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PSPR 6203 SYLLABUS

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF POLITICAL MANAGEMENT

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to familiarize students with the basics of communications research, to design it, execute it, and evaluate it. We will cover developing research questions, choosing between qualitative and quantitative research approaches, and develop both quantitative and qualitative research projects as well as analyze them. By the end of the course, students will be able to design, carry out, analyze, and write up a thorough research report, as well as be able to evaluate research results from a hired vendor.

INSTRUCTOR: Jeanine P.D. Guidry, PhD

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PHONE: 804-683-4512

OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays, 7-8pm EDT:
individual appointments upon request

INSTRUCTOR BIO



Originally from the Netherlands, Dr. Jeanine Guidry received her Ph.D. in Social and Behavioral Sciences from the Department of Health Behavior and Policy in the School of Medicine at VCU, her M.S. in Health Sciences from Maastricht University in the Netherlands, and her M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations from George Washington University.

Dr. Guidry currently is an assistant professor at the Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture, as well as director of the School's Media+Health Lab. Besides Research Methods, she frequently teaches courses on Social Media for PR, Global Communication, Health and Risk Communication, and recently developed a course on Digital COVID Crisis Communication.

Her research agenda focuses on the use of visual social media and mobile technology in health communication and message design, and her dissertation research studied effective message design development for a future Zika vaccine. She regularly presents her work at national and international conferences, such as the International Communications Association (ICA) conference, the American Public Health Association (APHA) conference, and the EUPRERA (European PR) conference. In addition, her work has been published, among others, in *Public Relations Review*, *Vaccine*, the *Journal of Social Marketing*, *Health Communication*, *Health Education and Behavior*, *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, and *Communication Teacher*.

COURSE GOALS

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Develop a strong rationale for research and measurement in public relations practice and understand how to incorporate research into the development of your plans.
2. Understand the differences between research questions and hypotheses, and when to use each.
3. Identify the pros and cons of qualitative versus quantitative research, and when to use each.
4. Plan and write a secondary research paper.
5. Design and field qualitative research approaches and interpret and apply results.
6. Design and field quantitative research approaches and interpret and apply results.
7. Understand and execute basic descriptive statistical concepts.
8. Understand the basics of an RFP
9. Write a complete research report for your client, including research-based recommendations

GRADUATE SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS

Students enrolled in a graduate program should take their academic responsibilities seriously and be prepared to meet the following expectations:

1. Utilize effective time management skills so as to complete and submit their assignments on their required due dates and times.
2. Have attained a mastery of written communication skills including proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and word usage.
3. Understand how to properly format in-text citations and references for resources and information integrated into their written assignments.

COURSE EVALUATION

At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW's online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting:

Dr. Todd Belt

Director, Political Management Program
tbelt@gwu.edu | 202-994-4363

Lawrence Parnell

Director, Strategic Public Relations Program
lparnell@gwu.edu

Suzanne Farrand

Director of Academic Administration, GSPM
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309

PREREQUISITES

ACADEMIC

There are no academic prerequisites for this course.

TECHNOLOGICAL

As a student in an online course, you need to ensure that you have the required technology and skills necessary to fully participate.

The minimum technology requirements for all online students at GW are outlined at the following location: <http://www.gwu.edu/technology-requirements>.

You should also be able to:

- Use a digital camera or scanner
- Use your computer to upload recordings and images to your computer
- Be open to learning and registering for new technologies
- Be flexible when technological glitches happen (which is a given)
- Seek technological help when necessary by contacting the Division of Information Technology

If you have any problems with the software in this course, please reference the Help link in the left navigation menu in our course on Blackboard.

TEXTBOOKS & MATERIALS

Stacks, D.W. (2016). *Primer of Public Relations Research*. The Guilford Press. ISBN: 978-1462522705, E-book ISBN: 146252270X.

Croucher, S.M. & Cronn-Mills, D. (2019). *Understanding Communication Research Methods*. Routledge. ISBN: 978-1138052680

Articles pertinent to the weeks' topics will be posted for students on the course as well.

