

Public Interest Communications—PUR 4442 (3 credits)

Class Time: T: 12:50 - 2:45 pm, R: 12:50 - 1:40 pm

Class Location: WEIM 1078

Instructor: Dr. Christen Buckley | **Office:** 3045

Email: buckleychristen@ufl.edu

Student Hours: Tuesdays: 2:45 – 4:30 pm

COURSE OVERVIEW

Public interest communications is a form of strategic communication through which organizations, causes, or movements take on specific communications objectives that have some benefit to society. This benefit transcends the particular interest of any single organization undertaking a campaign or communications effort.

This is an evolving field, and its practitioners are continuously applying new insights and techniques to support positive social change. The field is not as well-established as its sister fields of public relations, advertising, journalism, and marketing, however, an increased recognition among changemakers of the importance of communications to social change means that there are more resources available than there once were. To make the most of our time, the course will focus on the principles and fundamentals on which the field stands.

This course teaches you how to use strategic, science-based communications to effect positive social change. At the beginning of the semester, you will select a social issue on which to focus and an organization that is working to effect change related to that issue. Through activities and by analyzing your chosen organization's communications, you'll learn the basics of being a public interest communicator, including the science behind message framing, how to make people care about big issues, how to mobilize people to action, and how to select the best messengers to deliver your message. For your final project, you'll develop the key components of a strategic communications plan for a public interest campaign of your choosing with a partner.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Define public interest communications and explain their role in bringing about positive social change.
2. Explain the science behind key public interest communications concepts.
3. Apply the concepts to real-world public interest communications campaigns and case studies.
4. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of any public interest organization's communications.
5. Craft the framework of a strategic public interest communications plan.
6. Explore career opportunities in the public interest and how to apply concepts going forward.

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.

COURSE LOGISTICS

Prerequisites

None

Required Reading, Viewing, and Listening

Founders of March for Our Lives. (2018). Glimmer of Hope: How Tragedy Sparked a Movement.

Additional book excerpts, videos, articles etc. will be made available through Canvas.

Technology Requirements

You will need reliable Internet access and a reliable computer with Microsoft Word (or other word processing software that can generate a .doc or .docx file), Adobe Flash (for viewing video content), and Adobe PDF reader. **Please bring your computer to class.**

Deadlines

Communications is a very deadline-oriented field. Please notify me as soon as possible if you have an emergency that will prevent you from completing an assignment.

Class attendance

You will maximize your learning outcomes by attending class regularly. However, I also understand that life happens. Therefore, you are allowed two absences, with no questions asked. After that, missing class will result in a 10-point deduction on your final grade. You are only permitted to make up missed work in accordance with the university's attendance policy. It will be applied evenly so each student is treated in an equitable manner. You can read it here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Course conduct

Consider your conduct and its impact on others. Please be on time for class. Please do not text, check email or social media unrelated to the class, browse unrelated websites, or do other work during class. Please be collegial and respectful in your interactions with your fellow students. I am adamant that students should not distract or detract from another's learning experience.

Format for writing assignments

Please use APA style for all writing assignments and check spelling and grammar

Attribution in writing assignments

In every assignment for this course, you must clearly attribute the source of your information, including information obtained from organizations' websites or internal documents. You cannot copy anything word for word, regardless of the source, without putting quotes around it and crediting the source.

Communications

Please login to Canvas and check your email daily to check for class-related announcements. You may set up alerts to forward messages directly to your UF email address. To adjust your notification settings in Canvas, follow these guidelines.

IMPORTANT: For questions about course content, your grade, or other issues, please feel free to email or call me. Please allow at least 24 hours for a response during the week and 48 hours on weekends and holidays.

COURSE EVALUATION

Content

Our course will include brief lectures, discussion/reflection, guest lectures, and student case presentations. The evaluation of coursework will be based on your performance in three major areas, each of which constitutes a proportion of the final grade. Your grade will be calculated by the following:

In-Class Activities and Participation: 35%

Includes in-class activities and discussions. I will be evaluating your participation throughout the semester.

