

**UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS ESSENTIALS: PUR4204 – Fall 2025 (ONLINE COURSE)**

Instructor:	Christopher Bona
Instructor Contact:	christopherbona@jou.ufl.edu, 847-899-3884
Office Hours:	Online and by Appointment
Class Meets:	Online – Weekly Schedule
Course Communication:	Students are encouraged to contact their instructor through UF and Canvas email, either for electronic communication or to schedule a phone call

DESCRIPTION

The course emphasizes real-world application by focusing on the reason 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 acumen.

Key course themes include:

- The reason strategic communication professionals develop international business acumen.
- How a company and/or your client generate revenue and profits.
- How companies report financial results and other so-called “material information,” and what are the regulatory requirements for financial disclosure for publicly traded companies vs. private companies vs. nonprofit companies.
- Learning about key financial statements like a balance sheet, income statement and cash flow statement and the reason they and other financial reports are significant in business.
- How a company engages with key stakeholders (such as employees, customers, suppliers, investors, and communities, etc.).
- The reason successful corporations focus on corporate reputation, corporate purpose, mission, vision, values, and on commitment to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies, including diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- The role of Communications with the Board of Directors and senior management in a company.
- How chief communication officers in successful companies interact with the chief executive officer, chief financial officer and other company leaders.

Over the course of this semester, we will delve into these and various other aspects of business acumen and corporate communication with special emphasis on why they matter in the success of the enterprise. Our course readings will examine a wide range of examples and, in some cases, read about senior communication executives on how they and their companies engage with their various stakeholders such as employees, suppliers, investors, customers, communities, governments, media, social media influencers, and other key opinion leaders.

By the conclusion of the course, participants should have developed a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of communications competency and expertise with business acumen.

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Prerequisite:

- PUR 3000 Principles of Public Relations

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Upon completing this course, students will:

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

EXPECTATIONS

Assignments will be completed on time and students will participate in class discussion in a professional manner while being respectful to the instructor and fellow students. These discussions are not limited to the Canvas shell, but all platforms that involve coursework.

READINGS

Generally, assigned readings (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.

Required

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

Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook, by Matthew W. Ragas and Ron Culp. Emerald Publishing, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-83797-085-8 (paperback)

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

This online course will be taught asynchronously using the Canvas learning management system. The course is comprised of weekly student discussion, readings and assignments. The new lecture week begins on Mondays.

<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 AND POLICIES

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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.

Attendance:

- Active participation is a must in this course. It is expected that students will fully participate in the online discussions, as well as be an active supporter of their peers in this online learning environment. As assignments are strongly tied to discussion activities, it is especially important not to miss these activities in a given week. This means posting individual thoughts about the topics, commenting on others' ideas, and responding to questions and suggestions made in response to individual postings.

Late assignments:

- NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR FULL CREDIT without prior arrangements made that are acceptable to the instructor, unless the lateness is due to an excused absence such as illness or catastrophic emergency that can be documented. This is true for all assignments, discussion boards, case studies, etc. Assignments less than one hour late will be docked 20%. Assignments more than an hour late, but less than 24 hours late will be docked 50%. Assignments more than 24 hours late will receive the score of "0."
- There may or may not be extra credit offered in this course (this is at the discretion of the instructor).
- Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies and can be found at:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

COURSE WORK

All coursework will be submitted through Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS, GRADING AND DEADLINES

This class, like others, involves many deadlines. Here is a reminder. The new lecture week starts on Mondays, and assignments are due by Sunday before the following Monday start of the new weekly lecture. All written assignments, with exception to slides, will be written in either 12 point, Times New Roman or Arial font type, with double space and regular margins. Students must follow page requirements for assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS	GRADE PERCENT
Weekly discussions	20%
Individual assignment 1	15%
Individual assignment 2	20%
Final project	45%
Total	100%

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Grading Scale:

A	100%	to	93%	C	< 76.99%	to	74%
A-	< 92.00%	to	90%	C-	< 73.99%	to	70%
B+	< 89.99%	to	87%	D+	< 69.99%	to	67%
B	< 86.99%	to	83%	D	< 66.99%	to	64%
B-	< 82.99%	to	80%	D-	< 63.99%	to	60%
C+	< 79.99%	to	77%	E	< 59%	to	0%

Grading for the course follows current UF grading policies for assigning grade points (see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

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.bluer.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.

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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 9-11 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.

Other Important Notes from the Instructor

In this class I want you to produce all your own work without generative AI's assistance. It is important for me to be able to ascertain what you know and can produce unaided on your own. The use of generative AI for your assignments in this class is 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 and if evidence is found that your work is AI generated, I will submit your assignment as violating the honor code.

