

Fall 2021 SYLLABUS: Corporate Communication Essentials (☀️) PUR 4932 (27289)

Professor: Patrick Ford, Professional-in-Residence, Department of Public Relations

Course Time: Tuesday 10:40 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Location: Weimer 1078

Office Hours: Monday 4:00-5:00 p.m.; Tuesday 12:00-2:00 p.m.

In office (Weimer 3115) or by phone or Zoom -- Appointments recommended and may also be possible outside office hours.

Contact Information -- Email: fordp@ufl.edu; phone or text: 703-966-8138

Messages via Canvas are accepted

(⚙️) This syllabus is subject to change as the professor deems appropriate and necessary.

Course Description

This course focuses on why successful communication professionals – whether they are in for-profit or nonprofit corporations; whether they are in-house or on the agency side; and whether they aspire to creative or management roles – must develop a fundamental understanding of business.

- How does your company and/or your client generate revenues and profits?
- How does your company engage with key stakeholders (such as employees, customers, suppliers, investors, and communities in which they operate)?
- Why do successful corporations focus on business purpose, on values, and on commitment to environmental, social, and governance policies?
- How does the board of directors oversee and interact with senior management?
- How does the chief communications officer in successful corporations interact with the chief executive officer, chief financial officer, chief operating officer, general counsel, chief human resources officer, chief information officer, chief marketing officer, and other members of the so-called c-suite?

Over the course of this semester, we will delve into these and various other aspects of corporate communication with special emphasis on why they matter and what role tomorrow's strategic communication professionals will play in ensuring the enduring success of the enterprise. We will examine a wide range of specific corporate examples and, in some cases, hear from senior communication executives on how they and their companies engage with their various stakeholders (employees, retirees, investors, customers, communities, governments, media, social media influencers and other key opinion leaders).

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will:

- Develop basic business acumen and how to relate that to their role as strategic communicators
- Develop an understanding of stakeholder theory
- Learn about the changing role of corporations in modern society and how the role of public relations also is evolving
- Learn the basics of corporate financial communication and investor relations
- Learn the basics of corporate purpose, corporate social responsibility and ESG (environmental, social and governance)
- Develop a deeper understanding of employee engagement

Prerequisite:

- PUR 3000 Principles of Public Relations

Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes

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

Readings

Required Book

- *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: A Primer*, by Matthew W. Ragas and Ron Culp. Emerald Publishing, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-83867-662-9 (paperback)

Additional Readings as Assigned

Students will be expected to be regular readers of free updates from *PRWeek Daily Breakfast Briefing*. **PRWeek is accessible to UF students through the UF George A. Smathers Libraries online database system.** The professor will provide or assign additional reading materials (e.g. media articles or book chapters) over the course of the semester. Generally, assigned reading (book chapters or other articles) in the syllabus should be read in advance of the class for which they are listed. Be prepared for the professor to call on you in that class to discuss the assigned readings.

Online Course Administration — e-Learning in Canvas

<https://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

- The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional school and professional decorum is expected at all times. Therefore, the students, and the professor, adhere to workplace norms for collegial and respectful interaction. Carefully consider how you participate in class discussions and in the assignments you submit and present. 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 show up on time, not leave early unless prior permission is granted, and wait for the class to end before leaving. This applies to both in-person and Zoom classes. *Please note the significant impact of attendance and active participation in your final grade (25% of grade) and be sure to show up and speak up.*
- Students are expected to conduct themselves in an honest, ethical, and courteous manner — with classmates and the professor.

Diversity Statement

Your experience in this class is important to me. I embrace a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by

diversity along several dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, socio-economic class, disability, age, and religion. It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for others.

Course Grades

Grading factors include:

Attendance and Active Participation: 30%

- Attendance and active participation are mandatory. Students will be expected to participate in various interactive exercises and to be fully engaged at all times unless cleared in advance with the professor. Each absence after the drop/add period will result in reduction in the grade for attendance. After due warning, the professor may prohibit further attendance and subsequently assign a lower or failing grade for excessive absences (please note: more than two unexcused absences during the semester will be considered “excessive absences.” You are responsible for **notifying the professor in advance of the cause of your absence** and, if it is due to illness, provide a note from your medical provider. For further information on attendance policy, please consult: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

Individual Assignment: 25%

- Individual assignments will provide an opportunity for you to explore various aspects of business acumen and corporate communication essentials. These will include:
 - Brief reports on selected topics (selected in consultation with professor)
 - A brief precis on elements of assigned readings

Quizzes: 45%

- Quizzes will be designed to test the students’ understanding of key concepts of corporate communication essentials addressed in the course textbook and/or in supplemental readings, and those discussed in class by the professor and/or guest lecturers.

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 = 93.0-100%.

A- = 90.0-92.99%. B+ = 87.0-89.99%. B = 83.0-86.99%. B- = 80.0-82.99%. C+ = 77.0-79.99%.

C = 74.0-76.99%. C- = 70.0-73.99%. D+ = 67.0-69.99%. D = 64.0-66.99%. D- = 60.0-63.99%. E = below 60%

Further information about grades and grading policy may be found at this [link to the university grades and grading policies](#).

Online 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/>. 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/>. Summaries of course evaluation

results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

The Honor Pledge

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 TA in this class.