COURSE OUTLINE

This is a 10-week course. The following outline presents the topics to be covered in each week:

Week 1: Research and research questions

Week 2: Secondary research; Content analysis

Week 3: Qualitative research: Focus groups and in-depth interviews

Week 4: Qualitative research: Analysis

Week 5: Quantitative research: Variable types; Survey research

Week 6: Quantitative research: Creating a survey

Week 7: Quantitative research: Analysis

Week 8: Creating a research RFP

Week 9: Social media metrics and measurement

Week 10: Final assignment: Complete research report

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

This course uses the following methods of instruction:

- *Lectures:* Weeks 1–9 have both written and PowerPoint lectures.
- *Readings:* Each week contains required and suggested readings relevant to the module's topic that offer further substance to the lectures or a central part of the class discussion(s) for that week.
- *Exercises:* Weeks 2, 4, and 7 have exercise assignments, to help you apply some of the skills taught in the previous weeks.
- *Discussion Assignments:* Weeks 1-3 and 5-9 have discussion topics. There is no discussion in Weeks 4 and 10. Bringing your experience and knowledge to contribute to a broader discussion with your fellow students will allow you to explore the week's topics for different perspectives. There is an ungraded introduction discussion in Week 1.
- *Writing Assignments:* There are a total of ten (10) written assignments, one each in Weeks 1-5, 8; and two each in Weeks 6 and 9. The final research report is due in Week 10.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

The following describes each of the assessment categories listed in the table below:

- *Discussions:* All students are expected to participate in all classroom discussions. The discussions are meant to ensure that you are mastering class concepts, that you can research additional information, and that you can engage knowledgeably with others on topics covered in the course. Each student's ideas, experiences, and opinions are important for a dynamic and engaging course. Students will be awarded points for substantive participation through meaningful responses to the assigned topics. The class will be an interactive learning experience and not simply lessons and homework. For each discussion, you will be required to post an initial response in which you will respond to a question provided by your instructor. Once you have posted your initial response, you will be required to

post at least two substantive responses to your peers' posts. All discussion posts should also include properly cited references (APA 7th). Keep in mind that all discussion posts must be substantive. Substantive responses must be based upon the course content, relevant theory, or your personal experiences, not mere opinion. A simple "I agree" will not count. Substantive responses should also include appropriate documentation/citations.

- *Written Assignments:* During this course, you will be required to complete ten (10) written assignments. There is a different prompt for each assignment.
- *Exercises:* Exercises will help you apply some of the skills taught in the previous weeks.
- *Final Paper:* A final research report will be due in the final week of the course. Students should abide by all the report requirements.

GRADING

Achievement in this course will be assessed through completion of the following activities:

Assignment Group	Assignment	Points	Weight of Final Grade
Written Assignments	Ten (10) written assignments	100 each	50%
Discussion assignments	Nine (9) discussion posts and replies	100 each	15%
Exercises	Four (4) exercises	100 each	10%
Final Research Report	Final Research Report	100	25%

The grading scale, below, determines your final letter grade.

Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%
A	100–93	B-	83–80	C-	70–73
A-	90–92	C+	79–77	F	< 70
B+	89–87	C	76–74		

POLICIES

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSE TIME

I will respond to emails within 48 hours. I will return writing assignments within one week, with comments.

LATE WORK

It is very important that work be turned in on time or you will find it very difficult to catch up. All assignments are due on the dates indicated in this syllabus and in the course outline. This is a highly participatory course, and late assignments due to work or medical requirements should be discussed with the instructor prior to the missed module or late assignments, if possible. Unexcused delays or assignments submitted after the due date will have two (2) point deduction per day.

