

PUBLIC RELATIONS IN DIGITAL AGE

Time: R (1:55PM - 4:55PM), Rm. WEIM 3020

Instructor:	Moon J. Lee, Ph.D.	Phone:	352-273-1699
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Office:	Weimer 3050		And by appointment
Website:	E-learning site	Handouts:	Project Calendar

Course Description

This seminar course deals with critical issues related to Public Relations in the digital age. The class is based on the analysis of existing theories as well as research findings and in-depth discussion. During the semester, students are expected to conduct research on a public relations relevant topic, particularly in the context of digital communication and present it to their peers. We will carefully examine a body of literature in public relations and particularly in the context of digital communication. This course will offer important insights into theories, practices, and critical issues of public relations with an emphasis on computer mediated communication. The course is aimed at developing and enhancing both students' theoretical and practical knowledge of public relations in the digital age and research skills based on critical thinking and problem solving abilities. Topics include, but are not limited to, the interplay of how social media influences public relations practices, the effects of Digital PR on particular audiences, and critical issues such as the proliferation of digital technologies and how they change the traditional sense of public relations practices. We will discuss and research public relations in the digital age in a number of contexts, including (1) challenges and opportunities presented to PR practitioners in the digital age, (2) how social media are changing public relations practices, (3) what would be the most effective public relations practices in the digital age, and (4) other critical issues such as professional ethics and social responsibility.

Course Objectives

This course will help you to:

1. carefully examine recent literature on public relations in the context of digital communication.
2. demonstrate a keen knowledge of theories and applications of public relations through scientific research papers and class discussions.
3. develop and enhance research skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills.
4. conduct an original study from conceptualization to final presentation of findings.

Course Requirements

Requirements include reading assigned materials, preparing in-class presentations, participating in class discussions, conducting one research project, and a final presentation.

- **Reading Assigned Materials:** Students are responsible for all assigned readings and materials covered in class. We will start with the reading materials I prepared; however, you will be expected to introduce one of the most relevant (academic) papers in your research interest once your research topic is decided.
- **Class Participation:** You are expected to participate in class discussion. Attendance and class participation counts for 20%. **Each "UNEXCUSED" absence in my records will result in 5% of your total grade lost. In other words, if you have four (or more) unexcused absences, you will not receive any points for your class participation.**
- **A Research Project and a Final Presentation:** Each student will conduct a research project and submit a final paper at the end of the semester. **The final paper counts for 50% of your grade.** It is your responsibility to consult with me about your topic early in the semester. The final research paper is due on December 4th before 5:00PM.

Research Paper/Proposal - You will be asked to research and write a research paper for a Ph.D. student (or a research proposal for Master's students) in public relations related topics, particularly in the context of digital communication. Each Ph.D. student (or group of M.A. students) will choose a research topic and a date for presentation. In a concise, but thorough research paper, you will need to present your own findings for your research hypotheses/questions. Also, you are encouraged to submit your paper to the International Communication Association convention in November. The deadline for this submission is normally Nov. 1st. For M.A. students, you will be expected to include five major sections in your research proposal (Introduction, Literature Review, Hypotheses/Research Questions, Methods, and References)

- **Final Presentation (10%):** At the end of the semester, each group (or Ph.D. student) will make a formal presentation of their research findings to the class.
- **Introduce Your Own Literature (20%):** At the beginning of October, you will be asked to present one research paper from your own topic to class. You must pick one article and make copies (or a link) available for your classmates a week prior to your presentation date. Don't forget to email me about the reference information of the selected article in advance.

Deadline: Failure to meet assignment deadlines will result in a lowered grade (-5 points per day).

