

# Media Relations

PBRL 4430-M90

Fall 2022

Online

**Prof. Tori Cliff**

**Office:** virtual via Zoom or phone

**Office Hours:** TR 9-11 a.m. and by appointment.

**Book appointments:** [click here](#)

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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog description

Development of media relations skills, including advanced writing of collateral materials, presentations, pitching and media training. Build effective and proactive work strategies with media through various tools including news conferences, media interviews, and media campaigns, and how PR professionals must mix traditional with new media outlets to most effectively promote their clients and employers. Strategic tools and techniques for developing successful media relations will be explored.

### Prerequisites

Students must have successfully completed 60 hours of credit.

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

*Associated Press Stylebook* (2018 or 2019). New York: Basic Books. You are responsible for the latest changes, so I recommend having the most current version.

### *Muck Rack for Educators:*

We will be using Muck Rack this semester. Muck Rack is a journalist database, media monitoring and coverage reporting platform, that is trusted by top-tier journalists, entrepreneurs, PR agencies and Fortune 500 companies. This software will allow you to become familiar with the types of real-world tools used to identify contacts, disseminate messages, and measure multiple variables.

Each student will receive an individual login and will be responsible for following all rules and expectations set forth. You are required to use Muck Rack to complete assignments this semester and will need to complete online training courses on your own time outside of class.

Additionally, you will be required to complete the training requirements and become certified in Muck Rack's Fundamentals of Media Relations (free for students through the University Program).

Other readings will be assigned and posted to Canvas.

### Classroom format

The class will include webinars, assignments, slide decks, discussions, quizzes, presentations, and

activities. It is important that you personally have a reliable internet connection, and a desktop or laptop device (unless you are using a lab on campus).

**Class participation.** This class is hands-on, and there will be a discussion board available to all students within the class. While it is not required, students may find it a useful way to communicate with peers. It will not be monitored by the professor or impact grades. It is a space for students to have an intellectual exchange of ideas, or to ask questions/discuss class materials with each other.

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis eLearn home page: <https://memphis.instructure.com/>
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 4430-M90 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

### Course Requirements

**PR writing assignments.** Individual PR writing assignments will be used throughout the semester and will vary in length and format.

**Quizzes.** Quizzes will be given periodically. Read your materials and stay on top of weekly work in Canvas and you should do well.

**Media relations plan project.** You will select an organization/company with a problem, opportunity and/or initiative that requires media relations support. Your final product needs to showcase your understanding of media relations. You will want to have elements for both traditional and non-traditional media. Additional details on the assignment will be provided separately.

**Muck Rack Fundamentals of Media Relations Certification.** Each student will be required to complete the training and pass the exam to earn Muck Rack Fundamentals of Media Relations Certificate.

**Media training.** Media training can teach you how to use your words, tone and body language to deliver your message in a powerful way. Throughout the semester there will be assignments and hands-on exercises designed to expose students to the basic concepts of media communication, including on-camera interview drills and practice in preparing a company's/organization's spokesperson (CEO, subject matter expert [SME], etc.) to do media interviews.

### Grading

Assignment categories and points or percentage weights.

A = 100-90

B = 89-80

C = 79-70

D = 69-60

F = 59-0

### Other issues

**Media diet.** The very nature of our profession requires us to stay on top of today's happenings. Our responsibility as PR professionals is to assess their relevance to – and their implications for – our clients

and employers. Knowledge of current events, government, history and media is becoming more and more crucial. 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. Continue to feed your media diet with a good mix of traditional, specialized and internet news sources.

**Other media consumption.** While we are studying media relations, be a voracious, critical consumer of media, texts, stories, brands, experiences – and the messages sent about and within them in the media. Look for the exceptional and the #PRFail.

**Communication.** We will use [Slack](#) to communicate informally in the class. Please join the channel in my workspace called media\_relations. We will also use Marco Polo. Please add the free app to your device, set up notifications, and then text me your name and that you are in Media Relations class (i.e. I am Tori Cliff in Media Relations). Please use my cell; it is 731.803.2345. I will then add everyone to a group in Marco Polo so that we can do group video messages, or individual messages as needed. It is a quick and refreshing way to communicate. Email is also a great way to communicate with me. Please only email me from your official university email to my official university email: [tmcliff@memphis.edu](mailto:tmcliff@memphis.edu).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### *Week 1, Aug. 22-28: Introduction to course*

What do we intend to accomplish? Establish Muck Rack Account.

