

Ethics and Professional Responsibility in Public Relations

Department of Public Relations

Spring 2013

PUR 4203 Section 017A

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Class time: Web Course

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Office hours: can be arranged by appointment

Virtual office hours: Monday – Friday

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course seeks to examine theories and practices related to ethics and corporate social responsibility in order to understand the business environment in which public relations operates and apply these findings to developing management and problem-solving strategies. Practical issues relevant to public relations careers such as moral dilemmas and the general workplace environment will also be explored.

PREREQUISITE CLASSES

You must have taken and passed PUR3000 and PUR3500 with minimum grades of C.

OBJECTIVES

- To enhance awareness of the ethical responsibilities of public relations professionals and of the social responsibilities of organizations;
- To improve ability to identify the moral dimensions of issues that arise in the practice of public relations and employ reason as a tool for dealing with moral issues;
- To increase knowledge and skills necessary to reach and justify ethical decisions
- To become familiar with diverse corporate social responsibility and public relations cases.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- Read all materials.
- Actively engage in online dialogues.
- Complete course assignments, exams and projects by due date indicated. Students are responsible for late submissions.

TEXTBOOKS AND READING MATERIALS

- [Required] Gower, K. Karla (2008 or latest edition). Legal and Ethical Considerations for Public Relations. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press. **(LERPR)**

- [Required] Coombs, W. Timothy and Holladay, J. Sherry (2012). Managing Corporate Social Responsibility: A communication Approach. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell. **(MCSR)**
- [Optional] Kanungo, N. Rabindra and Mendonca, Manuel (1996). Ethical Dimensions of Leadership. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (EDL)
- Supplementary readings will be provided by the instructor.

COMMUNICATION

Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with the instructor during the semester; especially any time there is a need for clarification or assistance with course materials or requirements.

Communication by email and e-Learning is always available, and email is the best way to reach me.

Office hours can be arranged by appointment. If you would like to set a meeting time with me, please feel free to email me.

COURSE FORMAT

Online learning requires a significant amount of self-discipline. All students are expected to participate actively, showing evidence of logging into the course at least twice each week and actively engaging in discussion, activity, and assignment posts.

This online class will consist of PPT materials provided by the instructor and supportive materials, such as video content, online readings, and online discussions. Each week includes two modules, and the content for the given week will be posted by 9:30am that Monday and Wednesday morning. That means, each Monday and Wednesday, you will be notified of your assigned coursework and details of assignment for that week.

There will be no make-up projects, assignments and quizzes. Late works will not be accepted. No exceptions including Internet unavailability, e-learning system error without instructors' notification, job interviews, wedding, etc. Only in the event of rare and unusual circumstances (and with formal documentation) will be considered with consultation. Please prepare projects, assignments, and quizzes in advance. Don't wait until the deadlines come.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Most weeks you will have two assignments to complete: (1) Discussion board posting and (2) Reaction paper for that week. Discussion questions will be provided in each Monday module, and your postings on your own opinion and comments to other students' posts (at least two) are due by **Wednesday at noon (12:00pm)**. Reaction papers related to the given weeks' topics and readings are due each **Friday by midnight (11:59pm)**. In addition, (3) there will be two scheduled quizzes, and (4) two written assignment projects, which will substitute for a mid-term and final exam.

(1) Discussion postings: In each MONDAY module, there will be a discussion session on a discussion board. By **Wednesday at noon**, you are required to post your original response to each of the weekly discussion questions (200 words minimum) AND post at least two comments (100 words minimum for each) to other students' posts. Your posting should have substance and help to further the class discussion of course content, connections to the

course readings, ways of applying the lessons from the course, and additional ideas, insights, or questions about others' comments. The quality of your postings will be graded. Comments such as "Good idea" or "I agree" do not constitute substantive posts on their own. If you say you agree about something, please explain why you agree, and add an additional insight or question.

You are required to participate in at least 10 modules, which includes posting your own response as well as posting two comments to other students' posts in each module, respectively. Each module's discussion-board response will be worth 3 points. Late works will not be graded.

(2) Reaction paper: After completing each week's modules (you will complete TWO modules a week), you will submit reaction papers related to the given topics. You are expected to submit a total of 8 (of a possible 9) two-page reaction papers. Reaction papers are due each **Friday by 11:59pm**, as indicated in the course schedule. Late papers will not be accepted and I will not make exceptions to this rule.

Each paper should clearly summarize or outline the main points of that week's assigned readings and address your personal reaction to or interpretation of the readings. You must respond to the assigned question using the lessons and vocabulary found in the readings. The reaction papers require that you think about the readings critically and integrate your understanding of the materials. Your commentary should represent insights, critiques, and/or questions that occurred to you while reading the assigned readings. The reaction papers should be at least 600 words (about 2 pages with double-spaced) with YOUR OWN WORDS and they should be submitted through the course Sakai site, Drop Box.

