

# PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY

Ms. Kalyca Becketl  
Phone: 760-855-0855  
Office hours: By Appointment  
Email: [kbecktel@ufl.edu](mailto:kbecktel@ufl.edu)  
Class: Tuesdays from 3 – 4:55 p.m. Zoom



Schedule number: 21415

Prerequisite: PUR 3000 & PUR 3500 with C or Better

The syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. Class lectures are the property of the instructor.

## > COURSE DESCRIPTION

The development of skills in strategic public relations management based on an analysis of current and historical case studies. Practical applications of public relations techniques with emphasis on writing and media usage. News releases and media relations, print and electronic communications production, multimedia techniques, speeches, other audio-visual presentations and special events. Field and laboratory practice.

## > TEXTS

Required:

- Smith, R. D. (2017). Strategic planning for public relations (4th ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Swann, P. (2019). Cases in public relations management (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

## > OVERVIEW

This course will focus first on messaging and strategy, then challenge students to apply those concepts across a variety of information subsidies. The class moves quickly, and attention-to-detail errors will quickly eat away at the student's grade. Being digitally present in class is strongly recommended as unannounced in-class assignments and quizzes will be frequent.

## > LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ✓ Write public relations products in the appropriate style, with accurate content
- ✓ Think critically and strategically about the purposes and audiences of written products
- ✓ Research strategic audiences and appropriate distribution channels for written products
- ✓ Produce all four components of an appropriate public relations program for a client
- ✓ Produce sample written products suitable for a professional portfolio
- ✓ Write and speak consistently to professional standards of public relations practice
- ✓ Understand legal and ethical issues in public relations
- ✓ Develop a sense of professional identity and commitment
- ✓ Plan a special event
- ✓ Relate current events to the goals, needs and concerns of clients
- ✓ Track work hours (simulation of public relations firm environment)

## ACEJMC'S 11 COMPETENCIES

1. Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.
4. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
6. Think critically, creatively and independently.
7. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

8. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
9. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
10. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
11. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

## > STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS

We are committed to helping students with special challenges overcome difficulties with comprehending the subject matter, while abiding by the standard code of confidentiality. In order to address academic needs, we must be informed of the student's circumstance at the beginning of the semester before performance becomes a factor. This is not to imply that standards of fairness will not be generally applied when evaluating student work; only that reasonable and appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that officially recognized challenges do not become a hindrance to a student's ability to succeed in this course. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (Disability Research Center – 352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor or teaching assistant when requesting accommodation. Students with challenges should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

## > ACADEMIC HONESTY

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-conducthonor-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.

The best way to avoid academic honesty violations is to maintain integrity when preparing work to be turned in for the class and properly citing ideas and passages when appropriate. The fine for plagiarism in this course is, at minimum, a zero on the assignment at hand. The school or the university may determine the bigger-picture fine for additional repercussions. Just say no.

## > ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students should login to class on time, prepared and ready to participate or work as required. Just as in the fast-paced world of PR, there will be unannounced events in class that result in production. Students who miss class – for whatever reason – forfeit the right to make up graded elements that occur during class or lab time. Students who are planning on missing do not need to inform the instructor.

## > LATE WORK OR MAKEUPS

Work is accepted for full credit when it is due in the method prescribed for turning it in. In the real world, late work can mean a missed public relations opportunity. Students will be allowed two late **individual** homework submissions for a maximum of **half credit**. The two late assignments must be submitted within 72 hours of the original due date to receive any portion of the half credit. Group and in-class timed writing assignments cannot be submitted late. If you have extenuating circumstances, please email me directly: [KBecktel@ufl.edu](mailto:KBecktel@ufl.edu).

