Introduction to Public Relations

The field of public relations is not for the faint of heart, nor is it for a person who wants an 8 to 5 workday. That’s a job; public relations is a career requiring long hours, commitment, dedication, diplomacy, and a broad pool of knowledge. Too often students “get into” public relations without knowing exactly what it is. It sounds fun and glamorous. Sometimes. But there are many misconceptions about our chosen profession. If we who practice public relations don’t understand it fully, how can we expect others to understand it? How can we expect our senior managers to realize that we are a necessary, vital, productive part of the organization and that we are essential to the success and health of the organization?

The objective of this course is to help you understand the nature of this multi-faceted profession. We will study its history, practices, and ethics and clear up the misconceptions. We will explore the trends and areas of specialization within the field.

Our goals will be to . . .
1. develop a working description of the evolving field of public relations and distinguish it from “similar” fields (marketing, advertising).
2. build a vocabulary of terms used in the profession.
3. understand the legal and ethical environment of public relations.
4. learn the difference between objectives, strategies and tactics and how to develop all three.
5. anticipate and prepare for issues that may impact the client.
6. read classic and contemporary public relations case studies.
7. practice the public relations method of problem solving.
8. listen to, support, and work effectively with others.
9. improve our presentation skills.
10. write effective, clear messages for various publics.

Required Text:


Work Requirements and Grading:

Your ability to function as an effective public relations professional will depend, to a great extent, on your ability to assess situations and issues and to discover the problems and opportunities they present. Therefore, you will read and discuss famous and “infamous”
public relations cases. Effective PR people must also be “up” on current events, so we will discuss important current events each week.

We will also have weekly discussions on the assigned reading in Wilcox. In order to have a vital and productive class, it is essential that you come to class having read the assignment. In addition, anything we discuss in class or any presentation given by another student/speaker is fair game for tests, which you will take four times during the semester. It will be very difficult to earn a good grade if you don’t attend class, participate, and keep up with your reading assignments.

You will often work in groups to discuss issues and create assignments; get used to it! For example, you will work with your team to track the public relations moves of an assigned corporation. Toward the end of the semester, you (with your teammates) will create and present a PR campaign for a fictional company. Remember, your assignments will involve not only creative and critical thinking, but a good deal of writing as well. Therefore, clear, focused writing skills are essential.

The grading for these assignments breaks down this way:

25% Assignments & participation
25% PR campaign & PR tracking
50% Tests

**Tentative Reading Schedule:**

**Week 1** Intro to course
8/28-9/1 Wilcox: Ch. 1

**Week 2** Chs. 2, 3
9/4-9/8

**Week 3** Ch. 14
9/11-9/15

**Week 4** Ch. 15
9/18-9/22 **TEST 1**

**Week 5** Chs. 5, 6
9/25-9/29

**Week 6** Chs. 7, 8
10/2-10/6

**Week 7** Ch. 11
10/9-10/13 **TEST 2**

**Week 8** Chs. 9, 13
10/16-10/20

**Week 9** Chs. 10
10/25-10/27 **Fall Break**
Week 10  
10/30-11/3  
Chs. 4, 16

Week 11  
11/6-11/10  
Chs. 17, 18  
TEST 3

Week 12  
11/13-11/17  
PR Campaign Presentations

Week 13  
11/20  
Thanksgiving Break

Week 14  
11/27-12/1  
Chs. 12, 21

Week 15  
12/4-12/8  
PR Tracking Presentations  
Last day of class

Finals Week  
TEST 4  
12/11, 8-10:30

*All dates are subject to change.*