

Media Relations

PBRL 4430-001 / 6430-001

Fall 2023

Class meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:20 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Meeman 212

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Office: Meeman 330

Office hours: Monday, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.; Tuesday 9 - 11 a.m. & online 4 to 5 p.m.; other hours by appointment. Note: If you'd like to meet for the office hours listed, please reach out via email prior to dropping by so I can make sure I'm in my office. I'm also available via Zoom outside of the listed office hours upon request.

Phone: 901-678-3095

Email: jcfssmnn@memphis.edu

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

Development of media relations skills, including advanced writing of collateral materials, presentations, pitching and media training. Build effective and proactive work strategies with media through various tools including news conferences, media interviews, and media campaigns, and how PR professionals must mix traditional with new media outlets to most effectively promote their clients and employers. Strategic tools and techniques for developing successful media relations will be explored.

Prerequisites

Earned 60 credit hours.

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

- Howard, C. M., Mathews, W. K., & Horsley, J. S. (2020). *On deadline: Managing media relations, 6th Edition*. Waveland Press. Print ISBN 9781478646051, 1478646055, eText ISBN 9781478646631, 1478646632
- Associated Press Stylebook (2018 or 2019). New York: Basic Books. You are responsible for the latest changes, so I recommend having the most current version.
- Additional readings may be assigned and posted on Canvas.

Muck Rack for Educators:

We will be using Muck Rack this semester. Muck Rack is a journalist database, media monitoring and coverage reporting platform, that is trusted by top-tier journalists, entrepreneurs, PR agencies and Fortune 500 companies. This software will allow you to become familiar with the types of real-world tools used to identify contacts, disseminate messages, and measure multiple variables.

Each student will receive an individual login and will be responsible for following all rules and

expectations set forth. You are required to use Muck Rack to complete assignments this semester and will need to complete online training courses on your own time outside of class.

Additionally, you will be required to complete the training requirements and become certified in Muck Rack's Fundamentals of Media Relations (free for students through the University Program).

Note: University computers are regularly erased, and lost files cannot be recovered. Saving files on university computers is not permitted.

Online Course Administration — Canvas

Canvas will be used to administer the course communication, materials (e.g., PowerPoint files, additional readings, handouts, assignment guidelines, evaluation forms), and grades. For instance, an electronic file of this document is posted on canvas. Please check the site for announcements and/or threads of comments from classmates and the professor.

All correspondence regarding the class needs to be addressed to jcfssmnn@memphis.edu. Please **include in any email the class designation PBRL 4430** (or PBRL 6430). During weekdays I will usually respond to emails within 24-48 hours. If you have not received an answer after two days, please resend the email with a note that you are resending it. I will not respond on weekends but will address the concerns the following Monday.

The syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor and needs of the class. Changes will be communicated in class and on Canvas. Make sure that you check your Canvas shell a couple times a week to stay up-to-date will announcements and updates.

Classroom format and participation

The class will include lecture, webinars, discussion, quizzes, surveys, presentations, and in-class activities. Come to class having read the content assigned for each week, and ready to actively participate in class. This class is hands-on, and we will all benefit from class discussions and collaborative efforts in our study of media relations, communication tactics, public relations tools, audience and media selection. Your class participation and collaboration not only are appreciated, but they are also expected. Please come to class prepared to have intellectual exchange of ideas, and ready to participate in the class experience.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page:
<http://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JRSM 3900 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

Grading and course assignments

There are a total of 300 points possible in this course. Points will be allocated as follows:

- **6 Quizzes** worth 20 points for a total of 120 points.
- **Media Relations Plan, Presentation, Peer Reviews** each worth 30 points for a total of 90 points.
- **Video Interview** and **Mock Press Conference** each worth 30 points each for a total of 60 points.

- **Muck Rack Certification** worth 30 points.