## > GRADE

This class employs multiple forms of evaluation to maximize the learning and evaluation experience while allowing for differences among learning types for students. There is an emphasis on real-world professionalism. All work will be evaluated based on the ability to meet the assignment objectives, clarity, professionalism, technical skill and quality. The following breakdown explains how the grade is to be computed; note this class uses a weighed formula to compute the grade, not raw points:

| Graded Item                               | Date    | Percentage of Grade |
|---|---------|---------------------|
| Assignments, writing in class and quizzes | Ongoing | 60 percent          |
| Individual Cases                          | Oct. 30 | 15 percent          |
| Client PR plan                            | Dec, 6  | 20 percent          |
| Class Contribution and Peer Evaluation    | Ongoing | 5 percent           |
|   |         | 100 percent         |

All grades on assignments, projects and quizzes are based on the following +/- grading scale:

|                |                |                |                |                      |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 95 – 100 = A   | 88 – 90.9 = B+ | 76 – 79.9 = C+ | 66 – 69.9 = D+ | below 59 percent = F |
| 91 – 94.9 = A- | 85 – 87.9 = B  | 73 – 75.9 = C  | 63 – 65.9 = D  |                      |
|                | 80 – 84.9 = B- | 70 – 72.9 = C- | 60 – 62.9 = D- |                      |

The instructor does not round up (not even 0.1 point). Graded items will not be dropped or weighted. Grades are based on the final product and the student's ability to meet the requirements set by the instructor.

Each product is graded against the same criteria and the student's ability to show mastery of the objective. All graded materials must meet specific standards for professionalism and quality. **Effort does not equal an "A."** Only those who show mastery of the graded material will earn such a grade for that item. No one is given grades; one earns the grade based on the quality of the product.

Students are to keep track of their own grades and progress in the course. Monitor Canvas to compute your grade.

Any student wishing to dispute a grade must have the graded material when pleading the case. Students have the right to dispute a grade within one week of the material being returned; after one week all grades are final.

The deadline to reconcile grades in Canvas grades is Dec. 1. Adjustments will not be made after this date so keep on top of your grade (i.e., monitor frequently).

Grades will not be discussed via email or the telephone. If a student has a question about a grade and would like to discuss it, then the student must meet with the instructor via Zoom. This policy protects the student.

## > GRADED PRODUCTS

All out of class work must be typed in a word processing program. All work should use Times New Roman font in size 12, 1-inch margins each side and double-space. All work must employ AP Style, proper grammar and punctuation. Unless otherwise specified, all items are at the start of class.

**RUBRIC:** All written assignments are graded according to a grading rubric for technical skill, in addition to the style and content considerations. Students can rely on the following rubric throughout the semester:

AP Style error – five points each time  
Misspelled name – 10 points each time  
Misspelled word – five points each time

Incorrect grammar – five points each time  
Fact error – 10 points each time  
Failure to follow directions – 15 points for assignment

## INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS:

Every single assignment is equal. All assignments are averaged together to create the assignment category in your final calculated grade.

**WRITING IN CLASS:** Students will have the opportunity to write during class. Students should use this opportunity to practice writing on deadline but should also take advantage of having the professor available while working. Most of these assignments will be due before the end of the class period.

**LINKEDIN PROFILE:** Students are required to make a professional digital resume through LinkedIn. A satisfactory LinkedIn profile includes a summary statement, relevant jobs or volunteer assignment, education and expected graduation date, a professional headshot and contact information.

**DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING TRAINING:** Students will complete the [Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging for All LinkedIn learning path](#) (LinkedIn account required).

**INDIVIDUAL CASES:** This 20-minute oral and visual presentation will summarize the social media/web communication strategies use of a selected brand or organization as identified by the student and approved by the instructor or teaching assistant. Students are encouraged to supplement their presentations with a variety of sources and to emphasize the use of digital communication in their selected cases. Extemporaneous public speaking and visual communication skills will be evaluated.

**PRACTITIONER INTERVIEW:** Each student must propose an active public relations practitioner working in a context in which the student is interested. The practitioner must be approved by the instructor in order to be eligible, but the student must do the work in finding, making contact and arranging the interview. Students will submit a picture of an addressed and stamped thank you note to the practitioner to gain credit for the assignment. If you need assistance obtaining postage stamps, please email me at the beginning of the semester so we can work out how to get some to you. Students are warned to manage the timing of this assignment closely in order to avoid a potential issue in not having an interview conducted in time.

