Syllabus: Internal Communications and Employee Engagement

The syllabus includes all information regarding the course. Please read ALL information thoroughly.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Professor: Renee Mitson (PhD Student, M.A.)

I'm a second year PhD student in the Public Relations Department. My research areas are organizational leadership (internal public relations) and emerging technology. I am also interested in female executive communication and leadership research of underrepresented groups.

I have two M.A's (media and mass communication) and a BA in public relations and film. I have also worked for over a decade in corporate communication and public relations representing high-end consumer products. Some highlights include working for TED Talks, Yelp, Electrolux, Burger King, Cornell University, and Hasbro Toys (I worked on My Little Pony).

This course was originally designed by Dr. Rita Men who is on sabbatical and will be having a beautiful baby in the Spring. I am her advisee and work and research with her closely so I was selected to teach her course as I am the closest to the material. I am so excited to be teaching this course and sharing it with you all!

Office: Weimer 3054

Phone: N/A

E-mail: reneemitson@ufl.edu

Office Hours:

By appointment - email me anytime. I find that when I set office hours some students have class during that time so I would rather set up a time individually that works for you as-needed. I'm very flexible as to how we meet - it can be in person, on Zoom, over the phone, on gchat - however is easiest for you.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Employees have long been recognized as the No. 1 stakeholder of the organizations. Especially in this increasingly connected, globalized, and transparent digital age, the line between internal and external is blurred. Effective internal communication is critical for the success of an organization. This course focuses on the influential roles that communication managers play to address the issues, challenges, and opportunities facing internal stakeholders. It integrates theories, research insights, practices, as well as

current issues and cases into a comprehensive guide for future internal communication managers and organizational leaders on how to communicate effectively with internal stakeholders, build beneficial relationships, and engage employees in the fast-changing business and media environment. Through lectures, discussions, and work sessions, students will be equipped with effective strategies, tactics, and tools to be able to act as an internal communication strategist.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course will teach you to:

1. Discuss the basic principles of internal communication management, as related to topics of internal public segmentation, ethics, culture, communication strategies, channels, and measurement
2. Counsel organizational leaders such as the C-Suite and supervisors on how to communicate effectively
3. Apply the strategies, techniques, and tools required to engage employees, with specific emphasis on digital and social capabilities
4. Develop a standard of excellence in internal communications by analyzing "real life," award-winning cases
5. Create an internal communication plan applying strategic and creative thinking

REQUIRED TEXT

Men, L. R., & Bowen, S. (2017). Excellence in Internal Communication Management. Business Expert Press, New York.

CONTINUING READING

- [The Institute for Public Relations' Organizational Communication Research Center (Links to an external site.)](#)
- [The International Association of Business Communication (Links to an external site.)](#)
- [PRSA (Links to an external site.)](#)

COMMUNICATION METHODS FOR ONLINE STUDENTS

The instructor works normal weekday hours (i.e., Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.). If you email during this time, you may expect a reply in 24 hours. (*Note: Normally, I reply as soon as I see your email. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions!*)

Please do not ask questions in the "comments" section of an assignment. The instructor does not get an individual ping when a comment is left, so I will not know that they are there and so will not be able to respond in a timely manner.

For technical issues with Canvas, please contact E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2), e-mail Learningsupport@ufl.edu, or visit [http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/ (Links to an external site.)](http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/)

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Students need to have access to a computer with a microphone and a camera and an internet. Students need to know how to use computers and create and work with Microsoft Word documents. You will need to introduce yourself via video post.

Students with Special Needs

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center (Links to an external site.)](#) (352-392-8565) 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 Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at [https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/ (Links to an external site.)](https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/ (Links to an external site.)](https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/ (Links to an external site.)](https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/).

Academic Honesty

The University of Florida Honor Code applies to all activities associated with this class.

1. 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.
2. 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 (Links to an external site.)](#) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.
3. You can also review information on [Academic Honesty (Links to an external site.)](#) in detail.

Religious Observance

Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence.

Attendance and Make-Ups

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with [university policies. (Links to an external site.)](#)

Respect for Diversity Statement

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

Distribution of Points

Grades are *earned* via five modes: (1) Assignments; (2) Activities or exercises; (3) Discussions; (4) Case study (5) Exam; and (6) A final internal communication plan [group].

