

Course: PRAD 585 • Section 301 • Spring 2015

Research Methods for the Communication Professional

Class Times: Wed. 5:45 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Classroom: 14 E. Jackson (Daley building), Room 1129

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Course Description:

Research, measurement and evaluation are fundamental components of contemporary public relations and advertising campaigns and programs. In this course, students will gain a foundation in the history and growth of measurement and evaluation practices within the profession; the major types of quantitative and qualitative research methods; the trade-offs among primary versus secondary research sources; an overview of sampling and data analysis; and how to derive actionable insights and recommendations from research. Working with a real-world client, students will conceptualize and conduct a research project to help solve an organizational challenge and generate evidence-based recommendations for the client. In addition to this multi-assignment project, students will benefit from class visits by industry professionals and discussions of the use of research in recent award-winning campaigns and in the news. This course prepares students to not only use research more effectively as communication professionals, but to be better informed consumers of research in civic life.

We are fortunate to have the Chicago French Market as the class client this quarter. The Chicago French Market is located inside of the Ogilvie Transportation Center in the West Loop. The Bensidoun family, the largest market operator in and around Paris since 1953, co-developed the market with Chicago-based U.S. Equities Realty, and operates and manages the market. In 2014, CBRE, the world's largest commercial real estate firm (\$7.2 billion in annual revenue), acquired U.S. Equities. Founded in 1978, U.S. Equities leases and manages 17 million square feet of Chicago property. We especially wish to thank Ms. Marian Jarocki of U.S. Equities.

Course Objectives:

- To learn about the history, development, current trends, best practices and emerging standards in PR and advertising research, measurement and evaluation for the communication professional
- To examine the strengths/weaknesses and appropriate uses of major quantitative and qualitative research methods in the process of developing and evaluating campaigns and programs
- To examine the role of sampling and data analysis in the research process
- To learn how to conduct a secondary data analysis that helps inform primary data collection
- To gain hands-on experience conducting research that helps solve a communication problem, more specifically to translate research findings/results into actionable client recommendations/insights
- To enhance presentation and writing skills in communicating persuasively, clearly, and successfully.

Required Textbook and Reading Materials:

Michaelson, D., & Stacks, D. W. (2014). *A professional and practitioner's guide to public relations research, measurement, and evaluation* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Business Expert Press, LLC.

There will be assigned readings out of the Michaelson and Stacks (2014) text each week. While this book was written for PR professionals, both PR and advertising research are grounded in the social sciences and mass communication so there is significant overlap. More importantly, this book is written for professionals rather than academics or research experts, which is a problem I've found with many research methods books.

In addition to the text, there will also be assigned readings drawn from other sources. You will find these readings posted as a PDF through the course modules by week on the course Desire2Learn (D2L) site. It is your responsibility to read the assigned readings and come prepared to discuss them in class on the evening they have been assigned. Class participation is part of your grade and it's pretty obvious who has not done the readings.

Course Evaluation:

The evaluation of the coursework will be based on the student's performance in seven areas, each which constitute a portion of the final grade. These areas include: 1) "Research in the Real World" blog post/presentation (posting an analysis of the research used in a Silver Anvil award-winning campaign to the class blog and a brief presentation), 2) class attendance and participation, 3) weekly #PRAD585 tweet, 4) secondary data analysis paper, 5) survey questionnaire design assignment, 6) survey data collection (i.e., each student is responsible for collecting a certain number of survey responses), and 7) final report and short presentation to the client due the last night of class (based on an analysis of the data collected/research results).