**RESEARCH RELEASE:** Students must find recent mass communication research conducted by scholars of marginalized identities or communities (research cannot be older than 12 months from publication). A release on the research findings, as well as a strategic frame of the scholar and scholarship are vital in this writing assignment. Research prospects are proposed by the student in advance and must be approved by the instructor.

**CONTRIBUTION:** The contribution grade is earned individually through various ways, to include attending class, being on time for every session and contributing to class discussion in a meaningful way by connecting class material to outside, real-world public relations examples. Students should not assume full point credit for contribution, and the following guidelines will help students understand their contribution scores:

- five = attended all sessions, never late, providing meaningful and in-depth contributions connecting class material to real scenarios every session
- four and a half = attended all sessions, never late, providing interesting commentary in most (not all) sessions
- four = attended most sessions, late no more than two times, providing interesting commentary in some sessions
- three and a half = attended some sessions, often late for class, providing interesting commentary in some sessions
- three = attended some sessions, often late for class, rarely provided commentary of any kind
- two = attended few sessions, rarely provided commentary of any kind
- one = attended few sessions, never provided commentary of any kind

## GROUP ASSIGNMENTS:

**SITUATION ANALYSIS:** Minimum 10 single-spaced pages, Times Roman 12, margins 1". This is a summary of the analysis of the client organization, its main challenges, its existing communications, and its targeted publics. It should be supported by secondary research. The analysis should include a variety of reliable sources and corporate information. The references must follow the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. The main components of this analysis are: problem/opportunity statement, background of the situation, background of the organizations (internal and external environments/impediments and public perceptions), existing communication techniques and efforts (strategic key messages), and the description of targeted publics.

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CLIENT:** Students will be assigned a client for whom they need to write a public relations plan. Students will write a problem statement, set goals and objectives and write messaging for target audiences (inspired by the situation analysis). Components of the plan will include: situation analysis identifying internal and external factors (use secondary research), current media environment regarding situation at hand, identify target audience, message themes and talking points and response to query question answer sets. Students must be prepared to verbally present their plan to the class using an extemporaneous speaking style. Students will log their time working on this project to simulate agency life.

**GROUP PARTICIPATION:** Each team will be given an allotment of points which will be disbursed to each member as the team collectively deems appropriate. This point value will be determined by the number of team members in the group.

## > COURSE POLICIES

**BE NICE.** Disrespect in any form is not permitted. If a student is deemed disrespectful by the instructor, then the student may be asked to leave (and receive an absence). Disrespect is conveyed in many forms, both face to face and online. None will be tolerated. Respect your class members' privacy and do not post comments, photos or other information online without permission.

**COMMUNICATE PROFESSIONALLY.** As this is a respected legacy school in public relations, the ability to communicate in a professional and courteous manner via email is important. Students are expected to display their top-level PR communication skills each time they send an email to the professor. Students who fail to use a professional greeting, sign one's full name or use proper AP Style in an email will have one point deducted from the final (overall grade) for the course for each infraction. Ask the professor for examples of proper and improper email communication so as to not make this mistake.

**KNOW WHEN YOU NEED HELP.** The college experience is stressful. If a student feels the need for professional services to assist in coping with stress related to school or other life's events, please contact UF's Health and Wellness Services:

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/Default.aspx>, 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, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies). <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

Academic Resources: E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to [Learningsupport@ufl.edu](mailto:Learningsupport@ufl.edu).  
<https://ss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601.

Career assistance and counseling. <http://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.

**INCOMPLETES UNAVAILABLE.** Incompletes will rarely, if ever, be given for this class. Only students who are already operating at a satisfactory level prior to a medical or other serious circumstance beyond one's control will even be considered for an incomplete. Incompletes are not a way to skirt responsibility and work around lost opportunities in major course assignments.