I can be reached via email (christopherbona@jou.ufl.edu), by telephone or text (847-899-3884). 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.

If you notice yourself having trouble in the course, it is crucial that you schedule time with 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 on Zoom during office hours or at other times, but I ask that you reach out in advance and schedule an appointment.

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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 incur a penalty. 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 point deduction on the grade. Check your work!

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COURSE OUTLINE AND WEEKLY LECTURES

Week	Readings	Assignments
1. The importance of business acumen in the communications profession and the role of the CCO.	Parts I and II in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: A Primer Part I in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook	Weekly discussion
2. Stakeholders, shareholders and the C-Suite	Part III in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: A Primer	Weekly discussion
3. Finance and Accounting, and the relationship to Communications	Part IV in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: A Primer, pages 97-138	Weekly discussion
4. Financial communications and the investor narrative	Part II in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook	Weekly discussion Mini-Assignment 1
5. Financial communications and government regulation Financial communications and government regulation	Part III in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook pages 87-98	Weekly discussion
6. Financial communications and the intersection with the strategic communicator	Part III in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook	Weekly discussion
7. Corporate disclosure and Communications	Part IV in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: A Prime (pages 139-156) Part VI in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook	Weekly discussion
8. Leadership, business acumen and stakeholder communication	Part VI in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: A Primer Part VII in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook	Weekly discussion Mini-Assignment 2
9. Quarterly earnings reports and Communications	Part IV in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook	Weekly discussion

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Week	Readings	Assignments
10. The annual report and Communications	Part III in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook	Weekly discussion
11. Public Reporting: DEI, ESG, EEO-1	Parts V and VI in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook	Weekly discussion
12. Communications Business Models and career growth	Parts V and VI in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: A Primer Part VII in Business Acumen for Strategic Communicators: The Workbook	Weekly discussion Final Project

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities:

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

Students with Disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented. DRC is located in room 001 in Reid Hall or you can contact them by phone at 352-392-8565.

University counseling services and mental health services:

****Netiquette: Communication Courtesy:**

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. <http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>

Class Demeanor:

Mastery in this class requires preparation, passion, and professionalism. Students are expected, within the requirements allowed by university policy, to attend class, be on time, and meet all deadlines. Work assigned in advance of class should be completed as directed. Full participation in online and live discussions, group projects, and small group activities is expected.

My role as instructor is to identify critical issues related to the course, direct you to and teach relevant information, assign appropriate learning activities, create opportunities for assessing your performance, and communicate the outcomes of such assessments in a timely, informative, and professional way. Feedback is essential for you to have confidence that you have mastered the material and for me to determine that you are meeting all course requirements.

At all times it is expected that you will welcome and respond professionally to assessment feedback, that you will treat your fellow students and me with respect, and that you will contribute to the success of the class as best as you can.

Getting Help:

For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- Learning-support@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

**** Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.**

Other resources are available at <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help> for:

- Counseling and Wellness resources: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 352-392-1575
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints

- Library Help Desk support

Should you have any complaints with your experience in this course please visit <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaints> to submit a complaint.

Course Evaluation:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. 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 at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

University Policy on Academic Misconduct:

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester. The Honor Code reads as follows:

Preamble: In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

The Honor Code: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."

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."

For more information about academic honesty, contact Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1261.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All graduate students in the College of Journalism and Communications are expected to conduct themselves with the highest degree of integrity. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that they know and understand the requirements of every assignment. At a minimum, this includes avoiding the following:

Plagiarism: Plagiarism occurs when an individual presents the ideas or expressions of another as his or her own. Students must always credit others' ideas with accurate citations and must use quotation marks and citations when presenting the words of others. A thorough understanding of plagiarism is a precondition for admittance to graduate studies in the college.

Cheating: Cheating occurs when a student circumvents or ignores the rules that govern an academic assignment such as an exam or class paper. It can include using notes, in physical or electronic form, in an exam, submitting the work of another as one's own, or reusing a paper a student has composed for one class in another class. If a

student is not sure about the rules that govern an assignment, it is the student's responsibility to ask for clarification from his instructor.

Misrepresenting Research Data: The integrity of data in mass communication research is a paramount issue for advancing knowledge and the credibility of our professions. For this reason any intentional misrepresentation of data, or misrepresentation of the conditions or circumstances of data collection, is considered a violation of academic integrity. Misrepresenting data is a clear violation of the rules and requirements of academic integrity and honesty.

Any violation of the above stated conditions is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program and will result in revocation of the degree if the degree previously has been awarded.

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Florida Code of Conduct
<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>

If you have additional questions, please refer to the Online Graduate Program Student Handbook you received when you were admitted into the Program.