

Public Interest Communications  
Fall 2019  
Instructor: Dr. Kelly Chernin  
Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom

## **Course Description**

Effective communication is the accelerant on the fire of social change. Public interest communications is a form of strategic communication through which organizations take on specific communication objectives that will have a benefit to society. This benefit transcends the particular interest of any single organization undertaking a campaign or communications effort.

The skills and qualities of those who work in public interest communications are not unlike those of people who work in public relations. In fact, the fields differ more in purpose than in form: while public relations tends to take on the interests of a single corporation or entity, public interest communications tends to take on causes that affect the health, safety, and well-being of a community or population.

Public interest communications is a large, complex, and interdisciplinary field. This course will focus on providing an introduction to the principles and fundamentals of this emerging discipline.

By the end of the semester, students will understand the foundations of the evolving field that is public interest communications through the analysis and evaluation of the six spheres through which we can drive social change, the strategic planning process for effective social change communications campaigns, and the tools, qualities, and tactics that utilize a unique approach beyond regular communications that make these campaigns powerful.

## **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the role of communications in driving social change
- Critique a strategic communications plan for social change efforts
- Determine how to use and combine the six spheres through which communicators work to achieve change: policy, media, social marketing, the market, activism, and communities of influence
- Establish a professional network of experts who are leading and defining the field
- Develop the skills to interpret and incorporate fundamental changes in how we communicate as a society and their implications for this field
- Utilize a framework for the skills and qualities associated with effective communication for social change
- Begin planning for a career in Public Interest Communications
- Understanding the role of research in designing for change

## Readings

Students will be expected to purchase the following books:

Heimans, J, & Timms, H. (2017). *New power: How power works in our hyperconnected world—and how to make it work for you.*

Students will also be required to purchase a book that focuses on a Public Interest Communications. Below is a list of already approved texts. Texts not listed must be pre-approved by the instructor

*The Other Wes Moore*

*Nickle & Dimed*

*Random Family*

*Hillbilly Elegy*

*Educated*

*The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson*

Additional readings and videos are assigned throughout the term and will be available in digital format on the course site in their respective weekly units.

## Grades / Assignments

### GRADE DISTRIBUTION

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Discussion Post	20%
Book Review	15%
Film or podcast review	15%
Campaign Analysis and Critique	30%
Quizzes	10%
LinkedIn Profile	5%
Twitter	5%

### GRADE SCALE

<b>A</b>	90-100
<b>B</b>	80-89
<b>C</b>	70-79
<b>D</b>	60-69
<b>E</b>	Less than 60

### ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

## Discussion:

Each week one or two students will be assigned to lead the discussion. These discussion leaders will be asked to post a current campaign or news story that they think is related to PIC. In the post, leaders will be expected to analyze why they believe the campaign or event is an example of PIC and provide evidence using class content from the current week or past weeks to support their view. Students will be expected to be discussion leaders twice throughout the semester. On weeks that students are not discussion leaders, they will be expected to comment on the leaders' post. Leaders for the week will then be expected to respond to their classmates' comments (facilitate online discussion). For some weeks, you may also be asked to participate in a Discussion Activity. You will need to provide a short answer related to the prompt due Friday (midnight) of that week. Peer comments will not be required for the Discussion Activity assignments but are encouraged.

## Create Professional LinkedIn Profile

Networking is an important element in public relations in general, but more specifically PIC. At the beginning of the semester, students will be asked to create a professional LinkedIn profile. By the end of the semester, students will need to have made at least **five** contacts with PIC practitioners.

## Twitter

In addition to creating a LinkedIn profiles, students will also be required to establish a professional Twitter presence. Twitter is an important tool for PIC practitioners in that it helps individuals network but also build credibility in the field. During the LinkedIn check-in at the beginning of the semester, students will also be expected to follow the instructor and the five PIC contacts from LinkedIn. Students will also need to follow at least **ten** PIC-based organizations (a list of potential organizations will be included with the assignment description). For each module, students will then need to tweet about the topic. For examples, if a student is reading *New Power*, they could tweet about a section they found interesting or a direct quote that included the author's Twitter handle.

## Book Review

Midway through the semester students will be asked to select a book from a proposed reading list to read and evaluate. Students will be expected to write a brief synopsis detailing why the book is related to PIC and then develop a brief PIC campaign surrounding the issues discussed in the book. This assignment will also serve to reinforce the power of stories and how they are effective strategic communications tools. Given that students in the class are coming from diverse backgrounds, in addition to the proposed books (which focuses on topics of education, race, and inequality), students will also be able to propose their own books for approval if there are other PIC topics that may interest them.

## Film / Podcast Review

After the module about media, one of the six spheres through which we drive change, students will write their own review of a film (documentary or feature) or podcast season based on what they learned through the *Blackfish* example discussed in class. Students will specifically focus on how the media can be used to effectively drive change. The assignment will consist of a short 3-5-page paper that gives a summary of the film or podcast, how it's related to PIC, and how the documentary/podcast engages storytelling.

### Quizzes

The quizzes will be low-stakes assignments designed to assess students' understanding of the reading materials and guest speakers.

### Campaign Analysis/Critique

For the final assessment, students will be asked to explore a social issue that matters to them. They will then need to identify an organization whose work is related to the desired issue and find a related campaign to analyze and critique using the skills developed in class. Students will be expected to explore the context, audience, message, and strategy of the campaign and present the information as an issue brief.

## **Module/Weekly Schedule**

### **Week 1**

*What is PIC? History of PIC*

### **Week 2**

*New Power*

### **Week 3**

*A Brief Introduction to the 5 Imperatives*

### **Week 4**

*The Six Spheres Through Which We Drive Change – Policy*

**Week 5**

*The Six Spheres Through Which We Drive Change – Media*

**Week 6**

*The Six Spheres Through Which We Drive Change – Behavior Change Marketing*

**Due: Film / Podcast Review**

**Week 7**

*The Six Spheres Through Which We Drive Change – Activism*

**Week 8**

*The Six Spheres Through Which We Drive Change – Communities of Influence*

**Week 9**

*The Six Spheres Through Which We Drive Change – Market*

**Week 10**

*The Science of Story Building*

**Week 11**

*Using Research to Drive Social Change*

**Due: Book Review**

**Week 12**

*Introduction to Strategy*

## **Week 13**

*Evaluating Campaigns*

## **Week 14**

**Due: Final Project Presentations**

## **Week 15**

*Moving Forward*

## **Required Information**

### ***Students Requiring Accommodations***

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### ***Course Evaluation***

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals>. 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 Honesty Policy***

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. 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.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

### ***Software Use***

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

### ***Student Privacy***

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see: <http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html>

### ***Campus Resources:***

#### ***Health and Wellness***

##### **U Matter, We Care:**

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

**Counseling and Wellness Center:** <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>, and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

##### **Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)**

Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

**University Police Department** at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or

<http://www.police.ufl.edu/>.

#### ***Academic Resources***

**E-learning technical support**, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

**Career Resource Center**, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/>.

**Library Support**, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

**Teaching Center**, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>.

**Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall**, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.

**Student Complaints Campus:** [https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF\\_Complaints\\_policy.pdf](https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf).

**On-Line Students Complaints:** <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>.