The following provides a point allocation for each of these areas:

1) "Research in the Real World" Silver Anvil winning campaign blog post/presentation	(outline below)	30 (15%)
2) Class attendance/participation	(outline below)	40 (20%)
3) "Research in the News" #PRAD585 weekly tweet about research methods	(outline below)	20 (10%)
4) "Brand audit": Secondary data analysis paper (researching the class client and peers)	(outline below)	30 (15%)
5) Survey questionnaire design assignment (designing questionnaire for client problem)	(outline below)	20 (10%)
6) Survey data collection (responsible for collecting responses while survey in field)	(outline below)	10 (5%)
7) Final project (team report and presentation due last class)	(outline below)	50 (25%)

TOTAL

200 possible points

Course Grading Scale:

A: 93-100%

A-: 90-92%

B+: 87-89%

B: 83-86%

B-: 80-82%
C+: 77-79%
C: 73-76%

C-: 70-72%
D: 60-69%
F: 0-59%

1) “Research in the Real World” Case Analysis: Blog Post and Presentation (30 points)

You will help maintain the class blog (<http://www.DePaulResearchMethods.com>) which will feature student reviews and analyses of award-winning Silver Anvil PRSA campaigns. You will sign up early in the quarter to make your post/presentation on a certain class date. For this assignment, you will select a PRSA Silver Anvil case about a recent campaign. You will then summarize and analyze the case with a specific focus on how the agency/organization used research to help develop the campaign/conduct a situation analysis and then measure and evaluate the success of the campaign. In addition to focusing on what research the agency/organization conducted in the planning and evaluation stages of the campaign, you will make recommendations/share your opinion on how this process might have been improved from a research perspective. By your assigned blog post date, you will have posted: 1) your review and analysis to the class blog and 2) will make a short presentation (15 minutes) about the campaign. **It is important you focus on the research aspects of this campaign/case. Do not just summarize the campaign, but rather offer your multi-point opinion/critique of how the campaign may be improved from a research perspective.** Your presentation will be timed and points will be deducted for going materially over. You will have access to the classroom computer to show the case, pull up websites, videos, etc. Class interaction/engagement is expected. An assignment sheet will be provided.

2) Class Attendance and Participation (40 points)

As this is a learner-centered course, your attendance and active participation in class is essential. You are expected to always arrive for class on time (arriving late or leaving early is the same as being absent). Attendance will be taken each class by passing around a sign-in sheet. **Email me (mragas@depaul.edu) in advance if you plan to miss a class for a work, family, or health reason and I will most likely count this as an *excused absence*.** If I don't hear from you in advance, I will record your absence as an *unexcused absence*.

You only have the potential to earn an “A” on the class attendance and participation part of your grade if you miss one class or less AND you *consistently* contribute to class discussion *throughout the quarter*. Participation is based on the quality and quantity of your contributions. **IMPORTANT: It is your responsibility to sign in. If your signature isn't on the sign-in sheet, you will be marked as absent. I will always try to remind you.**

Leaving after the break without a valid excuse/notice for your absence counts as an unexcused absence.

3) “Research in the News” #PRAD585 Weekly Tweets (20 points – 2 pts. per week)

Starting with Week Two, each week you will be responsible for tweeting about the use or incorporation of research in PRAD and/or society (i.e., in the news) using the hashtag #PRAD585. You must use this exact hashtag on Twitter to receive credit for your tweet. You may tweet about any of the following: (1) response/comment/question about one of the assigned readings, (2) share a headline/link to a story in the news that week that relates to communication and research broadly defined (whether that is a newly released study by an agency/media company, a new public opinion poll, an article about a new/old research technique, etc.) or (3) respond to a #PRAD585 tweet posted by one of your classmates with a thoughtful comment that helps advance class discussion. I will select 1-2 tweets weekly as the “Top Tweets.” These top tweets will earn double points for that week, meaning you can take off from submitting a tweet in a future week. You will receive credit in Week One simply for signing up for this assignment. Tweets will be submitted and graded for nine weeks during the quarter. **Please note: A student cannot earn more than a max of 20 points for this assignment.**

4) “Brand Audit”: Secondary Data Analysis Paper (30 points)

