



**SYLLABUS – PUR 4932 Special Study  
Corporate Social Advocacy (3 credits) – Summer B 2021**

**Web-Based (Mixed synchronous via Zoom and asynchronous via CANVAS)  
Time: Tuesday | Period 4 - 6 (12:30 PM – 4:45 PM)  
Thursday | Period 4 - 5 (12:30 PM – 3:15 PM)**

Instructor:	Eve R. Heffron, M.A. (@eveheffron)
Email:	Canvas mail Or if unrelated to course ( <a href="mailto:eheffron@ufl.edu">eheffron@ufl.edu</a> )
Office Hours:	By appointment

*\* This syllabus is subject to change as appropriate and necessary.*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

In the age of consumer activism, there is a growing shift in societal expectations transitioning from traditional government to business to incite social change and take public stances on some of the most important issues society faces today, an area typically avoided by companies. Nonetheless, instances of corporate America responding to calls from the public are becoming more and more frequent, changing the role of public relations professionals. This course focuses on how companies and/or CEOs engage in controversial social-political issues – better known as corporate social advocacy (CSA).

Throughout this course, we will explore how companies manage issues and approach different internal and external stakeholders in the heightened politicized climate for those planning careers in the public relations industry or who plan to pursue research in related areas. Specifically, we will examine various instances of CSA over the past decade and distinguish the concept from other tools commonly used in public relations (e.g., CSR, CSV, and purpose). Students will also learn emerging insights about CSA and CEO activism, the risks and rewards related to companies who choose to either take issue stances or stay silent on sociopolitical issues, and the impact issue stances have on salient organizational outcomes by listening to leading communications professionals that will be attending classes as guest speakers.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES & LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of this course, students will:

- Learn about how corporate America engages in sociopolitical issues.
- Understand and describe the role of public relations professionals today.
- Establish a professional network of experts who are leading and defining the field.
- Analyze and improve various CSA communication and CEO messages by thinking critically, creatively, and independently.
- Develop the skills needed to identify and approach various internal and external stakeholders when engaging in CSA initiatives.
- Understand and apply a framework for determining if, when, and how to take stances on controversial sociopolitical issues.

## **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:

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the US
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

### **INCLUSION:**

I deeply value a learning environment that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors and celebrates your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) Please share any ways I can help enable a more inclusive virtual classroom experience for you.

### **TEXTS AND RESOURCES REQUIRED:**

No textbook is required for this class. All reading materials will be posted in CANVAS or accessible online.

**Technology requirements:** A reliable computer with webcam and internet access.

### **Online Course Privacy Related Issues**

Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

### **COURSE EVALUATION**

Education is not a passive activity. Just as in the professional world, showing-up is essential to success. Being present allows you to consider and understand the topics we will cover, practically ensuring a higher grade in the course than if your attendance is sporadic. Especially in a synchronous Zoom class, attendance and engagement are even more crucial. Material presented during lectures that is not a part of the text may appear on quizzes and assignments. Students are expected to keep up with the work in this course and contribute meaningfully to any group assignments/projects. Adequate class participation includes all the following:

- Students coming prepared to class discussions (this includes completing assigned readings).
- Students asking meaningful questions.
- Students answering questions thoughtfully.
- Students responding thoughtfully to other students' questions and comments.
- Students initiating relevant discussions.
- Active participation and engagement in all facets of course.

The evaluation of coursework will be based on the student's performance in four major areas, each of which constitutes a proportion of the final grade. These include weekly assignments and active participation in individual and group activities and quizzes/assignments, one individual analysis of a CSA case, one group experiential learning project, and one final group case study and presentation. The area and allocations for each are as follows:

Assignments = 25%

Mini Individual Case Study = 25%

Industry Group Project = 25%

Final Group Case Study = 25%

**Assignments and Active Participation (25%):**

Throughout this course, participation in a variety of activities and exercises is expected. Although attendance is not graded separately, active participation in each class is mandatory and graded. Students will be expected to participate in various interactive exercises and to be fully engaged – with live video always activated – unless cleared in advance with the professor. This will not only count toward your grade but will also provide you with experience working in teams as is typical in the profession. In-class activities must be turned in prior to the end of class to be eligible for full class credit. If you are missing, you are responsible for getting the assignment from one of your peers or me, and you will have until the next class to submit for a maximum of ½ credit. Requirements for make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

**Mini Individual Case Study (25%):**

Halfway through the semester, you will submit a mini version of a case study focusing on one example of CSA using a company that is not already selected for your group case study and must be approved in advance by the professor. Through individual work, you will demonstrate your critical thinking and writing skills apart from the group. Details will be distributed separately at the beginning of the semester.

