

Intro to Public Relations

PBRL 3400-001/350

Spring 2023

TTR 2:40 – 4:05 p.m.

Meeman Jour Bldg 100

Prof. Sheri D. Neely

Office: 330 Meeman Journalism Building

Office Hours: Tuesday 7-11 a.m. or by appointment

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

Development, scope and modern role of public relations; emphasis on problem-solving, lectures, and application of major public relations tools and practices.

Prerequisites

None

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Kim, C. M. (2019). *Public Relations: Competencies and Practices (1st edition)*. New York: Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-1385-5234-0

An online version of the book is available at:

<https://ezproxy.memphis.edu:3443/login?url=https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781315148106>

Classroom format

The class will be presented through lectures, discussions, multimedia, and case studies both in class and utilizing online platforms including Canvas and social media sites. This class will meet in person twice a week in room 100. Regular attendance and participation in class is expected and will affect your grade. Part of academic success at the collegiate level is being able to add to discussions with informed ideas and thoughts, as well as being willing to ask questions if you are unsure about anything. There will be many opportunities to contribute, engage, or explore topics that may be confusing or unclear in class, and I encourage each and every one of you to speak up when appropriate. Remember there is no such thing as a stupid question.

Class discussions taking place both online and in person should remain respectful and professional, and show respect to all people regardless of background, sex, race, or any other factor. Hate speech will not be tolerated in my classroom and I reserve the right to ask any student to leave if they violate this boundary. Remember: Public relations is all about creating and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships and our classroom should be no different.

This class is meant to serve as an introduction to public relations and the fundamentals that PR is built on. Our classroom discussions will include the pillars of public relations and the future of the field, as well as public relations processes. There will be an emphasis on social media, content creation, stewardship, stakeholder relationships, and leadership. We will also discuss different areas of public relations and application to other fields.

Students will upload all required assignments to Canvas, and feedback will be given to encourage student improvement. Access to a computer or an electronic device will be required. Please be sure to read the instructions for each assignment carefully, as requirements for each assignment will vary.

Assignments being turned into Dropbox will all need to be submitted as a .doc file unless otherwise noted. Reach out in class or via email if anything is unclear to you. All assignments will be due Sunday nights at 11:59 p.m. central time unless otherwise noted. To allow time for response and clarification, please reach out with any assignment questions at least 48 hours prior to the deadline.

In order to succeed in this course, it's imperative to attend class and stay engaged in all coursework. If at any point you are concerned about your grade or struggling to grasp course concepts, I encourage you to make an appointment during my office hours so we can work to find a good solution. Remember that in order for me to help you, communication is key.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page:
<https://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 PBRL 3400-001/350 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

Course Requirements

Individual Assignments

- Weekly assignments (Total of 6; 40 points each) 240 points
- Discussion grades (Total of 6; 35 points each) 210 points
- Quizzes (Total of 4; 50 points each) 200 points
- Social Media Assignments 200 points
- Final project (Choose Your Own Adventure) 100 points
- Class Attendance & Participation 50 points

Total: 1,000 points

Honors Component

If you are taking this class as an honors class, you will need to fulfill the honors project requirement. For the honors project requirement, you will be able to choose from one of the following options:

1. Research paper explaining an issue or specific topic in PR; topic to be approved by instructor.
2. Presentation covering a specific skillset in PR with actionable items on how to be successful; tool must be approved by instructor.
3. Feature story that includes 3-5 interview sources based on what people think PR is/where the field is headed.
4. Historical backgrounder about public relations that outlines major accomplishments, changes, and key players in the field of public relations.
5. Organization media audit.

**Regardless of the choice of requirement, specific assignments must be approved with the instructor for each student at least three weeks prior to the deadline. More specific expectation and details for each option will be provided upon approval. I recommend meeting with me during office hours to flesh out the details of the honors requirement.

Weekly assignments

Weekly assignments will vary in nature and be used to build on the concepts we are learning each week in class, as well as gauge your progress in the course. There will be a total of eight weekly assignments, 30 points each for a total of 240 points.

Discussions

There will be a total of seven discussion grades given throughout the semester at 30 points each for a total of 210 points. Discussion grades will be given based on participation in class discussions both in person and within online discussion boards. We will start with having most class discussions in-person during class time, but if this seems to be too burdensome or difficult to get full class participation, the discussions will move to Canvas. Be sure to check Canvas news items and lectures for updates.

Quizzes

A total of four quizzes will be given throughout the semester to test your understanding of course concepts. Quizzes will be given on Canvas with a time limit of 30 minutes. You will have

two attempts for each quiz with the highest grade taken. You are welcome to use your notes or book to help assist you on the quiz, but working with another student is prohibited.

Social Media Assignments

Because social media is such a large part of our field, you will have three social media assignments throughout the semester. Two of these assignments will be worth 50 points, and one will be worth 100. Please see specific assignment sheets for instructions.

Choose Your Own Adventure/Final Assignment

Your final assignment will be a choose your own adventure assignment, meaning you can pick below from one of the options to play to your strengths. More specific guidelines will be provided for each option later in the semester on Canvas.