The client will provide us with background about the organization and will also visit us in person near the start of the quarter. The client will also help provide us with a general idea of a challenge/opportunity and, based upon this information, we must decide upon research problem(s)/question(s) to address. Our job will be to use available secondary data sources to get fully up to speed on the client and its peer group/category. To do so, we will use the Web (search engines, social media), DePaul library resources (www.lib.depaul.edu), and any other secondary sources you may access to research the client organization and its peer group/category. Many PRAD professionals will not be responsible for primary data collection, but will frequently have to gather, synthesize and draw conclusions from available secondary data for their department or client. In this first paper of the quarter, you will write a short research paper that will include: (1) Introduction (2) Stated research problem(s)/challenge(s), (3) Method section (what resources did you confer/use for your analysis – be as transparent as possible), (4) Results of your findings and (5) Conclusion (what did you learn in a nutshell?). The findings from this paper will help inform the development of a class survey questionnaire that forms the basis of the final project. The quality of writing (proof your writing carefully) and readability/format will factor into your grade. You will submit your paper via a Dropbox set up on D2L. An assignment sheet will be provided.

5) Survey Questionnaire Design Assignment (20 points)

This assignment builds upon the findings of the secondary data analysis paper. In this assignment, you will submit as a copy of a 10 item questionnaire that you have developed using a free SurveyMonkey basic account. The basic account does not allow for the PDF export feature, but you can screen capture or copy and paste your questionnaire items into a Word doc. The questionnaire will consist of a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions and question responses that collect data at different levels of measurement (i.e., nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio-level data). These survey items should be clearly related to collecting data that will address the client’s research problem(s)/challenge(s). Clear writing, presentation and mechanics will again factor into your grade. You will submit this file via a Dropbox set up on D2L. An assignment sheet will be provided.

6) Survey Data Collection (10 points)

After the class submits individual drafts of the questionnaire, a combined version of the questionnaire for the full class will be developed and readied for distribution into the field. Survey instrument design and data collection are part of the “blocking-and-tackling” involved in collecting data. In this assignment, students will be provided with a unique trackable link to the survey housed on SurveyMonkey. They will then be responsible for collecting a pre-determined number of total survey responses by a set date. The client may also assist with soliciting responses to the survey. Since this is a non-probability, convenience sample approach to data collection, these results may not be generalizable to a larger population and care must be taken in noting this in our report. These responses will then form the data set that will provide the foundation for the final project.

7) Final Project (Team-Based Research Report and Presentation) (50 points)

For the final project, students will analyze the top-level descriptive results of the quantitative class survey for the client (they will also be provided with the raw data set should they choose to do further descriptive or inferential analysis) and will also conduct interviews to collect qualitative data and triangulate their findings. On the final night of class, teams will: 1) submit a research report via a D2L dropbox folder and 2) make a short presentation focusing on their conclusions/recommendations to the client and class. This final research report will include the following clearly labeled sections: 1) Introduction, 2) Literature Review (condensed version of secondary data analysis, 3) State research question(s) [i.e., research problem(s)/challenge(s) as you see it for the organization, 4) Method section (focusing on the sampling method(s) used, instruments (questionnaire, interview guide), dates of data collection], 5) Short summary of the findings (based on your reading/analysis of the top-level descriptive results, and 6) Discussion section (i.e., based on these results, what are your data-

driven business and communication conclusions and recommendations for the client? What are they doing well? How can they improve? How would they do this given their situation and resources?).

The class client will watch the final presentations and will receive copies of the final research reports. However, client feedback will not impact your grade, unless the client selects your team as the winning presentation (i.e., feels you were the top class presentation!). An assignment sheet will be provided. **Also, to make everyone accountable, team peer evals will factor into the grade that each student earns on the final project.**

Deadlines for Presentations and Reports

Deadlines are real. Late work will be reduced by one letter grade for each 24 hour period it is not turned in or does not follow the stated submission format. Work turned in during the middle or end of class (this includes blog posts submitted *after* the start of class!) is considered late. This pertains to both team and individual work. As you know, in a professional environment, the consequences of missing deadlines are much worse. You are responsible for meeting all assignment deadlines even if you have an excused absence from class for that week.

IMPORTANT: Assigned presentation dates cannot be made up at a later date. You will receive a zero if you miss a previously assigned presentation deadline so please plan accordingly!

Academic Honesty

Cheating and plagiarism (literary or artistic theft), copying someone else's work, or other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any case of academic dishonesty will be considered grounds for *an automatic failing grade in the course*. Having someone else do your work for you is also considered academic dishonesty. University guidelines will be followed for any offenses. Please don't put yourself in this situation.