NETIQUETTE

Please observe the following rules of netiquette for communicating online:

- Remain professional, respectful, and courteous at all times.
- Remember that a real human being wrote each post and will read what you write in response. It is easy to misinterpret discussion posts. Let's give the benefit of the doubt.
- If you have a strong opinion on a topic, it is acceptable to express it as long as it is not phrased as an attack. Please be gracious with differing opinions.
- When upset, wait a day or two prior to posting. Messages posted (or emailed) in anger are often regretted later.
- Proofread and use the spell check tool when you type a post. It makes the post easier to read and helps your readers understand what you are saying.

I reserve the right to delete any post that is deemed inappropriate for the discussion forum, blog, or wiki without prior notification to the student. This includes any post containing language that is offensive, rude, profane, racist, or hateful. Posts that are seriously off-topic or serve no purpose other than to vent frustration will also be removed.

GWU CREDIT HOUR POLICY

This is a 3-credit course. Over 16 weeks, direct instruction per week is variable given the method of delivery. The student will have a minimum of 5.5 hours of independent learning per week. Independent learning includes reading assignments, writing papers, discussion boards, preparing for exams, and study time.

This is the maximum expected hours of work—each student will have his or her own work level. Some students will be able to complete their work in less time, some may require more time.

More information about GWU's credit hour policy can be found at: [Credit Hour Policy](#).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For details and complete code, see [GW's Code of Academic Integrity](#).

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden.

The Copyright Act (17 U.S.C. § 10) governs the rights attributed to owners of copyrighted work. Under certain circumstances, educational institutions may provide copies of copyrighted works to students. The copies may not be copied nor used for any other purpose besides private study, scholarship, or research. Users should not provide electronic copies of any materials provided on this course's Blackboard site to unauthorized users. If a user fails to comply with Fair Use restrictions, he/she may be held liable for copyright infringement. No further transmission or electronic distribution is permitted.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON OBSERVANCE OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details see the current religious holiday policy on the [Office of the Provost's Policies](#) web page.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services. They can be contacted by phone at 202-994-8250 or in person at Rome Hall, 801 22nd Street, NW, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information visit the [Disability Support Services](#) website.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

GW's Colonial Health Center offers counseling and psychological services, supporting mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success. For additional information call 202-994-5300 or visit the [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) website.

THE WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center is located in Gelman Library at 2130 H St NW in Suite 221 and they can be reached at 202-994-3765 or via email at gwriter@gwu.edu. You can [schedule writing center appointments](#), both

in-person or by phone, in advance. Daytime and evening hours are available. Check for this semester's hours at the [writing center contact page](#). The Writing Center does offer Summer hours.

GWU LIBRARIES

Off campus students have full access to all of the research resources, services, and assistance that the Library offers. The GW community has access to 500+ online subscription databases and to millions of items, electronic and print, in the library catalog. Off-campus students even have additional privileges because the Library will FedEx print materials to your home. For more information visit the [GW Libraries](#) homepage.

Call the Ask Us desk at 202-994-6048 or [contact someone at the library](#) to answer any questions. For questions beyond “Do you have this book/article?” and “How do I login?” use the website mentioned to make a research consultation appointment with a librarian. Librarians are there to guide students through any aspect of the research process, from selecting and narrowing a topic, crafting a research strategy to citation management.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- In an emergency: call GYPD at 202-994-6111 or call 911
- For situation-specific actions: review the [Emergency Response Handbook](#)
- In an active violence situation: [Get Out, Hide Out or Take Out](#)
- Stay informed: review [notification tools for staying informed during emergency and safety related situations](#)

WEEK 1: Research and Research Questions

The focus of this first week is to get an overview of research, of different types of research, and of the differences between research questions and hypotheses. **IMPORTANT:** you will choose your client for the course early in this week – you need to submit this and get it approved before you can write Discussion 1.2.



Online Lectures: Read, watch, and listen to the lecture presentations:

1. An Introduction to the Constitution.
2. The U.S. Constitution.



Discussion 1.1 [Ungraded, introductions]. Respond to the discussion prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post an initial response by Wednesday and then follow up your initial post by a minimum of two responses to discussants by **Friday**.