1. Presentation-based option: You will create a presentation that teaches others about a PR concept or presentation topic must be approved prior and have enough material to be a 10-minute presentation.
2. Podcast/vlog: You will write and record a 15-minute podcast or vlog about a PR topic.
3. Social media content: You create a mini social media PR campaign and plan it in a content calendar.
4. Media kit: You write and create several pieces that would normally be a part of a media kit, including an organizational background, fact sheet, and other materials.
5. Pitch your own project.

Questions About Grades

If you would like to ask about a grade, please make an appointment to meet with me outside of class time, as I will not discuss grades via email or during class.

Additionally, you are responsible for tracking your grade online and meeting with me early in the semester if you are concerned about your overall grade. Meeting early and often can help both parties involved find ways to improve student-instructor understanding and quality of work.

Plagiarism policy

First offense: Redo for 50%, plus meet with Prof. Neely

Second offense: Automatic 0, no redo

Third offense: Automatic class fail

Final assignment, regardless of which offense: Automatic 0 on assignment

**Any instances of plagiarism may result in a note being added to your department file.

Late work

<24 hours late: -10% (perfect = 90% A)

24-48 hours late: -20% (perfect = 80% B)

1 Week late: -30% (perfect = 70% C)

Final call: Up to 50% credit (perfect = 50% F)

Grading

Assignment categories and points or percentage weights.

A+ = 96.5-100%; A = 92.5-96.4%; A- = 89.5-92.4%

B+ = 86.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-86.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4%

C+ = 76.5-79.4%; C = 72.5-76.4%; C- = 69.5-72.4%

D+ = 66.5-69.4%; D = 59.5-66.4%

F 0-59.4%

A=Professional quality work that could be used with little or no modification

B=Good to excellent work and exceeds requirement, but would require revision to be used professionally

C=Satisfactory work and adequately meets requirement, but would need significant revision

D=Barely satisfies the minimum requirement and below average quality

F=Unsatisfactory work and does not meet minimum requirements

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1, JAN 17, 19: Introductions & Foundation of Public Relations

Order textbook

State of Semester Survey (A1)

Week 2, JAN 24 & 26: Intro to Public Relations

Chapter 1

Fundamentals of PR Survey (A2)

Discussion 1

Week 3, JAN 31 & FEB 2: Business Literacy & Strategy

Chapter 6

Week 4, FEB 7 & 9: Stewardship & Relationship Building

Chapter 11

Quiz 1

Social Media Assignment 1

Week 5, FEB 14 & 16: Ethics

Chapter 5

Week 6, FEB 21 & 23: Media Relations and Guest Speaker

Chapter 22

Media Relations Assignment (A3)

Week 7, FEB 28 & MAR 2: Entertainment PR and Guest Speaker

Chapter 3

Mid-semester survey (A4)

Discussion 2

Week 8, MAR 7, 9: SPRING BREAK

No Readings

Week 9, MAR 14 & 16: Crisis Communications

Chapter 10

Discussion 3

Quiz 2

Week 10, MAR 21 & 23: Employee Relations

Discussion 4

Internal Communication Assignment (A5)

Week 11, MAR 28 & 30: Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion

Chapter 14

Discussion 5

Social Media Assignment 2

Week 12, APR 4 & 6: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Chapter 2, 13

Social Media Assignment 2

Week 13, APR 11 & 13: Social Media

Chapter 7 & 12

Discussion 6

Choose Your Own Adventure Final Project

Week 14, APR 18 & 20: Content Creation

End of Semester Survey (A6)

Quiz 3

Week 15, APR 25: Course Wrap Up

APR 25 LAST DAY OF CLASS

APR 28 STUDY DAY

APR 29 – MAY 4 EXAMS

Your final quiz is due during the assigned finals time. You may complete the final anytime between April 28-Thursday May 4. May 4, 12:30pm is the hard deadline. NO finals will be accepted after this.

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

Professional Values and Competencies in PBRL 3400

- 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.
- 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.

How professional values and competencies will be met

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

- Identify the four-step public relations process and what activities exist within each step.
- Explain the variety of relationships between organizations, media and publics.
- Understand how new technology affects the media and communication.
- Understand what's involved in preparing for and advancing a career in public relations.
- Understand mass communication theories and their application to media professions.

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

- Read and critically reflect on assigned readings, podcasts, videos, etc.
- Demonstrate understanding of class concepts by earning passing scores on periodic tests and/or exams.
- Practice intellectual exchange of ideas with class and professor through meaningful discussion.
- Research, interpret and present findings to class.
- Analyze the impact of digital footprints on personal brands.
- Produce content for class utilizing appropriate technology.

How assessment of student learning will be met

Awareness

- Identify the historical and theoretical foundations of public relations.
- Recognize the importance of ethics.
- Examine the need for diversity in all areas of mass communication.

Understanding

- Recall the historical and theoretical foundations of public relations during class discussions, exercises, and on tests.
- Differentiate between ethical and unethical behavior through examination of PR ethical codes of conduct, situational exercises, and class discussions.
- Express the skills needed to excel in the public relations field.

Application

- Discuss course concepts with class demonstrating reflection and critical thinking.
- Complete assignments sharpening understanding of public relations, such as researching a public relations firm and presenting findings and interpretation of agency portfolio and website; analyzing personal digital media usage and reporting findings, including where and how changes could improve personal digital brand; and/or creating personal videography for use on YouTube.
- Complete several tests and exercises earning passing scores.

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.

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.