These reaction papers will be graded with following scale: Barely Adequate = 1.0-1.5 points, Average = 1.6-2.0 points, Good = 2.1-2.5 points, Very Good = 2.6-2.7, and Excellent = 2.8-3.0 points. Barely adequate means that you did not understand the given readings or communication of ideas was poor. A Good paper, in addition to giving a summary, will integrate the readings for that week. A Very Good paper will summarize, integrate the readings and bring in new information on a related topic. An Excellent paper will go beyond summary, reaction, and integration and bring new information or ideas to the discussion with extensive research on a related topic, and clearly communicate your ideas. Excellent papers will be rare. If you fail to turn in an assigned paper, you get a "0".

(3) Quizzes: There will be two quizzes consisting of about 10 multiple-choice, true/false questions, and fill-in-the-blank questions. You will be notified on Monday module if there is a quiz associated with the content for the week. You will have from Wednesday until Saturday at 6pm to take your quiz at a time that best suits your schedule. Please keep in mind quizzes are designed for prepared learners. You will only have 20 minutes to complete each quiz.

(4) Case analysis projects: For the mid-term and final project, you will be asked to analyze 1) the given PR ethics scenario and 2) the real company's social responsibility campaign, respectively. Student will be asked to analyze the case and write their thoughts in about 4-6 pages by applying theories learned from the course. You will have a whole week to complete

the written assignment (refer to the course schedule). The details for the assignments will be provided.

GRADING

Your grade will be assessed based on discussion board participation, reaction papers, two quizzes, and a midterm and a final project. To succeed in this course, you will need to regularly visit the content in Sakai accessed through the e-Learning page at <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>.

The following provides a point allocation for each of these areas:

- **Personal introduction:** 1
- **Reaction paper:** 3pt x 8 papers (out of 9) = 24
- **Quality of discussion/response posting:** 3pt x 10 modules (out of 12) = 30
- **Quiz:** 7.5pt x 2 quizzes = 15
- **Case analysis project:** 15pt x 2 = 30
- **Total:** 100 points

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|----|--------|----|-------|
| A | 92-100 | C | 72-74 |
| A- | 88-91 | C- | 68-71 |
| B+ | 85-87 | D+ | 65-67 |
| B | 82-84 | D | 62-64 |
| B- | 78-81 | D- | 58-61 |
| C+ | 75-77 | E | < 58 |

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic honesty is expected on all assignments, including discussion postings, quizzes, and written assignment for analyzing cases. Cheating of any kind will not be tolerated. You are expected to abide by the University's Honor Code and Academic Honesty Guidelines. Cheating will result in an automatic zero for the exam and an "E" for the overall course. All university policies regarding academic honesty (Rule 6C1-4.017) will be strictly enforced.

Academic Honesty: All students are expected to be honest in all their academic work. Failure to uphold the standards of honesty will result in the appropriate disciplinary action by the University of Florida. As a result of completing the registration form at the University of Florida, every student has signed the following statement:

"I understand that the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the university."

It is your responsibility to be familiar with the academic student code. You can review the honor code and sanctions for violations to the code in the following link:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/studenthonorcode.php>

Academic Student 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."

UF Counseling Services: UF has resources available for students in need of counseling for personal or academic reasons, such as:

- University Counseling Center (for personal counseling and academic counseling). Located at: 301 Peabody Hall, Phone #: 392-1575
- Student Mental Health (for personal counseling). Located at the Student Health Care Center, Phone #: 392-1171
- Career Resource Center (for career counseling). Located in the Reitz Union, Phone #:392-1601

For more information and other resources visit: <http://www.counsel.ufl.edu> or speak to your instructor. I will be happy to point you in the right direction.

SAKAI POLICIES

If you are not familiar with Sakai, I encourage you to take advantage of the student resources offered on the e-Learning help page. Sakai tools work best in a *Firefox browser*. If you are having any technical difficulties, it is best that you first contact the **UF Help Desk at 352-392-4357**.

If you are experiencing a trouble with Sakai, please try logging out and logging back in to see if the issue self-corrects. If there is any issue with Sakai that I am notified of, I will send out an email to all students. If you have an issue, and you do not see any updates from me, you may assume that this issue is unique to you or your computer and should try accessing the course from another computer and contact the UF Help Desk. When you are dealing with an issue with Sakai and if it is close to a deadline, you may need to email me immediately.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The table below represents a tentative outline of topics that will be covered over the course of the semester. Although we will make every effort to adhere to the schedule, it may become necessary to make modifications to accommodate unforeseen circumstances. The instructor will advise the class of any events that necessitate revision to the present schedule.