**Industry Group Project (25%):**

Over the semester, you will work in teams to inform the class about an assigned industry and any related corporate social advocacy efforts. Once a week, teams will present one specific example of CSA related to their designated industry. You will be graded based on the frequency of your updates and on the degree to which you present well-reasoned information about your industry related to CSA. Details and team assignments will be distributed separately at the beginning of the semester.

**Final Group Case Study (25%):**

One of the best ways to learn about CSA is by studying what other corporations have done. This assignment requires you to critically analyze a company's CSA initiatives by creating and presenting a case study in a team format. For the final assessment, student teams will identify one company engaged in a controversial social-political issue (that must be approved in advance by the professor) and analyze its stance and actions related to that issue, followed by a team Zoom presentation on the case. Details and team assignments will be distributed separately at the beginning of the semester.

Grading for the course follows current UF grading policies for assigning grade points (see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

The grading scale for the course is as follows:

A 92-100%	C 72-77%
A- 90-91%	C- 70-71%
B+ 88-89%	D+ 68-69%
B 82-87%	D 62-67%
B- 80-81%	D- 60-61%
C+ 78-79%	E below 60%

Letter grades for this course will be based on the total points earned over the term. For further information about grades and grading policy, please consult:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

### **ONLINE COURSE ADMINISTRATION — E-LEARNING IN CANVAS**

<http://elearning.ufl.edu/> will be used to administer the course communication, materials (e.g., PowerPoint files, additional readings, handouts, assignment guidelines, evaluation forms), and grades. For instance, an electronic file of this document is posted on Canvas. You can access the site by using your GatorLink username and password. Please check the site for announcements and/or threads of comments from classmates, and the professor.

### **COURSE PROFESSIONALISM**

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. Carefully consider how you participate and the assignments you submit. You can use humor and demonstrate creativity, but think ahead to how it will reflect on you. Use your best professional judgment. Projects should not contain nudity, profanity, illegal activities or situations that would put you or others in danger.

Students are expected to arrive on time, not leave early unless prior permission is granted, and wait for the class to end before packing to leave. Cell phones and other electronic devices must not be used during class. In the event of an emergency, notify me at the start of class. Laptops may be used for assignments or as a note-taking device. Surfing the Internet, checking or sending email or texts, playing games, and other online activities not related to class are strictly prohibited.

### **END OF COURSE EVALUATIONS**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. 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>.

### **THE HONOR PLEDGE**

The University of Florida Honor Code applies to all work related to this class. All students are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. Students are expected to attend every class, arrive on time, and participate in class discussions. Assigned readings should be completed prior to class, and students should be prepared to discuss the assigned material. Any material discussed in class and/or covered in the assigned readings may be included on examinations. Students will not be allowed to make up

quizzes. Exceptions to this policy will be limited to documented exceptional (as defined by the professor) circumstances and at the discretion of the professor. Students arriving more than 10 minutes late to a quiz will not be allowed to take the quiz.

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 obliged to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the professor in this class.

### **STUDENTS REQUIRING ACCOMODATIONS**

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 professor when requesting accommodation. Students with challenges should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### **Campus Resources**

**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>, (352)392-1575; and the University Police Department: (352)392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

**Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)** Student Health Care Center, (352)392-1161.

**University Police Department,** (352)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://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

**Career Resource Center:** Reitz Union, (352)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.

**AVAILABILITY**

Please feel free to speak with me at any time during the semester about any questions or concerns you have. You can stop by during my office hours or make an appointment to see me at another time during the week. I’m also available by email and will try to get back to you within 24 hours.

**Course Schedule and Readings**

**\*Readings are to be done BEFORE the dates listed below\***

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics &amp; Deadlines</b>	<b>Readings &amp; Other Resources</b>
Week 1	June 28 – July 2	<p><b>Course Overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction to CSA</li> <li>- Edelman Trust Barometer</li> <li>- CSA v CSR v CSV</li> <li>- Consumer activism</li> <li>- Group assignments in class</li> <li>- Sign up for PRWeek, PRovoke, &amp; IPR Research Letter in class (free)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dodd, M. D., &amp; Supa, D. W. (2014). Conceptualizing and measuring “corporate social advocacy” communication: Examining the impact on corporate financial performance. <i>Public Relations Journal</i>, 8(3), 2-23.</li> <li>- In 2019 businesses must drive social change: consumers demand it (PRWeek, 2019)</li> <li>- MLB’s decision to drop Atlanta highlights the economic power companies can wield over lawmakers – when they choose to (The Conversation, 2021)</li> <li>- Battle of the wallets: The changing landscape of consumer activism (Weber Shandwick, 2018)</li> <li>- Corporate America’s Evolution on L.G.B.T. Rights (The New Yorker, 2015)</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dodd, M. (2018). Globalization, pluralization, and erosion: The impact of shifting societal expectations for advocacy and public good. <i>The Journal of Public Interest Communications</i>, 2(2), 221-221.</li> </ul>

