COURSE SYLLABUS
Southeast Missouri State University

Department of Management and Marketing
Course No: UI351
Title of Course: Public Opinion Management
Revision: Spring 2012

I. Catalog Description and Credit Hours of Course:

Discussion of basic principles of public relations, publicity and propaganda used by business, political, and non-profit organizations to influence public opinion and communicate with their various publics. (3)

Interdisciplinary Nature of the Course:

The categories of social systems and behavioral systems will be integrated in this course. The category of social systems is addressed through the study of the persuasion strategies of institutions in our society such as corporations, special interest groups, government, advertising agencies, the media, etc. In addition, the influence of reference groups, opinion leadership and cultural factors relate to concepts covered under social systems. The category of behavioral systems will be integrated with social systems via the demonstrations of why and how persuasion messages by social institutions and groups affect cognitive and emotional responses of message recipients.

The term public opinion has existed as a subject since antiquity. The Romans, in general held the masses in contempt, but during the medieval period such writers as Alcuin, William of Malmesbury, and later Machiavelli emphasized the importance of what we might call mass opinion. Greater means to manage public opinion were developed in the fifteenth century with the advent of the printing press with moveable type. As the methods of mass media developed so did the discipline of managing public opinion. Much of this knowledge was pooled under the categories of social psychology, journalism/mass communication and marketing/promotion. This course plans to combine those materials from of these disciplines appropriate for understanding mass persuasion management.

II. Prerequisites:

The 100 - 200 level core curriculum requirements for both social systems and behavioral systems.

III. Purpose or objectives of the course:

A. To introduce the students to the exact nature of a “Public” as it applies to the concept of public opinion and to the many differing environments and management objectives involving various “publics.” (Obj. 6)

B. To enable students to gain a recognition of the enormous importance and strength of public opinion. (Objs. 4, 7, & 9)

C. To introduce students to the techniques of managing public opinion with the strategies commonly utilized. (Objs. 2, 6, 7, & 9)

D. To assist students in the development of critical thinking skills as they are taught to analyze and manage mass persuasion messages and techniques. (Objs. 2 & 9)

E. To assist students in their abilities to articulate criticisms of persuasion tactics used in public opinion management. (Objs. 2, 3, 8, & 9)
F. To enable students to demonstrate the ability to integrate the breadth and diversity of public opinion/mass persuasion theories and knowledge developed by advertisers, politicians, government officials, religious groups, non-profit organizations and other sources. (Objs. 5, 6, 7, & 9)

IV. Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course the students will be able to:

A. demonstrate the role that the standard Laws of Public Opinion play in this dynamic force in our society. (University Studies Objective 2)

B. explain in writing the background and importance of Public Opinion and media influence in modern society. (University Studies Objective 3)

C. identify the importance of the “Laws of Public Opinion” and many of its modern applications. (University Studies Objective 6)

V. HCB Assurance of Learning (BSBA):

All faculty members in the Department of Management and Marketing are committed to upholding certain learning objectives for their students in accordance with AACSB accreditation standards. As such, the courses students take in this department seek to meet at least one or more of the following objectives as part of the BSBA degree:

A. Proficiency in written and oral communications

B. Demonstrated effective use of technology

C. Demonstrated awareness and understanding of other cultures

D. Demonstrated knowledge of the fundamentals of business disciplines

E. Demonstrated critical thinking skills involving business and ethics

VI. Expectations of Students:

A. Satisfactory performance on examinations.

B. Active, informed participation in class discussions.

C. Demonstration of critical thinking skill in all written and oral presentations.

D. Timely completion of all assignments.

VII. Course Outline:

1. Types of Public Opinion Careers (Objs. 4 & 9) 2 hours

   A. Corporations

   B. Associations
      1. Trade Associations
      2. Labor Unions
      3. Professional Cultural Societies
      4. Non-Profit "cause" Organizations
C. Personal and Entertainment Agents

D. Government
   1. Public Affairs
   2. Military
   3. Politics
   4. International Agencies

E. Education

2. History of Public Opinion Management (Obj. 4) 1 hour
   A. How growth of democracies parallels growth of an informed public.
   B. Power of public opinion in recent historical events.
   C. The Chicago School Theory
      1. Fear of TotalitarianManipulation of the Masses
      2. Decline of Chicago Theory

3. Research (Objs. 1 & 2) 3 hours
   A. Informal Research Methods
   B. Sampling Public Opinion
   C. Questionnaire Design

