

Communication 314: Public Relations Cases and Strategies

Fall 2015
Course Syllabus

Tu-Th 2:30-3:45 p.m.
105 CLC

Instructor

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Office Hours: Tu 1:15-2:15 p.m. and 3:45-4:45 p.m., Th 1:15-2:15 p.m., or by appointment

By providing practical experience analyzing and recommending solutions to real-world public relations problems, this course helps prepare students for careers in public relations.

Course Description

This course focuses on the problems, strategies, solutions, and outcomes organizations experience in managing their reputations. It builds on students' existing knowledge of public relations, tools and techniques used by public relations professionals, and the concept that public relations is a strategic management function that can build and sustain positive relationships with key publics through genuine engagement. This course provides practical, real-world experience analyzing and applying case-specific solutions. The cases cover a wide range of communication issues, including internal communications, media relations, community relations, investor and financial relations, consumer relations, issues management and crisis communication.

Course Objectives

- Expose students to the range of communication issues that organizations face, and how public relations can play a vital role in accomplishing organizational objectives.
- Engage students in the strategic process of public relations problem solving.
- Provide examples of and critique actual public relations challenges and how they were addressed by public relations practitioners.
- Give students practical, hands-on experience formulating strategies and tactics to help solve public relations issues and capitalize on public relations opportunities.

Prerequisite

COMM 210 Principles of Public Relations

Required Textbook

Center, A. H., Jackson, P., Smith, S., & Stansberry, F. R. *Public Relations Practices: Managerial Case Studies and Problems* (8th edition, 2013), Pearson Prentice Hall.

Additional Assigned Readings

Additional required course readings will be available on Sakai and/or handed out in class.

Sakai

Lectures will be posted in advance on Sakai. This is designed to enable students to avoid having to take extensive notes in class and as an aid for studying for exams; it is not meant as a substitute for class attendance.

Expectations

Students are expected to be prepared for, attend, and actively participate in all class sessions. Class will begin promptly at 2:30 p.m. and students who arrive after attendance has been taken will be marked absent. Class participation counts for 10 percent of a student's grade, and if you don't attend, you can't participate. Please inform me in advance if you believe you have a legitimate reason for an absence.

Assignments

There will be seven short (2-3 page) written assignments during the semester. All assignments should be typed double spaced in a 12-point font with 1-inch margins with the student's name and date on the top of the first page. Papers should be stapled.

Hard copies of assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified. No email copies will be accepted except with prior approval of the instructor.

Public relations practitioners write for professional audiences. Students should aim to produce professional-quality work: accuracy, quality, format, and neatness all count and papers should be carefully proofread. Papers with typos, factual errors, or errors in grammar, punctuation or syntax will be graded down.

Students are strongly advised to refer to a recent edition of the Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law (2015 edition, ISBN 978-0-917360-61-9; print edition, online subscription and mobile app are available for purchase through <https://www.apstylebook.com/>). In addition, students are urged to have and use a reference book on English grammar for guidance on writing style.

Since public relations practitioners are held to deadlines, all assignments are due at the beginning of class on the specified date. Late assignments will be graded down one grade per day. For example, an assignment that would have received an A if it been turned in on time would receive a B+ if it was received between the class meeting time and midnight on the date due, a B if it was turned in on the following day, a C if it was turned in two days late, etc. No make-up assignments will be available.

Discussions

Each class lecture on a public relations topic will be followed by a class discussion of real-world cases on that topic. All students are expected to come to class prepared to actively discuss the cases and to respond to questions from the instructor and classmates. Students who do not attend discussion sessions and/or do not participate will receive a participation grade of zero for that session.

In-Class Team Exercises

Students will be divided into teams to work on a realistic public relations situation, problem, issue or opportunity on different topics. Teams will spend one class session working on the exercise and another presenting their solutions and discussing them with their classmates. Students who do not attend both the team exercise session and presentation will receive a grade of zero for that exercise.