Week 2	July 5 – 9	<p><b>Commitment to all Stakeholders, Not Just Shareholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Corporate purpose</li> <li>- The Fortune Most Admired Companies</li> <li>- Corporate Equality Index</li> <li>- Business Roundtable</li> </ul> <p>(Tentative Guest Speaker)</p>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Business Imperative for Social Justice Today (Porter Novelli Purpose Tracker, 2020)</li> <li>- Call it “Purpose Plus” (Korn Ferry, 2020)</li> <li>- Shareholder Value Is No Longer Everything, Top C.E.O.s Say (NYTimes, 2019)</li> <li>- HBR: How Do Consumers Feel When Companies Get Political? (2020)</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommended:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tsai, W. H. S., &amp; Men, L. R. (2017). Social CEOs: The effects of CEOs’ communication styles and parasocial interaction on social networking sites. <i>New Media &amp; Society</i>, 19(11), 1848-1867.</li> <li>- Men, R., &amp; Tsai, W. H. S. (2016) Public engagement with CEOs on social media: Motivations and relational outcomes. <i>Public Relations Review</i>, 42(5) 932-942.</li> </ul>
Week 3	July 12 – 16	<p><b>The New Role of CEOs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CEO activism</li> <li>- Coalition building</li> </ul> <p>(Tentative Guest Speaker)</p> <p><b>*Mini Individual CSA Case Study Due*</b></p>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HBR: Starbucks’ “Race Together” Campaign and the Upside of CEO Activism (2015)</li> <li>- HBR: What CEO Activism Looks Like in the Trump Era (Leslie Gaines-Ross, 2017)</li> <li>- HBR: The New CEO Activists (Chatterji &amp; Toffel, 2017)</li> <li>- The Dawn of CEO Activism (Weber Shandwick &amp; KRC Research, 2016)</li> <li>- 3 Takeaways From Patagonia's 'Time to Vote' Campaign- The famously political company's advice for encouraging employees to vote (Inc., 2020)</li> </ul>
Week 4	July 19 – 23	<p><b>Risks &amp; Rewards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The cost of staying silent</li> <li>- Woke-washing</li> </ul> <p>(Tentative Guest Speaker)</p>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delta and Coca-Cola Reverse Course on Georgia Voting Law, Stating ‘Crystal Clear’ Opposition (NYTimes, 2021)</li> <li>- In N.R.A. Fight, Delta Finds There Is No</li> </ul>



			<p>Neutral Ground (NYTimes, 2018)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Complexity of Brands Taking a Stand at This Time (PRNews, 2020)</li> <li>- Nike's Colin Kaepernick ad campaign gets more yeas than nays (The Washington Post, 2018)</li> <li>- Black Lives Matter: Do companies really support the cause? (BBC, 2020)</li> <li>- Silence is NOT an Option (Ben &amp; Jerry's, 2020)</li> <li>- HBR: "Woke-Washing" Your Company Won't Cut It (Dowell &amp; Jackson, 2020)</li> </ul>
Week 5	July 26 – 30	<p><b>The Power of Activist Consumers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Boycotts &amp; buycotts</li> </ul> <p>(Tentative Guest Speaker)</p>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People are destroying their Nike shoes and socks to protest Nike's Colin Kaepernick ad campaign (Business Insider, 2018)</li> <li>- Why 'buycotts' could overtake boycotts among consumer activists (The Washington Post, 2018)</li> <li>- More Than 1,000 Companies Boycotted Facebook. Did It Work? (NYTimes, 2020)</li> <li>- The Dark Side of Brand Boycotts (Forbes, 2020)</li> <li>- Endres &amp; Panagopoulos. (2017). Boycotts, buycotts, and political consumerism in America. <i>Research &amp; Politics</i>, 4(4), 2053168017738632.</li> </ul>
Week 6	Aug. 2 – 6	<p><b>Final Group Case Study Presentations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peer evaluations</li> </ul> <p><b>*Final Group Case Study Due*</b></p>	