4. Communication Theory (Objs. 2, 3, 4 & 6) 4 hours
   A. Spiral Silence Theory
      1. Human Behavior with the "Quasi-statistical Organ"
      2. The Five Hypothesis
      3. Public Opinion Formation and Fear of Isolation
   B. Theories of Modern Communication
   C. Barriers to Communication
      1. Cultural barriers
      2. International barriers
      3. Value of cross-cultural communications
   D. Information Processing Theory
      1. The Entertaining fast paced T.V. News
      2. News Consumers Responsibility

5. Evaluation (Obj. 2) 2 hours
   A. Measure of Message Distribution
   B. Measure of Message Exposure
   C. Measure of Message Perception
   D. Measure of Attitude Change
6. Public Opinion and Persuasion Strategies (Objs. 4, 6, 7 & 9)  
   A. Opinion Leaders as Catalyst  
   B. Propaganda Techniques  
      1. Domestic  
      2. International  
   C. Persuasion and Manipulation  
   D. Ethics of Persuasion  

7. Press and the Media (Objs. 2, 4 & 9)  
   A. Matching Audience and Media  
   B. The Print Media  
   C. The Broadcast Media  
      1. Radio  
      2. Television  
   D. The Media Intrusion Theory  
      1. The Winnowing Effect  
      2. Media Crises  
      3. Pack Journalism  
   E. Agenda Setting Concept  
      1. Press Coverage predicts trends  
      2. Media Coverage as a Catalyst to Opinions  

8. Financial Media (Objs. 2 & 4)  
   A. Capital Markets and Public Opinion  
   B. Insider Trading & Information Control  
   C. The Subjectiveness of Market Opinions  

9. Corporations (Objs. 2, 4, 6 & 7)  
   A. The Corporate Role in Image Making  
   B. Public Opinion and Consumerism  
   C. Issue Management  
      1. Public Reactions and Crisis Management  
      2. Employee Communications  
   D. Value of Corporate Philanthropy in Image Creation  

10. Public Affairs and Government (Objs. 2, 4, 6, 7, & 9)  
    A. Hostility toward Government Public Opinion Efforts  
    B. Lobbying
C. Community Relations
   1. Understanding Reactionaries
   2. Understanding Radicals

D. Public Affairs in Government

E. The Promotion of Candidates

11. International Public Opinion Management (Obj. 5) 5 hours
   A. International Corporate P.O.M.
      1. Growth
      2. Language and Culture

12. Tactics (Objs. 3 & 8) 8 hours
   A. Written Tactics
   B. Spoken Tactics
   C. Visual Tactics
   D. Technological Advances

VII. Textbook:


Students will also be required to read a variety of articles to be selected from academic journals and non-academic sources such as magazines, trade publications and newspapers. This will emphasize the connection between classroom material and current events.

VIII. Basis of Student Evaluation

1. Two exams during the course term 40-50%
2. Final exam 20-25%
3. Research Paper 10-20%
4. Written critical analysis of readings and quizzes 10-20%
5. Class participation in discussions and oral reports 5-10%

IX. Justifications for Inclusion in the University Studies Program

Objective 1: Demonstrate the ability to locate and gather information in the execution of research papers and propaganda material for class presentation.

Emphasis: Some

Content: The focus will be on how to use the library reference gathering capabilities in two areas: Material for research papers and propaganda material for class presentations.
Teaching Strategy: Students will be required to use library data searches such as Proquest and indexes. Students will develop a short research paper as a method to teach them research techniques.

Student Assignments: In order to develop research materials and to gauge current trends students will find it necessary to obtain information from out-of-class sources which will include library data searches. Proquest and other secondary data material will be incorporated in a short research paper.

Student Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the scope of their paper's bibliography. Scope includes the number and quality of the references with regard to sources especially academic sources.

Objective 2: Demonstrate capabilities for critical thinking, reasoning and analyzing.

Emphasis: Significant

Content: The critical thinking skills emphasized will include: analysis of persuasive messages with an emphasis toward discovering underlying strategies and theories of human behavior; differentiating between facts and assumptions; making judgments and drawing logical conclusions. In evaluating theories students will be required to apply these to the understanding of human history. Analyzing which theory explained mass behavior at a particular time and also why some propaganda programs failed. Also students will have to analyze the responsibility of government for opinion leadership. They will need to think critically over the paradox of responsible government versus the public right to know. Further, the students will be challenged to critically consider that responsible government may not advisedly proceed far in advance of public opinion. This situation poses many perplexing problems. How far is government justified in going to win support for its leadership and programs? To what extent should it censor and conceal information, distort and fabricate, engage in propaganda and stress emotional appeals?

