

PUR4203: Ethics and Professional Responsibility in Public Relations

Spring 2023 (Section 078A)

Tuesdays from 1:55 to 2:45 p.m.

Thursdays from 12:50 to 2:45 p.m.

Weimer 1078

Instructor: Eliana DuBosar

Office: Weimer 2039B

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (or by appointment)

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Course Description and Goals:

This course takes an in-depth look at the ethical responsibilities and professional practices of public relations practitioners. It identifies the moral dimensions of issues that may arise in the practice of PR, builds reasoning to deal with moral issues, provides the knowledge and skills necessary to reach ethical decisions, and elicits a sense of personal and professional responsibility. This course will provide an understanding of the role of ethics in public relations, both in a historical and current perspective. We will talk through real-life scenarios to understand how companies have dealt with ethical crises both internally and on a public level, culminating in students presenting their own case studies at the end of the semester.

Required Texts:

Luttrell, R., & Ward, J. (2018). *A Practical Guide to Ethics in Public Relations*. Littlefield.

Stanwick, P., & Stanwick, S. (2016). *Understanding Business Ethics* (3rd edition). Sage.

**Any supplemental readings will be made available to you on the course Canvas page.*

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this semester, students will:

- Have more of an awareness and understanding of the ethical responsibilities faced by public relations practitioners and of the social responsibilities of corporations and other organizations;
- Be able to identify the moral dimensions of issues that arise in the practice of public relations;
- Create their own personal and professional ethical codes of conduct based on existing codes of ethics from public relations organizations;
- Have a sense of personal and professional responsibility;
- Build ethical leadership practices; and
- Build the skills necessary to enhance and employ reasoning necessary to make ethical decisions in public relations

College of Journalism and Communications Objectives:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that by graduation all students should be able to:

- Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts;
- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work”

Final Grade Breakdown:

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Assignment:	Points (Percentage of Final Grade):
Introduction	50 points (5%)
Personal Code of Ethics	100 points (10%)
Reaction Papers	200 points (20%)
Discussion Leaders	100 points (10%)
Issue of the Week	100 points (10%)
Final Case Study	400 points (40%)
Attendance/Participation	50 points (5%)
TOTAL	1000 points

Letter grades will be calculated as follows:

Letter	Course Points	Percentage	GPA Points
A	930-1000	93-100%	4.0
A-	900-929	90-92.9%	3.67
B+	870-899	87-89.9%	3.33
B	830-869	83-86.9%	3.0
B-	800-829	80-82.9%	2.67
C+	770-799	77-79.9%	2.33

C	730-769	73-76.9%	2.0
C-	700-729	70-72.9%	1.67
D+	670-699	67-69.9%	1.33
D	600-669	60-66.9%	1.0
F	0-599	0-59.9%	0

Course Policies:

Attendance/Participation:

I expect that you attend class, and you will have the opportunity to gain points by participating in class discussion. I do not provide any notes so if you miss a class, reach out to a classmate for any notes they may have taken. If you miss class, please do not ask me if you missed “anything important.” Of course, you did! **Every day is important.** If what you mean to ask is if I made any announcements about changes to due dates or something of that nature, those types of announcements will always be posted on the course website. Additionally, this is a discussion heavy course, and everyone is expected to participate. There are no wrong answers in this class – it is a safe space and everyone is encouraged to share their opinions and be respectful of others’ opinions.

E-mail Policy:

As a state employee, my email is considered a public record, and can be requested via an open-records request. Because of this, federal privacy laws prevent me from discussing grades or other personal matters via e-mail, and you must visit me in my office to discuss these matters. In general, face-to-face meetings tend to take less time and result in less confusion than emailed conversations. Also, please be aware that e-mail is considered formal communication, and it is important to practice professionalism. Make sure that you do not treat email as text (i.e., don’t use text abbreviations) and never e-mail something that you would not say to your boss’ face. If I don’t respond within 24 hours during the week, send a follow-up email.