**MAKE IT COUNT.** Students may never write more content and produce as diverse of a set of products in another class. Make this class count. Collect and correct all PR products to assemble a professional portfolio.

**LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION.** Assuming you have been an active part of the class and visited the instructor outside of class hours, the instructor is willing to consider signing a positive letter of recommendation about you. Any requests for letters of recommendation should be made at least four weeks prior to the letter deadline. Students requesting the letter of recommendation should write the text of the letter as if the instructor were not going to add anything to it (though 99 percent of the time she will!) and submit that as a final suggested draft to the instructor. As a professional courtesy, students should discuss the request to write a letter of recommendation during a one-on-one meeting. The instructor reserves the right to refuse to write a letter or will advise students of potentially adverse material that would be discussed in such a letter prior to agreeing to submit such a letter.

**GRADE THE INSTRUCTOR.** The instructor worked hard on this syllabus and thinks it is perfect. It probably isn't. Being perfect is really important to her. If a student finds an AP Stylebook error in this document, the student should kindly notify the instructor immediately. The first student to report that specific error will be rewarded with one bonus point on top of the student's final grade. These syllabus error bonus points are awarded one point per error on a first-reported basis. Multiple bonus points can be earned by a single student if that student is able to find multiple errors and report them before others discover them. Errors must be reported by the deadline to reconcile Canvas and students are limited to five bonus syllabus error bonus points. This bonus opportunity is only extended to the syllabus, not other handouts in the semester.

## > TENTATIVE READING ASSIGNMENTS AND SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change at instructor's discretion.

| Day            | Topic   | Items Due and Class Notes   |
|----------------|---|---|
| Sept. 1        | Intro to the course   | In class: The importance of professionalism.<br>Starting off on the left foot: Evaluation.  |
| Sept. 8        | The strategic process<br>"We'll make a viral video"<br>Guest Speaker  |   |
| Sept. 15       | Case Discussions<br>Situation Analysis; guidelines for individual presentation  | <b>Due:</b> Thank You Notes Due<br><b>Due:</b> LinkedIn Profile<br><b>Due:</b> Practitioner interview proposal (limit 2 requests per student)                               |
| Sept. 22       | Case Discussions<br>Situation Analysis, Cont.   | <b>Due:</b> Individual Case Organizations (limit 2 requests per student)  |
| Sept. 29       | Case Discussions<br>Campaign writing<br><i>Information subsidies:</i> message themes, talking points, objectives, problem statements        | <b>Due:</b> Group Formation (limit 2 requests per student)  |
| Oct. 6         | Case Discussions<br>Campaign writing<br><i>Information subsidies:</i> message themes, talking points, objectives, problem statements, cont. | <b>Due:</b> LinkedIn <a href="#">Diversity, Inclusion &amp; Belonging for All LinkedIn learning path</a> (LinkedIn account required).<br><br>Individual Presentations Begin |
| Oct. 13        | Response strategies and media training<br><i>Information subsidies:</i> interviews, response to query                                       | Individual Presentations  |
| Oct. 20        | Social media and writing for the web<br><i>Information subsidies:</i> blog, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.                              | Individual Presentations<br><b>Due:</b> Situation analysis due  |
| Oct. 27        | Writing in class: Social media post   | Individual Presentations  |
| Nov. 3         | TBD   | Individual Presentations  |
| Nov. 10        | TBD   | <b>Due:</b> Draft Plans (not graded)  |
| Nov. 17        | Group Meetings  |   |
| <b>Nov. 24</b> | Group Work Day  | <b>Due:</b> Research Release  |
| Dec. 1         |   | <b>Due:</b> Strategic Plans Due<br><b>Due:</b> Team Presentations   |
| Dec. 8         |   | <b>Due:</b> Team Presentations<br><b>Due:</b> Practitioner Interview  |
| Dec. 15        |   | <b>Due:</b> Team Presentations  |