Grading

- **Paper Presentation (required, but not graded):**
 1. During the first week of the semester, we will decide who is going to present a paper from the required reading materials to the class and when.
 2. You will be asked to email your name, student id, a paper topic from the syllabus, and the date. You need to provide a short outline for your presentation in class.
 3. Each individual is required to prepare a class presentation for the class. Prepare an outline (with moderate details) or power-point presentation for your classmates-please make an appropriate number of copies (or make links available) for everyone in the class, if you prepare an outline. Also, you will be asked to

moderate class discussions. You need to prepare an approximately 20 minute presentation along with 3 to 5 questions for your classmates to use while moderating. It is a good idea to include your questions in your outline or presentation slides. But if not, please make sure to provide your questions to the instructor separately.

- **Research Project and a Final Paper (50 %):**

The guidelines for writing a final paper and the final evaluation sheet will be posted on the Project Calendar. Please review them carefully and let me know if you need any extra help. It is very crucial to seek extra help **BEFORE** the final paper is due!

Please note that there are minimum requirements for your final research paper or proposal.

1. It must be theoretical. You must develop your hypotheses based on theories.
2. It must contain at least 15 references.
3. Writing should be clear and compliant with APA style. You are responsible for learning APA style.
4. Read the guidelines for submitting your paper to a conference (e.g. International Communication Association or AEJMC) and follow the formats accordingly.
5. The paper should not exceed 30 pages, including references as well as figures.

- **Reaction Papers (20%):**

Throughout the semester, I will ask you to write reaction papers on assigned readings. Additional information will be provided in a separate handout.

- **Class Participation is fully expected. Each "UNEXCUSED" absence in my records will result in 5% of your total grade lost. In other words, if you have four (or more) unexcused absences, you will lose 20% of your total grade.**
- **Introduce Your Own Literature (Class Presentation and Discussion: 20%): Think of this as an opportunity to introduce the literature that you have been working on.**

Each student will have an opportunity to introduce one article to class. This will be counted as 20% of your grade. I give a better grade when the student presents the given materials effectively and presents critical and useful analysis to the class--**not just repeating what you read**. Please note that if you don't show up in class (unless excused), you will not be able to participate in class discussions, resulting in zero points for this assignment. Make-up presentations will not be given except for under exceptional circumstances. It is **your** responsibility to proactively seek and acquire information you missed due to an absence--regardless of whether the absence was excused or not.

- **Final Presentation (10%): Think of this as an opportunity to rehearse your presentation for a conference. We will try to simulate what goes on in actual research presentation sessions.**

1. Please prepare a 15 minute presentation.
2. You will have a respondent who will comment on your paper.
3. You will have a chance to answer some questions from the audience.

Grading Items	Date	Points
Final Research Paper	Dec. 4th	50
Final Presentation	Will be determined	10
Reaction Papers		20
Class Presentation (Introduce Your Own Literature)		20
Total Points		100

Range	Final Grade
93 - 100 pts	A
90 - 92 pts	A-
87 - 89 pts	B+
83 - 86 pts	B
80 - 82 pts	B-
77 - 79 pts	C +
73 - 76 pts	C
70 - 72 pts	C-
67 - 69 pts	D +
60 - 66 pts	D
Below 59 pts	F

Academic Honesty

Students should be aware of academic honesty in fulfilling all course requirements. Plagiarism is not permitted. If you use information from a publication, you must attribute a source.

Class Etiquette

- Reading a newspaper or other unrelated materials during class is not permitted.
- Sleeping during class is considered as an unexcused absence.
- Do not use cell phones or audible pagers.
- Consumption of food, drinks and tobacco products is not allowed in the classroom.

Seeking Help

If you need individual assistance beyond the help you receive in class, you can see me during office hours or set up an appointment for another time. If you have any special concerns for your instructor to know in order to ensure your academic success in class, please inform me as soon as possible, so I can assist you accordingly. Please, see me if you have any problems! I consider my student's failure to learn as my own failure to teach effectively. We are going to work together to provide a high quality academic environment for your learning.

Special Assistance: Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify me during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. All accommodations must be approved through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) in Peabody Hall 202 (Tel.352-392-1261).