

Public Relations Ethics and Advocacy

PBRL 4706/6706 in Meeman 112

Fall 2021

Meeting: T/H 1-2:25 p.m. CT

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

An approach to ethics and advocacy through case studies and their application to the work of public relations professionals as they interact with employers, publics and society as a whole.

Course information

This class will look at how specific communication objectives can transcend the interests of an organization in order to bring about benefits to society. The class will delve into advocacy and activism, discussing the differences between the two, and interrogating the process of social change and how it manifests via popular media and community action. The course will introduce and analyze cases that include activist speech, social justice, and the impact of and on social media.

Prerequisites

None

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

- Ethics in Public Relations (3rd edition) by Patricia Parsons
- ISBN: 9780749477264
 - Rent for \$10.50 from the bookstore

Classroom format

As of August 1, 2021, this class will be held in room 112 in the Meeman Journalism Building. This class will include lecture, discussion, in-class activities, and group assignments. Students will write and submit assignments to eCourseware, which will be returned with feedback meant to encourage student improvement over the course of the semester. Access to a computer or mobile electronic device (tablet or smartphone) with internet access is required to complete many (if not all) of your assignments. Please let me know if you need information on computers available for use on campus.

I see us building a classroom community together this fall. To do that, I expect that you show up ready to engage with myself and your classmates. It's important to ask questions when you're lost, and pay attention so you don't get lost on purpose.

It is my hope that you know and believe that I am always willing to help you. Always ask for clarification(s) if you have any questions or doubts: the sooner the better. It's important to be proactive. If you're having an issue, let's work together to make sure you are doing what you can, when you can.

COVID-19 policy around attendance

There is no attendance policy for this class—the only day you are required to attend is your guest speaker day.

In addition to a penalty-free attendance policy, you will not be required to attend class on campus. I want to recognize that there are still a lot of unknowns and fears surrounding COVID-19. If you feel uncomfortable attending class on campus, you may join via Zoom. I ask that you not Zoom from the beach, bar hopping, or while on vacation. Please note that this is something I'm doing to help alleviate COVID-19 stress, not make it easy for you to join from the pool. If you're on vacation, just be on vacation and don't rub it in.

This is a decision you can make day-by-day, so don't feel like you have to decide "zoom" or "campus" and stick with it for the rest of the semester.

Students with disabilities & accommodations

If you will need accommodations through [Disability Resources](#) to meet any of the requirements of this course, please let me know as soon as possible. Remember, this does not mean you are incapable or receiving special treatment. We all have specific tools we use to do our best work. I encourage you to consider which tools you need to be your best in this class.

Trauma & emotional needs

This class is just one component of your life. It is important, but sometimes we experience trauma and crisis, and we need to reprioritize. As your instructor, I feel your health and well-being is more important than this class, especially under the circumstances. If completing this course or an assignment to the best of your abilities is challenging, please let me know as soon as possible. I am here for you and want to work with you.

COVID-19 illness accommodations

I hope that this is the most worthless syllabus section I've ever written. I hope that COVID-19 comes nowhere near you or your loved ones, and doesn't affect you in any way, including physically, emotionally, spiritually, financially, and mentally. COVID-19 will likely affect one of us in one of those ways, however. Here's how we'll adapt:

If you get sick:

I recommend you take an incomplete for the semester. Given that it's hard to know how your body will react, and cases range from asymptomatic to months of illness to death, we should prepare for you to dedicate a substantial amount of your time to feeling better. Your health is more important than this course. *Honor code: no documentation required.*

If you need to take care of someone who gets sick:

Depending on the severity of their illness, I recommend you consider taking an incomplete. If you are the primary caretaker of someone who tests positive for COVID-19 with symptoms, your priority should be remaining healthy and supporting that person. *Honor code: no documentation required.*

If you are exposed to someone who tests positive:

You must isolate and monitor your symptoms. Please let me know as soon as possible if that affects your access to resources and technology. *Honor code: no documentation required.*

Resources specific to physical health and wellness:

[Mental health Services](#)

[UofM Student Health Center](#)

[Sexual, domestic, and intimate partner violence resources](#)

Financial resources :

There are many resources available through the Dean of Students including:

[Dr. Rosie Phillips Bingham Student Emergency Fund](#)

[Emergency Food Resources](#), which includes [Tiger Pantry](#)

[Emergency Housing](#)

[Specific COVID-19 relief funds](#)

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis eLearn home page: <http://elearn.memphis.edu>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for PBRL 4706/6706-001 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

Plagiarism policy

First offense: Lose 10%

Second offense: Lose 30%

Third offense: Automatic class fail

Citation policy

For this class, we'll use AP Style (<https://www.apstylebook.com>) and APA style (https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html).

