process), instrument construction (present a set of questions to be asked to participants), sampling technique and sample, data gathering and analysis.

**6) Conducting quantitative research and writing/presenting research findings (50 points)  
DUE 4/26/2015**

Report quantitative research findings and analysis, including method used and brief research protocol (stages of the research process), sample description (demographics), summary of findings, answers to research questions/hypotheses, interpretation, and limitations/future quantitative research.

**7) Revision of the previous assignments and completion of the final project (25 points)  
DUE 4/28/2015**

Final executive summary intended to be presented to a fictitious client, which includes highlights of the situation analysis, qualitative research findings, quantitative research findings, and recommendation for enhancing public relations techniques and efforts. For the final project submission, all components should be revised reflecting the instructor's feedback.

**NOTE:** The primary outcomes of this course are oral and written reports of a research project developed by the team to which you belong. Your participation in the group effort will be closely monitored, especially through peer evaluations (for each assignment, each group member will complete peer evaluations). Thus, the members of a group may receive a different grade at the end of the course. Be aware that investing sufficient time and effort in the development of the research project will impact your group performance and your individual grade. The quality of your participation in-group projects will determine your individual grade. If your peers evaluate you poorly, your individual grade will be up to 10 percent less than the rest of the members of your group. This is to emphasize the importance of your active participation in the group effort.

**III. Participation & Class Activities (50 points)**

As this is a learner-centered course, your attendance and participation in class discussions is essential. Your participation will be determined by such efforts as discussing assigned readings and bringing timely and relevant issues to the attention of the class. Participation grades separate from attendance. Only those who make a valuable contribution to the quality of the discussion and show enthusiasm to classmates' presentation will receive full points. Some in-class or take-home assignments will be given to facilitate class discussion. **Note:** Participation is not a reflection of attendance, however, any student who has more than three absences cannot receive more than a 70% on this portion of their grade. Being in class is a prerequisite for participation, and doing it a lot once every few classes is not substitute for participating every day.

**Grading**

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I. Exams (2 @ 100 points)	40 % (200 points)
II. Team Project	50 % (250 points)
1. Team member & client selection memo	2 % (10 points)
2. Situation analysis	8 % (40 points)

3. Qualitative research proposal	5 % (25 points)
4. Reporting and presenting qualitative research findings	10 % (50 points)
5. Quantitative research proposal	5 % (25 points)
6. Reporting and presenting quantitative research findings	15 % (50 points)
7. Revision of the previous assignments and completion	5 % (25 points)
III. Participation & Class Activities	10 % (50 points)

**Course Grade:** Total your points from all course requirements. See the table below to determine your final grade for the course. No rounding.

500-465	A	464-450	A-	449-435	B+
434-415	B	414-400	B-	399-385	C+
384-365	C	364-350	C-	349-335	D+
334-315	D	314-300	D-	Below 300	F

\* Note: A C- does not count as a C for purposes of passing required classes.

### Makeups and Late Assignments

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It is important public relations practitioners to know how to adhere to pre-determined project deadlines. Therefore, policy of the course is that there will be no make-up exams or extensions of deadlines. Exceptions will be rare and made only in cases of extraordinary, documented circumstances, as determined by the instructor. Any make-up exams administered or late assignments accepted will be graded lower than work turned in on time.

Assignments turned in within the first 24 hours after the deadline will receive a 10% grade reduction. Assignments turned in between 24 and 48 hours after the deadline will receive a 20% grade reduction. After 48 hours, late assignments will not be accepted and will receive a grade of 0. **All assignments are due via Blackboard, by 9:00 a.m. on the due date. Do not email me your assignments.**

### Attendance

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You are expected to attend class faithfully and arrive on time. Students arriving after the class roll has been taken will be marked as "late/tardy" and 2 tardies = 1 absence. Each student is allowed two (either excused or unexcused) absences for the semester without any points deducted. **Absences beyond two—for any reason—will result in a reduction of 10 points for each additional absence after the first two absences. After six absences (either excused or unexcused) you will fail the entire class.** Students are responsible for all class work missed. They should consult with classmates, rather than the instructor, to obtain information on lectures, assignments, etc.

