

**PUR4203: Ethics and Professional Responsibility in Public Relations
Spring 2024**

Tuesday, 10:40 a.m.-12:35 p.m. & Thursday, 11:45 a.m. – 12:35 p.m.

Instructor: Jeannie Clary

Email: jclary@ufl.edu

Phone: 727.278.8216

Credits: 3

Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom. I am happy to schedule time to meet via Zoom during any weekday based on mutual availability.

Join Zoom Meeting:

Link TBD

COURSE OVERVIEW

Ethics & Professional Responsibility in Public Relations provides an understanding of the role of ethics in public relations, both in historical and current perspective. The growing lack of trust in institutions has moved ethical considerations of public relations to center stage. Now more than ever, we must understand the possibilities and responsibilities for professional communicators. Discussing real life scenarios, we will explore the history of ethics and PR, ethical dilemmas for communicators, the business relevance of ethics, ethics and leadership, and the interesting evolving dynamic between ethics and technology.

COURSE PURPOSES:

- 1) To enhance your awareness of the ethical responsibilities of public relations professionals and of the social responsibilities of corporations and other organizations;
- 2) To increase your ability to identify the moral dimensions of issues that arise in the practice of public relations;
- 3) To enhance your ability to employ reason as a tool for dealing with moral issues;
- 4) To provide you the knowledge and skills necessary to reach and justify ethical decisions;
- 5) To elicit within you a sense of personal and professional responsibility; and 6) to teach you leadership theories and principles to enhance ethical leadership and corporate social responsibility.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This class requires your full engagement. You must keep up with the assignments and complete all activities in a timely manner. Not all of the materials that you read will be discussed or explained in the lectures, and conversely, not everything discussed in our lectures will be written in the textbook. If you need further explanations or clarification on anything, please reach out to me. You should come to class each week prepared to justify/defend your own perspectives about ethics situations. ***While it is important that you absorb and process the provided material, learn about background and history, models and frameworks, etc., I am primarily interested in your perspective of what you are hearing and learning.*** Put it in context with your own experience, and in discussions, express your own thoughts, make your own voice heard (rather than just repeat the learned material).

Expectations include the following:

- Read the assigned materials before the class meeting
- Come prepared to discuss readings and PR situations in the news
- Submit real-life PR/communications ethics examples you find
- Submit reaction papers based on the readings *where assigned*
- Share your reactions to the readings and/or relevant issues in the news in our class discussions
- Case Study:
 - Research a case study approved by the instructor
 - Give a short *oral* report summarizing the case and the public relations strategies used by the organization

- Submit a final report that discusses the case, describes the public relations strategies used in the case and recommends an ethics communication program

As most students in this class are only a short time from graduating, I believe it's important to prepare for the non-academic world of PR. As such, we will approach this course as we would approach client work in a PR agency. We will view case studies from the practitioner-to-client perspective. ***All work should be written in AP Style, with clear, grammatically correct sentences and PR formatting:***

- Single-spaced (except between each paragraph)
- Professional font, e.g., Times New Roman, Garamond, Arial, Calibri, etc.
- No paragraph indentations

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. Use your best professional judgment. I expect students to arrive on time via Zoom, not leave early, and wait for the class to end before signing off.

Discussion Demeanor: I want this class to be fun and energetic with great discussions, and we will cover sensitive topics and ones about which some students may have strong feelings. Therefore, I expect you to be courteous and respectful to your fellow classmates. Please be polite to others while both expressing opinions and responding to them. *Any form of disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated.*

Zoom Screens: This class requires discussion and holding conversations with a grid of blank screens is difficult at best. As such, you must leave your screen on for the duration of class unless you have cleared it with me for that day.

COURSE CONTENT

Course content not already listed will usually be published 1-2 weeks in advance. We will occasionally have guest speakers. As such, the dates and corresponding work – such as discussions and assignments – on the syllabus might change. I will give you plenty of notice so you can adjust as needed, as we firm up guest speakers' schedules.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Introduction (5%)

Write an introduction, telling me who you are, where you're from, your major, what you plan to do in PR and what you hope to learn in this class. In bullet points, please list any questions you have about PR and PR/communications careers – this could be anything, from questions about how agencies work, negotiating salaries, work life balance, being a working parent, etc.

