

Fall 2025 SYLLABUS: Corporate Reputation

PUR 4611 (19453)

University of Florida – Department of Public Relations

Professor: Patrick Ford, Professional-in-Residence

Teaching Assistant: Carolina Calleiro

Quick Reference Guide

| Item | Details |
|-----------------------|--|
| Class Meetings | Mon: 12:50 – 1:40 p.m.; Wed: 12:50 – 2:45 p.m. Zoom (live/synchronous) |
| Office Hours | Tue 1–2 p.m. Wed 3–4 p.m. (Appointments recommended; available outside hours by request) |
| Contact Info | Prof: fordp@ufl.edu 703-966-8138 Canvas messages TA: ccalleiro@ufl.edu |
| Note | This syllabus is subject to change at the professor's discretion. |

Required Readings

| Title | Author | Edition/Year | ISBN | Notes |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| <i>Reputation First: Building a Crisis Communication Plan</i> | Chris Komisarjevsky | 3 rd ed. (2024) | 9781734641592 | Paperback |
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Note: textbook will be provided at the beginning of the semester at no charge to students. Additional readings will be provided on Canvas. Read assigned materials before the listed class.

Major Deadlines

| Date | Assignment |
|--------|---|
| Oct 6 | Individual Case Study Due |
| Nov 5 | Preliminary Draft of Group Project Due |
| Nov 17 | Final Group Project Due and Presentations Begin |
| Dec 3 | Course Wrp-up |

Welcome from Professor Ford

Corporate reputations can take decades to build and minutes to destroy because of severe crises. Employers know this and place a high value on employees who develop the skills needed to manage that reality.. In this class, you'll learn the key factors that build and sustain strong reputations, and how to engage with key stakeholders to enhance opportunities for positive reputation initiatives, and how to mitigate or overcome damage from severe crises. You'll hear directly from leaders at top companies and agencies, analyze real-world cases, and produce work that will prepare you for reputation management in your professional career.

Course Overview

Corporate Reputation explores how reputations are built, sustained, and sometimes damaged beyond repair. In an era of global connectivity, polarization, constant crises, and rapid technological change – including AI – the ability to manage corporate reputation is a top priority for executives worldwide. You will study and actively discuss real-world cases, learn best practices, and hear from and engage with senior communications leaders from top corporations and agencies. Guest lecturers in this course in the past year included leaders from Patagonia, McKinsey & Co., General Mills, Cone Health, FleishmanHillard, Weber Shandwick, Zeno Group, Finn Partners, The Harris Poll, Sloane & Co., United Minds, and The Page Society. An equally impressive lineup is planning to join us this semester.

Our group project will involve creating an original case study for submission to the national IPR-Page Case Study Competition – a renowned program in which teams from this course have finished in the money in five of the past six years, including the Grand Prize in 2024 for a wonderful case study on how Mattel's corporate and product reputations were enhanced by the company's involvement with 2023 *Barbie* film production.

What You'll Learn

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

- Spot early signs of reputation risks or crises
- Map stakeholders and design engagement strategies
- Apply ethics and cultural fluency in decision-making
- Write an industry-standard corporate case study
- Measure and track a company's reputation over time
- Demonstrate strategic judgment when managing real-time issues or crises

Online Course Administration – e-Learning on Canvas

<https://elearning.ufl.edu> will be used to administer the course communication, materials (e.g. presentation decks, additional readings, handouts, assignment guidelines, evaluation

forms), and grades. For example, an electronic file of this document is posted on Canvas. You can access the site using your GatorLink username and password. Please check the site regularly for announcements, assignments, and other important information.

Assignments & Grading

| Component | % of Grade | Description |
|--------------------|------------|--|
| Attendance | 10% | Be present, on time, and engaged |
| Participation | 30% | Prepare for discussions, engage actively, occasional pop quizzes |
| Individual Project | 30% | Research and analyze a company's reputation – portfolio-ready |
| Group Project | 40% | Collaborate on developing a full case study for consideration for the national IPR-Page Case Study Competition |

Academic Policies and Resources

Please see this link to important policies and resources:

<https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolices>

Weekly Course Schedule

| Week | Dates | Topic / Reading | Notes |
|--------|-----------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Week 1 | Aug 25–27 | Course overview & introductions | |
| Week 2 | Sept 3 | The Changing Role of Corporations | |
| Week 3 | Sept 8–10 | Corporate Reputation – Ch. 1 | Read Ch. 1 |

