J4256 / 7256 Public Relations

Instructor
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What’s this course about?
This class aims to build on what students have learned in classes such as Principles of Strategic Communication and focus primarily on the practical applications of public relations. It will be a combination of lectures, case study analysis and discussion, in-class scenarios and assignments, and guest lectures from PR practitioners (along with some quizzes and exams).

We will examine what’s going on in the PR world each week – from crisis communication to cutting-edge social media campaigns – and do hands-on work for the most basic elements of public relations such as press releases, social media messaging, focus groups and surveys.

The goal is to create a classroom atmosphere where it isn’t just me talking at you, but creating an interactive environment where we can have open discussions about the field of public relations.

Course Goals
• To provide an understanding of public relations work and the profession
• To analyze current public relations practice and address ethical questions
• To develop key skills all public relations professionals must know
• To become familiar with the components of how to create a PR communications plan

Required readings
There is no textbook for this class, but you will be responsible for using AP style so it’s recommended you familiarize yourself with the AP stylebook. Students will also be responsible for all readings on Blackboard at: http://bblearn.missouri.edu under “Readings.” All readings are expected to be completed by the day they are listed on the syllabus as those readings may be covered on a quiz or lecture for that day (e.g. if there are readings listed on a Monday, they should be complete before class on that Monday).

The majority of the readings come from two books:
It is also **recommended** that you keep up with PR-related news, be it through newspapers, Google News alerts, or other means to places such as PR Daily (http://www.prdaily.com).

**Grading**

Final course grades will be assigned as follows based on total points earned:

The undergraduate grading scale will be as follows with a +/- system out of 600 points:

- 600 - 562 - A
- 560 - 538 - A-
- 536 – 520 - B+
- 518 - 496 - B
- 494 - 478 - B-
- 476 - 460 - C+

The graduate grading scale will be as follows with a +/- system out of 650 points:

- 650 - 562 - A
- 560 - 538 - A-
- 536 – 520 - B+
- 518 - 496 - B
- 494 - 478 - B-
- 476 - 460 - C+

Extra credit may be given at the instructor’s discretion.

Students interested in creating an **honors by contract proposal** for this class should contact the instructor the first week of class.

**NOTES**

*Submitting assignments*: All assignments should be submitted through Blackboard or emailed to the instructor and teaching assistant, depending on the instructions on the given assignment. If Blackboard doesn’t work, assignments should be emailed as described previously.

Assignments should always be done in Word so that we can provide extensive feedback and correct errors. PDFs will not be accepted.

Assignments must be submitted with your last name(s) and the assignment name or number.

For example, an ethics assignment done as a group would be saved as: 
LastName1_LastName2_LastName3_Ethics OR LastName1_LastName2_LastName3_CSA3

An assignment done by a single person would be: LastName_CSA1

If an assignment is turned in without the correct naming structure, it 10 percent of the point value of the assignment will be deducted.

**Late work**: Any assignments handed in late (even if by one minute) will lose 50 percent of the point value of the assignment. Work handed in one full day late will be worth one quarter of the full assignment credit. Any work handed in later than that will not be accepted. (E.g. – an
assignment worth 20 points would be worth a maximum of 10 if late on the first day and a maximum of 5 on the second, and zero thereafter.)

Weekly schedule: The Weekly Schedule may change to benefit the specific needs of students and to meet the fast-paced and dynamic environment of the strategic communication field. It is your responsibility to check back for any updates.

Citations: When citing a source, APA (American Psychological Association) Style must be used. For information about APA style, please consult the following online resources:
- http://www.apastyle.org/
- https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

These grades will be based on the following criteria:

**Exams = 350 points (100 first exam, 100 take home, 150 second exam)**

There are three exams on the syllabus – one after the PR Background section, a take home exam at the end of the Elements of a PR Campaign section, and the second exam at the end of the class. On days of exams, laptops, phones and other electronic devices must be kept out of sight. The first exam is worth 100 points, take home exam is worth 100 points, and the second exam is worth 150 points for a total of 350 points. Students who are absent for an exam without prior arrangements with the instructor will receive NO POINTS for that exam.

