

JOUR460: RESEARCH METHODS IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Spring 2020

Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
(Stauffer-Flint Hall, Room 100)

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00-3:00 p.m.; Thursday, 9:30-10:30 a.m.; and by appointment
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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is to help students build skills for designing, conducting, interpreting, and presenting research related to strategic communications. These include basics of qualitative and quantitative research methods and data analysis, techniques for measuring key concepts in strategic communications, and ethical conduct of research. This course also covers how developments of information technology have affected ways of conducting social science research.

As part of the class, students will work in groups to identify research problems, design and conduct research, and report research results relevant to the organization chosen for this class. Research is an integral part of communications planning and management, and businesses and other organizations are investing more and more resources on research in support of effective decision-making. Thus, research skills have become increasingly relevant to students' career goals in the field of mass communications.

This course will be taught in a hybrid format to encourage students to become more active learners, to permit the instructor to devote more time to individual students and project groups, as well as to enable improved assessment of student performance and progress. Students are expected to actively participate in both in-class and online activities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To learn secondary and primary research methods widely used in strategic communication
- To learn how to select and apply appropriate research methods in support of strategic communication objectives
- To learn ways to identify and measure demographics, psychographics and technographics of an organization's key audiences
- To develop an understanding of the role of social/emerging media in strategic communication research
- To learn current trends in social media analytics and identify future directions in the area
- To learn ways to identify and measure social metrics that align with an organization's key business goals and objectives
- To learn concepts and techniques in social media analytics
- To learn about ethical issues related to marketing and strategic communications research
- To learn about diversity issues related to communications research
- To improve skills for communicating research results in written and oral reports

EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successful completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:

- Identify researchable strategic communications objectives, and select and apply appropriate research methods in support of these objectives
- Identify and measure demographics, psychographics and technographics of an organization's key audiences
- Understand the role of social/emerging media in strategic communication research
- Identify and measure social metrics that align with an organization's key business goals and objectives
- Understand concepts and techniques in social media analytics
- Understand how to incorporate insights gained from social media analytics into the organization's social media strategy
- Understand how to write a professional report on social media analytics and metrics
- Understand ethical issues related to social media analytics and metrics
- Understand diversity issues related to social media research
- Effectively communicate research results in written and oral reports

READINGS

All the course readings are available electronically, either on the web or on the course Blackboard site. Download and read the documents specified in the course schedule. Some of the readings come from the following books, and you can purchase them through Amazon or other online booksellers.

- McDaniel, C., & Gates, R. (2019). *Marketing research* (11th ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Stacks, D. W. (2017). *Primer of public relations research* (3rd ed.). Guildford Press.
- Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2018). *Social media marketing* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2009). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

COMMUNICATIONS

The University of Kansas email account (@ku.edu) will be used as a primary vehicle for official communications including announcements of any changes in the course schedule or assignments. Thus, it is your responsibility to regularly monitor your KU email account. I will use the class Blackboard space to post class materials. Email is the best way to reach me out of scheduled office hours. It is recommended that you use your KU email account when corresponding with me, since messages sent from other servers can be interpreted as junk or spam and thus not received.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The following are graded individually:

Class attendance and participation (15%)

Your attendance and active class participation is expected. Each student will have an assigned seat throughout the semester to facilitate taking class attendance. Seat assignment will be determined early in the semester. You should complete assigned readings prior to class and be prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion about them (i.e., answering a discussion question, asking a question, and making an informed comment). Should I get the sense that you are not properly preparing for class, I reserve the right to have periodic unannounced quizzes.

Individual research assignments (10%)

There will be two assignments where students will make use of research methods discussed in class: (i) Developing a focus group moderation guide and (ii) designing a

survey questionnaire. These assignments are aimed at developing research plans for the final project. Assignment guidelines will be posted to Blackboard.

Social media/web analytics assignment (5%)

The purpose of this assignment is to help students become more familiar with social media monitoring and analytics. You will write a short analytics report using methods and tools that we will discuss in class. Detailed guidelines will be posted to the course Blackboard site.

Exams (30%)

There will be two in-class exams on topics covered in this course.

Peer evaluation (3%)

Following each major group assignment, your group members will evaluate one another on the categories specified below. Your grade for this category will be determined by the median of the evaluation scores your group members assigned to you.

- Relevant task knowledge
- Contribution of quality ideas
- Participation in team meetings
- Dependability / follow-through
- Cooperation / relationship / attitude
- Taking initiative
- Facilitating communication

Research participation pool (2%)

This course is part of the research participant pool for the School of Journalism and Mass Communications, which means that you are expected to participate in research studies in our field as part of your overall grade. You are each expected to take part in two studies this semester, worth 2% of your final grade (1% per completed study). Researchers will contact you directly during the semester with specific details about their study. If you do not wish to participate in a study, you will have the option to write a summary of a peer-reviewed research article instead. If you do not wish to participate in any study, you will have to write two research summaries in order to obtain full credit. Deadlines to participate in the studies or write the research summaries will be set by the researchers.