Reaction Papers (15%)

Students are expected to submit 4 two-page reaction papers. Reaction papers are due by the beginning of class on the assigned date.

- The first page of the paper must *summarize or outline the main points of the week's readings* and the second page should be *your personal reaction to or interpretation of the readings*.
- All papers must be submitted via Canvas by the deadline on the due date. Late papers will not be accepted, unless I was made aware and gave an extension BEFORE the deadline.
- **Reaction papers will be graded along the following lines:**
 - **Inadequate:** No submission OR inaccurate summary of readings and no context or analysis
 - **Minimally Adequate:** Summarizes the readings accurately, but does not offer analysis
 - **Average:** Offers an accurate summary of the readings and will respond thoughtfully to the issues raised.
 - **Good:** Summarizes but also integrates the readings with what you have learned *previously* about public relations in *other* classes.
 - **Excellent:** Summarizes, integrates the readings and brings in previously gleaned information *and* *new* information from what you're learning about public relations and ethics in *this* course.

- **Next-Level:** Goes beyond summary, reaction and integration to develop a new idea beyond what you are learning in class. Next-level papers will be rare.

Case Study Final Report (30%)

Each student will select a case study after consultation with Professor Clary. You will research this case and the public relations implications. Case studies may be selected from a variety of sources, such as “Public Relations Ethics: How to Practice PR Without Losing Your Soul” by Dick Martin & Donald K. Wright, [The Arthur W. Page Center](#), PRSA’s archive of ethics case studies, [Media Ethics Initiative](#), Institute for Public Relations, etc. You are welcome to find case studies from any reputable source as long as you get it approved by Professor Clary.

- **Final Report:** Your final report will a) summarize the case and b) provide your recommendations for a successful, ethical PR program. You should describe your program and the process the company should have used to develop the program. Program elements should include recommendations for:
 - Formative research
 - Planning and design steps
 - Implementation and execution phases
 - Evaluation

Discussion Leadership (20%)

Each week, two or three students will be assigned to take a class leadership role for the online discussion (via Canvas) of the readings and the lecture. You have complete freedom in how you elect to approach that leadership role. Here are some ways to approach this:

- Summarize own reaction paper (or share it in its entirety) and then direct discussion around paper.
- Prepare questions to generate thought-provoking discussions
- Lecture on the topic and bring additional readings or other materials to the lecture
- Take a critical position on the authors’ perspectives and bring evidence as to why you think an author is wrong
- Show the class current event examples that illustrate the week’s readings.

These are just examples. There’s no one “right” way to lead; you will be evaluated in terms of how creative you were and how much impact your leadership had on the breadth and depth of the class discussion. This isn’t a team “presentation,” so it doesn’t have to be perfectly coordinated. However, as you will have a partner, it’s best to discuss how you plan to share the discussion.

Attendance (15%)

Class attendance is expected, whether we meet in-person or via Zoom. There are two non-penalized absences. If you are ill or have a conflict and can’t make it to class, please let me know *beforehand* via text or email. Also, being habitually late to class will impact your attendance. Five minutes will be considered “late.” Punctuality is particularly important in an online class so we can begin on time.

- **Religious Observances:** If one of our class dates falls on the date of religious holiday you observe, please let me know in advance. You will be excused and it will not count against your absences. As you can turn them in virtually, assignments will still be due by the deadline. If there is a multi-day observance that conflicts with turning the assignment in, please let me know ahead of time. I will only accept late assignments if you have discussed it with me ahead of time.
- **Zoom Screens:** This class requires discussion and holding conversations with a grid of blank screens is difficult at best. As such, you must leave your screen on for the duration of class unless you have cleared it with me for that day. You will be marked absent if your screen is off for the entire class unless you clear it with Professor Clary beforehand. Students who leave their screens off for any significant portion of the class without being excused will lose points from their participation grade.

In-Class Participation (15%)

You will participate in the weekly discussions in both small group assignments and with the entire class. In addition to taking a leadership role in your assigned week, you will be graded on how thoughtfully and respectfully you take part in class discussions. I will be making this summary judgment--not on how often you talk--but on the quality of that contribution.

