

# Theories of Public Relations

Fall 2017, Section 9499

**Instructor:** Dr. Linda Hon

**Email:** LHon@ufl.edu

**Phone:** 352-294-2745

**Office Hours:** Wednesday, 9:30—10:30; 12:00—2:00 p.m. Other times by appointment.

**Course Website:** <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>

**Technical Help:** For technical issues with course access or e-learning in Canvas, contact UF Helpdesk at <http://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml> / (352) 392-HELP (4357) / [Learning-support@ufl.edu](mailto:Learning-support@ufl.edu)

## **Course Communication:**

Please email me directly at the ufl account listed above.

## **Course Description:**

This course covers main emphases in public relations theory and their applications to practice.

## **Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course, students will:

- Possess comprehensive knowledge of major areas of public relations theory and how those areas have been developed through empirical research.
- Be able to apply abstract theoretical models and concepts from public relations scholarship to public relations practice.
- Understand the elements of an effective research proposal and develop a proposal suitable for a master's thesis or a manuscript for an academic research conference.

## **Expectations:**

Students are expected to complete work on time and participate in class discussions in a professional manner while respecting the instructor and fellow students. These discussions are not limited to the Canvas shell, but all platforms that involve coursework.

## **Required Readings and Reaction Assignments**

Required Readings are listed in the course schedule and are available as PDFs for each weekly module on Canvas. The article PDFs are also available in the Announcements tab on Canvas (See Announcement 1). Reaction Assignments are listed in each weekly module on Canvas.

## **Teaching Philosophy:**

I see myself as a facilitator. My experience and background provide me with expertise in public relations theory and practice. However, there are no facts in public relations theory that I will communicate to you. The course materials I have selected and the assignments I have developed are designed to introduce you to main areas of public relations theory so you can make the connection from academic research to public relations practice.

**Instructional Methods:**

Because theory is based on empirical (data-based) scholarship, much of the class involves reading research literature. All the literature comes from peer-reviewed journals, particularly several main journals focusing on public relations—*Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Journal of Public Relations*, and *Public Relations Review*.

I have selected foundational articles that trace the development of a major theoretical program of research and/or research articles that are current and have to do with important trends in industry. And for each week, I have developed an assignment that is designed to elaborate on the reading material by linking it to professional practice.

I hope much of the learning in this class is peer-to-peer. Each student brings his or her life history and work experience to the class. Therefore, you will be sharing your discussion posts and reaction assignments with one another and providing constructive feedback to one another.

**Course Policies:****Late Work and Make-up Policy:**

Deadlines are critical to this class. All work is due on or before the due date. Extensions for deadlines will only be for preapproved emergencies. With this in mind there will be penalties for late work:

- Less than an hour late 5 points off
- More than an hour late but less than 24 hours late 10 points off
- More than 24 hours late but less than 48 hours late 15 points off
- More than 48 hours late 25 points off
- A week or more late Not accepted at all

**Emergency and extenuating circumstances policy:** Students who face emergencies, such as a major personal medical issue, a death in the family, serious illness of a family member, or other situations beyond their control should notify their instructors immediately. Students are also advised to contact the Dean of Students Office if they would like more information on the medical withdrawal or drop process: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/care/medical-withdrawal-process/>.

**Students must inform their academic advisor before dropping a course**, whether for medical or non-medical reasons. Your advisor will assist with notifying professors and go over options for how to proceed with their classes.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalogue at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Requirements for all graded course assignments are consistent with university attendance policies that can be found in the online catalogue at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

**Assignments:**

Assignments should be submitted through Canvas.

- Discussion Posts and Responses to Another Student's Post
- Research Proposal--Preliminary Idea
- Research Proposal—Final Draft
- Research Proposal--Final

**Deadlines:**

The deadlines for graded material are as follows:

Discussion Posts	11:59 PM EST Sundays
Comments on Another Student's Post	11:59 PM EST Mondays
Research Proposal	
Preliminary Idea	11:59 PM EST Wed., Oct. 18
Final Draft	11:59 PM EST Wed., Nov. 29
Final Proposal	11:59 PM EST Mon., Dec. 11

**Grading:**

Your work will be evaluated according to this distribution (100-point scale):

Discussion Posts	40%
Class Discussion (Discussion Posts and Reaction Assignments)	40%
Research Proposal	
Preliminary Idea	3 %
Draft	7 %
Final	10 %

The final grade will be determined as follows. Grades will be rounded up (e.g., 89.5 becomes 90).

