

SYLLABUS
PUR 4243 (SECTION 4249): BRAND SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION

INSTRUCTOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

An organization's values, commitments, actions, and outcomes related to environmental and social protection and sustainability directly impact its image, reputation, and financial performance. Stakeholders want to see sustainable behavior and leadership that reflects responsible future-oriented management. This has been repeatedly confirmed by research, and demonstrated by the emergence of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) departments within companies and organizations globally. Communicating about sustainability is a key factor in an organization's social license to operate.

As public relations practitioners and communicators, it is critical to understand key aspects of communicating about environmental and social performance with a broad range of stakeholders and related global best practices. This course will provide you with a background and understanding of sustainability communication and will focus on three key sectors: 1) consumer-facing retail brands in the textile sector (sports, fashion, and outdoor brands), 2) leading brands in the hospitality, travel, and tourism sector, and 3) business to business brands in transportation and energy sectors engaging in resilience communication.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will provide you with the knowledge and understanding of key tenets of sustainability communications and how organizations deliver messages and report on actions and outcomes.

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand key aspects of communicating about sustainability
- Recognize approaches to framing messages about corporate environmental and social commitments and actions
- Support in developing communication strategies that convey the impact of outcomes
- Support in developing content that contributes to sustainability reports

REQUIRED TEXT

There is no single, required textbook. There will be readings assigned during the semester. All readings must be **read in advance** of the class dates for which they are assigned. Your instructor will communicate any new readings assigned in class and through Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS, AND GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Attendance, participation, and assignments for the basis for course grades.

The course grade will be determined on a 100-point scale as follows:

Assignment	Percent of Grade
Attendance	20%
Class Participation	20%
Speaker Engagement	20%
Analysis of Sustainability Communication Using Social Media	20%
Analysis of Sustainability Reporting to Shareholders	20%

Attendance (20%)

This course requires you to be present and engaged. Attendance and class participation comprise 20 percent of your final grade. Whether online or in-person, students are expected to arrive to class on time. Class participation is determined by such efforts as discussion of assigned readings and participation in class discussions. Arriving late or leaving early will result in the lowering of the student's grade. There is one excused absence for this class. Beyond this absence, each unexcused absence will result in a loss of two percentage points from the total attendance grade.

Class Participation (20%)

Students must be fully present during class, contribute to discussions, and demonstrate through their comments that they have read and understood assigned readings and benefited from previous class discussions.

Speaker Engagement (20%)

There will be senior leaders from various companies who will join us throughout the semester to share their expertise and talk to us about sustainability communications and challenges. Students are expected to ask questions and engage in discussions with speakers.

Analysis of Sustainability Communication Using Social Media (20%)

Students will select a company/organization who is communicating about sustainability actions or values through social media and conduct an analysis of the form, content, platforms used, and outcomes resulting from the communications. The format for this analysis will be provided in class. The analysis should be no longer than 2 single-spaced pages.

Analysis of Sustainability Reporting to Shareholder (20%)

Students will select a company/organization who has developed and issued a sustainability report for 2021 or 2022 and conduct an analysis of the contents, alignment with the company/organizations products or services, expressed values, and global reporting requirements. Students should also indicate areas of improvement. The format for this analysis will be provided in class. The analysis should be no longer than 2 single-spaced pages.

GRADES

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

Grade	Percent
A	92-100
A-	90-91
B+	87-89
B	82-86
B-	80-81
C+	77-79
C	72-76

C-	70-71
D	60-69
E	59 or less

Letter grades are based on the total points accumulated over the term.

APPOINTMENTS

Supporting students throughout the semester is a priority. Please contact me with questions or if you need support in thinking through assignments. I am always available before and after class and will coordinate another time as needed. I have an open-door policy to meet with my students! Please do not ever hesitate to reach out to me if you have questions or need help.

ATTENDANCE

Whether classes occur online or in-person, attendance is mandatory. Each student is allowed one absence for the semester. Each additional absence one will result in a two-point reduction of the course grade from your total attendance grade. Students are responsible for all class work missed. They should consult with classmates, rather than the instructor, to obtain information on lectures, assignments, and other matters. Additional information concerning UF's attendance policy is provide here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#absencestext>.

MAKEUPS, LATE ASSIGNMENTS, AND EXTRA CREDIT

The practice of public relations hinges on meeting deadlines. Missing deadlines not only damages a public relations professional's credibility, but also can lead to termination of a relationship with a client or to dismissal. Thus, deadlines are treated seriously in this class. All written assignments are due by the date of the deadline, unless otherwise instructed. A student may not submit a late assignment and will receive a grade of zero for that assignment. There will be no make-up exams or extensions of deadlines. Dates have been announced in advance in the Weekly Course Plan so that students can schedule other activities around these deadlines. Exceptions will be rare and made only in cases of extraordinary, documented circumstances, as determined by the instructor. No extra credit will be given for additional work.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The University of Florida is committed to the highest standards of academic and professional ethics and expects its students to adhere to those standards. Each student is bound by the academic honesty guidelines of the University and the student conduct code. The penalty for violation of academic honesty is an "E" for the course, at minimum.