Please refer to the Student Handbook for more details: <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html>

Inclusiveness

This class encourages the free exchange of ideas. Every attempt is made to make all course material non-sexist, diverse, and multi-cultural. Should I ever fail to meet this goal, please let me know immediately.

Please be respectful of your classmates. A great way to learn is through class discussions. I love the exchange of ideas. It's fine to disagree, but it's important that everyone stays respectful and civil to differing viewpoints.

The Writing Center

Consider visiting the Writing Center to discuss your written assignments for this course. Writing Center Tutors are specially trained undergraduate and graduate students who can help you at any stage of your writing project. They can help you focus and develop your ideas, review your drafts, and polish your writing, as well as answer questions about grammar, mechanics, style, and citation.

You may schedule appointments on an as-needed or weekly basis. In addition to Face-to-Face appointments, the Writing Center also provides Written Feedback by Email and Online Appointments. Be sure to schedule your appointment with enough time to think about and incorporate the feedback you'll receive. Bring/upload your assignment handout and/or any other relevant materials to your appointment.

How do I make an appointment?

To schedule a Face-to-Face, Written Feedback by Email, or Online Appointment, visit www.depaul.edu/writing. You can also call one of our offices: (312) 362-6726 (Loop Office, 1600 Lewis

Center) or (773) 325-4272 (LPC Office, SAC 212). When possible, the Writing Center accepts walk-in requests, but it's always a good idea to schedule your appointment ahead of time. You may schedule tutorials on an as-needed basis or as weekly standing appointments up to 3 hours per week.

All Writing Center services are free to the DePaul community.

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation for disabilities, including LD and AD/HD, should provide me with written documentation from the appropriate university offices regarding the specific disability and accommodation requested during the first week of class. All discussions will remain confidential. For more information, contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD):

<http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/studentswithdisabilities>, (773) 325-1677. Offices: Rm 370, Student Center (2250 N. Sheffield), Lincoln Park Campus and Rm 1400, Lewis Center (25 E. Jackson), Loop Campus

Final Notes:

- I will make every effort to adhere to this class schedule and grading system, but reserves the right to make necessary changes.
- While laptop, netbooks, tablets, etc. are welcome for taking notes during class, please DO NOT use them to Facebook, IM, email, etc. during class (unless of course you're visiting our class Tumblr ☺).
- Make sure to arrive to class on time and plan to stay to the completion of each class. Being tardy for the start of class or ducking out early negatively impacts your reputation with me and your classmates.
- Please turn your phones to vibrate when in class unless they are needed for emergency purposes. Visibly texting or checking email during class is again distracting and disrespectful to everyone else in the class.
- This class and the assigned work is challenging, but in the end, I believe it is rewarding and helps prepare you to better integrate communication research into your work and life. If you notice yourself having trouble, please see me immediately. Also feel free to approach me about any concerns.
- Again, the following dates and topics are a good faith attempt at providing you with a tentative schedule, but please note that they are not etched in stone. We will adapt as needed to circumstances.
- If you cannot meet with me during office hours, please see me after class, generally we can meet then, or find another time that works. *If you do choose to drop by during office hours, consider e-mailing me in advance regarding your question(s) and you are likely to get a more detailed answer in person.*
- Generally, email is the fastest way to reach me (please include PRAD 585 in the subject line and your full name in the body of your email), followed by my office phone. If you have an emergency or need an immediate response, please feel free to try me on my cell phone. Please no texts to my cell phone.
- I am passionate about the role of research in enhancing the effectiveness and impact of PR and advertising, as well as how greater research knowledge makes us smart consumers of research claims!