Late/Make-up Work:

All written assignments must be submitted via Canvas by **11:59 p.m. on the due date listed both online and in the syllabus.** Assignments are automatically marked late by Canvas if they’re turned in even one minute after the deadline. You will have 24 hours after the due date to turn in your assignment for a 10% grade reduction. Any assignments received more than 24 hours after the due date will be given a zero. There are no make-ups/late exceptions for exams or in-class activities for any reason beyond university or religious excused absences.

Classroom Behavior:

As PR students, I expect you to maintain a high level of professionalism in all of our interactions. This includes being courteous and respectful to everyone in the classroom. This includes making sure you are not being distracting to others in the class by using your cell phones, computers for non-class related things (e.g. social media, work for other courses), talking during lectures, or arriving late/leaving early.

Overview of Course Components:

I will be as fair and impartial as possible during the grading process. Each of you will be graded on the same basis. Normally by the time I've returned your assignments, I've looked at everyone's work closely and feel comfortable with the grade assigned to it. Grades are earned; they are not gifts or negotiated and are awarded based on the quality of work not on the amount of time you spent working on an assignment. I will do my best to make this course enjoyable and interesting. However, some students struggle with the material. Please see me if you are having trouble understanding any of the concepts we cover in class. I am here to help you succeed and am available during office hours or by appointment if you are unable to make it during office hours. I will do everything I can to help you before a deadline but once that deadline passes or an exam has been given, there's nothing I can do to help you.

Introduction Assignment:

This assignment will have two components. First, everyone will be filling out an information sheet to help me get to know you better. In addition to the information sheet, you will be posting to a discussion board introducing yourself and why you were interested in taking this class. You are also encouraged to interact with your classmates, though this will not be factored into your grade.

Personal Code of Ethics:

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you the opportunity to reflect on your own moral development that forms the basis for your ethical behavior. You must put this reflection into words, highlighting the values that are important to you. This assignment will have three components: a personal code of ethics, a professional code, and a reflection essay. More details will be given closer to the assignment's due date.

Reaction Papers:

Over the course of the semester, you will be responsible for writing reaction papers that make up 20% of your grade. The reaction papers will be due every Monday by 5 p.m. and will include both a summary of the week's readings and your reaction to those readings. Your reaction should include examples, either from your own experiences or of things companies have dealt with publicly, that tie back to the readings. Reaction papers should be between 3 and 4 pages, double-spaced. **You will be assigned specific weeks to complete reaction papers. In addition to your assigned weeks, you can complete one additional reaction paper to replace a lower grade or missed (unexcused) assignment.**

Discussion Leaders:

Each week, one or two students will be assigned to lead discussion based on the readings for the week. Because we meet twice a week, discussion leaders will lead the class on the longer of our two days. There are many ways to approach leading discussion, including (1) summarizing your own reaction papers and crafting questions surrounding them, (2) prepare questions to generate thought-provoking discussion from your peers, (3) lecture on the topic, (4) show the class current event examples relevant to the weekly readings. You

should bring some sort of a visual aid with you as well. Although you will be leading discussion with one of your peers, you will be graded individually.

Issue of the Week:

On the days that we don't have discussion leaders, one or two students will present an issue of the week. For this assignment, you will bring in a current events issue that you would like to discuss with the class that is relevant to the topic of ethics and professional responsibility in public relations. This can be any current issue that you would like to talk about that you feel is relevant to the subject matter of the course. Articles for issue of the week should be emailed to me the Monday morning prior to your presentation of the issue.

Final Case Study:

Your final paper will be a case study on a topic approved by me. For this, you will present a short oral summary of the case and the public relations strategies used by the organization. This will include discussing the issue at hand, outlining the response to the problem, and highlighting stakeholders affected by the case. For your final paper, you will submit a report that discusses the case, describes the public relations strategies used in the case, and recommend an ethical communication strategy for the company moving forward. Examples of both the presentation and case study will be provided.