Final grades (based on 300 total points) are calculated as follows:

- A+= 293-300; A= 278-292; A-= 269-277
- B+= 260-268; B= 248-259; B-= 239-247
- C+= 230-238; C= 218-229; C-= 209-217
- D+= 200-108; D= 179-199; F= 0-178

Quizzes. Quizzes will be given periodically. Attend class, read your materials and you should do well.

Media relations plan and presentation. In teams, you will select an organization/company with a problem, opportunity and/or initiative that requires media relations support. Your final product needs to showcase your understanding of media relations. You will want to have elements for both traditional and non-traditional media. Each group will give a professional presentation for their media relations campaign. It's recommended that you treat this as you would a job presentation: dress professionally, have visual aids/handouts, practice ahead of time, and be prepared for questions. All group members will also submit peer reviews and outline their own contributions to the effort. In addition to a group grade on the plan and presentation, each group member will be graded individually based on group member's feedback, contribution to the project, participation and poise during the presentation. Additional details on the assignment will be provided separately.

Mock news conference. In teams, you will work to plan and conduct a news conference to include talking points, introductory statement, response to questions and collateral.

Muck Rack Fundamentals of Media Relations Certification. Each student will be required to complete the training and pass the exam to earn Muck Rack Fundamentals of Media Relations Certificate.

Media training. Media training can teach you how to use your words, tone and body language to deliver your message in a powerful way. Throughout the semester there will be assignments and hands-on exercises designed to expose students to the basic concepts of media communication, including on-camera interview drills and practice in preparing a company's/organization's spokesperson (CEO, subject matter expert [SME], etc.) to do media interviews.

PBRL 6430. Graduate students will also need to complete Muck Rack's Social Media Certification, in addition to the work outlined above.

More details will be provided in class and on Canvas. Deadlines will be listed on each assignment.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. You get **3 "free" absences** to account for sickness, car troubles, funerals, football games or any other reason – DO NOT provide me with an excuse. However, any student who **misses 4-5 classes** will have his/her **final grade reduced by 1 letter grade**; missing **6-7 classes** will result in a **2-letter grade reduction**; **8 or more absences** will result in an **unsatisfactory grade** in the course. I may, after due warning, prohibit further attendance in the

courses in such cases. You are expected to arrive promptly for class, fully prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Anyone arriving more than 10 minutes late for class will be noted as absent, and his or her class participation grade will suffer as a result.

Other issues

Media diet. The very nature of our profession requires us to stay on top of today's happenings. Our responsibility as PR professionals is to assess their relevance to – and their implications for – our clients and employers. Knowledge of current events, government, history and media is becoming more and more crucial. While your undergraduate education will provide a strong base of understanding in these areas, your proactive efforts to continue learning about them will greatly benefit your career. Continue to feed your media diet with a good mix of traditional, specialized and internet news sources.

Other media consumption. While we are studying media relations, be a voracious, critical consumer of media, texts, stories, brands, experiences – and the messages sent about and within them in the media. Look for the exceptional and the #PRFail. Bring these examples of good media relations and bad to class so we can critically analyze and learn from them together.

Suggested resources include, but are not limited to:

- [Institute for Public Relations](#)
- [Arthur W. Page Society](#)
- [Public Relations Society of America \(PRSA\)](#)
 - [PRSA Silver & Bronze Anvil Awards home page](#)
 - [PRSA Volunteer Chapter](#)
- [Public Affairs Council](#)
- [Issues Management Council](#)
- [National Investor Relations Institute](#)
- [National Black Public Relations Association](#)
- [Hispanic Public Relations Association](#)

Use of AI in this Course

You are permitted to use ChatGPT and other AI tools to assist you in gathering information, writing drafts, and revising your writing in this course. However, you are expected to include a disclosure statement at the end of your assignment describing which AI tool you used and how you used it. For example, "ChatGPT was used to draft about 30% of this assignment and to provide revision assistance. AI-produced content was edited for accuracy and style." Be prepared to submit any prompts you used for assistance with your assignment as well as the original ChatGPT output and to be able to explain/show how you fact-checked and improved upon the AI's work.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE [Subject to change]

Week 1 (August 29 & 31) - Introduction

Syllabus and course expectations. What does it mean to practice media relations?