Writing Assignments/Watch, Read, Answer (WRAs): 35%

The class will include readings, videos, podcasts, et al., and there will be written assignments for some of them.

Final Project: 30%

You will write and present a complete a case study of an organization working to make a specific change and offer recommendations for how that organization might have taken a different approach that would have been more effective. You will present your case in class during the last week of class.

Guidelines for Assignment Grades

Assignments that receive the most points:

- Are clearly organized
- Rely heavily on stories and visual language
- Are free of grammatical, spelling, fact, or typographical errors
- Show an understanding of both the lecture and the assignment
- Include strong transitions
- Are concise but complete—not overwritten or puffy, but include relevant messages and information
- Are consistent with your message
- Meticulously cite source materials
- Where appropriate, include 5 or more credible sources of information
- Are truthful and accurate
- Demonstrate a strong understanding of the client and their needs, as well as an understanding of issues and opposition the client faces
- Clearly support arguments with research

COURSE DYNAMICS

Mutual pledge

As your instructor, I pledge to help you to gain confidence in your understanding and application of public interest communications, strategic communications tools, and critical thinking skills. I

will do my best to provide you with an equitable educational experience that celebrates your diversity and is inclusive of your skills and abilities.

In turn, you must do the work necessary to help me teach you. That means keeping up with assigned readings and weekly writing assignments, being prepared for class, participating in class discussions, and putting time and thought into your work.

Statement on Inclusion and Diversity

Some of the topics we will cover in this class may be difficult. While I expect rigorous discussion and even disagreement during our class discussions, I ask that you engage in discussion with care and empathy for the other students in the classroom, recognizing that people come from diverse backgrounds and have an array of perspectives. My goal is to create a supportive learning environment for all and help you cultivate an appreciation for the diversity each of your peers brings to the classroom. If something was said in class (by anyone) that makes you uncomfortable, please talk to me about it. (Anonymous feedback is an option as well). If any class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

I aim to present materials that are respectful of different ethnicities, races, cultures, genders, sexual orientations, disabilities, ages, and socioeconomic statuses. However, these materials may have limitations and I encourage suggestions for additional materials that offer diverse perspectives. Please let me know if you have any ideas as to how to make the course more effective for you and/or other students.

I encourage you to employ critical thinking, both about the materials *and* your own experiences, and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. None of my coursework is intended to espouse, promote, advance, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint, or belief.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Students with special needs

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. 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.

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 specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Read the Honor Code [here](#). You are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask me. In every assignment for this course, you must clearly attribute the source of your information, including information obtained from organizations’ web sites or internal documents. You cannot copy anything word for word, regardless of the source, without putting quotes around it and crediting the source. Doing so constitutes plagiarism, which will result in a 0 on the assignment and could lead to disciplinary action.

Plagiarism

The Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code states that "A Student must not represent as the Student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
- Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student’s own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student’s own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
- Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
- Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author."

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. 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 here.](#)

Recording of class

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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(subject to change)

1 Welcome!

Welcome! This week, we'll introduce public interest communications, an emerging academic field that is becoming increasingly important as the challenges we face as a society grow. What is public interest communications? What careers can you have as a public interest communicator? How does one determine what's in the public interest?

2 Communications for Social Change – A Look-Back

This week, we will look at how communication has been used for positive social change throughout history. We're going to look at the arc of social movements and be inspired by successful campaigns that have done so much good in just a short time.

3 The Six Spheres Framework

This week, we'll introduce a key framework you can use as a public interest communicator to approach challenges creatively. This framework outlines the levers we can use to move people to action.

4 The Four Questions

This week, we introduce another important framework – the four-question, back-of-the-envelope guide to developing a communications strategy – and dive into the first question: what are we trying to achieve?