Tentative Weekly Schedule*:

Week	Topic and Assignment Due Dates	Reading(s)**
Week 1 January 10 th January 12 th	Course Introduction ○ Info Sheet and intro post due by 1/11 What is ethics and why does it matter?	Syllabus IPR Article
Week 2 January 17 th January 19 th	Why Ethics Matter A Revolution of Ethics	Chapter 1 PGEPR (Luttrell & Ward) Chapter 1 UBE (Stanwick & Stanwick)
Week 3 January 24 th January 26 th	Ethics in Public Relations The Law and PR	Chapter 2 PGEPR PR, Ethics, and the First Amendment (article online) Law and Ethics in PR (APR)
Week 4 January 31 st February 2 nd	Business Ethics Today ○ Personal Code of Ethics due Core Value: Honesty	Chapter 2 UBE Chapter 4 PGEPR
Week 5 February 7 th February 9 th	Corporate Social Responsibility Core Value: Advocacy ○ Submit case study preferences by 2/10	Chapter 3 UBE Why CSR is Essential in PR (article online) Chapter 3 PGEPR
Week 6 February 14 th February 16 th	Ethical Leadership and Corporate Governance Core Value: Expertise	Chapter 5 UBE Chapter 5 PGEPR
Week 7 February 21 st February 23 rd	Strategic Planning and Corporate Culture Core Value: Independence	Chapter 6 UBE Chapter 6 PGEPR
Week 8 February 28 th March 2 nd	Decision Making and Human Resources Core Value: Fairness	Chapter 7 UBE Chapter 8 PGEPR
Week 9 March 7 th March 9 th	Diversity Core Value: Loyalty	Loyalty in PR, Ethical Dilemmas, The Solution Starts with Higher Education (articles online) Chapter 7 PGEPR
Week 10 March 14 th March 16 th	NO CLASS! Have a good spring break!	
Week 11 March 21 st	Ethics and the Environment	UBE pages 150-167

March 23 rd		Greenwashing (online article) Green is the New Color of Money (UT Austin Center for Media Engagement)
Week 12 March 28 th	Communications Functions and Ethics	Social Media in a Crisis, 12 Rules for Ethical Social Media Marketing (articles online)
March 30 th	Marketing and Advertising	Chapter 10 UBE
Week 13 April 4 th April 6 th	Developing and Establishing an Ethics Program	Chapter 12 UBE
Week 10 April 11 th April 13 th	CASE STUDY PRESENTATIONS CASE STUDY PRESENTATIONS	
Week 11 April 18 th April 20 th	No Class – Work on written case studies; I will be available for Zoom meetings as needed CASE STUDY PRESENTATIONS	
Week 12 April 25 th	CASE STUDY PRESENTATIONS	

*Schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be discussed in class and sent out via e-mail/Canvas announcement.

**All weekly reading assignments should be completed before our class meeting for that week.

University of Florida Policies and Campus Resources

Attendance and Absence Policy:

The University of Florida's attendance and absence policies can be found [here](#).

Grading Policy:

The University of Florida's grades and grading policies can be found [here](#).

Students Requiring Accommodations:

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.

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.bluer.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.

University Honesty Policy:

The university's honesty policy regarding cheating, plagiarism, etc. Suggested wording: 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 for 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. More information can be found [here](#).

In-Class Recording Policy:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Health and Wellness Resources:

- **U Matter, We Care:** If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit the [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 (CWC):** 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 the 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](#).

Academic Resources:

- **E-Learning Technical Support:** Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- **Career Connections Center (CCC):** Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- **Library Support:** Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- **Teaching Center:** Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment call 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- **Writing Studio:** 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- **Student Complaints (On-Campus):** Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code [webpage](#) for more information.
- **Online Student Complaints:** View the Distance Learning Student [Complaint Process](#).