A	100%	to	93%
A-	< 92%	to	90%
B+	< 90%	to	87%
B	< 87%	to	83%
B-	< 82%	to	80%
C+	< 80%	to	77%
C	< 77%	to	73%
C-	< 72%	to	70%
D+	< 70%	to	67%
D	< 67%	to	63%
D-	< 62%	to	60%
F	< 59%	to	0%

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

### **Discussion Posts and Responses to Another Student's Post**

- You are expected to read all of the course materials each week.
- Since there are no exams, you will be graded according to how well you incorporate specifics from all of the readings that demonstrate mastery of the material. Students will post an answer to the instructor prompt about the lecture and readings (750 words maximum) by **11:59 p.m. Sunday** of each week.
- Students are required to respond to another team member's post (250 words maximum) by **11:59 Monday** of each week.

For specific grading information, please refer to "Rubric for Discussion Participation and Comments to Another Student's Post."

### **Class Discussion and Reaction Assignments:**

- Students must be prepared to engage in class discussion about the week's assigned readings and discussion posts. Each discussion prompt will be available on Canvas a week ahead of the class the discussion prompt and posts are scheduled to be discussed. Please remember it is your responsibility to check the Canvas site.
- Students must read or view the content of the material in the week's reaction assignment before class and be prepared to engage in class discussion and/or exercises for each reaction assignment. Each reaction assignment will be available on Canvas a week ahead of the class the reaction assignment is schedule to be discussed. Please remember it is your responsibility to check the Canvas site.

For specific grading information, please refer to "Rubric for Class Discussion."

### **Research Proposal**

The capstone assignment for the course will be a research proposal appropriate for your thesis (or a conference paper for doctoral students). The proposal will be divided into three steps—preliminary idea, final draft, and final proposal. You should follow the guidelines for writing a research proposal found here:

<http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchproposal>

Your preliminary idea, final draft, and final proposal must conform to the style guidelines of the American Psychological Association. A helpful source is available at:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

#### **Preliminary idea (due Oct. 18, 11:59 p.m.)**

- This should be two pages (double-spaced, 12-point type, one-inch margins).
- Submit as a Word file in Canvas.
- Include the Title of your proposal and a synopsis of the preliminary main sections—Introduction, Background and Significance, Literature Review, and Proposed Research Design and Methods, and Preliminary Suppositions and Implications.

- The Citations (References) should be at the end of the document on a separate page (or pages).

**Final Draft (due November 29, 11:59 p.m.)**

- This is a 10-15 page (not including references, tables, and figures) final draft of your research proposal.
- Submit as a Word document through Canvas.
- Follow the guidelines here:

<http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchproposal>

For specific grading information for the Final Draft Research Proposal, please refer to “Rubric for Research Proposal.”

**Final Research Proposal (due December 11, 11:59 p.m.)**

- This is a 10-15 page (not including references, tables, and figures) final draft of your research proposal.
- Submit as a Word document through Canvas.
- Follow the guidelines here:

<http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchproposal>

For specific grading information for the Final Research Proposal, please refer to “Rubric for Research Proposal.”

**Course Introduction:**

**Week One (August 23, First Day of Class): Introductions and Class Overview**

**MODULE 1: Precedents**

**Week Two (Aug. 24—30): Historical Theoretical Perspectives**

**Learning Objective:**

1. Distinguish among common misconceptions in public relations history and a more complex account of the development of the field as a profession.

**Read:**

Lamme, M.O. & Russell, K.M. (2010). Removing the spin. Toward a new theory of public relations history. *Journalism and Communication Monographs*, 11(4), 281-362.

**Respond to Instructor Prompt**

**Respond to another student’s post**

**Be prepared to discuss reaction assignment in class**

## **MODULE 2: Major Domains of Public Relations Theory**

### **Week Three (Aug. 31—Sept. 6): Open-Systems and Excellence**

#### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Explain how empirical research is conducted and how theory is developed.
2. Differentiate between the dominant message-centered focus of public relations practice with the strategic management perspective.

#### **Read:**

Broom, G. M. (2006). An open-system approach to building theory in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18(2), 141-150. doi: 10.1207/s1532754xjpr1802\_4.

Grunig, J.E. (2006). Furnishing the edifice: Ongoing research on public relations as a strategic management function. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18(2), 151-176. doi: 10.1207/s1532754xjpr1802\_5.

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### **Week Four (Sept. 7—Sept. 13): Persuasion and Framing**

#### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify and explain the major tenets of persuasion and framing theory.
2. Identify elements of persuasion theory for which empirical support has been found.

#### **Read:**

Miller, G. R. (1989). Persuasion and public relations: Two p's in a pod. In C.H. Botan & V. Hazleton, J. (Eds.), *Public Relations theory* (pp. 45-66). Hillsdale NJ: Erlbaum.