### Tips for Surviving this Class

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Most students find PBRL 340 to be one of the more time consuming classes in the public relations sequence. Especially at the end of the semester (and probably when all of your other courses are hectic as well), PBRL 340 will prove stressful. You will, however, leave this class a more informed individual and a more prepared potential employee for all future career endeavors.

To succeed in this course, it is strongly advised that you complete course readings and assignments – before coming to class. Only then will you be prepared for exams, in-class exercises, Q & A sessions, able to discuss materials, and ultimately make the most of class time. It is strongly suggested that you refer to the Blackboard course site regularly to download materials and get notices.

In PBRL 340, 50% of your final course grade will be comprised of group work assignments. Please choose your group wisely. From experience, friends do not always make the best teammates!

## Classroom Conduct and Policies

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I will do my best to provide a welcoming and open learning environment for every student, but I cannot do this alone. **Mutual respect**—including respect for and appreciation of diversity—is very important to our learning environment. Refrain from any behavior that can disrupt the learning environment, such as cell phone use, leaving early, arriving late, chatting with your neighbor, listening to music, etc.

### **Other Rules**

- Arrive on time and stay until the end of class.
- Cell phones, and other electronic devices must be turned off or silent during class; vibrate is not considered off. Phones must not be touched during class and are to remain in your bag/backpack.
- Absolutely no texting during class.
- Laptops/tablet PCs are prohibited for all students during class time, except for students with disabilities that require a laptop for note-taking. Any student who has received permission to use laptop MUST sit in one of the first two rows of the classroom.
- Talking while others are speaking and reading unrelated materials are prohibited. It is distracting and disrespectful to your classmates and the instructor.
- Students are urged to meet in-person with the instructor or teaching assistant if they have questions or are having problems. Office hours are listed on p. 1 of the syllabus.
- E-mail inquiries to the instructor and teaching assistant should be limited to questions that are not answered elsewhere (e.g., the syllabus). Formal composition and clear and concise writing are required.
- ***Any student doing any of the above behaviors or any other outside activities may be asked to leave the class and will be counted absent for that day.***

### **Honor Code**

All academic work must meet the standards contained in the University of Tennessee's Academic Standards of Conduct and Honor Statement, in "*Hilltopics*." Each student is responsible for knowing these standards before performing academic work. All assignments are your work and your work *alone*. Any questionable behavior or violations of the standards presented in *Hilltopics* will result in a zero score for the assignment in question, lowered grade or failure of the entire course, and possible expulsion from the university. Please commit yourselves to academic honesty; failure to do so negatively affects you and cheapens the value of a degree from the University of Tennessee.

### **Open Records Act**

This course adheres to the University's policy regarding the use and release of student records that are governed by Public Law 93-380, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Tennessee Public Records Act, which charges the University and its employees with protecting the confidentiality of the educational records of its prospective, current and former students. One way this affects you is that the professor cannot share or discuss grades via email.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with documented disabilities should notify the instructor immediately to discuss requests for special provisions. Students who have a disability that requires accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, 2227 Dunford Hall, (974-6087) to discuss specific needs and get official documentation of the disability.

### **College Diversity Statement**

The College of Communication and Information recognizes that a college diverse in its people, curricula, scholarship, research, and creative activities expands opportunities for intellectual inquiry and engagement, helps students develop critical thinking skills, and prepares students for social and civic responsibilities. All members of the College benefit from diversity and the quality of learning, research, scholarship and creative activities is enhanced by a climate of

inclusion, understanding and appreciation of differences and the full range of human experience. As a result, the College is committed to diversity and equal opportunity and it recognizes that it must represent the diversity inherent in American society. The College is acutely aware that diversity and fairness are foundations that unite the College's faculty, staff, students, and the larger communication and information community (see <http://www.cci.utk.edu/diversity-statement> for CCI's full Diversity statement).

***Incomplete Grades***

Incomplete grades will only be granted when, due to circumstances beyond the control of the student, only a small portion of the required work remains undone and the student is otherwise passing the course.