Read the following resources, either in your textbooks or found on the “Readings” page:

- Research Questions background
- Hypotheses background
- Chapter 1 in Stacks textbook
- Chapter 7 in Croucher textbook

The full list of readings is available in Blackboard.



Discussion 1.2 [Asking the right questions]. Respond to the discussion prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post an initial response by Friday and then follow up your initial post by a minimum of six responses to discussants by **Sunday**.



Assignment 1.1 [Choosing your client]. Respond to the assignment prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post this assignment by **Wednesday**. The timing is crucial since you will need to have your client approved before you can write **Discussion 1.2**

WEEK 2: Secondary research; Content analysis

In this week we will focus on secondary research, as well as on the first primary research method: content analysis. In preparation for your secondary research paper, you will focus on secondary research sources, as well as on developing your research questions for your client.



Online Lectures: Read, watch, and listen to the lecture presentations:

1. Secondary research
2. Research questions and hypotheses
- 3.



Discussion 2.1 [Sources for secondary research].

Respond to the discussion prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post an initial response by **Thursday** and then follow up your initial post by a minimum of two responses to discussants by **Saturday**.



Read the following resources, either in your textbooks or found on the “Readings” page:

- Chapter 9 in Stacks textbook
- Chapters 12 and 13 in Croucher textbook
- Examples secondary research papers



Assignment 2.1 [Develop research questions].

Respond to the assignment prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post this assignment by **Thursday**.

WEEK 3: Qualitative research: Focus groups and in-depth interviews

This week is focused on qualitative research, and more specifically on focus groups and in-depth interviews. In addition, you will finish and submit your secondary research paper this week.

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Online Lectures: Read, watch, and listen to the lecture presentations:

1. Focus groups
2. In-depth interviews



Discussion 3.1 [Examples of qualitative research]. Respond to the discussion prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post an initial response by Thursday, and then follow up your initial post by a minimum of two responses to discussants by **Saturday**.



Read the following resources, either in your textbooks or found on the “Readings” page:

- Chapter 11 in the Stacks textbook
- Chapters 9 and 10 in the Croucher textbook



Assignment 3.1 [Secondary research paper]. Respond to the prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post your assignment by **Sunday**.

WEEK 4: Analyzing qualitative research

This week our focus will be on analyzing qualitative research – once you have interview or focus group data, how do you use it to answer your research questions? Your assignment this week is to develop either an in-depth interview or focus group moderator’s guide (my recommendation is an in-depth interview guide, since that will be easier to execute next week.)



Online Lectures: No recorded lectures for this week



Read the following resources, either in your textbooks or found on the “Readings” page:

- Moderator examples
- Sample focus group analysis
- [Analyzing](#) interview transcripts
- Three straightforward methods for [analyzing interview](#) data



Assignment 4.1 [Develop interview or focus group guide]. Respond to the prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post your assignment by **Sunday**.

WEEK 5: Quantitative research: Variable types, survey research

This week will start our focus on quantitative research, primarily in the form of survey research, but starting with an important lecture on sampling: how do you select the group or people you will survey? In addition, this week you will actually carry out and transcribe two in-depth interviews (which you will analyze next week)



Online Lectures: Read, watch, and listen to the lecture presentations:

1. Sampling
2. Surveys
- 3.



Discussion 5.1 [Examples of specific variables]. Respond to the discussion prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post an initial response by **Wednesday** and then follow up your initial post by a minimum of two responses to discussants by **Sunday**.



Read the following resources, either in your textbooks or found on the “Readings” page:

- Chapter 12 in the Stacks textbook



Assignment 5.1 [Two in-depth interviews & transcribe the data]. Respond to the prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post your assignment by **Sunday**.

The full list of readings is available in Blackboard.

WEEK 6: Quantitative research: Creating a survey

During this week you will learn more about variables, which you will then put into practice by creating your own survey using Google Forms. In addition, you will create a research report for the in-depth interview results.