Read: Syllabus; Preface in the textbook and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

Due: Get textbook.

Week 2 (September 5 & 7) - Getting Started: Setting Up Your Program

Media relations in the era of information.

Read: Chapter 1 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

Due: Quiz 1 is due at 11.59 p.m. on Saturday, September 9. Establish Muck Rack account.

[Note: Day of Observance - Sept. 6 & Sept. 7 Sri Krishna Jayanti (Hinduism)]

Week 3 (September 12 & 14) - News: Defining News and Newsmakers in a Complex World

Theory in media relations. Assessing the news - What is newsworthiness?

Read: Chapter 2 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

[Note: Sept. 11 - 18 Paryushan Mahaarva (Jainism); Sept. 15- 17 Rosh Hashanah (Judaism)]

Week 4 (September 19 & 21) - Tools of the Trade: From ANRs to Gen Z

Tools of the trade.

Read: Chapter 3 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

Due: Quiz 2 is due at 11.59 p.m. on Saturday, September 23.

Week 5 (September 26 & 28) - Reporters: Helping Them Meet Their Objectives

The relationship between media relations practitioners and journalists.

Read: Chapter 4 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

[Sept. 24-25 Yom Kippur (Judaism); Sept. 26-27 Mawlid al-Nabi (Islam); Sept. 29- Oct. 6 Sukkot (Judaism)]

Week 6 (October 3 & 5) - Spokespersons: Training and Briefing Them for Their Role

Reaching out, making contact, & earning a response.

Read: Chapter 5 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

Due: Quiz 3 is due at 11.59 p.m. on Saturday, October 7.

[Oct 1-7 Golden Week (China); Oct. 6-8 Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah (Judaism)]

Week 7 (October 10 & 12) - Ethical and Legal Issues: How to Avoid a Crisis of Character

Ethics.

Read: Chapter 6 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

Week 8 (October 17 & 19) - Fall Break – NO CLASS!

Week 9 (October 24 & 26) - Media Events: How to Make Them Work for You.

Understanding audiences.

Read: Chapter 7 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

Due: Quiz 4 is due at 11.59 p.m. on Saturday, October 28.

Week 10 (October 31 & November 2) – Media Training Workshop

Individual video interviews will be conducted and evaluated in class.

Read: Non but check for any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

[Nov. 1 All Saints' Day / Día de Muertos (Catholics), Nov. 5 Daylight Saving Time Ends]

Week 11 (November 7 & 9) - Going Global: How to Manage International Media Relations

Impact of globality on media relations. Cultural intelligence (CQ) and cultural factors.

Read: Chapter 8 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

Due: Media Relations Plans & Peer Review Document due in appropriate Dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. November 11.

Week 12 (November 14 & 16) - Crisis Planning: How to Anticipate and Manage Emergency Situations

The critical role of effective media relations in a crisis. Media Plan Presentations will start this week.

Read: Chapter 9 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

Due: Quiz 4 is due at 11.59 p.m. on Saturday, November 18.

[Nov. 12 Diwali / Deepavali (Jainism, Sikhism, Hinduism)]

Week 13 (November 21 & 23) - Media Plan Presentations and Thanksgiving Break!

Media Plan Presentations will be continued this week. Thanksgiving break: NO CLASS ON THURSDAY!

Week 14 (November 28 & 30) - Measurement and Evaluation: How to Know if you are Achieving Your Objectives

Managing goals, objectives, & expectations. A proactive approach to measurement and evaluation.

Read: Chapter 10 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

Due: Mock Press Conference will be held in class.

Week 15 (December 5) - The Future: Expanding Your Counselor Role

Adapting Your Media Relations Program.

