PUR 3211: Diverse Voices in Public Relations
Fall 2025
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Course Meetings: Asynchronous on Zoom
Office Hours: Available by appointment. Please email me if you want to meet!

Course Description
Diverse Voices is a one-credit course that assesses the vital role of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in public relations. Public relations professionals play a key role in telling stories that shape the perceptions of stakeholder groups. In this course you will gain insight and direction on ways to help create and support a diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment. We will explore the ways in which emotional intelligence and cultural competency impact your ability to make decisions that reflect the core principles of DEI. Understanding the journeys of the leaders of color who have changed the face of leadership in public relations will help outline the obstacles to and benefits of DEI in the field.

Course Format
The format for this course is asynchronous – meaning you are able to complete work at your own pace.

Participation in online discussions, group work and timely assignment completion are keys to succeeding

in this class**.** You are responsible for notifying me in advance if you are unable to complete an assignment due to illness and should be prepared to provide a note from your medical provider. For further information on attendance policy, please go here.

Required Material
There is no textbook for this course. All required readings, podcasts, and videos/movies are listed on the syllabus and will be available on Canvas. **Additional readings and assignments may be added at my discretion over the course of the semester.**

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES
Upon completing this course, students will:

- Use and apply the terms diversity, equity, inclusion and access correctly
- Understand the practical application of DEI principles to public relations and communications, and the role of the public relations professional in support of these principles
- Identify and analyze the challenges and opportunities in public relations from the various narratives of diverse leaders
- Understand the current climate towards DEI in the public relations sector
- Begin to develop a competency for inclusive language and communication

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

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS
The evaluation of coursework will be based on your performance in weekly quizzes, discussions and a short case study, each of which constitutes a proportion of the final grade. Your grade will be calculated by the following:

Team Case Study: 40%
Teams will work together to identify and assess the presence or absence of DEI initiatives and practices of a company of your choice. Teams will use the materials and information provided throughout the class as background to assess the internal and external DEI practices and initiatives and prepare a presentation to the class on how companies are or are not creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture.

Groups should present the company's DEI initiatives. The following must be included in the presentation:
1) An overview of the company (1 slide)
2) Company's DEI leadership (1 slide)
3) Company's DEI philosophy/ethos/principles (1 slide)
4) At least two of the company's DEI program examples (1 slide)
5) Recent trends or articles in DEI related to the company (1 slide)

Presentation
Teams should prepare a 5-slide minimum presentation. The presentation should be recorded live and show videos, images, articles or other visual depictions to enhance your presentation.

Team Participation
This is a group project; therefore, each team will have to meet in order for each member to contribute to the assignment equally. It is important that the information presented be cohesive and representative of team collaboration.

QUIZZES: 20%
Throughout the semester, students will complete quizzes designed to assess their understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) concepts within both public and private sector contexts. These quizzes will include a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. Each quiz will reinforce students' ability to interpret policy and organizational change through a DEI lens, while also preparing them to analyze current events and stakeholder dynamics in professional settings. **ANSWERS SHOULD NOT BE GENERATED BY CHATGPT.**

DISCUSSIONS: 40%

Each week, a discussion question will be posted to Canvas which will cover either the readings, a contemporary event, or Easter Egg Hunts (see below). For the readings and contemporary events, your response should be a critical reflection. **IT SHOULD NOT BE CREATED BY CHATGPT**.

You will only be graded for your contribution, but you are more than welcome to comment on and engage with others' post.

Easter Egg Hunts
To develop a deeper understanding of how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles show up in everyday life and public spaces—and how they can be communicated through effective, ethical public relations strategies, **your mission will be to become a DEI detective**. Each group will work together, observe your surroundings—campus, workplaces, stores, public spaces—and capture real-life "DEI Easter Eggs": small (or big!) examples where DEI strategies, principles, or values are being put into practice.

Easter Egg Areas:

- Religious Inclusion
- Cultural Representation and Celebration
- Linguistic Inclusion
- Disability Inclusion and Accessibility
- Diverse Media Representation
- Identity-Affirming Environments
- Community Support and Advocacy

NOTE: The purpose of this assignment is to find DEI in "real life" – that means there should be no screenshots or pictures from websites or social media. You're hunting in your real-world environments. Remember, Google allows for a reverse image search.