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.

Campus Resources

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 [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 9-1-1 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*: 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 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).

- *On-Line Students Complaints:* [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.](#)

UF COVID-19 Guidance

In response to COVID-19, the following practices are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available at no cost and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit this link for details on where to get your shot, including options that do not require an appointment: <https://coronavirus.ufhealth.org/vaccinations/vaccine-availability/>. Students who receive the first dose of the vaccine somewhere off-campus and/or outside of Gainesville can still receive their second dose on campus.
- You are expected to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings even if you are vaccinated. Please continue to follow healthy habits, including best practices like frequent hand washing. Following these practices is our responsibility as Gators.
 - Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
 - Hand sanitizing stations will be located in every classroom.
- If you are sick, stay home and self-quarantine. Please visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website about next steps, retake the questionnaire and schedule your test for no sooner than 24 hours after your symptoms began. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 (or email covid@shcc.ufl.edu) to be evaluated for testing and to receive further instructions about returning to campus. UF Health Screen, Test & Protect offers guidance when you are sick, have been exposed to someone who has tested positive or have tested positive yourself. Visit the [UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website](#) for more information.
 - Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.
 - If you are withheld from campus by the Department of Health through Screen, Test & Protect you are not permitted to use any on campus facilities. Students attempting to attend campus activities when withheld from campus will be referred to the Dean of Students Office.
- Continue to regularly visit coronavirus.UFHealth.org and coronavirus.ufl.edu for up-to-date information about COVID-19 and vaccination.

Policy on Recording Classes

- 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.

Other Important Notes

- We will meet in person (Weimer 1078) for most classes, but several classes will be conducted on Zoom to accommodate guest lecturers – you will receive ample advance notice in those cases. You will be welcome to log in from your seat in class or remotely. In response to COVID-19, we will carefully track and comply with all UF policies and guidelines to maintain your learning environment and to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions.
- The professor reserves the right to make changes, if necessary, to the grading system, schedule, or other matters pertaining to the class.
- I can be reached in my office (Weimer 3115), via email (fordp@ufl.edu), by telephone (352-294-0493) or by text (703-966-8138). While I always strive to respond in a timely way, please be aware that I may not always be able to respond immediately to your communication. As a rule, allow up to 24 hours for a response.
- Students are not permitted to bring guests to class unless pre-arranged with me in advance.
- If you notice yourself having trouble in the course, it is crucial that you see me immediately or as soon as possible. Please feel free to approach me about any concerns or comments you might have about this class. Ideally, every student in the class should plan to have at least one 1:1 meeting with me during the semester – I can meet with you during office hours or at other times, but I ask that you reach out in advance and schedule an appointment.
- Any evidence of plagiarism or cheating will result in an “E” for the course and possible disciplinary action.
- Do not submit the same work to more than one class without prior written permission from both professors. Do not adapt work from another class for this class without my prior written permission.
- Do not adapt someone else's work and submit it as your own. This course requires original work, created at this time, for this purpose.
- Spelling counts, as do grammar, punctuation and professional presentation techniques. If you need extra help with presentation skills, arrange an appointment with me.
- An assignment turned in past the deadline may be penalized one letter grade for each weekday it is late. This is a business where deadlines count.
- In addition to the required and recommended readings, you are expected to maintain comprehensive class notes because class lectures often contain information that is not contained in the readings. You will be quizzed on this information. *If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get briefed by another student on the content covered in the class.*
- Misspelling company or agency names during exercises may result in a letter grade deduction. Check your work!

Course Schedule

Readings are to be done BEFORE the date listed below

Aug 24

Course overview

- Why business acumen matters more than ever

Aug 31

Interactive review: “Strategic Communication and Business Acumen”

- Read: “Foreword by Linda Rutherford” and Chapter 1 in *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators*

- Sept 7** “Growth Innovation and Transformation” and “The Lean and Agile Enterprise”
- Read: Chapters 2 and 3 in *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators*
- Sept 14** “The Purpose Driven Enterprise”
- Read: Chapter 4 in *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators* and additional readings to be provided
- Sept 21** “Stakeholders and Society”
- Stakeholder Theory
 - Read Chapter 5 in *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators* and additional reading to be provided
- Sept 28** Corporate Governance: Board of Directors and the C-suite
- Read Chapter 6 in *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators*
- Oct 5** **Quiz #1**
- Oct 12** “Finance and the Capital Markets”
- Read Chapter 7 in *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators*
- Oct 19** “Financial Statements and Valuation Essentials”
- Read Chapter 8 in *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators*
- Oct 26** “Corporate Disclosure Laws”
- Read Chapter 9 in *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators*
- Nov 2** **Quiz #2**
- Nov 9** Rise of the CCO and In-House Communication Teams
- Read Chapter 11 in *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators*
- Nov 16** “Strategic Communication Agencies and Consultancies”
- Read Chapter 10 in *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators*
- Nov 23** “Ten Ways to Build Business Acumen”
- Read Chapter 12 in *Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators*
- Nov 30** **Quiz #3**
- Dec 7** Wrap-Up and Key Takeaways – Why Emerging PR Professionals Must Gain Business Acumen