

Public Relations Case Studies

JOUR 3409

Fall 2013

Instructor: Darrin M. Devault, M.A.

Office: Meeman Journalism Building (Room 332)

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday (10 a.m. to Noon) and by appointment

Phone: (901) 678-2405 (office); (901) 569-6353 (cell)

E-mail: darrin.devault@memphis.edu

Twitter: [@darrindevault](https://twitter.com/darrindevault)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Case studies and typical public relations problems; planning and preparation of communications materials for various media; application of public relations techniques.

PREREQUISITE:

JOUR 3400

TEXTBOOK:

Cases in Public Relations Management by Swann, P. (New York: Routledge). ISBN: 0415878934

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

Due to the content of this course, there will be a lot of discussion, so class participation is MANDATORY. You must come to class prepared and ready to participate.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Media Diet: As you know, the very nature of our profession requires us to stay on top of current events. Our responsibility is to assess their relevance to—and their implications for—our clients and employers. Knowledge of current events, government, history and media is critical. While your undergraduate education will provide a strong base of understanding in these areas, your proactive efforts to continue learning about them will greatly benefit your career.

It is imperative that you read a variety of local and national news sources (print and online) as well as PR trade publications (e.g., *Public Relations Tactics*, *PR News*) and become actively engaged in social media conversations. The new media landscape has changed public relations, and you must adapt. You must know where your target public(s) is finding its news.

Coursework: Coursework will be accomplished every week. Five exams will be part of your final grade. Each one will cover the main sections of the text.

Other parts of your grade will come from homework assignments, class reports, individual case study reports and group work. These assignments, discussions and case studies must be submitted per instructions; no credit will be given outside of the proper submission guidelines.

All papers submitted will be considered final. There will be no re-submission of papers to increase the initial grade given. You are required to ask questions, either in class or by appointment with your instructor, as to the proper completion of the assignment. It is your responsibility to ensure clarification of assignment instructions.

All written work must reflect critical thinking and knowledge of the material; that is, examples found within or outside of class, along with elaboration, are required to achieve an “A” grade. In all our assignments, it is noted that elaboration is required. This material must come from outside of our text, and can be of a professional experience in nature. Items given as facts in elaboration must be referenced using our referencing criteria. In nearly every case, the core material needed to complete your work will be found in our text.

Deadlines: Understanding and working with deadlines is a critical part of the public relations process. No late assignments will be accepted without prior approval of your instructor.

Attendance: Your instructor keeps attendance records. You will get three free passes (no questions asked) during the semester. After you use these passes, each additional missed class will result in a half-letter deduction from your semester grade.

Grading Scale:

Current PR Case Reports/Homework Assignments — 125 points
Five Exams Covering Textbook – 50 points each
Five Individual Case Study Assignments – 75 points each
Two Group Assignments/Presentations – 125 points each
TOTAL: 1,000 points

A = 900-1,000 points

B = 800-899 points

C = 700-799 points

D = 600-699 points

F = 599 and fewer points

Grading Rubric for Written Assignments:

A (90-100): Professional work. Clear thinking is reflected in clear writing. Uses appropriate style for type of media. Knows and uses preferred form. No errors in form, grammar or spelling. Adapted to intended audience (public).

B (80-89): Near professional work. Lacks polish (style) of A work. Form is correct. No errors in form, grammar or spelling. Adapted to intended audience.

C (70-79): Acceptable as a classroom assignment only. Not usable professionally without further editing/corrections. Up to 7 errors detected [or] not well adapted to intended audience or medium.

D (60-69): Needs significant work in form and/or style. Up to 12 errors detected [or] shows little consideration of needs/interests of intended audience or medium.

F (59 or below): Unacceptable in form and style [or] fails to adapt to intended audience or medium.

ASSIGNED READINGS

Here are the assigned readings from your textbook:

Chapter 1 – The Purpose of Public Relations: August 26 - September 1

Chapter 2 – Proactive Public Relations: August 26 - September 1

Chapter 3 – The Case Method: September 2-8

Chapter 4 – Ethics and the Public Interest: September 9-15

Chapter 5 – Media Relations: September 16-22

Chapter 6 – Crisis Communications: September 23-29

Chapter 7 – Consumer Relations: September 30 – October 6

Chapter 8 – Sports, Entertainment, and Travel: October 7-21

Chapter 9 – Community Relations: October 21-27

Chapter 10 – Employee Relations: October 28 – November 3

Chapter 11 – Governmental Relations: November 4-10

Chapter 12 – International Public Relations: November 11-17

Chapter 13 - Financial Relations: November 18-24

Chapter 14 – Internships and Early Career: November 25 - December 1

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES:

Students will be able to:

- + Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power and to assemble and petition for redress and grievances;
- + Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- + Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications;
- + Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- + Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- + Think critically, creatively and independently;
- + Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- + Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- + Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical structure;
- + Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts; and
- + Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

Cognitive Objectives to Be Mastered (Ability to Explain, Analyze, Understand, Think Critically):

Students will:

- + Apply their knowledge of public relations theories and concepts in various professional settings to build problem-solving and critical thinking skills;
- + Develop counseling and peer feedback skills;
- + Build teamwork skills; and
- + Distinguish between goals, objectives, strategies and tactics using the case method: diagnosing public relations problems and suggesting solutions with detailed messages, timelines, budgets and details.

Performance Standards to Be Met (Demonstrable Skills, Abilities, Techniques, Applied Competencies):

Students will:

- + Understand and discuss how different public relations processes lead to difficult outcomes in various professional settings;
- + Successfully analyze and prescribe solutions for text and contemporary problems;
- + Work in teams to plan solutions focusing on goals, objectives, strategies and tactics; and
- + Offer constructive criticism by evaluating the work of their peers on a group project.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET:

The course is designed to equip students with knowledge necessary to analyze public relations problems, postulate alternative solutions, evaluate alternatives and develop appropriate public relations strategies and tactics.

Awareness:

- + Identify and solve public relation problems through classroom discussions, individual written assignments, exams and group work.

Application:

- + Define publics, examine motivators, establish message content, select media and conform to budgetary limitations. Students will pay special attention to diversity among organizational constituencies and the implications of diversity in the development of public relations plans.
- + Students will review and analyze case problems covering textbook and contemporary scenarios and submit individual written assessments. Each assessment will be graded.
- + Students will successfully execute group work. This work will be graded (including a peer grade).
- + Students will successfully complete periodic exams covering textbook materials and contemporary case problems.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- + Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- + Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;

- + Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communication;
- + Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- + Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- + Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- + Think critically, creatively and independently;
- + Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- + Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- + Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- + Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- + Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation. Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- + Awareness: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- + Understanding: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- + Application: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

E-MAIL:

You must have your UM e-mail account activated. If you are using another provider such as Google, you are required to have your UM e-mail forwarded to that account. Go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> Web site to implement forwarding of UM e-mail. You are required to check your e-mail daily. You are responsible for complying with any e-mail sent to you by your professor or the University.

CELL PHONES:

You must turn them off during class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements, which are acceptable to your professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence due to illness or other catastrophic emergency such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g., a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). This is a professional program for journalists who are

expected to understand and comply with deadlines. If you have some problem making it to class on time make arrangements to fix the problem or consider taking another class. You should consider this class your “job” in the educational process and be on time just as you would elsewhere.

CHEATING:

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, or a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. That may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the university.

“Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com’s restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.” (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

ONLINE SETEs:

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of the course. Once your instructor has posted your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that course. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and e-mail password; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at (901) 678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.