Readings: Ch. 1 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

### *Week 2, Aug. 29-Sept. 4: | Ch. 1, What Does It Mean to Practice Media Relations*

Defining Media Relations

Readings: Ch. 2 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

### *Week 3 Sept. 5-11: Ch. 2, Media Relations in the Era of Information*

The Marketplace of Information

Readings: Ch. 3 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

### *Week 4, Sept. 12-18: Ch. 3, Theory in Media Relations*

What Makes a Theory a “Good” Theory?

Readings: Ch. 4 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

### *Week 5, Sept. 19-25: Ch. 4, Understanding Audiences & Quiz 1*

Understanding the Makeup of an Audience

Take Quiz 1

Readings: Ch. 5 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

### *Week 6, Sept. 26-Oct. 2: Ch. 5, The Relationship Between Media Relations Practitioners and Journalists*

A Quick History of the Relationship Over the Last Century

Readings: Ch. 6 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

*Week 7, Oct. 3-9: Ch. 6, Ethics*

Personal and Professional Ethics

Readings: Ch. 7 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

*Week 8, Oct. 10-16: Ch. 7, Assessing News*

What is Newsworthiness?

Readings: Ch. 8 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

*Week 9, Oct. 17-23: Ch. 8, Managing Goals, Objectives, and Expectations & Quiz 2*

Connecting to Organizational Goals is Essential

Take Quiz 2 in Canvas

Readings: Ch. 9 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

*Week 10, Oct. 24-30: Ch. 9 & Media Training Workshop*

Tools of the Trade

Readings: Ch. 10 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

*Week 11, Oct. 31-Nov. 6: Ch. 10, Reaching Out, Making Contact, Earning a Response*

Who to Target?

Readings: Ch. 11 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

*Week 12, Nov. 7-13: Ch. 11, A Proactive Approach to Measurement and Evaluation / Media relations plan presentations*

Due: Media Relations Plans Presentations NLT 11:59 p.m. Nov. 13.

Readings: Ch. 12 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

*Week 13, Nov. 14-20: Ch. 12, Adapting Your Media Relations Program*

Becoming a Flexible Media Relations Practitioner

Readings: Ch. 13 and any additional content for this week in Canvas

*Week 14, Nov. 21-27: Ch. 13, Engaging with Diverse Audiences / Mock news conferences*

The Diversity of Journalists as an Audience / Practice what you've learned

Due: Mock news conference assignment NLT 11:59 p.m. Nov. 20

*Week 15, Nov. 28-Nov. 30: Muck Rack Certification Due and Quiz 3*

Take Quiz 3 in Canvas

Due: Muck Rack Certification in Canvas submission box NLT 11:59 p.m. Nov. 30

## ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

### Professional Values and Competencies in PBRL 4430

- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual

orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.

- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Apply current 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)*

- Learn techniques with writing in a brand voice to a diverse and global audience.
- Apply strategic thinking for communicating an organization's message to media.
- Produce professional grade content that can be used by an organization.
- Use industry-standard tools that support media relations work.

*Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)*

- Complete a large-scale project that relies heavily on the skills presented in class.
- Demonstrate an advanced ability to write in an appropriate and brand-consistent voice.
- Demonstrated advanced knowledge of the monitoring and social listening software required for the course.

### How assessment of student learning will be met

*Awareness*

- Become aware of how public relations professionals work with the media to share information.

*Understanding*

- Develop an understanding of the role of public relations in the media landscape.
- Develop an understanding of the processes by which public relations professionals shape messages when working with the media.

*Application*

- Creation of a large-scale project addressing different media tools, strategies and tactics as applicable to media relations practice.

## JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

### Portfolio requirement

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix or SquareSpace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files and writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

## Email

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the University.

## Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

## Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary).

Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a "job" in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

## Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade ("C-") in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

### **Academic integrity**

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

Further, as this is a journalism and strategic media class, students are expected to comply with copyright law and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. (*Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018*)

### **Online SETEs**

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIDs and email passwords; click on the gray "Student" tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

### **Deadlines**

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

### **AP Style and grammar**

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

### **Disability and accommodations**

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### **Diversity and inclusivity**

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Media reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

### **Weather policy**

Always check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the University is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day's work.

### **Student support**

Student who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting with campus or community support.

### **COVID-19 protocols**

If a student tests positive for COVID-19, they need to notify the Dean of Students Office at [deanofstudents@memphis.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@memphis.edu) and notify the University of their result. Faculty are expected to be accommodating with extra time for assignments; however, decisions will vary on a case-by-case basis according to the severity of the student's illness. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, students are encouraged to wear masks indoors, wash hands frequently and wipe down their workstations with sanitizing wipes before and after class.