This is a group assignment to maximize the opportunities to find true DEI gems! Please make sure your group is communicating about the upcoming assignments and who will post them.

Assignment Requirement

1. **Photograph** one example of DEI in action (respecting privacy and ethics).
2. **Answer the following questions (**100-150 words)

    1. Where did you find the Easter Egg?
    2. What was your reaction when you saw it?
    3. How does this example relate to something you found in this week's reading?
    4. How is this being used as public relations? (In order to answer this question, you must keep in mind that public relations is: 1) the way in which organizations develop and maintain relationships with diverse publics; 2) different that advertising and marketing; 3) going above what is required by law.

3. **Post the photograph with the question responses to Canvas.**
4. ***Post the photograph with the question responses to Instagram account** (@dei_in_real_life) using our shared hashtag: #DEIinRealLife and a description of the picture.

*This will require that at least one person in the group has or signs up for an Instagram account and adds the class Instagram account.
    Instagram Username: @dei_in_real_life
    Instagram Password: UFL3211!

LinkedIn Post (counted toward discussion post)
In week 17, you must make one LinkedIn post reflecting on what you learned this semester. The post must include something you learned from one of your Easter Eggs, a company you assessed or at least one article, podcast or YouTube video you watched. To receive full credit, it must include the hashtag #DiverseVoices and a tag of the professor, Ajia Meux, and any people being quoted or referenced, where possible.

Requirements for assignments and other work in this course follow UF policies:
https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx

Late or Missed Work:
Deadlines for each assignment will be given and students are expected to meet them. Late assignments will automatically lose a full letter grade for each week it is late (e.g. B to a C). Some consideration, however, might be given (at the discretion of the instructor) if there are extenuating circumstances such as prolonged hospitalization, family death, or extended individual sickness; however, you need to notify me before the deadline is missed, not after the fact.

The grading scale for the course is:
A 92-100%
A- 90-91.99%
B+ 88-89.99%
B 82-87.99.99%
B- 80-81.99%
C+ 78-79.99%
C 72-77.99%

C- 70-71.99%
D+ 68-69.99%
D 62-67.99%
D- 60-61.99%
E below 60.99%

Follows current UF policies (https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx).

AI Policy for Student Work (AI is allowed/integrated into assignments)
In this course you will be asked to use generative AI for some assignments. AI is commonly 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. If you are using AI when not explicitly allowed, that is considered a violation of the honor code as you are presenting content as your own that was not fully created by you. There are various AI detection tools 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.

Availability
Please feel free to speak with me during the semester about any questions or concerns you have during my office hours or by appointment. You can also reach me by email, and I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours.

Students Requiring Accommodations
Students with disabilities 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.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations here. 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 here.

Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/

Statement of Professionalism
In this course, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of professionalism as they prepare to enter the field of public relations. Professionalism in this context includes a commitment to respectful engagement, ethical communication, and inclusive behavior in all academic and collaborative settings.

The following represent key expectations for professional behavior:

- *Integrity and Accountability*: Honesty in academic work, thoughtful participation in group activities, and personal responsibility for meeting deadlines are fundamental. In preparing for professional roles, students must demonstrate reliability and uphold the ethical standards of the public relations profession.
- *Collaboration and Communication*: Clear, constructive, and empathetic communication is essential in group work. Students are encouraged to engage in dialogue that is open, thoughtful, and sensitive to cultural and social complexities.
- *Growth Mindset and Reflexivity*: As future practitioners in a dynamic and diverse field, students should approach the course with a willingness to learn, challenge assumptions, and reflect on their own positionality. Mistakes are part of learning—how we respond and grow from them is a key marker of professionalism.
- *Preparedness and Engagement*: Students are expected to engage in class discussions, easter egg hunts and quizzes having completed readings. Professional behavior includes being attentive, contributing meaningfully, and respecting class time and discussion processes.

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 me.

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 umatter.ufl.edu/ to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center
Visit counseling.ufl.edu/ 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 shcc.ufl.edu/.

University Police Department
Visit police.ufl.edu/ 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; ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center.

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 career.ufl.edu/. Library Support: cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask 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 352392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. teachingcenter.ufl.edu/ Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/ Student Complaints On-Campus: sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor- codestudent-conduct

A Note on Recording
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.