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 specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Honor Code](#). 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.

Students are expected to observe the University of Florida's policy on academic honesty in fulfilling all course requirements. The work you submit for this course must be your own. It must be original for this course. You must never use direct or paraphrased material from any source, including Web sites, without attribution. You may not submit anything that you wrote for another class, or that you wrote as a volunteer or intern. You may not submit anything that was written for any purpose other than the

given assignment. Having someone else do your work or sign your name/initials on the attendance sheet is considered academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty includes the following: use of materials from another author without citation or attribution, extensive use of verbatim materials from another author with citation and attribution, and extensive use of one's own writing from past assignments or from assignments in other, current classes (called "double dipping"). Any time you complete an assignment for this course you will clearly attribute the source of your information, including information obtained from organizations' Web sites or internal documents.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

Lectures given in this course, including handouts and PowerPoint® slide decks, are the property of the instructor and the University of Florida. Class lectures may not be recorded in any form without prior permission from the instructor and any guest lecturers that may speak to this class. Recordings, including class notes, may not be used for commercial purposes.

DIVERSITY

All discussions will be ruled by mutual respect for people and their opinions. Effective public relations practice relies on the ability to recognize and embrace diversity in all its forms, including viewpoints. Furthermore, professionalism requires an appreciation for the multicultural society and global economy in which students plan to work. Throughout the course, students will have opportunities to see how different life experiences and cultural perspectives influence public relations practice. You are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities in your own work and to learn from the information and ideas shared by other students.

COURSE PROFESSIONALISM

The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional school and professional decorum is expected at all times. I expect you to adhere to workplace norms of collegial and respectful interaction. It is expected that whether conducted online or in-person, the following student conduct is expected:

- Cell phones must be turned off during class.
- Photos and other recordings are prohibited unless approved in advance by the instructor.
- Reading unrelated material or talking while others are speaking is prohibited.
- Anyone violating these rules or disrupting class in other ways will be asked to leave the class session.

FORMAT FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

All written work submitted for this course must be coherent, logical, and carefully edited. Writing proficiency is necessary to pass this course. Misspellings, syntax, and grammar errors as well as other writing problems are unacceptable in upper-division college writing, especially in work by public relations students. Please do not submit materials with editing marks; all assignments must be client ready. Specifics as to assignment format will be included in instructions provided during class.

ONLINE COURSE EVALUATION

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner.](#) 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 ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.](#)

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester

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.

EXCUSED ABSENCES FOR UNIVERSITY EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up any graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

University Police Department: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 911 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

SYLLABUS – FALL 2022
PUR 4242: SUSTAINABILITY/BRAND COMMUNICATION
WEEKLY COURSE PLAN

Week	Date	Topics	Readings/Speakers	Due
1		No class this week since semester starts 8/24/2022		
2	8/29/2022	Syllabus Review Introduction to the Course	Review syllabus	
3	9/5/2022	No class Labor Day holiday		
4	9/12/2022	Background on brand sustainability communication Sustainability reporting (GRI and other best practices) Perception, image, and reputation	https://www.globalreporting.org/	
5	9/19/2022	Challenges to communicating about environmental and social issues and actions Role of activists		
6	9/26/2022	Consumer-facing retail brands in the textile sector (sports, fashion, and outdoor brands) (Nike, adidas Group, PVH, Bath and Body Works) Case studies in brand communication		
7	10/3/2022	Consumer-facing retail brands in the textile sector (sports, fashion, and outdoor brands) (Nike, adidas Group, PVH, Bath and Body Works) Guest Speaker		
8	10/10/2022	Discuss/recap guest speaker lessons/insights Discuss first Analysis assignment and format		
9	10/17/2022	Leading brands in the hospitality, travel, and tourism sector		Analysis of Sustainability Communication Using Social Media
10	10/24/2022	Leading brands in the hospitality, travel, and tourism sector Case studies in brand communication		
11	10/31/2022	Leading brands in the hospitality, travel, and tourism sector Guest Speaker		

Week	Date	Topics	Readings/Speakers	Due
12	11/7/2022	Business to business brands in transportation, and energy sectors		
13	11/14/2022	Business to business brands in transportation, and energy sectors Case studies in brand communication		Analysis of Sustainability Reporting to Shareholder
14	11/21/2022	No class – Thanksgiving week		
15	11/28/2022	Message framing and content development for effective sustainability communication Optimizing platform use/communication pathways		
16	12/5/2022	Lessons and guidance for public relations practitioners		
Please submit instructor evaluations!!!!				