All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar and language. A large part of public relations is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. This includes all class work and presentations. Problems in these or other areas will result in the deduction of points.

I expect your work to be good – and to be yours. What is not yours should be fully cited. In documenting sources, you must use APA formatting. If you need help with writing and citing sources, please see me for resources. In addition, Purdue University's Online Writing Lab is an excellent resource, and can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

Your deliverables

Individual: Journals

(20 points)

Ten reflective journals

2 points each

Group: The Page Case Study Competition

(80 points)

The below sections are a suggestion. Each case study will have a different approach to the material. As we make our contracts, we'll discuss how each team will earn those points.

Pitch	5
Synopsis & problem/opportunity identification	5
Overview of organizations/stakeholders	5
Key issues at play (secondary research)	5
Organization's response	5
Business Impacts	5
Evaluation & next steps	5
Slides/PPT	5
Presentation	10
Final Paper	30

Total

100 points

Grading: Labor-based grading

For this class, your case study team will decide what constitutes B effort for you and your team, and each case study section guideline will have the labor and effort needed to earn the B (84%). At the beginning of the semester, we will meet together as a class and talk about intentions and best practices, and then your case study team will connect with me to design your contract based on what can be realistically expected of all team members. Given your commitment to working cooperatively and collegially in groups, your group will decide what effort and labor is necessary. In other words, students are developing and setting the team's goals and the intentions around that. Please see the labor-based grading contract for more information.

IMPROVING YOUR CONTRACTED GRADE

The grade of B (84%) depends primarily on behavior and labor. Have you shown responsible effort and consistency in our class? Have you done what was asked of you in the spirit it was asked? Higher grades than the default, the grades of 88% (B+), 90-97% (A- to A), or 98% (A+), however, require more labor that helps or supports the class in its mutual discussions and examinations of ethics and advocacy. For this, you must engage in "Public Relations in Practice."

In order to raise your grade, you may complete as many of the following items of labor as you like (up to 100% overall grade). Each item completed fully and in the appropriate manner will raise your final course grade by 4%.

- Peer edit: For this item, you will volunteer to be a peer editor for another group/individual. You will be responsible for providing constructive and meaningful feedback on the final case study draft
- Events & reflection

- Attend a PR event + reflection
- Attend an activism event/protest
- Civic or volunteer activity
- Interview with an activist during a class
- PRSSA PRogression blog post
- Lead and organize a Twitter chat
- Some other labor that benefits the class and our mutual learning of ethics and advocacy. Maybe you would like to read an article for us and summarize some of its findings or ideas that you think will help us do our work in class? If you have an idea, come to me early. We will plan it, while making sure the amount of labor is commensurate with the other items above.

Thus, for every item you complete on the above list, your contracted grade will improve by 4% grade points. So if you meet the conditions for a B-contract (84%), then your grade can improve in the following ways:

- 1 item completed = course grade of 88% (B+)
- 2 items completed = course grade of 92% (A-)
- 3 items completed = course grade of 96% (A)
- 4 items completed = course grade of 100% (A+)
- 5 or more items completed = you bank credits, which you can gift to other students

At any point, you may “gift” 1-4% of your credit to the student(s) with the overall lowest score in the class.

If you are working toward a C-contract (74%) or lower, the same 4% movement applies. You can only complete up to four (16% movement).

PEER ASSESSMENT

At the end of the semester, your teammates have the ability to raise your grade to 100% based on their assessment of your participation, effort, writing, contribution, collaboration, brilliance, leadership, communication skills—etc. Peers only have the ability to raise a grade and not dock the grade.

Graduate students

Graduate students will be expected to complete their own case study of an ethical/advocacy-focused event that showcases their knowledge of concepts presented in class. This may include primary and/or secondary research, and will culminate in a presentation to the whole class at the end of the semester. Students are encouraged to submit their case studies to a conference, such as the AEJMC Colloquium, at the end of the semester.

COVID-19 protocols for this course

COVID-19 Health and Safety Policy - Masks and Social Distancing

Faculty, staff, students and visitors are expected to monitor current health and safety measure requirements posted to our website and shared through other official

communication channels including, but not limited to University email. Definitions related to those requirements and enforcement mechanisms appear in the [COVID-19 Health and Safety Policy \(GE2040\)](#). **Please be reminded that the University currently requires that all persons, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors and in places where appropriate social distancing is not possible.**

Classroom experiences from recent semesters have shown that the campus community generally understands and complies voluntarily with the mask requirement. The policy does permit faculty members to take action for non-compliance of mask use. Additionally, if students have concerns about faculty or staff mask use, contact Human Resources at hr@memphis.edu or 901.678.3573. Faculty who are delivering on-campus instruction may remove their face mask to teach, provided they are located within a delineated teaching area that is no less than 6 feet from students.

