

Public Relations Ethics & Advocacy

PBRL 4706/6706-001

Spring 2023

Class Meeting: T/Th - 1 - 2:25 p.m.

MJ 100

Prof. Taylor Ackerman, APR

She/Her

Office: Meeman 332

Office hours: Monday, 10:45 a.m. - 12:15 pm

Tuesday, 10am - 11am

Wednesday, 11:45 am - 12:45 pm

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.

Email: tkerman@memphis.edu

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

An approach to ethics and advocacy through case studies and their application to the work of public relations professionals as they interact with employers, publics and society as a whole.

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Parsons, Patricia. *Ethics in Public Relations (2nd ed.)* ISBN: : 9780749477264

Classroom format

Our class will meet in person in room 100 in the Meeman Journalism building twice a week. Attending class in person is imperative and necessary for your success in this class, as part of your grade will depend on in class activities and discussion. Our class will be based around ethics and advocacy within the field of public relations, as well as how you can bring both ethics and advocacy into your future career, regardless of the field. Through lectures, slide decks, podcasts and multimedia sources, case studies, special guests, course activities and class discussions, you will learn how ethics plays a role in everyday decision making. Your learning will be assessed through course discussions, a presentation of ethical decision making, analysis of case studies, assignments, and quizzes. All work will be turned in through our Canvas shell.

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. Click on the link for PBRL 4706 to enter our course

Course Requirements

This course will require access to technology, diligence in engaging with each week's course content, bringing forward thoughtful discussion, application of course material to real world examples, and communication with the instructor and other classmates. The course work will often require you to think critically, listen to other points of view, and approach situations with an ethics mindset as well as a problem solving attitude. Discussions should always remain respectful, supportive, and open to hearing differing perspectives or ideas.

Course & Campus Resources

Students with disabilities & accommodations

If you will need accommodations through [Disability Resources](#) to meet any of the requirements of this course, please let me know as soon as possible. I'm happy to work with you to make sure you are able to be successful in this course. Remember, this is not a reflection on your ability nor is it giving special treatment, but rather making sure you are equipped to do your best in this course.

Support: If at any point in the semester you are struggling with the course load or a specific assignment, please reach out to me for a meeting so we can work to get you back on track. I'm happy to help in any way I'm able, but you must be an advocate for yourself. It's impossible for me to help if I don't know there's a problem.

School in general can be stressful, and I know that you have many things going on outside of this course. I am here to help make sure that you have everything possible that you need to succeed, and advocate for you. However, this requires open communication from you as early on in the semester as possible. I am happy to meet with you outside of class, hop on a Zoom call, or provide support over email. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you find yourself falling behind, feeling overwhelmed, or struggling. Please remember that the earlier I'm aware of the problem, the more likely it is that we'll be able to get things turned around.

Academic Services:

[Writing Center](#)

[Tutoring](#)

Communities & Inclusion:

[Multicultural Affairs](#)

[LGBTQ+](#)

Grading

There are 1,000 possible points in this class. At the end of the semester, your class points will be calculated and rounded up to the nearest whole number. Letter grades will be determined according to the scale below. If additional points are added or subtracted from this possible point total, students will be provided with an updated point to letter grade scale.

A+ = 967 – 1,000 points, **A** = 934 – 966, **A-** = 900 – 933 points

B+ = 867 – 899 points, **B** = 834 – 866 points, **B-** = 800 – 833 points

C+ = 767 – 799 points, **C** = 734 – 766 points, **C-** = 700 – 733 points

D = 667 – 600 points
F = 600 and fewer points

Grading Philosophy. A=Professional quality work that could be use 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 minimum requirement and below average quality
F=Unsatisfactory work and does not meet minimum requirements

Assignments

Attendance	100 points
In Class Activities	100 points
Individual Ethics Presentation	200 points
Case Study Analysis	100 points
Individual Assignments	160 points
Discussions	140 points
Quizzes	200 points
Total:	1,000 points

Assignment Breakdown

More in-depth guidelines posted to Canvas.

Attendance: Since much of this class will be reliant on course discussions and in class activities, attending class is imperative. Each student will have a total of three absences to use as they need. Each absence over three will be ten points off their attendance grade.

In Class Activities: We will do a few activities together as a group in class. Students must be present in class to participate, and cannot be made up or turned in late.

Individual Ethics Presentation: Each student will do an ethics presentation in class in which they present an ethical dilemma and the needed details for the scenario, lead the class in a discussion about the dilemma and potential solutions, and conclude with their own ethical counseling for the situation. Students will be graded on their outside research and creativity in coming up with the scenario, if they presented good questions to the class for discussion and led them well, clearly presented the key facts of the ethical dilemma, provided good ethical counseling based on course concepts, and had a clean and professional presentation. More details will be provided in class and on Canvas.

