Public Interest Communications - Fall 2025
PUR 4442 /MMC 6939
3 credits
Tuesdays 11:45 p.m. - 1:40 p.m. and Thursdays 12:50 p.m. - 1:40 p.m.
AHA! Lab (third floor of Weimer Hall outside the Center for Public Interest Communications)

Instructor: Angela Bradbery

Office hours: 2-4 p.m. Thursdays or by appointment, 3200B Weimer Hall (in the Center for Public Interest Communications). I'm also available by email or phone: abradbery@jou.ufl.edu or (352) 294-2013, c. (202) 669-6517. Please allow at least 24 hours for a response during the week and 48 hours on weekends and holidays.

Course Prerequisites: None.

Course Description: In this course, you will learn the basics of being a public interest communicator by exploring concepts and frameworks that are key to the discipline. We'll delve into how public interest communicators strategize and develop their theory of change. We'll also explore the science of message framing, discover how to make people care about big issues, learn how to use communications to mobilize people to act, delve into the science of emotions in messaging and much more. You'll choose an issue to follow for the semester, and for your final project, you'll produce the framework of a public interest communications campaign for that issue.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, you will be able to:
1. Define public interest communications.
2. Explain the role of public interest communications in bringing about positive social change.
3. Explain key public interest communications concepts and frameworks.
4. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of a public interest organization's communications.
5. Apply the key concepts and frameworks to current social issues and real-world public interest communications campaigns.
6. Explore the many career opportunities in public interest communications.

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.

Tips for success
To be successful in this course, you just need an open mind and a desire to learn, question and explore. You'll do well as long as you come to class, keep up with the assignments and ask questions when you have them.

> *Note: Grad students taking this course will be given more advanced work in the form of additional assignments or additional components in assignments.*

MUTUAL PLEDGE

As your instructor, I pledge to open a window for you into the world of public interest communications and guide you in your journey of learning not only strategic communications tools but also the critical thinking skills necessary to being a successful public interest communicator. In turn, I ask that you do the work necessary to help me guide you. That means keeping up with assignments, being prepared for class, participating in class discussions and putting time and thought into your work.

About classroom discussions
Please engage in class discussions with care, respect and empathy for others, recognizing that people come from an array of backgrounds and have different perspectives. My aim is for students from all backgrounds to find this course valuable and to view others' ideas as a resource and benefit. I aim to present materials that are respectful of ethnicity, race, culture, gender, sexuality, disability, age and socioeconomic status. However, I recognize the materials may have limitations and encourage suggestions for additional materials that offer different

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. 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.

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking 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. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.

CLASS LOGISTICS

Deadlines
Communications work is deadline oriented, so it's important to meet assignment deadlines. If you do miss a deadline and submit your assignment late, I'll still assess it, but I will reduce the total number of points you can receive. The number of possible points will drop over three days to 0. I will make exceptions for students with documented medical emergencies (e.g. a doctor's note) or other genuine, documented emergencies. **Please notify me as soon as possible** if you have an emergency that will prevent you from completing an assignment. This policy doesn't pertain to the final project; if it is submitted after the due date and time, it will get a 0.

If submission of your assignment is delayed because of technical issues with Canvas, please report the problem immediately, receive a ticket number from the UF Computing Help Desk and email it to me immediately. The ticket will document the time and date of your issue.

For technical issues related to Canvas, contact the UF Help Desk at http://helpdesk.ufl.edu or (352) 392-HELP (4357).

Format for writing assignments
Please use Associated Press (AP) style for all writing assignments. If you don't have the AP Stylebook, you can subscribe to it online (https://www.apstylebook.com/ on- line/) or you can purchase a hard copy.

Attribution in writing assignments
You likely have heard about careers being derailed because someone copied material from a book, article or other source and represented it as their own (aka plagiarism). It's a serious offense, both in school and the professional world. That's why, 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. **Do not 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.

Artificial intelligence (AI)
In this course, you may be asked to use generative AI for some assignments. Increasingly, AI is used in the profession, so familiarity with generative AI tools is important. However, do not let your creative thinking and editing skills lapse! When AI is allowed or encouraged in assignments, you will need to document how AI was used. This could include providing your original prompts, showing the editing that you did to the created content, or using appropriate citation of information obtained via generative AI.

Using AI when not explicitly allowed is considered a violation of the honor code, as you are presenting content as your own that was not fully created by you.

Various AI detection tools are available (built within Canvas and externally such as ZeroGPT), and many AI platforms follow very formulaic response patterns. If I am concerned that your work is not your own, I will try to verify the originality of your work. If unable to do so, I may ask you to resubmit the assignment detailing how you arrived at your submission.

Course technology
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**.

Class attendance
Attendance is important, as class participation is a key part of your learning and will factor into your grade. To get the most out of the class, you must be present and participate in discussions and class activities. Being present doesn't simply mean you're in the room; it also means you're attentive and not texting, checking email, doing other work or using social media during class. Excessive absences will harm your grade.

In the professional world, people who are running late or are going to be absent notify their employer and/or colleagues. It's a good habit to get into, so please notify me and your teammates (if you are working in a team) if you are going to be late or absent. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to make up lost work, get notes from another student or otherwise ensure that you have caught up on what you missed.

I recognize that things crop up and you may have to miss a class during the semester. For that reason, at the end of the semester, I will drop each student's lowest participation grade.

Class professionalism … did you know?
Did you know that multitasking during class hinders your ability to absorb information and virtually ensures that you will miss a critical point being made by another student or the

instructor? For that reason, please do not text, check email or social media unrelated to the class, browse unrelated websites or do other work during class.