Read: Chapter 11 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware.

Due: Quiz 6 is due at 11.59 p.m. on Thursday, December 5.

Final Exam:

There is NO final exam, but the Muck Rack Certification and any extra credit is due to be uploaded into the assignment box no later than 10.00 a.m., December 14th!

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

Professional Values and Competencies in PBRL 4430

- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

How professional values and competencies will be met

Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)

- Learn techniques with writing in a brand voice to a diverse and global audience.
- Apply strategic thinking for communicating an organization's message to media.
- Produce professional grade content that can be used by an organization.
- Use industry-standard tools that support media relations work.

Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)

- Complete a large-scale project that relies heavily on the skills presented in class.
- Demonstrate an advanced ability to write in an appropriate and brand-consistent voice.
- Demonstrated advanced knowledge of the monitoring and social listening software required for the course.

How assessment of student learning will be met

Awareness

- Become aware of how public relations professionals work with the media to share information.

Understanding

- Develop an understanding of the role of public relations in the media landscape.
- Develop an understanding of the processes by which public relations professionals shape messages when working with the media.

Application

- Creation of a large-scale project addressing different media tools, strategies and tactics as applicable to media relations practice.

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

Portfolio requirement

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of your work. Portfolios begin in JRSM 3900/3905. The portfolio should contain samples of coursework and/or professional experiences and should develop as you build skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while you are enrolled in your capstone course.

You may use any type of web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system, but you are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace. It is also encouraged to purchase a URL if you plan to use the portfolio long term. You must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

You should have a professional email address you plan to use throughout your professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact

- Professional social media links (minimum LinkedIn)

You may wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files or writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career you seek after graduation. Your portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

Email

You must have your UofM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have all UofM emails forwarded to that account. Go to the [account management website](#) for information about implementing email forwarding. You are required to check your email daily.

Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

AI/Chat GPT

The use of artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others in Journalism & Strategic Media. Please refer to specific guidelines for this course in the course-specific part of the syllabus.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism & Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual tardiness.

Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (C-) in a class required by your program of study in Journalism & Strategic Media after three attempts will be dropped from the program.

You may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. Substantially reworking the original submission, or working with the same general idea, may be permissible upon discussion and with written approval from the professor of the current course.

Academic integrity

The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly and follow the policies stated in the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. If you need more information about the University policy on academic integrity visit the [Office of Student Accountability's website](#).

In addition to University-wide policies, the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on your own, as acts of cheating and punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, you are expected to comply with copyright and intellectual property laws and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas and to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. All creative work may be checked for policy adherence by the professor. The only exception to this policy is your online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo). By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

Online SETEs

You are encouraged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. If completed, once the instructor has posted final grades, you can immediately see that grade. To access evaluation forms, log in to MyMemphis; click the "Student Pages" dropdown menu and select "My Resources" and find the SETE evaluation forms; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and is appreciated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. Because Journalism & Strategic Media is a professional program, students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

You may be permitted to make up missing work if it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented.

AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. You are responsible for learning these rules and checking your work for errors.

Disability and accommodations

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Diversity and inclusivity

The Department of Journalism & Strategic Media values diversity in all its forms. Some of these forms include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. As such, students are expected to participate in fostering an inclusive environment that respects the differences of others.

Students are expected to approach their work through a diverse lens. Creating messages that resonate with diverse audiences requires an understanding of a variety of perspectives, which are carried out through multiple platforms, such as digital and traditional media outlets.

The department seeks to foster healthy and positive classroom discussions and experiences. As such, faculty and students are expected to remain respectful and professional at all times.

Weather policy

Always check with local media, the University of Memphis website and the LiveSafe App regarding inclement weather.

Student support

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, visit the Student Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php> or contact the Dean of Students Office at 901-678-2187, or in person in Suite 359 in the University Center for assistance. You may also talk with course instructors about the challenges you are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting you with campus or community support.