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Fall 2025 Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading, Listening or Viewing	Exercise or Assignments
Week 1 Aug 17	Course Overview, defining PR and DEI, and their intersections	PRSA Definition of Public Relations Public Relations 101. (Public Relations 101, August 2020. YouTube) Diversity and Public Relations Practice	***Discussion Post:*** Introduce Yourself QUIZ
Week 2 Aug 24	Diversity + PR: The Role of Identity *Identity Factors (race, gender, sexuality, disability) in PR messaging*	Unlocking Social Identity: Insights for your Workplace! [Video] Dimensions of Diversity Understanding Social Identity to lead in a changing world	***Discussion Post:*** Social Identity for Inclusion QUIZ
Week 3 Aug 31	"DEI": Current landscape, shifting language and priorities	All The Major Companies and Orgs Dumping Their DEI Programs (Full List).pdf At a Meltzer Center forum, Stacey Abrams argues for diversity, equity, and inclusion Is DEI Dead? Vernā Myers on the future of inclusion in corporate America [Video]	***Discussion Post:*** Moral panic, controversy, and the media QUIZ
Week 4 Sept 7	Language, Tone, and Cultural Sensitivity: *Effective messaging for diverse audiences*	Avoiding Pitfalls: Why Cultural Sensitivity is Key in Modern PR Working with Linguistically Diverse Populations Language access: Creating a language access plan	***Easter Egg Discussion Post:*** Linguistic Inclusion

Week 5 Sept 14	DEI Stakeholders: Internal vs. External Efforts and Structures	Harrison, E., Ngon, P., Williamson M.V., Bradbury, E. (n.d.). Aligning your external DEI Commitments to your Internal Organization [Video]. PR News Differences between Internal and External Stakeholders [Video] DEI centered on your internal audiences, external stakeholders and inclusive product design	***Easter Egg Discussion Post:*** Identity-Affirming Environments
Week 6 Sept 21	Fundraising, Public Relations and The Power of Diverse Narratives	Satchwell, CM (2010). At the fundraising core: Strategic public relations in fundraising practice. *CASE*. Devex Partnerships (2021). How development organizations can tell stories more ethically. Trust Matters: Ethical Storytelling for Donor Engagement [Podcast] Schohl, L. (2021) How to create a culture of inclusive philanthropy. *Philanthropy.com*	Equity Quiz and Results
Week 7 Sept 28	Crisis Management/ Communication and DEI	The Principles of Effective Crisis Communication (.pdf) Where DEI, Ethics, and Crisis Communication Intersect Target's problems are escalating	***Discussion Post:*** Politics of Respectability and a dragged Passenger
Week 8 Oct 5	Cultural Representation	How companies can build trust with the LGBTQ+ community — during Pride and beyond The Cultural Significance of Festivals Around the World How Public Art Can Improve Quality of Life and Advance Equity	***Easter Egg Discussion Post:*** Cultural Representation

Week 9 Oct 12	Disability & Accessibility	[The Communications Battle For Accessible and Accurate Live Captions: Humans Versus AI](#) ['I felt like luggage': American Airlines fined $50 million for violating disabled passengers' rights](#) [Starbucks to Open First "Signing Store" in the U.S. to Serve Deaf Customers](#)	***Easter Egg Discussion Post:*** Disability, Physical Accessibility and Inclusive Design
Week 10 Oct 19	Religious Inclusion	[Religious Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace](#) [Fortune 500 Embrace of Religious Inclusion Continues to Grow](#) [Report shows despite DEI cuts, religious inclusion is improving at Fortune 500 Companies](#)	***Easter Egg Discussion Post:*** Religious Inclusion
Week 11 Oct 26	Socio-economic Inclusion	[Dimensions of diversity beyond gender: socioeconomic background](#) [Socioeconomic Status and DEI: Why income inequality is a diversity issue](#) [What Trump's DEI Orders Could Mean for Housing](#)	***Easter Egg Discussion Post:*** Community Support and Advocacy
Week 12 Nov 2	Case Study Teams 1 & 2		
Week 13 Nov 9	Case Study Teams 3 & 4 ***Discussion Post Response to Case Study***		

Week 14 Nov 16	Case Study Teams 5 & 6 ***Discussion Post Response to Case Study***
Week 15 Nov 23	Thanksgiving Break
Week 16 Nov 30	Case Study Teams 7 & 8 ***Discussion Post Response to Case Study***
Week 17 Dec 7	Linked In Post ***Discussion Post Response to Case Study***