Hallahan, K. (1999). Seven models of framing: Implications for public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11(3), 205-242. doi: 10.1207/s1532754xjpr1103\_02.

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## **MODULE 3: Contemporary Theories of Public Relations**

### **Week Five (Sept. 14—Sept. 20): Digital Media**

#### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Explain how social media have been used in public relations practice since their inception.
2. Analyze the potential and limitations of social media for effective public relations.
3. Compare and contrast the use of social media for consumer and activist engagement.

**Read:**

Wright, D. K., & Hinson, M. (2015). Examining social and emerging media use in public relations practice: A ten-year longitudinal analysis. *Public Relations Journal*, 9(2), 1-26.

Hon, L. (2015). Digital social advocacy in the Justice for Trayvon campaign, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 27(4), 299-321. doi: 10.1080/1062726X.2015.1027771.

Valentini, C. (2015). Is using social media “good” for the public relations profession? A critical reflection. *Public Relations Review*, 41, 170-177.

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**Week Six (Sept. 21—27): Contingency and Crisis**

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Understand a contingency approach to public relations management and compare and contrast this approach with major assumptions of Excellence Theory.
2. Explain the development of crisis theory in public relations.
3. Identify and distinguish among the major elements of Situational Crisis Communication Theory.

**Read:**

Amanda E. Cancel , Glen T. Cameron , Lynne M. Sallot & Michael A. Mitrook. (1997). It depends: A contingency theory of accommodation in public relations, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9(1), 31-63.

Coombs., W.T. (2010). Crisis communication: A developing field. In E.L. Heath (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of public relations* (pp. 477-488). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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**Week Seven (Sept. 28—Oct. 4): Measurement and Evaluation**

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Explain the development of public relations program measurement and evaluation.
2. Evaluate the state of best practices for public relations measurement and evaluation.

**Read:**

Watson, T. (2011). The evolution of public relations measurement and evaluation. *Public Relations Review*, 38, p. 390-398.

Thorson, K., Michaelson, D., Gee, E., Jiang, J., Lu, Z., Luan, G., Weatherly, K., Pung, S., Qin, Y., & Xu, J. (2015). Joining the movement? Investigating the standardization of measurement and evaluation within public relations. *Research Journal of the Institute for Public Relations*, 2(1), 1-25.

**Respond to Instructor Prompt****Respond to another student's post****Be prepared to discuss reaction assignment in class****Week Eight (Oct. 5—11): Ethics****Learning Objectives:**

1. Identify the ethical issues inherent in public relations as an advocacy function.
2. Explain the underlying principles in a model of responsible advocacy and analyze examples of public relations practice in relation to these principles.

**Read:**

Edgett, R. (2002). Toward an ethical framework for advocacy in public relations, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14(1), 1-26. doi: 10.1207/S1532754XJPRR1401\_1.

**Respond to Instructor Prompt****Respond to another student's post****Be prepared to discuss reaction assignment in class****Week Nine (Oct. 12—18): Social Responsibility****Learning Objectives:**

1. Develop a framework for dimensions of social responsibility communication.
2. Identify public expectations for social responsibility and implications for corporate social responsibility communication.
3. Examine perceptions of social responsibility communication among practitioners in the nonprofit section.

**Read:**

Kim, S. and Ferguson, M.T. (2014). Public expectations of CSR communication: What and how to communicate CSR. *Public Relations Journal*, 8(3), 1-22.

Waters, R.D. and Ott, H.K. (2014). Corporate social responsibility and the nonprofit sector: Assessing the thoughts and practices across three nonprofit subsectors. *Public Relations Journal*, 8(3), 1-18.

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**Oct. 18, 11:59 p.m., Submit Research Proposal—Preliminary Idea in Canvas.**

**Week Ten (Oct. 19—25): Global/International**

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Explain the status of international public relations research in terms of trends, themes, and theoretical paradigms.
2. Identify opportunities for growth and change in global public relations.
3. Compare and contrast globally accepted practices among a variety of countries.

**Read:**

Jain, R., De Moya, M., & Molleda, J.C. (2014). State of international public relations research: Narrowing the knowledge gap about the practice across borders. *Public Relations Review*, 40, 595-597.

Sriramesh, K. (2010). Globalization and public relations: Opportunities for growth and reformulation. In R. J. Heath (Ed.), *The Sage Handbook of public relations*, (pp. 691-707). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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**Week Eleven (Oct. 26—Nov. 1): Leadership**

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Explain how leadership has been conceptualized and measured in public relations.
2. Apply theoretical understandings of leadership to prominent examples in practice.

