

## **PUR 4243 – Engage & Influence: PR Storytelling Across Platforms**

**Course Number:** PUR 4243

**Semester:** Spring 2026

**Time:** Thursdays, 4:05–4:55 p.m. (Live via Zoom)

**Instructor:** Susie Gilden

**Email:** [sgilden@ufl.edu](mailto:sgilden@ufl.edu)

**Virtual Office Hours:** By Appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In today's evolving media landscape, PR practitioners must be skilled storytellers who understand how narratives move across platforms. This course teaches students how to develop strategic, ethical, and audience-first stories using the PESO model (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned). Students will learn how journalism works, how audiences consume news, how platforms shape content, and how to adapt storytelling to press releases, blogs, influencer partnerships, social media, and crisis communications. Through weekly practice and case analysis, students will gain the practical skills to craft compelling, credible stories for modern PR environments. **No textbook required.**

### **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand how the modern media and PR landscape operates.
- Apply the PESO model to storytelling strategy.
- Craft clear, compelling stories tailored to platform and audience.
- Analyze how journalism works and how news is produced and verified.
- Evaluate how people, especially younger audiences, consume news on social platforms.
- Write effectively across PR formats, including pitches, releases, blogs, and social media.
- Analyze real-world PR campaigns to understand effective multi-platform storytelling.
- Assess ethical implications of digital communication and storytelling.
- Collaborate in group discussions and apply storytelling frameworks to real-world case studies.

### **GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS**

**Attendance & Active Participation — 40%**

Students are expected to attend live Zoom sessions, engage in discussions, turn cameras on when possible, and participate in breakout activities. More than two unexcused absences will be considered excessive. Full UF attendance policy: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

### **Weekly Assignments — 60%**

No quizzes. No final project. Students will complete short, real-world assignments such as pitches, blog posts, crisis analyses, content series, and campaign reflections. Assignments are intentionally low-stress, practical, and designed to build skills progressively.

## **COURSE POLICIES & RESOURCES**

### **Instructor Communication**

Email is the best way to reach me. I will respond within 48 hours during the workweek. Avoid sending personal or grade-related information via email; schedule Zoom meetings for complex questions.

### **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend live sessions, have cameras on when possible, and participate actively. Excessive absences harm your grade.

### **Professionalism**

Maintain a respectful, engaged presence in class. Follow camera/mic etiquette.

### **Late Work**

Late assignments lose one full letter grade per day unless arrangements are made in advance for documented emergencies.

### **University Honesty Policy**

Students are bound by the UF Honor Code.

### **Accommodations**

Students needing accommodations should contact the Disability Resource Center: <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>

### **Course Evaluation**

Students provide feedback at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals>

### **Student Resources**

U Matter, Counseling & Wellness, SHCC, UFPD, Computing Help Desk, Career Center, Libraries, Writing Studio, and student complaint resources.

## **FERPA & In-Class Recording Policy**

Students may record lectures for personal educational use but may not publish recordings without instructor consent.

## **KEY DATES — SPRING 2026**

- Classes Begin: January 6
- Drop/Add Ends: January 10
- MLK Day (No Class): January 19
- Spring Break: March 2–6
- Classes End: April 22
- Final Grades Due: April 28

## **WEEK-BY-WEEK COURSE SCHEDULE**

*(All weekly readings appear separately in the Reading & Resource Guide.)*

### **Week 1 — January 16**

**Topic:** Introduction to PR Storytelling & Today’s Media Ecosystem

**Assignment:** 150-word reflection on where you get your news and why.

### **Week 2 — January 23**

**Topic:** Story Structure Essentials

**Assignment:** Story arc breakdown.

### **Week 3 — January 30**

**Topic:** News Literacy & How Journalism Works

**Assignment:** Compare one news article and one social media “news” post for credibility.

### **Week 4 — February 6**

**Topic:** Audience-Centric Storytelling

**Assignment:** Rewrite a short message for two distinct audiences.

### **Week 5 — February 13**

**Topic:** How People Consume News on Social Platforms

**Guest Speaker Placeholder:** Digital journalist or social media editor

**Assignment:** Analyze a news outlet’s presence on TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube.

### **Week 6 — February 20**

**Topic:** Writing for PR: Press Releases & Media Pitches

**Guest Speaker Placeholder:** Journalist (recommended: Cindy Goodman)

**Assignment:** Draft a pitch or press release headline.

### **Week 7 — February 27**

**Topic:** Storytelling Through Blogs & Owned Media

**Assignment:** Write a 300-word editorial-style blog post introducing a new product or service.

### **Week 8 — March 6**

**Topic:** Campaigns That Moved the Needle

**Guest Speaker Placeholder:** Senior PR strategist

**Assignment:** Analyze a recent PR campaign's story, audience, and impact.

### **SPRING BREAK — March 13 & 20 (No Class)**

### **Week 9 — March 27**

**Topic:** Social Media as a Storytelling Platform

**Assignment:** Create a three-post content series for Instagram or TikTok.

### **Week 10 — April 3**

**Topic:** Influencer Marketing & Creator Storytelling

**Guest Speaker Placeholder:** Influencer or creator partnerships professional

**Assignment:** 150–200 word analysis of a creator-led brand story.

### **Week 11 — April 10**

**Topic:** AI in Storytelling: Tools, Ethics & Credibility

**Assignment:** Create an AI-generated brand message + human rewrite with commentary.

### **Week 12 — April 17**

**Topic:** Crisis Communications

**Guest Speaker Placeholder:** Crisis communications expert

**Assignment:** Analyze how narrative framing shaped a recent brand crisis response.

### **Week 13 — April 22**

**Topic:** Course Wrap-Up & The Future of Storytelling

**Assignment:** 150–200 word final reflection on how your approach to storytelling evolved.