- To aid your participation grade, you may conduct news searches and look for any news items that might involve ethical considerations for an organization or government. Send to Professor Clary by 8:30 a.m. each Tuesday or Thursday and we will add the item to our class discussion, time permitting. You might not have something to send every week, so you won't be graded weekly. However, this will be taken into consideration as part of your overall class participation score.

DEADLINES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Public relations professionals are often bound by tight, important deadlines, whether for media, clients or colleagues. Missing these can damage our credibility, as well as our clients' credibility. Media deadlines are almost always immovable. Even if there's a true emergency, missing a media deadline will typically result in losing the placement. Client deadlines are similar, but sometimes with slightly more flexibility, depending on the client, project, issue and how you approach it. Internal deadlines (those within your team or agency) are often more flexible, but not by much. Even internally, deadlines are set so that other people will be able to do their parts of the project. For example, if you're tasked with delivering a media brief to your supervisor by a certain time, your deadline is set so that your supervisor will have time to review, edit and send to the client so the client has time to review, approve and prepare for their media interview.

Therefore, I take a similar approach to class assignments. **"Late" is considered anything submitted after the deadline on the due date, unless otherwise noted.**

If for any reason, you think you will miss a deadline, even by 30 minutes, please discuss it with me in advance. This is not only out of respect, but practice for work in the PR field. If you think your assignment will be late, even by 30 minutes, please reach out and explain why. I assess late assignments on a case-by-case basis. Under legitimate extenuating circumstances, I will agree to let you schedule a makeup or turn in an assignment late. **Late assignments turned in without explanation will receive a zero.** Lost files are not an acceptable excuse for late or missing work. Remember Murphy's Law. Please back up all your files; you may choose to do so on a USB flash drive, Google Drive, iCloud, Dropbox, etc.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLIENT EXAMPLES: To help you in your assignments, I will share examples of real-life client work, such as strategic plans, news releases, pitches, etc. This is proprietary information belonging to me. While I am always happy to share these examples with my students, they may not be shared outside of this class at any point during or after the semester.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This is an online course, and we will meet via e-learning in Canvas/Zoom. A learning module will be set up for each online section containing a lecture, readings and activities/assignments for the week. You will be required to read the assigned chapters/pages, go through the lecture slides and do each week's assigned work. It is your responsibility to follow and adhere to the schedule. We will use Canvas <http://elearning.ufl.edu/> for the course communication, materials and grades.

Availability

Please feel free to speak with me during the semester about any questions or concerns you have. You can also reach me by email and I'll do my best to get back to you within 24 hours. If it's urgent, you may text me, but please don't text after 8 p.m.

Grading Scale

The grading scale for the course follows current UF policies

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

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-87
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-74
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	61-63
E	< 63

Required Reading

- "Public Relations Ethics: How to Practice PR Without Losing Your Soul" by Dick Martin & Donald K. Wright
- Links as assigned by Professor Clary

Useful Web Sites

[PRWeek](#)

[PProvoked](#)

[IPR Research Letter](#)

[PRNEWS](#)

- Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship: <http://www.bccccc.net/>
- Business Ethics: The Magazine of Corporate Responsibility: <http://www.business-ethics.com/>
- Business for Social Responsibility: <http://www.bsr.org/index.cfm>
- Compliance Week:
<http://www.complianceweek.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Article.AdvancedSearchResults>
- CSRwire: CSR news and press releases: <http://www.csrwire.com>
- Ethical Corporation Online: <http://www.ethicalcorp.com>
- Global Reporting Initiative: <http://www.globalreporting.org/Home>
- The Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability: <http://www.accountability21.net/default.aspx?id=54>
- World Bank--Business Ethics and Corporate Accountability: The Search for Standards:
http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/corpgov/csr/pdf/bizethics_econference.pdf
- World Business Council for Sustainable Development: <http://www.wbcsd.org/>

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, dso.ufl.edu/drc) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Religious Holy Days

By UF policy, a student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day must notify me of his or her pending absence in advance of a religious holy day, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment or activity within a reasonable time after the absence.

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. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at 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 ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu) 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](#).

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 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](#).

UNIVERSITY HONESTY POLICY

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 (sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-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 or TA in this class.