Area	Percent of Grade
Assignments	15%
Activities/exercises	10%
Discussions	10%
Case Study	10%
Exam	25%
Communication Plan	30%
Total Possible Points	100%

Grading Scale

100-93 A; 92-90 A-; 89-87 B+; 86-84 B; 83-80 B-; 79-77 C+; 76-74 C; 73-70 C-; 69-67 D+; 66-64 D; 63-60 D-; 59 and below E

Final Grades

Final grades will be rounded up if above .5. (For example, an 89.6 is an A-; an 89.2 is a B+)

UF Grading Policies

For more information on current UF grading policies, refer to [UF Grades and Grading Policies (Links to an external site.)](#).

General Information

All assignments are due on the specified dates. Feedback on the assignments will be provided within one week after the due dates. Any assignments turned in late will be assessed penalty points per calendar day. Late assignments will receive an automatic grade reduction of 10 points every 24 hours (or portion thereof) beyond the time they are due. So, if it's an hour late, it's a reduction of 10 points.

Keep in mind that technology can fail from time to time, so try to complete your assignments ahead of time.

Assignments

Assignments include individual writing assignments that will require you to apply the principles, techniques, and skills you've learned to solve various problems.

Activities/Exercises

Activities/exercises are designed to engage the students with the course topics outside of the online environment. **This may entail individual or group activities/exercises (e.g., role play).** (Note: graded as pass or fail)

Discussions

Participation in discussions is an important element of this course. The discussion board will give you an opportunity to consider aspects of topics that may be subject to interpretation. Each student is required to answer four discussion questions (20% for each) and comment on other classmates' posts (20%). **Each discussion post will be graded separately, but students will receive one overall commenting grade toward the end of the semester based upon your overall participation in the class discussions,** i.e., quantity and quality of your comments on others' posts.

As for your discussion post, typically, there will be no "right" or "wrong" answer. A high-quality post, is one in which the author makes a good case to support an opinion. It involves analyzing relevant issues, building on others' ideas, synthesizing across readings and discussions, and expanding the class' perspective. Posts should also be clear, concise, original, and thoughtful, with proper English grammar, syntax, and spelling. The expected length for a high quality post is about 150-200 words.

Below is a sample of a high-quality post:

"I think social media is critical for engaging employees. Today's workplace is becoming more technology savvy especially with the first generation of employees who have grown up in the digital era entering the workplace. According to a 2013 Towers Watson Change and Communication ROI Survey, 56% of the employers surveyed use social media tools as part of their internal communication initiatives to build community. I think social media can be effective in driving employee engagement because it is two-way, interactive, and communal by nature. These features can help build employee connections, internal relationships, and foster collaboration and mutual understanding. Also, internal social media provides managers and leaders a convenient venue to listen to employees, gather employee feedback, and address employees' concerns in a timely manner. Keeping the dialogues going can help create a sense of belonging and attachment to the organization among the employees."

Case Study

For the case study, each team of two or three students will browse case databases such as PRSA Silver Anvil Award cases (Links to an external site.) (http://www.prsa.org/Awards/SilverAnvil/Search; Account no.: 1730276, password: zhedacici84) or case books to select a successful employee/internal communication campaign or program case, analyze the case, and present the case to the class. Deliverables include a PowerPoint which summarizes your analyses and a recorded video presentation. Detailed guidelines for case presentations can be found under instructions for case study assignments.

Please do not lift the entire sentence from the case material. Use your own words. Focus your analysis on why something was done vs. what was done. Be sure to relate your analysis to the theories and concepts discussed in class.

Note: 1) You may choose to have one or both of the team members orally present the case. If both team members will present, you may record two videos with each covering their own section, or record a video conference presentation, where both of you can present together. Zoom is recommended for video conferencing and recording. 2) Due dates for each group are randomly generated using a computer randomization program. 3) Individual grade will be weighed taking into consideration of peer evaluations.

Exam

There will be one closed-book exam on **April 8**. A study guide will be provided to you. Content of class discussions and required readings are subject to inclusion. An extra-credit Q&A zoom session will be hosted prior to the exam date. Participation in the Q&A zoom session will gain 1 bonus point added to the exam score.

Note: the exam will be proctored via Honorlock.

Internal Communication Plan Project

The internal communication plan project requires students to work in teams to research and propose an internal communication plan for an organization of your interest. A written plan will be turned in and students will record a virtual team presentation. Detailed instructions on the team communication plan project can be found under the project description. (Note: click on assignments on the menu, then find internal communication plan project.)

The Team Project grade is comprised of a Team Grade (75%) and an Individual Grade (25%). Individual grade will be based on peer evaluations. Utilizing confidential forms, team members will evaluate each others' contributions. Team Grade will be based on the quality of the communication plan (75%) as well as the final oral presentation (25%).