Exams

The mid-term will cover material up to the mid-term; the final will cover material from after the mid-term to the end of the semester. Both exams will be in essay form. Both will cover materials from lectures, assigned readings, handouts, guest speakers, and film/videos. Neither exam may be made up at another time.

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+	67-69
D	61-66
F	60 or below

Course Grading

Written assignments	35 percent of grade
In-class team exercises	15 percent of grade
Mid-term	20 percent of grade
Final exam	20 percent of grade
Class participation	10 percent of grade

Academic Integrity

Each student is expected to do his or her own work in the course. Allegations of academic misconduct will be forwarded immediately to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication for possible disciplinary action. Loyola regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter with consequences ranging from failure of the course to probation to expulsion.

Academic misconduct includes:

- Cheating on exams or aiding other students to cheat. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful.
- Stealing the intellectual property of others and passing it off as your own work (this includes material found on the Internet). Software will be used to identify plagiarism.
- Failing to quote directly if you use someone else's words, and cite that particular work and author. If you paraphrase the ideas of another, credit the source with your

citation. Please ask me if you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism and/or how to cite sources.

- For closed-book exams, academic misconduct includes conferring with other class members, copying or reading someone else's test, and using notes and materials without prior permission of the instructor.
- Turning in the same work for two classes.

Classroom Behavior

To help create a positive learning community, this will be a device-free class – no phones, laptops or tablets – except on days with in-class team exercises. In several research studies, students in classes in which laptops were allowed (but not required for class use) reported greater levels of distraction and lower levels of engagement and learning. In addition, at least one study found a negative correlation between laptop use in class and course grade.

Please be respectful of fellow students and be in your seat when class begins.

Accommodations

Any student with a learning disability who needs accommodation during class sessions or exams should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities to the instructor during the first week of class; this information will be treated in complete confidence. The instructor will accommodate students' needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the responsibility of each student to plan in advance to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Students are excused for recognized religious holidays. Please let me know in advance.

Course Schedule

(Reading assignments are to be completed before class on the date shown)

Week 1

Aug. 25

Course Overview and Introductions

Foundations of Public Relations

Reading: Ch. 1 & 2

Miltenberg, "Public Relations Redefined and Deconstructed"

Aug 27

Employee Communication

Reading: Ch. 3, p. 21-28

McAdams, "How Deloitte's Social Network Beat the Isolation Blues"

Ovatt, "Top Brands Offer a Roadmap for Communicating with Rank and File"

Week 2

Sept. 1

Discussion of Employee Communication Cases

Reading: Ch. 3, TBD

Bush, "Counting Every Drop"

Leung, "The Mensch of Malden Mills"

Sept. 3

In-class team employee communication exercise

Week 3

Sept. 8

Presentations of team employee communication exercise

Employee communication problem due

Sept. 10

Community Relations

Reading: Ch. 4, p. 49-54

Kane, Fichman, Gallagher & Glaser, "Community Relations 2.0"

Week 4

Sept. 15

Discussion of Community Relations Cases

Reading: Ch. 4, TBD

Sept. 17

In-class team community relations exercise

Week 5

Sept. 22

Presentations of team community relations exercise
Community relations problem due

Sept. 24

Financial Communication

Reading: Ch. 5, p. 76-82

Safdar & Connaughton, "Investor Communications Strategies in the Age of Online
Activist Shareholders"

Karp & York, "McDonald's: Ronald isn't Going Anywhere"

Wardell, "Scuffles, Protests Mar BP Shareholder Meeting"

Week 6

Sept. 29

Discussion of Financial Communication Cases

Reading: Ch. 5, TBD

Dayton Hudson case

SDG&E takeover case

Oct. 1

Mid-term exam

Week 7

Oct. 6

Fall break

Oct. 8

Consumer Relations

Reading: Ch. 6, p. 107-111

Clifford, "For Dunkin, a Tempest in an Iced-Coffee Cup"

Goel, "G.M. Uses Social Media to Manage Customers and its Reputation"