Online Lectures: Read, watch, and listen to the lecture presentations:

- 1. Variables



Discussion 6.1 [Demographic questions]. Respond to the discussion prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post an initial response by **Wednesday** of Week 11 and then follow up your initial post by a minimum of two responses to discussants by **Sunday**.



Read the following resources, either in your textbooks or found on the “Readings” page:

- Chapter 13 in Stacks textbook
- Chapter 15 in Croucher textbook
- Survey examples
- Analyzing interview and focus group data – written tutorial
- Rev.com



Discussion 6.1 [Create a qualitative data analysis report]. Respond to the prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post your assignment by **Sunday**.



Assignment 6.2 [Create a 20-question survey]. Respond to the prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post your assignment by **Sunday**.

WEEK 7: Analyzing Quantitative data

This week focuses on getting at least 20 completed responses to your survey, and on analyzing quantitative data. You'll learn a little about statistics and how to use the two main types of statistics, and you will dip your proverbial toes into statistical analysis program SPSS.



Online Lectures: Read, watch, and listen to the lecture presentations:

1. Basic statistics
2. Inferential statistics



Discussion 7.1 [Sample size calculations]. Respond to the discussion prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post an initial response by **Wednesday of Week 13** and then follow up your initial post by a **minimum of two responses to discussants by Sunday.**



Read the following resources, either in your textbooks or found on the “Readings” page:

- Chapter 6 in the Stacks textbook
- Chapters 16 and 17 in the Croucher textbook
- [Analyzing survey data](#)



Exercise 7.1 [Field your approved survey and get at least 20 completed responses]. Respond to the prompts and questions as outlined in the exercise. Post your exercise by **Sunday. Sunday.**



Exercise 7.2 [SPSS exercise]. Respond to the prompts and questions as outlined in the exercise. Post your exercise by **Sunday.**

WEEK 8: Research RFPs

Week 8 will focus on creating research RFPs, and you will analyze your survey results.



Online Lectures: Read, watch, and listen to the lecture presentations:

1. Creating an RFP



Discussion 8.1 [Research RFP]. Respond to the discussion prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post an initial response by **Wednesday** and then follow up your initial post by a minimum of two responses to discussants by **Sunday**.



Read the following resources, either in your textbooks or found on the “Readings” page:

- Chapter 16 in the Stacks textbook
- Chapters 16 and 17 in the Croucher textbook
- [Writing](#) a better research RFP



Assignment 8.1 [Create a survey research analysis report]. Respond to the prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post your assignment by **Sunday**.

WEEK 9: Social metrics and measurement

Week 9 will focus on social media metrics and engagement.



Online Lectures: Read, watch, and listen to the lecture presentations:

1. Social media metrics and measurement



Assignment 9.1 [Social media metrics recommendation]. Respond to the prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post your assignment by **Sunday**.



Read the following resources, either in your textbooks or found on the “Readings” page:

- Freberg textbook chapter 6
- Chapters 11 in the Croucher textbook



Assignment 9.2 [Social listening/hashtag analysis]. Respond to the prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post your assignment by **Sunday**.



Discussion 9.1 [Your client and social media platforms]. Respond to the discussion prompts and questions as outlined in the assignment. Post an initial response by **Wednesday** and then follow up your initial post by a minimum of two responses to discussants by **Sunday**.

WEEK 10: Comprehensive Final Exam

Week 10 completes the course. No lectures or assigned readings for this week – all your attention can go to the final research report for your client.



Online Lectures: There are no lectures in this week.



Assignment 10.1 [Final research report]. The Final Research Report is due by **Sunday**.



There are no assigned readings this week

RESEARCH METHODS

PSPR 6203

Weeks 1-10
3 credits

This course is designed to familiarize students with the concept of research and provide them with both the skills to design basic qualitative and quantitative research studies, as well as evaluate such study designs as they may be presented in Requests for Proposal. The course will cover both primary and secondary research, creating research instruments, and data analysis. The course includes a section on social media metrics and measurement.



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