| | | | |
|---------|---------------|---|---|
| Week 4 | Sept 15–17 | Effective Case Studies Workshop & Review Best Practice Examples | Guest lecture: Eliot Mizrahi, Page Society |
| Week 5 | Sept 22–24 | Behavior & Trust – Ch. 2–3 | Read Ch. 2 and 3 and additional news clips posted on Canvas. Guest lecture, Chris Komisarjevsky, on Sept 24 |
| Week 6 | Sept 29–Oct 1 | Stakeholder Engagement | Guest lecture TBC |
| Week 7 | Oct 6–8 | Corporate Purpose, Mission, Vision, Values | Guest lecture TBC |
| Week 8 | Oct 13–15 | Individual Case Study Due | Assignment Due Oct 13 |
| Week 9 | Oct 20–22 | Character – Ch. 4 | Read Ch. 4 |
| Week 10 | Oct 27–29 | Communication Imperatives – Ch. 5 | Read Ch. 5 |
| Week 11 | Nov 3–5 | Group Project Workshop – Preliminary Drafts Due | Draft Due Nov. 5 |
| Week 12 | Nov 10–12 | International Reputation Management – reputation challenges across different cultures and regulatory environments | Guest lecture: Fred Hawrysh |
| Week 13 | Nov 17–19 | Final Group Project Due – Presentations Begin | Assignment Due Nov 17 |
| Week 14 | Nov 24–26 | Thanksgiving Break – No Classes | |
| Week 15 | Dec 1–3 | Final Presentations & Course Wrap-up | |

Appendix

Compliance with ACEJMC Accreditation Standards

Note: This course aligns with Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) accreditation standards and emphasizes competencies in ethical decision-making, culturally proficient communication, stakeholder engagement, and digital literacy.

The ACEJMC 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

Additional Grading Details

Attendance 10%

- Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences during the semester may cause a reduction in credit for attendance and participation. **If you need to be excused, you are responsible for notifying the instructor prior to missing class or as soon as possible afterwards in an emergency.** Requirements for assignments and other work in this course follow UF policies:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Active Participation Points: 30%

- Active class participation will be assessed and graded on an ongoing basis. To receive high scores, you must demonstrate active engagement, which includes arriving in class on time, keeping your camera on during Zoom sessions, and being prepared to make

comments, ask questions, or answer questions as appropriate. We will also have occasional pop quizzes to gauge your understanding of course content and guest-lecture discussions. Each month, you will receive feedback and a point allocation for your participation:

- Excellent: fully prepared for and performing strongly in discussions and pop quizzes
- Satisfactory: present and actively listening; but minimal engagement and/or poor pop quiz results
- Needs improvement; failure to be present and engaged.

Individual Case Study Assignment: 30%

Prepare a case study (approximately 8-10 pages) on a specific challenge or opportunity relating to a specific company's reputation. You will select the company or institution for the case (subject to the professor's approval). Full details on this project will be provided early in the semester and on Canvas.

Group Project and Presentation: Case Study 40%

This semester-long team project gives you the opportunity to work collaboratively with a team of your peers in much the way strategic communicators do in professional settings. The assignment follows the guidelines and rubrics used in the national IPR-Page Case Study Competition. See the guidelines for this national competition here (<https://instituteforpr.org/awards/ipr-page-case-study/>) as well as UF's 2024 winning case study at this link (<https://page.org/press-news/university-of-florida-wins-top-prize-in-page-and-institute-of-public-relations-case-study-competition/>).

Your work should combine research, critical thinking, and strategic insight, resulting in a comprehensive written case study and presentation. Detailed instructions and team assignments will be provided early in the semester.

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

The grading scale for the course is as follows:

A = 93.0-100%.

A- = 90.0-92.99%. B+ = 87.0-89.99%. B = 83.0-86.99%. B- = 80.0-82.99%. C+ = 77.0-79.99%.

C = 74.0-76.99%. C- = 70.0-73.99%. D+ = 67.0-69.99%. D = 64.0-66.99%. D- = 60.0-63.99%. E = below 60%

Further information about grades and grading policy may be found at this [link to the university grades and grading policies](#).

Course Professionalism and Policies

- Students are expected to conduct themselves in an honest, ethical, and courteous manner — with classmates and the professor. This course values and respects the diverse experiences, identities, and viewpoints of all students. We aim to foster a classroom environment in which everyone feels safe and encouraged to participate.
- All work must reflect professional standards – avoid any inappropriate or unsafe content.
- Students are expected to attend classes on time and not leave early unless prior permission is granted. *Please note the significant impact of attendance and active participation in your final grade and be sure to show up and speak up as appropriate.*
- Cameras on during Zoom classes unless you have pre-arranged an exception with the professor. This allows for more meaningful discussion and engagement in a virtual format.

Other Important Notes from the Instructor

- **Late work:** Late assignments lose 5% per weekday unless pre-approved.
- **Communication with Instructor:** I can be reached via email (fordp@ufl.edu), or by telephone or text (703-966-8138). 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.
- **Guest policy:** Students are not permitted to bring guests to class unless pre-arranged with me or TA Eva Pantoja in advance.
- **We are here to help:** If you notice yourself having trouble in the course, it is crucial that you speak with me immediately or as soon as possible. Please feel free to contact 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 Zoom or phone meeting with me during the semester – I can meet with you during office hours or at other times, but I ask that you reach out in advance and schedule an appointment.
- **Academic integrity:** Any evidence of plagiarism or cheating will result in an “E” for the course and possible disciplinary action.
- **Original work:** 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.

- **Effective writing:** Spelling counts, as do grammar, punctuation, and professional presentation techniques, so edit and proofread materials carefully.
- **Presentation skills:** If you need extra help with presentation skills, arrange an appointment with me.