The following are graded by group:

Client research project (35%)

In order to link an academic understanding of research to the real world, students will work in small groups to conduct research designed to address an organization's strategic communications problems or opportunities. Each group will choose an organization to consider as a client. The group will then identify specific strategic communications objectives, design a research study to investigate relevant issues, collect and analyze data, and report results. Guidelines will be posted to Blackboard.

- Small assignment 1: Secondary research report (5%)
- Small assignment 2: Focus group report (5%)
- Small assignment 3: Survey report (5%)
- Final presentation (5%)
- Final paper (15%)

GRADING

Guidelines for submitting written assignments

All written assignments must be double-spaced, 12 point font, with 1-1.15 inch margin on all sides. For in-text citation and bibliography, refer to the guidelines of the American Psychological Association – commonly referred to as the APA style (6th edition of *Concise Rules of APA Style*). Assignments are graded on grammar, spelling, and punctuation as well as on their content.

Policy on late assignments

Papers and assignments are due when indicated on the syllabus. Late assignments are penalized one letter grade. Only under extreme circumstances (e.g., documented family or medical emergencies) will I agree to a delay in the submission of assigned material. Late assignments must be completed and turned in by the last day of the class.

Summary of assignments and evaluation

Assignments	Deadlines	Points	Percent
INDIVIDUAL			
Class participation		60	15%
Focus group moderation guide	February 18	20	5%
Exam 1	March 3	60	15%
Survey questionnaire	March 26, 10 a.m.	20	5%
Social media analytics assignment	April 2, 10 a.m.	20	5%
Exam 2	April 16	60	15%
Peer evaluations	TBD	12	3%
Research participation pool	TBD	8	2%
GROUP			
Final project		140	35%
Small assignment 1: Secondary (5%)	February 11, 10 a.m.		
Small assignment 2: Focus group (5%)	March 19, 10 a.m.		
Small assignment 3: Survey (5%)	April 28, 10 a.m.		
Final presentation (5%)	May 5 & 7		
Final paper due (15%)	May 12, 10 a.m.		
<i>Total</i>		400	100%

The final grading is based on the accumulated number of points. The following scale will be used:

370-400 = A	308-319 = C+
360-369 = A-	290-307 = C
348-359 = B+	280-289 = C-
330-347 = B	270-279 = D
320-329 = B-	
0-269 = F	

Policy on plagiarism and fabrication/falsification

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence. Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for the course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the professor of the course. The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.

- **Plagiarism:** Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.
- **Fabrication and Falsification:** Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

Policy on use of digital devices in class

Our class meetings involve discussions in a variety of formats designed to enable different forms of thinking and analysis and accommodate diverse learning styles. In all settings, collaborate thoughtfully and respectfully with your peers. Human connection is central to this learning environment. To facilitate the collaborative learning environment, laptop / tablet use in this class is not recommended except when they are integral to specific class activities. Using your laptop or tablet to take notes often leads to checking email and social media or browsing the Internet. This hinders your learning and can also distract those around you. Therefore, I highly recommend taking notes on paper. Take notes by hand on the general points and methods we discuss in class and then use your computer after class to help expand on and clarify your understanding of the class conversation. This approach allows you to participate fully and also review your thoughts in a productive way when you have a quiet moment after class. Also, please keep your cell phones on silent and put away in your bag or pocket.

School policy on class attendance

No student may add a class after the 20th day of a semester. Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent. The School of Journalism and Mass Communications reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or laboratory meeting.

Financial aid policy

The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid." Students who receive any form of financial aid should learn all requirements including minimum hours of enrollment and grades to qualify for and retain that aid.

Students with special needs

The Office of Disability Resources (DR), 22 Strong Hall, 785-864-2620 (V/TTY), coordinates accommodations and services for KU students with disabilities. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in KU classes and have not contacted DR, please do so as soon as possible. Please also contact me privately in regard to this course.

Copying or recording of classroom lectures

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all lectures presented by the instructor, are the instructor's property. Video and audio recording of lectures without instructor consent is prohibited. On request, the instructor usually will permit students to record lectures, on the condition that these recordings are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless the instructor gives explicit permission, recordings of lectures may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

Concealed carry policy

Individuals who choose to carry concealed handguns are solely responsible to do so in a safe and secure manner in strict conformity with state and federal laws and [KU weapons policy](#). Safety measures outlined in the KU weapons policy specify that a concealed handgun (i) must be under the constant control of the carrier; (ii) must be out of view, concealed either on the body of the carrier, or backpack, purse, or bag that remains under the carrier's custody and control; (iii) must be in a holster that covers the trigger area and secures any external hammer in an un-cocked position; and (iv) must have the safety on, and have no round in the chamber. Students who choose to carry a concealed handgun in a purse, backpack, or bag must review and plan each day accordingly, and are responsible for making alternate arrangements as necessary. Individuals who violate the KU weapons policy may be asked to leave campus with the weapon and may face disciplinary action under the appropriate university code of conduct.