**Read:**

Meng, J. & Berger, B. (2013) An integrated model of excellent leadership in public relations: Dimensions, measurement, and validation. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 25(2), 141-167. doi: 10.1080/1062726X.2013.758583.

Meng, J. Berger, B. Gower, K.K., & Heyman, W.C. (2012). A test of excellent leadership in public relations: Key qualities, valuable sources, and distinctive leadership perceptions, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 24(1), 18-36. doi:10.1080/1062726X.2012.626132.

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## **Week Twelve (Nov. 2—Nov. 8): Transparency and Authenticity**

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Conceptually and operationally define the concepts of authenticity and transparency in public relations scholarship.
2. Compare and contrast theoretical understandings of transparency and authenticity with major themes in practice.

### **Read:**

Rawlins, B. (2008). Give the emperor a mirror: Toward developing a stakeholder measurement of organizational transparency. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21(1), 71-99. doi: 10.1080/10627260802153421.

Molleda, J.C. (2010). Authenticity and the construct's dimensions in public relations and communication research. *Journal of Communication Management*, 14(3), 223-236.

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## **Week Thirteen (Nov. 9—Nov. 15): Engagement**

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Conceptually and operationally define the concept of engagement in public relations scholarship.
2. Compare and contrast theoretical understandings of engagement with major themes in practice.

### **Read:**

Men, L. R. (2015). Employee engagement in relation to employee–organization relationships and internal reputation: Effects of leadership communication. *Public Relations Journal*, 9(2), 1-22.

Taylor, M. & Kent. M.L. (2014). Dialogic engagement: Clarifying foundational concepts. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(5), 384-398. doi:10.1080/1062726X.2014.956106.

### **Respond to Instructor Prompt**

#### **Respond to another student's post**

#### **Be prepared to discuss reaction assignment in class**

**Week 14—No class, Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 15, November 29—No class, Submit Draft Research Proposal, 11:59 p.m.**

**Week, 16, December 11—No class, Submit Final Research Proposal, 11:59 p.m.**

**Disclaimer:**

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, if anything in these plans changes, I will communicate that to you clearly and with advance notice.

**University Policies**

University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities:

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

Students with Disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented. DRC is located in room 001 in Reid Hall or you can contact them by phone at 352-392-8565.

University counseling services and mental health services:

\*\*Netiquette: Communication Courtesy:

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. <http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>

**Class Demeanor:**

Mastery in this class requires preparation, passion, and professionalism. Students are expected, within the requirements allowed by university policy, to meet deadlines. Work assigned in advance of class should be completed as directed. Full participation in online discussion is expected.

My role as instructor is to identify critical issues related to the course, direct you to and teach relevant information, assign appropriate learning activities, create opportunities for assessing your performance, and communicate the outcomes of such assessments in a timely, informative, and professional way. Feedback is essential for you to have confidence that you have mastered the material and for me to determine that you are meeting all course requirements.

At all times it is expected that you will welcome and respond professionally to assessment feedback, that you will treat your fellow students and me with respect, and that you will contribute to the success of the class as best as you can.

Other Resources for getting help are available at <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/>. These include:

- Counseling and Wellness resources
  - <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/352-392-1575>
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

**Course Evaluation:**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

**University Policy on Academic Misconduct:**

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>.

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester. The Honor Code reads as follows:

Preamble: In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

The Honor Code: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."

On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

For more information about academic honesty, contact Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1261.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

All graduate students in the College of Journalism and Communications are expected to conduct themselves with the highest degree of integrity. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that they know and understand the requirements of every assignment. At a minimum, this includes avoiding the following:

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism occurs when an individual presents the ideas or expressions of another as his or her own. Students must always credit others' ideas with accurate citations and must use quotation marks and citations when presenting the words of others. A thorough understanding of plagiarism is a precondition for admittance to graduate studies in the college.

**Cheating:** Cheating occurs when a student circumvents or ignores the rules that govern an academic assignment such as an exam or class paper. It can include using notes, in physical or electronic form, in an exam, submitting the work of another as one's own, or reusing a paper a student has composed for one class in another class. If a student is not sure about the rules that govern an assignment, it is the student's responsibility to ask for clarification from his instructor.

**Misrepresenting Research Data:** The integrity of data in mass communication research is a paramount issue for advancing knowledge and the credibility of our professions. For this reason any intentional misrepresentation of data, or misrepresentation of the conditions or circumstances of data collection, is considered a violation of academic integrity. Misrepresenting data is a clear violation of the rules and requirements of academic integrity and honesty.

**Any violation of the above stated conditions is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program and will result in revocation of the degree if the degree previously has been awarded.**

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Florida Code of Conduct  
<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>