

*Syllabus updated, August 22, 2013*

**PUR 4932: Public Interest Communications**

Tuesday: Periods 7 and 8

Thursday: Period 7

**Professor Ann Christiano, Frank Karel Chair in Public Interest Communications**

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Office Hours:

Monday and Wednesday 12:30-2pm, and by appointment

Teaching Assistant

**About this Course**

Positive social change is not possible without effective communication. The greatest ideas will languish without a specific effort to engage the right people in those efforts at the right time. Public Interest Communications is a form of public relations through which organizations take on specific communications objectives that will have a benefit to society. This benefit transcends the particular interests of any single organization undertaking a campaign or communications effort.

The skills and qualities of those who work in Public Interest Communications are not unlike those of people who work in public relations. In fact, the fields differ more in purpose than in form: while public relations tends to take on the interests of a single corporation or entity, Public Interest Communications tends to take on causes that affect the health, safety and well being of a community or population.

This is an evolving field, and its practitioners are continuously applying new insights and techniques to support positive social change. The field is not as well-established as its sister fields of advertising, journalism and marketing, however, an increased recognition among change makers of the importance of communications to social change means that there are more resources available than there once were. This is also an entrepreneurial field, which results in significant innovation.

Public Interest Communications is a large and complex field, and it will not be possible to cover all its aspects during the 16 weeks we have together. To make the most of our time, the course will focus on the principles and fundamentals on which the field stands.

In this course, you will learn the four spheres through which we can drive social change, the strategic planning process for an effective social change communications campaign, and the tools, qualities and tactics that make these campaigns real. You will gain insight to the richness of the field, the power that effective communications has to address a problem and profoundly affect the lives of people, and begin to see the astonishing range of careers and opportunity that this field holds.

This course will give you the opportunity to hear directly from the leading thinkers in public interest communicators, and we will talk with people working in the field frequently. I urge you to take careful

notes from these lectures and learn enough about the speakers in advance to add your own well-informed questions to the discussion.

### **Course Objectives**

1. You will understand the role of communications in affecting positive social change.
2. You will understand the strategic communications planning process.
3. You will understand the five spheres through which communicators work to achieve change: policy, media, social marketing, activism and communities of influence.
4. You will meet and interact with the experts who are leading and defining this field.
5. You will gain new insight to how fundamental changes in how we communicate as a society are changing this field.
6. You will understand the skills and qualities associated with effective communication for social change.

### **Grading**

Your grade will be based on the following:

Class participation:	10%
Mid-term Exam:	15%
Final Exam:	15%
Writing Assignments	20%
Final Presentation:	20%
Quizzes:	20%

A	90-100 points
B	80-89 points
C	70-79 points
D	60-69 points
E	Less than 60 points

### **Appointments**

Please stop by during office hours to discuss assignments, materials or other concerns related to the course. You may also schedule a meeting with me via email. My office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus. I'm often in my office, and am always happy to talk with students. Please feel free to pop in, but know that there's no guarantee you'll catch me except during office hours.

### **Course Professionalism**

This College is a professional school, and professional decorum is expected at all times. I expect you to adhere to workplace norms of collegial and respectful interaction and behavior. That specifically means that you will arrive on time, not speak when another student or the instructor are speaking or use cell

phones, lap tops or other electronic devices. I expect that you will welcome and treat with respect the diverse perspectives of your fellow students, as will I. Violations of these expectations may result in students being asked to leave class and a lowering of your grade.

### **Students with Special Needs**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must submit a documentation letter to the professor when requesting accommodation. Please notify me at the beginning of the semester if you would like to discuss requests for special provisions.

### **Class Attendance Policy**

Attendance is not required. However, note that your attendance will affect your class participation grade. Participation accounts for 10 percent of your grade. To achieve full credit, you must be present for class and participate. Additionally, I will give surprise quizzes. While quizzes that appear on the syllabus may be made up, surprise quizzes may not be.

### **Academic Honesty**

The work you submit for this course must be your own. It must be original for this course. You must never use direct or paraphrased material from any source, including Web sites, without attribution. You may not submit anything that you wrote for another class, or that you wrote as a volunteer or intern. You may not submit anything that was written for any purpose other than the given assignment. I will handle any incident of academic dishonesty in accordance with the University of Florida policies that address cheating and unethical academic behavior, specifically the UF Honor Code and the Academic Honesty Guidelines.

Any case of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for this course. I will follow University Guidelines for any offense.

In every assignment you complete for this course you will clearly attribute the source of your information, including information obtained from organizations' web sites or internal documents. You cannot copy anything word for word, regardless of the source, without putting quotes around it and attributing the source.

### **Format**

Everything you write for this course must be coherent, logical and carefully edited. Misspellings, syntax and grammatical errors are unacceptable in upper-level college writing, particularly writing by public relations students.

## Texts

Wes Moore “The Other Wes Moore”

Dan and Chip Heath “Switch”

“The Dragonfly Effect: Quick, Effective, and Powerful Ways To Use Social Media to Drive Social Change”  
by Jennifer Aaker, Andy Smith, Dan Ariely and Chip Heath

“Short and Sweet” and “See, Say, Feel, Do” both available for free download at [www.fenton.com](http://www.fenton.com)

## Schedule of Class Discussions

	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
Week 1		August 22 Introduction to Public Interest Communications  <b>Writing assignment 1 distributed</b>
Week 2	August 27  A brief history of Public Interest Communications  Overview of the strategic planning process  <b>Team Building Survey Distributed Due: Wednesday, August 28 by noon</b>	August 29  Case Study 1  <b>Writing assignment 1 due, via email, one hour before class begins</b>
Week 3	September 3  Final assignment distributed, teams formed  Guest Experts: Two legal perspectives on Stand Your Ground	September 5  The five spheres through which we create change: policy, media, social marketing, activism and communities of influence
Week 4	September 10  Working with policymakers  Florida policymakers respond to Stand Your Ground	September 12  <b>Quiz: Switch</b>
	September 17	September 19

Week 5	Working with the news media  Guest Experts: How we covered Trayvon and Stand Your Ground	Social Marketing
Week 6	September 24  Activism  Guest Experts: The Dream Defenders	September 26  Communities of Influence
Week 7	October 1  What the data shows about Stand Your Ground  Guest Experts	October 3  Midterm Exam
Week 8	October 8  Message development  Expert Guest	October 11  Testing messages
Week 9	October 15  Storytelling in words and imagery  Guest Experts	October 17  The four roles of empathy in creating change.  <b>Writing assignment 2 distributed</b>
Week 10	October 22  Working with scientists and the importance of good science and data to meaningful and effective change.  Guest Experts	October 24  The ethics of Public Interest Communications  <b>Writing assignment 2 due, via email, one hour before class begins</b>
Week 11	October 29  <b>QUIZ: The Dragonfly Effect And Short and Sweet</b>  Class Discussion: the opportunities	October 31  Design for social change

	digital platforms create for social change	
Week 12	November 5 Online activism and movements Guest Expert	November 7 The importance of theory to social change communications strategy
Week 13	November 12 Evaluating our results Read: See, Say, Feel, Do  Presenting like you mean it	November 14 The fields that influence Public Interest Communications
Week 14	November 19 Final team presentations	November 21 Final team presentations
Week 15	November 26 Final Exam Review	November 28 THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS
Week 16	<b>December 3</b> <b>Final Exam</b>	

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/>.