Case Study Analysis: Students will study and critique a case study from the Page Society Student Case Study Competition, and create a report based on the ethical and advocacy components of the case. More details will be provided in class and on Canvas.

Individual Assignments: Students will work independently on assignments in order to demonstrate understanding of course concepts. These assignments will consist of surveys, a pitch for their ethics presentation, reflections, and a media find assignment. Additional details will be provided on Canvas.

Discussions: Students will participate in class discussions in order to get a deeper understanding of the class material. Students will be given a discussion grade based on how often they participate in the discussions as well as the thoughtfulness of their contributions.

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.

Miscellaneous Policies

Late Work Late Work: In the fields of public relations and journalism, deadlines are imperative. As such, learning to work within deadlines for this course will be expected. In class activities cannot be made up, and surveys, the ethics presentation, and quizzes will not be accepted late.. Individual assignments will accepted with the following policy:

- <24 hours late: 5% off
- <48 hours late: 10% off
- <One week late: 20% off
- One to three weeks late: 30% off
- Over three weeks late: No credit

Communication: Students should reach out to the professor via email (tckerman@memphis.edu) if they are experiencing trouble or have questions. Do not wait and let things snowball. I will make every effort to respond with 48-hours during the work week. If a message is sent over the weekend, additional response time may be required.

Course Schedule

Week 1, January 17 - 22: Introductions, Class Expectations, How do you define advocacy?

Readings/Media: Get Textbook!

Assignments: Survey

Week 2, January 23 - 29: Ethics, morals, and laws - oh my!

Readings/Media: Chapter One, Check Canvas

Assignments: In Class Assignment

Week 3, January 30 - February 5: Lies, Truth, Honesty, Trust

Readings/Media: Chapters Two & Three, Check Canvas

Assignments: Quiz One

Week 4, February 6 - 12: Codes of Ethics

Readings/Media: Chapter Eight, Check Canvas

Assignments: Case Study Assignment Due

Week 5: February 13 - 19: Conflicts of Interest, Personal Ethical Decisions

Readings/Media: Chapters Nine & Ten, Check Canvas

- Assignments: Pitch Scenarios
- Week 6: February 20 - 26: Moral Development
Readings/Media: Chapter Seven, Check Canvas
Assignments: Quiz 2
- Week 7: February 27 - March 5: Whose right is right?
Readings/Media: Chapter Four, Check Canvas
Assignments: Work on Ethics Presentation
- Week 8, March 6 - 12: Spring Break! No Class.
- Week 9, March 13 - 19: Ethics & Media
Readings/Media: Chapters 11 & 12, Check Canvas
Assignments: Individual Ethics Presentations Due
- Week 10, March 20 - 26: Presentation of Ethics Presentations
Readings/Media: None
Assignments: None
- Week 11, March 27 - April 2: Presentation of Ethics Presentations
Readings/Media: None
Assignments: Reflection
- Week 12, April 3 - 9: Finding Advocacy in Your Career
Readings/Media: Check Canvas
Assignments: Guest Speaker Reflection
- Week 13, April 10 - 16: Persuasion, Propaganda & Advocacy
Readings/Media: Chapter 13, Check Canvas
Assignments: Quiz 3
- Week 14, April 17 - 23: Making Decisions
Readings/Media: Chapter 14, Check Canvas
Assignments: Media Assignment
- Week 15: April 24 - 30:
Readings/Media: None
Assignments: Quiz 4

This schedule will change as needed to suit course needs.

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

Professional Values and Competencies in PBRL 4706

- 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.
- 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)

- Explore the theory and practice of social advocacy.
- Understand the history, process, and effects of digital activism.
- Understand the tools and forms of activism.
- Recognize ethical principles and how they can be utilized in different situations.

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

- Analyze international and domestic social advocacy for ethical standards and practices.
- Conduct research on a current social cause and understand how digital media have been utilized in the public relations management of the cause.
- Deliberate and informed contributions to regular class discussion.

How assessment of student learning will be met

Awareness

- Grow awareness of ethical principles in public relations.
- Deepen knowledge of social advocacy movements, particularly historical movements.
- Understand the tools and forms of social advocacy.

Understanding

- Explain theoretical and practical knowledge about social advocacy, especially in a social/digital landscape.
- Apply ethical understandings to a variety of social advocacy case studies and movements.
- Discussion questions will be posed in class to stimulate critical thinking. Independent thinking is encouraged.

Application

- Evaluate a community social advocacy campaign for effectiveness, public relations management, and connection to ethical principles.
- Develop a social advocacy project of their own, based upon the knowledge gained from learning about other projects and movements.
- Critique and evaluate the work of classmates and the social advocacy projects they present.

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 JRSJ 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.