Student Health

Students who are experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing or a higher than normal temperature should inform me by email so they can be excused from class and should stay home. Students should contact their health care provider or the Student Health Center at <https://www.memphis.edu/health/>.

Students who have a positive COVID-19 test should contact the Dean of Students at deanofstudents@memphis.edu or 901.678.2187.

Testing & Notification

The University will continue to provide testing for the entire campus community. The details regarding test availability and locations can be found [here](#). Do not come to campus if you are experiencing symptoms, are in isolation or quarantine due to positive test results or exposure, pending test results, or have reason to believe you have come in contact with the virus.

Student Resources

Students who need additional resources can contact the Dean of Students Office at <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php>.

Guidelines for classes, labs and equipment in Meeman Journalism Building in Fall 2021

- Anyone feeling sick should stay home.
- Social distance from all others at least 6 feet when possible.
- Wear a mask at all times when in University buildings and outside when social distancing isn't possible.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer regularly.
- No more than one person in the elevator at a time.

- Disinfect your workstation before and after use, including desks, keyboards, mice and screens. Wash your hands after cleaning.
- Air purifiers must run at all times during class meetings.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a basic schedule for topics and major assignments over the course of the semester. Although every effort will be made to stick with this schedule, please understand that changes to the schedule may occur. All changes will be announced as soon as possible. All assignments are due on Sunday at 11:59 p.m. C.T. unless otherwise noted. More in-depth lecture topics on eCourseware.

Module 1: Public Relations Ethics

Week 1, August 23: Course overview; foundations of ethics and public relations

Readings: Read the syllabus, get familiar with eCourseware and the assignments
 Assignments: Get to know you survey

Week 2, August 30: Ethics: Truth, lies, and being “good”

Readings: Chapter 1-3
 Assignments: Establishing contracts with your group

NOTE: September 5 is the LAST DAY TO DROP.

Week 3, September 6: Rights, rules, and wrongs

Monday, 9/6: Labor Day
 Readings: Chapter 4-6
 Assignments: Pitch due 9/12

Week 4, September 13: Your ethics

Readings: Chapter 7-8
 Assignments: Revisit contracts, meet as a team to talk about case study plan

Happy Rosh Hashanah (Sept. 18-20)

Week 5, September 20: Personal issues

Readings: Chapter 9-10
 Assignments: Synopsis & problem/opportunity identification due 9/26

Yom Kippur (Sept. 27-28)

Week 6, September 27: Ethics & organizations

Readings: Chapter 16-17
 Assignments: Overview of organizations/stakeholders due 10/3

Week 7, October 4: Looking to the future

Readings: Chapter 18

Assignments: No assignment

Week 8, October 11: Fall Break (10/9-12) & Recovery Week (10/13-17)

Recovery week: No class, no assignments, no readings for the full week.

NOTE: October 15 is the last day to WITHDRAW (Courses dropped during this period will have "W" grades assigned and will appear on your transcript. Courses cannot be dropped online after this period).

Module two: The Role of Ethics in Advocacy Work

Week 9, October 18: Advocacy and activism: What is the difference?

Readings: eCourseware

Assignments: Key issues at play (secondary research) due 10/24

Week 10, October 25: How to think about digital advocacy

Readings: Chapter 11-12

Assignments: Organization's response due 10/31

Week 11, November 1: Social Movements

Readings: eCourseware

Assignments: Business Impacts due 11/7

Week 12, November 8: Communities of influence and practice

Readings: Chapter 13

Assignments: No assignment

Week 13, November 15: Self care, collective care, and compassion fatigue

Readings: eCourseware, Chapter 14

Assignments: Evaluation & next steps due 11/21

Week 14, November 22: Recovery week & Thanksgiving break

Recovery week: No class, no assignments, no readings for the full week.

Week 15, November 29: Last week into finals week

Last class, Nov. 30: Presentations with slides due 11/30 during class

Last full day, Dec. 1

Study Day, Dec. 2

Exams week: December 3-9, 2021

Assignments: Final case study due 10/9 at 12:30 p.m. CT (this is the end of your final exam time)

Happy Hanukkah! (Dec. 10-18)

Merry Christmas! (Dec. 25)

Happy New Year! (Jan. 1)