Holmes, "Lessons Learned from the Great Free-Chicken Fiasco of 2009"

Morrissey, "These Brands Build Community" (*excerpt*)

Stelter, "Gripping Online? Comcast Hears and Talks Back"

Working, "Southwest Airlines' New Listening Center Making an Immediate Mark"

Financial communication problem due

Week 8

Oct. 13

Discussion of Consumer Relations Cases

Reading: Ch. 6, TBD

Oct. 15

In-class team consumer relations exercise

Week 9

Oct. 20

Presentations of team consumer relations exercise
Consumer relations problem due

Oct. 22

Media Relations

Reading: Ch. 7, p. 142-147

Bush, "As Media Market Shrinks, PR Passes up Reporters, Pitches Directly to Consumers"

Edgecliffe-Johnson, "The Invasion of Corporate News"

Kaufman, "Need Press? Repeat: 'Green,' 'Sex,' 'Cancer,' 'Secret,' 'Fat'"

Sprung, "Five Real-Life Examples of Awful PR Pitches"

Stoller, "Creating an Online Newsroom"

Woodall, "From Old Media to Social Media: Survey Reveals Essential Elements for Today's Online Newsroom"

Week 10

Oct. 27

Discussion of Media Relations Cases

Reading: Ch. 7, TBD

Alar case

GM vs. NBC case

Oct. 30

Public Issue Campaigns and Debates

Reading: Ch. 8, p. 167-172

Barbaro, "Wal-Mart's Detractors Come in from the Cold"

Blair, "Under the Radar, PR's Political Savvy"

Eng & Cancino, "Debate over Chain's Marketing of Burgers, Fries with Toys Likely to Ramp up, with Group Threatening Lawsuit"

Hopkinson, "Monsanto Confronts Devilish Public Image Problem"

Week 11

Nov. 3

Discussion of Public Issue Campaigns and Debates Cases

Reading: Ch. 8, TBD

Kruvand & Silver, "Zombies Gone Viral: How a Fictional Zombie Invasion Helped CDC Promote Emergency Awareness"

Media relations problem due

Nov. 5

In-class team public issues exercise

Week 12

Nov. 10

Presentations of team public issues exercise
Public issue campaigns and debates problem due

Nov. 12

Crisis Communication

Reading: Ch. 9, p. 207-209

Barnett, "The PR Response to Virginia Tech and Beyond"

Bernstein, "Making a Crisis Worse: The Eleven Biggest Mistakes in Crisis Communications"

Goodman, "In Case of Emergency: What Not to Do"

Hannah, "In Hudson River Landing, PR Pros Were Not First Responders"

Week 13

Nov. 17

Discussion of Crisis Communication Cases

Reading: Ch. 9, TBD

Harrison, "The Community is Speaking Loud and Clear: Susan G. Komen for the Cure, Planned Parenthood, and the Crisis of Public Opinion"

Young & Flowers, "Fight Viral with Viral: A Case Study of Domino's Pizza's Crisis Communication Strategies"

Nov. 19

In-class team crisis communication exercise

Week 14

Nov. 24

Presentation of team crisis communication exercise
Crisis communication problem due

Nov. 26

Thanksgiving break

Week 15

Dec. 1

Standards, Ethics and Values

Reading: Ch. 10, p. 239-242

Berfield, "The One Lie That Brought Down Walmart's PR Chief"

Gunther, "Climate Changeable: Waffling Lands PR Firm Edelman in Hot Water"

Newman, "Bloggers Don't Follow the Script, to ConAgra's Chagrin"

Reuters, "FTC Settles Complaint about Fake Video Game Testimonials"

Somaiya, "PR Firm for Putin's Russia Now Walking a Fine Line"

Stelter, "When Chevron Hires Ex-Reporter to Investigate Pollution, Chevron Looks Good"

Dec. 3

Discussion of Standards, Ethics and Values Cases

Reading: Ch. 10, TBD

FINAL EXAM: Sat. Dec. 12, 4:15 p.m.