Please be on time to class. Being late means missing updates and announcements, as well as the introduction to the material we are covering, which is key to putting it in context. (See note above about class attendance.)

Class-related notifications
Please log in to Canvas daily to check for class-related announcements. You may set up alerts to forward messages directly to your UF email address. To learn how to manage announcements, read this. To adjust your notification settings in Canvas, follow these guidelines.

Grading
Because communications at any public interest organization involves brainstorming and collaborating with colleagues, and because it's more fun to learn by seeking answers to questions through discussion rather than listening to a straight lecture, participating in class will be key to your learning and will be part of your grade. Likewise, the written analyses that you conduct outside of class will be critical because you will be applying concepts covered in class and in the reading assignments.

Here's how the grading will be weighted:

➢ Class participation (includes discussions, activities and in-class writing assignments): 30%

➢ Writing assignments (done outside of class): 35%

➢ Final project: 35%

For more information, please see the university's policy on grades and grading.

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 <u>here</u>. 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 must not 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 <u>Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code</u> 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 <u>ufl.bluera.com/ufl/</u>. <u>Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here</u>.

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

Note: This schedule may change as the semester advances to reflect the progress and needs of the class.

Week 1 (Aug. 21) – Welcome!
Welcome to the course! We'll meet each other, define public interest communications, explain how it differs from public relations and go over what you'll learn in the course.

Week 2 (Aug. 26 and 28) – What is "in the public interest"?
What does it mean to be "in the public interest"? We'll explore answers to this question as well as social issues you care about. We'll also identify the types of careers can you have as a public interest communicator.

Week 3 (Sept. 2 and 4) – Systems thinking for thorny issues
Thorny social issues don't exist in a vacuum. This week, we'll explore how to examine issues in the context of a larger system. We'll examine how the factors that contribute to a problem interact with each other and discover how understanding those interactions can help us figure out approaches to problems. You'll also choose an issue to follow for the semester.

Week 4 (Sept. 9 and 11) – Theory of change and the six spheres of influence
In public interest communications, we develop a "theory of change" that outlines how and why our strategy will work. We'll go over what a theory of change is and introduce a core public interest communications framework: the six spheres of influence. The spheres help public

interest communicators develop a strategic approach to broad problems. We'll dive into the first two spheres: activism and policy.

Week 5 (Sept. 16 and 18) –Activating media strategically
How do public interest communicators use media strategically? This week, we'll explore the importance of news, digital and entertainment media to public interest communications campaigns and learn how to identify the most effective types of news outlets to incorporate into a strategic communications plan. We'll also examine the changing news media landscape and the opportunities that it presents.

Week 6 (Sept. 23 and 25) – Leveraging the market and social norms to drive change
Corporations and financial markets play a vital role in many social change efforts. How do public interest communicators work with them to drive change? Plus, we'll explore how social norms – the unwritten rules that guide our behavior – factor into public interest communications work.

Week 7 (Sept. 30 and Oct. 2) – Six spheres: Issue shapers / communities of influence
In any given issue, an array of people and groups are influential. They drive the conversation and amplify messages. We'll explore how to identify communities of influence around an issue and delve into the qualities of effective messengers.

Week 8 (Oct. 7 and 9) – Four-question framework: goals and actors
This week, we'll introduce another framework: the four-question, back-of-the-envelope guide to strategic communications. What makes an effective goal in a public interest communications campaign? How do public interest communicators identify who to mobilize to achieve that goal? How do we measure success? We'll answer these questions and more.

Week 9 (Oct. 14 and 16) – The science of message framing
This week, we'll delve into the third question in the framework, which leads us to explore the science of message framing and the importance of values-based messaging in reaching people with a range of worldviews and identities. Plus, we'll talk about how public interest communications can help address political polarization.

Week 10 (Oct. 21 and 23) – Making people care about big issues
The larger a problem is and the more people it affects, the more likely people are to tune out, research shows. This week, we'll explore the research that explains this phenomenon and what communicators can do to make people care about big problems.

Week 11 (Oct. 28 and 30) – Mobilizing people to act: emotions, numbers and powerful language
We know that just providing information doesn't lead people to act. What does? This week, we'll talk about the role of emotions in messaging and how to present facts effectively as well as how to write an effective call to action.

Week 12 Nov. 4 and 6) –Using digital media to reach your actors

The digital media landscape is vast. As a public interest communicator, how do you use it strategically? Which platforms should you use? How do you ensure your actors see your messages? This week, we'll dive into social media and how to use digital media to move people to action. And you will be the guides! You'll work in teams to present information to the class about one social media platform.

Week 13 (Nov. 13 only) – **Final project work**
This week, we'll work on our final projects in class. Drafts are due Nov. 16.

Week 14 (Nov. 18 and 20) Using visuals for impact
We'll examine the power of visuals in social change efforts and identify elements of an effective visual.

Week 15 (Dec. 2 only) – PRESENTATIONS and wrap-up.
We'll close out the semester with presentations (these are voluntary) and a reflection on what you learned this semester.

READING MATERIALS

Throughout the course, we will use the following textbook: Christiano A., & Bradbery, A. (2025). *Public Interest Communications: Strategy for Changemakers*. Routledge.

The digital version of the book is available for free via the UF Library. Just make sure to be logged in using your UF credentials. The book also is available in hard copy or soft cover.

Links to additional articles, book chapters and videos will be provided in Canvas.

ADDITIONAL UF RESOURCES

Health and Wellness

> *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.

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.

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.