Makeup exams will be allowed only in rare circumstances. To be considered for a makeup exam, you must contact me PRIOR to the day of the exam. Reasons for makeup exams will be examined by the instructor and taken on a case by case basis. If you are ill the morning of the exam, it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible. If your illness is verified by a formal doctor’s excuse you may be permitted to take a makeup exam. You will have exactly one week to take the makeup exam. If you have not taken the makeup exam within seven days of the scheduled exam you will receive a zero. It is your responsibility to arrange timing for the makeup exam. If you fail to schedule within the allotted seven days, you will receive a zero.

In-class exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. The take home exam will be a combination of report and essay.

**Case Study Exercises = 120 points (point values vary)**

During the semester, we will take the basic ideas from the lectures and talk in depth about real world examples as case study exercises (CSE). For four of these CSE’s, you will be presented with a scenario that you will need to discuss in teams of two to three people and then you must write up your assignment as a group and submit to Blackboard. To receive full credit, students must be present in class and must provide significant input into the exercise, i.e., simply showing up and ignoring your group or giving little effort earns students a maximum of half credit (an F).

These case study exercises are in the form of a business memo, typically consisting of 600-800 words unless otherwise noted. All memos must be thoughtful and substantial, which means that
students read the assigned readings and do any necessary research on the topic before crafting their responses.

If you decide to include citations for your Case Study Exercise (and you typically should need to), please be sure to use APA style as was mentioned in the notes above.

**Spot Quizzes = 60 points (10 per quiz)**

There will be seven spot quizzes during the semester. These quizzes will not be announced and each quiz will be worth 10 points. Information from the class prior to the quiz – primarily readings, but sometimes the lecture – will make up the quiz questions. **Students who are absent for a quiz without prior arrangements with the instructor will receive NO POINTS for that quiz.**

Makeup quizzes will be allowed only in rare circumstances. To be considered for a makeup quiz, you must have an excused absence, the validity of which will be decided by the instructor. If you are ill the morning of the quiz, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor as soon as possible. If your illness is verified by a formal doctor’s excuse you may be permitted to take a makeup quiz.

**Professionalism = 70 points (5 points each)**

Professionalism points are awarded for work done in every class and participating actively in class. Students must attend class to receive full participation points. If you need to miss class for any reason, you must email the instructor **BEFORE** the missed class. If you miss class due to an illness, a written doctor’s note is required. Attendance will be taken in every class.

**Students who miss more than five classes unexcused will be asked to drop the course.**

You must also actively participate in our discussions in class. Active participation means that you ask good questions, demonstrate that you’ve read the assigned readings, and provide examples you’ve found or insights you’ve gained from outside readings that help to illustrate key points.

As part of participation, you may be asked to provide a news item that caught your eye from recommended readings you do on your own or answer a question written or orally during class.

**Graduate students**

**Graduate project = 50 points**

Graduate students enrolled in this course will do one of the following:

**Option 1:** Write a case study paper about a public relations campaign or effort that broke new ground in the industry. This could be an academic exploration of great campaigns from the past
like “I Love NY” or “Smokey the Bear” or more recent campaigns like the viral campaign for “The Blair Witch Project” which changed the way movies were marketed.

As part of this case study, the graduate student will complete a SWOT and situation analysis of the subject of the case study.

Research should be a part of this project and all citations should be included at the end of the paper in APA style.

Students will meet with the instructor for an idea pitch before beginning the project. Case studies should be no less than five pages in length and no more than 15 pages in length, not including citations or appendices.

**Option 2:** Conduct or assist with research or project dealing with a public relations topic. This can be a detailed literature review on a topic or making meaningful contributions to a research project.
Weekly schedule
The semester is divided up into three parts: PR Background, Elements of a PR Campaign, and Careers in PR. The schedule is subject to change. Should the schedule be changed, student will be given as much notice as possible. Readings should be completed before class on the date listed on the syllabus as you may be quizzed on this material.