Students' critical thinking must be similarly exercised regarding business messages to the public. A true market economy will require the dissemination of accurate and complete product information. Students need to consider what, if any, product information needs to be concealed. How public opinion management can facilitate sales of vital products and other more direct promotions will also be considered. Students will be challenged to develop standards regarding the many tactics used to manage public opinion by businesses, profit and non-profit organizations and by governmental agencies.

Teaching Strategies: Much classroom time will be devoted to question/answer sessions guided by the instructor(s). Questions will be phrased so that students can arrive at conclusions concerning the fundamental assumptions of the theories in addition to identifying their own values and the values of others (authors and other students). The students will be required to show how these theories operate. Students will be asked to exhibit these same skills of analysis, both orally and in writing. Students will have the opportunity to critically analyze in small groups and as individuals.

Student Assignments: They will participate in the development of a research proposal regarding public opinion. Students will be given principles upon which such research is designed. Their research proposal will be presented to the class. Additionally, they will be required to discuss the concepts in the textbook and other material and to apply it to current issues. Students will be directed in such a way as to stimulate critical thinking, reasoning and analysis.

Student Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the quality of their reasoning. The consistency, specificity, and thoroughness demonstrated in their research proposal, written exercises and oral discussions will be assessed.

Objective 3: Demonstrate effective communication skills.

Emphasis: Significant

Content: This objective is addressed throughout the course in both oral and written communications skills, but there is a particularly heavy emphasis in section XII of the course outline (Tactics). Further
communications skills are demonstrated throughout the course as very communications oriented material is orally discussed in class as parts of groups and individually. This especially includes the sections on careers, I. and II. on Research and IV., V., and VI., VII., IX., X. which are the sections on communication Theory, Evaluation, Persuasion Tactics, Press and Corporate and Government.

**Teaching Strategies:** The instructor will provide guidelines concerning the structure and content of all oral and written assignments.

**Student Assignments:** Students will be required to demonstrate effective communication skills on their papers, in their presentations, question/answer sessions and discussion sessions.

**Student Evaluation:** The evaluation of students' written work will be based on quality of content (e.g., analysis skills) as well as quality of structure (e.g., grammar, sentence structure). Likewise, the evaluation of oral work will be based on quality of content and quality of presentation.

**Objective 4:** Demonstrate an understanding of human experiences and the ability to relate them to the present.

**Emphasis:** Considerable

**Content:** Public Opinion issues and history are clearly intertwined. The move towards democracy in the last century, including Perestroika and the democratic reforms of the old Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, is profoundly related to public opinion issues. Further, the development and implementation of propaganda for business and political purposes can only be understood in relation to the human experience. Students should understand for example the impact on people and society of business public opinion efforts of the past (not including advertising) which convinced an entire generation of women to smoke and governmental activities to mobilize the population to support foreign wars and other policies.

**Teaching Strategies:** The principal teaching strategy to be employed is the lecture. Some discussion of historical developments will be enhanced by video tapes.

**Students Assignments:** In some written exercises and oral presentations students will be encouraged to bring in appropriate historical analysis. This will also be encouraged in both class discussion and question/answer sessions.

**Student Evaluation:** Students will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of the historical analysis they have included in the assignments mentioned under Student Assignments.

**Objective 5:** Develop an understanding of various cultures and their interrelationships.

**Emphasis:** Some

**Content:** The trend toward international business concentration and standardization has placed tremendous pressure on cross-cultural public opinion management. What does this portend for business, consumers and society? Students need to critically think and understand these issues. A full understanding of managing persuasive media messages to various publics must take into account the cultural backgrounds of the individuals. Visual and semantic meanings are considered in the light of the many cultural environments. Cultural differences are thereby very important.

**Teaching Strategies:** The teaching strategy currently envisioned in implementing this objective is lecture and discussion.

**Student Assignments:** At least one written report prepared by the students will address this objective directly.
Student Evaluation: The basis for student evaluation on this objective will be the quality of the analysis in the report. The degree to which students demonstrate an understanding of how it is that cultural diversity must factor in managing public opinion will be used in evaluating student performance.

Objective 6: Demonstrate the ability to integrate the breadth and diversity of knowledge and experience.