Tentative Class Schedule

- Week 1:** 4/1: Course Overview and Introduction
History and Development of Mass Communication Research (Readings: Ch. 1 in Michaelson and Stacks (2014) text and assigned readings found under Week 1 module on course D2L page)
- *Review of syllabus, the class blog assignment and Twitter assignment*
 - *Sign-up sheets to select (1) blog assignment date and (2) Twitter handles*
- Week 2:** 4/8: Strengths/Weaknesses of Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research
Secondary Research (Readings: Ch. 5 in Michaelson & Stacks (2014) and see Module 2 of D2L)
- *Guest speaker (6:00-6:40pm): Marian Jarocki, Chicago French Market (U.S. Equities) Review of “brand audit” secondary data analysis assignment (first assignment)*
 - *Schedule posted for class blog assignment (blog post and presentation dates)*
 - **REMINDER: first “Research in the News” tweet due 4/7 (each Tues. at midnight)**
- Week 3:** 4/15: Sampling: Probability vs. Non-Probability (Readings: Ch. 10 in text and see Module 3 of D2L)
- **“Research in the Real World” blog presentations begin (check your assigned date!)**
 - *Guest speaker: Angie Bechan, former VP, corporate communications, Takeda Pharmaceuticals*
- Week 4:** 4/22: Survey Methodology and Levels of Measurement (Readings: Ch. 8 in text and Module 4 of D2L)
- **(1) “Brand audit” secondary data analysis paper due (via D2L dropbox) by class**
 - *Review of survey questionnaire design assignment*
 - **April 25 (Saturday): Optional site visit: [The 5th annual Pastoral’s Artisanal Producer Festival at the Chicago French Market](#) (free tastings and meet-the-maker event)**
- Week 5:** 4/29: Basics of Statistical Analysis (Readings: Ch. 9 in text and see Module 5 of D2L)
- **(2) Survey questionnaire design assignment due (via D2L dropbox) by class**
 - *Guest speaker: Lisa Hartenberger, director, corporate communications, Navistar*
- Week 6:** 5/6: Media Content Analysis Method (Readings: Ch. 7 in text and see Module 6 of D2L)
- *Review of survey data collection assignment (& in-class pilot/discussion of final questionnaire)*
 - *Identify and discuss teammate for final project*
 - *Survey launches/in the field by the end of this week (5/8)*
 - *Guest speaker: Lisa Totino, senior digital strategist, MARC USA*
- Week 7:** 5/13: Qualitative Methods: Interviews, Focus Groups, Participant Observation (Readings: Ch. 6 in text and see Module 7 of D2L)
- *Review of final project (team report and presentations due on 6/10)*
 - *Sign-up in class to form teams for final project (2 per team/pairs, no exceptions)*
 - *Guest speakers: John Dominski and colleagues, gravitytank*
- Week 8:** 5/20: Research, Measurement and Evaluation Today (and in the Future) (No reading from text. See D2L for Ragas and Culp (2014) reading: Ch. 10 – Research, Measurement and Evaluation)
- **(3) Survey data collection assignment due/survey closes (via D2L dropbox) by class**
 - *Class offsite visit to Gatorade Mission Control and guest speaker: Krysten Gibson, VML*
- Week 9:** 5/27: Best Practices in PRAD Research (Readings: Ch. 11 in text)
- *Top-line survey data with descriptive statistics posted to D2L*
 - *Lab time for practice using SPSS for data analysis and interpreting statistics*
 - *Guest speaker (6:00-6:30pm): Check-in visit by Marian Jarocki, Chicago French Market*
- Week 10:** 6/3: Review Day: Pizza Party and Potluck (Readings: No readings this week!)
- *Review final project: one-on-one time with each team; class questions/pointers*
 - **Last week of “Research in the News” weekly tweets (due on 6/2 at midnight)**
 - **Last week of “Research in the Real World” blog post presentations**
- EXAM WEEK:** 6/10: **(4) Final Project: Team Reports Due and Team Presentations (Submit team evals)**
- *Final team report submitted electronically via D2L dropbox by class time*
 - *Hard copies of completed, confidential team evals due by the start of class*
 - *Guest judge for final presentation: Chicago French Market / U.S. Equities executives*

Note: Please be prepared to discuss all assigned readings by the class date for which they have been assigned above. For example, Ch. 1 in the text and the assigned readings on D2L under Week 1 should have been read before class on 4/1.