5 Who Needs to Act?

This week, we're moving on to question two in our four-question framework: Who needs to act to make it happen?

6 Messengers

This week, we continue with the second question from our back-of-the-envelope framework. Once we identify who we need to mobilize to make our goal a reality, we must think about who best conveys the message to those actors. In other words, consider the source!

7 How Do You Craft Messages That Move People? The Science Behind Message Framing

We move on to the third question in the four-question framework: What would your actors believe if they were to help achieve the campaign goal? This week, we explore the importance of understanding the worldviews of the people you speak to and basing your messages on shared values.

8 Campaign Project

This week, we'll go through the steps you need to take to identify a campaign for your final project and conduct research on it.

9 How Do You Make People Care About Big Issues?

Research shows that the larger a problem is and the more people it affects, the more likely people are to tune out. This week, we'll explore the science that explains this phenomenon and what communicators can do to make people care about big problems. Plus, we'll delve into the science behind storytelling.

10 The Science of Emotions and Painting a Picture With Words

This week, we'll talk about the science behind emotions and why evoking emotions is more effective than citing facts when trying to engage people and motivate them to act. We'll also discuss how to paint pictures with words and use rhetorical devices to craft powerful messages.

11 Using Visuals to Communicate Your Message

Photos, graphics, videos, and illustrations are key to any public interest communications campaign. We'll learn the science behind what makes visuals effective, as well as the elements of a compelling visual.

12 News Media

We now move to the fourth question in our back-of-the-envelope framework: "where is their attention now?" This means not only what issues people focus on but also how they get their information. One of the key channels public interest communicators use to get their messages out is the news media. This week, we'll explore how to engage with news media as part of a public interest communications strategy.

13 Digital Media

Just as some people are best reached via newspapers, radio, or TV news, others get their news from social media. This week, we look at how digital media is key to helping public interest communicators get their messages out, and we'll look at the differences between popular social media platforms.

14 Final Project Work

This week, we start putting the pieces together. We'll work on our final projects with each other. You'll get valuable feedback and provide feedback to others.

15 Measuring Success

While many public interest communicators might want to just move on to the next project when they've finished a campaign, it's important to look back and assess how well your plan worked. What went well? What could have gone better? Knowing these answers will help inform your plans for future campaigns. This week, we're going to look at how to evaluate your strategic communications plan.

16 Final Project Work

At the beginning of the semester, you selected an issue and organization on which to focus. You have analyzed what the organization has done; it's your turn now to create a campaign you want to run. For this final assignment, you'll craft key pieces of a strategic communications plan related to your issue. Graduate students will submit a full-fledged strategic communications plan.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Technical Difficulties

For help with technical issues or difficulties with Canvas, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk at:

- <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu>
- 352-392-HELP (4357)
- Walk-in: HUB 132

Any requests for make-ups (assignments, exams, etc.) due to technical issues should be accompanied by the ticket number received from the UF Computing Help Desk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You should email your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Wellness

U Matter, We Care:

If you or someone you know is in distress, please email umatter@ufl.edu, call 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter We Care](#) to refer or report a concern, and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the [UF Counseling & Wellness Center](#) website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services and 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 [UF Student Health Care Center](#) website.

University Police Department: Visit the [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 in Gainesville, call 352-733-0111, or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the [UF Health Shands Emergency Room/Trauma Center](#) website.

Academic and Student Support

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: For career assistance and counseling services, visit the [UF Career Connections Center](#) website or call 352-392-1601.

Library Support: For various ways to receive assistance concerning using the libraries or finding resources, visit the [UF George A. Smathers Libraries Ask-A-Librarian](#) website.

Teaching Center: For general study skills and tutoring, visit the [UF Teaching Center](#) website or call 352-392-2010.

Writing Studio: For help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers, visit the [University Writing Program Writing Studio](#) website or call 352-846-1138.

Student Complaints: Visit the [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code](#) webpage for more information.