Emphasis: Significant (Interdisciplinary)

Content: The course content explores the social psychology of persuasion. The effects of mass persuasion campaigns generated by advertisers, politicians, government officials, non-profit organizations and others will be analyzed. The persuasion process will be dissected and students will be provided a solid(social science foundation i.e.) for understanding human cognitive responses to persuasive efforts. Genuine understanding of public opinion management requires an integration of knowledge gleaned from both social systems and behavioral systems.

Teaching Strategies: The strategy will include lecture, discussion, handouts, videos and readings.

Student Assignments: Students must be able to demonstrate their ability to integrate the social psychological concepts of public opinion management in their papers, examinations and in discussion sessions, and through the identification of appropriate social psychological theories and integration with communication/business principles.

Student Evaluation: All student assignments and examinations mentioned in Section VIII (Basis of Student Evaluation) will be evaluated based on the degree in which students demonstrate an understanding of the depth and breath of the subject matter. Students will be encouraged in group presentations of research topics to demonstrate more than just a surface grasp of the topic but an interdisciplinary perspective of relevant concepts (behavioral-communication).

Objective 7: Demonstrate the ability to make informed, intelligent value decisions.

Emphasis: Significant

Content: A number of topics in the course lend themselves well to this objective. For example a more informed view of the intense struggle to win public support by numerous special interest groups will make for a more knowledgeable response to such tactics. Further, the student should become a more intelligent consumer and business leader because of a better understanding of corporate public opinion management. This course content should allow for better citizenship with regards to governmental persuasive activities. The student can begin to develop a value system by which to evaluate ethical versus unethical mass persuasion messages and to appreciate some of the ethical dilemmas that face society in these areas.

Teaching Strategies: The instructor will present various critical viewpoints of how public opinion is managed and some of the theoretical foundations involved. The underlying values of the organizations and individuals involved in the public opinion process will be critically examined.

Student Assignments: Students will be required to examine their own values and compare them to those of theorists and authors and other students in the class. Their own values will become part of their basis of evaluation of the theories and issues presented in the course outline. This self-examination will be exhibited in their papers, presentations, question/answer sessions and class discussions. They will be better able to articulate and understand the valuing dilemmas of citizenship.

Student Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the completeness of their reasoning demonstrated in the assignments discussed above.

Objective 8: Demonstrate the ability to make informed, sensitive, aesthetic responses.

Emphasis: Some
Content: Students can better respond to the numerous media messages and make more focused, informed, sensitive responses with a greater appreciation of the media strategies and tactics. A clearer understanding of various tactics will help students have a clearer, more informed aesthetic response to mass persuasion.

Teaching Strategies: The principal teaching strategy to be employed in achieving this objective is lecture/discussion, with emphasis on discussion. Students will be encouraged to attempt to articulate aesthetic responses and to incorporate them into arguments for or against particular actions.

Objective 9: Demonstrate the ability to function responsibly in one's natural, social and political environment.

Emphasis: Significant

Content: A great proportion of the course content deals with two fundamental citizenship issues. First, the role of the press as the guardians of the public's right to know sensitive information will be covered. Several major press theories will be presented including the spiral of silence theory. This issue includes the governmental perspective of who decides what information must be considered classified. The second fundamental area involves governmental agencies' propaganda efforts. This includes the perspective of the party out of power with respect to governmental public opinion management. Business interests also become involved in the issue of governmental persuasive activities. Many of the issues discussed in this class will be current events and beneficial to students in understanding our changing social and political environments.

Teaching Strategies: The instructor will present examples of both responsible and irresponsible public opinion tactics. Students would be asked, "How would you respond to these message tactics?" Interactive techniques would be employed to encourage students' critical analysis of one's social responsibilities. Message tactics refers to the various strategies used for public opinion management. This includes propaganda tactics which can be operationalized using written or spoken or print or visual tactics.

Student Assignments: Students will be required to defend and present their decisions on various issues orally during discussion sessions and in writing assignments.

Student Evaluation: The instructor(s) will evaluate the students' ability to make reasoned, intelligent decisions on a wide range of issues.

X. Background

Ideally this course will be taught by an instructor with a marketing, communications, and social psychology background. An instructor with a graduate degree in marketing and/or communication and some working experience in public relations/public opinion management would be appropriate for this course.

IX. Class Size:

Optimal class size, given the number of in-class presentations and emphasis on class discussion and participation, is 25-30.