***Audio Recordings***

All unauthorized audio or video recordings of class sessions are prohibited. Audio recordings that accommodate individual student needs must be approved in advance and may be made for personal use during the semester only. Sale or redistribution of approved audio recordings or lecture notes is prohibited.

***Final Caveat***

This syllabus is subject to change as the instructor deems appropriate and necessary.



## Course Schedule (Updated as of 1/13/2016)

\*\* All assignments are due by 9:00 a.m. on the due date.

Date		Topic	Readings	Due
<b>W1</b>	01/14 (R)	Course Overview Mini Assignment 1 Introduction Team Project 1 Introduction		
<b>W2</b>	01/19 (T)	Research in Public Relations Team Project 2 Introduction	[WD] Chapters 16 [S] Chapter 1	Student Bio Sheet <i>Mini Assignment 1</i>
	01/21 (R)	The Research Process/ Science and Research	[WD] Chapter 1 [S] Chapter 1	
<b>W3</b>	01/26 (T)	Situation Analysis & Secondary Research	[WD] Chapter 2	Team Project Assignment 1 (Client & team selection)
	01/28 (R)	Elements of Research	[WD] Chapter 2	
<b>W4</b>	02/02 (T)	Elements of Research	[WD] Chapter 2	
	02/04 (R)	Research Ethics	[WD] Chapter 3 [S] Chapter 1	
<b>W5</b>	02/09 (T)	Qualitative Research	[WD] Chapter 5 [S] Chapter 9	Team Project Assignment 2 1 <sup>st</sup> Peer Evaluation Form
	02/11 (R)	Qualitative Research Team Project Assignment 3 Introduction	[WD] Chapter 5 [S] Chapter 9	
<b>W6</b>	02/16 (T)	Sampling Feedback on Assignment 2	[WD] Chapter 4 [S] Chapter 10	
	02/18 (R)	Sampling Team Project Assignment 4 Introduction	[WD] Chapter 4 [S] Chapter 10	Team Project Assignment 3
<b>W7</b>	02/23 (T)	Feedback on Assignment 3 Team Meeting with Instructor	N/A	
	02/25 (R)	Exam1 Review	N/A	
<b>W8</b>	03/01 (T)	<b>Exam1</b>	N/A	
	03/03 (R)	Survey Research: Measurement	[WD] Chapters 2 & 7	
<b>W9</b>	03/08 (T)	Survey Research: Types of survey	[WD] Chapter 7 [S] Chapter 11	
	03/10 (R)	<b>Qualitative Research Finding Presentation</b> Survey Research & survey design	[WD] Chapter 7 [S] Chapter 11	Team Project Assignment 4 2 <sup>nd</sup> Peer Evaluation Form
<b>W10</b>	03/15 (T)	Spring Break	N/A	
	03/17 (R)	Spring Break	N/A	
<b>W11</b>	03/22 (T)	Feedback on Assignment 4 Survey Research Revising survey questionnaires	[WD] Chapter 7	
	03/24 (R)	Content Analysis	[WD] Chapter 6	Team Project Assignment 5
<b>W12</b>	03/29 (T)	Feedback on Assignment 5 & <i>Launch survey</i> Content Analysis	[WD] Chapter 6	
	03/31 (R)	<b>UT Social Media Week</b>		
<b>W13</b>	04/05 (T)	Introduction to Statistics	[WD] Chapter 10 [S] Chapter 13	
	04/07 (R)	SPSS Tutorial: Data Analysis Bring a laptop (with SPSS installed)	[WD] Chapter 12 [S] Chapter 4	
<b>W14</b>	04/12 (T)	SPSS Tutorial: Data Analysis Bring a laptop (with SPSS installed)	[WD] Chapter 12 [S] Chapter 4	
	04/14 (R)	Exam Review	N/A	
<b>W15</b>	04/19 (T)	<b>Exam2</b>	N/A	
	04/21 (R)	Work on Final Project	N/A	
<b>W16</b>	04/26 (T)	<b>Quantitative Research Finding Presentation</b>	N/A	3 <sup>rd</sup> Peer Evaluation Form
	04/28 (R)	<b>Final Project Submission</b>	N/A	Final Project