COMM 240 – Public Relations Principles and Practices
Syllabus for Online Course in Fall 2018

Contents

Instructor Contact Information

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Course Description

An introduction to the principles, processes, history, and practice of public relations. Students will learn the nature of public opinion, the application of problem-solving processes to case studies, and the use of persuasion and marketing skills in public relations practice by developing a public relations plan for a client.

Prerequisites

COMM 211- Fundamentals of Human Communication

Special Note
If you are a media studies or public relations major, this course is a required course. If you're a communication major, it counts as one three-credit communication elective.

Required Materials

Required Readings
Diggs-Brown, B. (2012). *Strategic public relations: An audience-focused approach.*
        Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

Supplemental Readings/videos will be provided in various formats.

Also, we will use APA style. If you don't have it:

Schwartz, B. M., Landrum, R. E., Gurung, R. A. R. (2016). *An easyguide to APA style: Easyguide series* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Technical Requirements

1. Internet access with adequate bandwidth for viewing videos as well as uploading and downloading documents.
2. Installation and ability to use Microsoft Office programs: Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

Course Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, student competencies should include:
1. The ability to define public relations and its various functions in organizations and society.
2. An understanding of the historical development of public relations.
3. an understanding of the characteristics and roles of public relations practitioners within the various venues where they practice
4. The ability to implement the four-step public relations process.
5. The ability to design PR plans and proposals.
6. An understanding of the differences between internal and external publics and the various media and methods used to reach them.
7. An appreciation of the importance of positive and ethical media relations for public relations practitioners.
8. The ability to work with a group to develop and present a proposal that addresses a public relations problem and/or opportunity for a client.

Nature of this course

Online courses are not easy. They require a great deal of responsibility and time management. Prepare accordingly. The activities in this course include textbook readings and mini tests, discussions surrounding public relations concepts, current events, case studies, and a public relations proposal. I will include PowerPoints with each chapter. In the notes section of my PowerPoints, you will find supplemental information including actual notes and videos that will help drive the points home. When faced with a concept you do not understand, make your first step identifying all that you do know about the problem. Identify resources that can help you fill the gaps in your understanding. These will include your text, your classmates, online academic support resources and your instructor. Many times as you try to put your understanding into writing, the light will dawn.

Organization of Course:

The organization of this course is in modules. Each module has its own set of modular outcomes. Each module is located in a separate folder in the Content section of the course. To begin the course, go to the Content section at the left of the course home page. **Click on the Start Here folder**. This first folder sets the stage for the class and must be finished by end-of-day (11:59 PM) on the second day of class, Friday, January 11. Specific due dates for all remaining activities are specified within the instructions and also noted on the calendar for the course.

Module	Activity Time	Topics	Assignments Due
Start Here!	Jan. 9-11	Introduction to the course & the people in it	SMT DB
1	Jan. 9-12	Ch. 1: What is Public Relations? Ch. 2: Who are PR Practitioners?	MTs
2	Jan. 13-19	Ch. 3: PR History *(Last day of add/drop- 1/15)*	DB MT
3	Jan. 20-26	Ch. 4: Strategy in PR	DB MT
4	Jan. 27- Feb. 2	Ch. 5: Understanding Audiences	DB MT **CB**
5	Feb. 3-9	Ch. 6: Researching Effectively	DB MT

6	Feb. 10-16	Ch. 17-20 *YOUR CHOICE	DB MT PRH
7	Feb. 17-23	Ch. 9: Understanding Public Relations Theory **-Meet with FP Group**	DB MT **FP1**
8	Feb. 24-Mar. 2	Ch. 10: Discovery & Analysis **-Submit Part II of FP**	DB MT **FP2**
9	Mar. 3-9	• **SPRING BREAK!**	
10	Mar. 10-16 (Last day to withdraw 3/15)	Ch. 11: Program Planning	DB MT **CB**
11	Mar. 17-23	Ch. 12: Campaign Implementation **-Submit Part III of FP**	DB MT **FP3**
12	Mar. 24-30	Ch. 14: Written Tactics Ch. 15: Spoken Tactics Ch. 16: Visual Media & Interactive Media Tactics	DB MTs
13	Mar. 31-Apr. 6	**Work with Groups** -**Submit Part IV of FP**	DB **FP4**
14	Apr. 7-13	Ch. 7: Adhering to Ethical Practices & Meeting Professional Standards	DB MT
15	Apr. 14-20	**Work on FP** -Proofread project	**CB**
16	April 21-27	• Last day of classes: Wednesday, April 24 • Reading Day: Thursday, April 25 • Finals: Friday, April 26- Tuesday, April 30	**FP EVAL**

Assignment Descriptions

With the exception of the mini-tests and discussion posts, all assignments must be submitted as a Word document. Assignments submitted in any other format will not be graded (because I cannot open them), and will adhere to the late assignment policy. I'm looking at you, Mac users.

Mini-tests:

The mini-tests will be based on the assigned textbook readings and PowerPoints that correspond with the chapters. There are a total of 15 mini tests, not including the syllabus quiz. These are due by **Saturday at 11:59 pm** of each module week. For example, the Week 1 mini-tests are due Saturday, January 12 by 11:59 pm. I am not looking over your shoulder to determine if you are using your learning materials when you take your quizzes. Push yourself to rely on your own brain as a diagnostic.

Discussion Board Guidelines:

Discussions are an important part of this course. A discussion board is the centerpiece of our activities within each of weekly modules. **For each discussion of each module**, you will choose and read an article from the current week (starting the prior Wednesday to the Wednesday the discussion post is due) on www.prweek.com/us that interests you. You **cannot** choose the same article as someone else. The first paragraph of your discussion post should summarize what happened in the article, why it happened, and what you see as the most important lesson from the case. The second paragraph should explain how the article related to the major concepts in the book. If there was a mishap or an issue, explain what you would do to improve. If something went well, explain why you think the organization was successful. **Make sure to include the link to your article at the end of the post. If you do not, you will not receive points.**

Due Dates: Original posts are due each Wednesday by 11:59 pm. Responses to posts are due each Friday by 11:59 pm. After the due date for the initial blog post, there is a 48 hour period for responses. These dates are noted on the Blackboard calendar. My aim is to provide enough flexibility in the calendar to allow for your various schedules. At the same time, we have to keep up a certain pace to make certain that we work methodically through the assignments and avoid a pile-up of assignments at the end of the course. You can always make these posts sooner than the date due and even work ahead.

Discussion Board Etiquette:
How you post a message to a topic is just as important as what you post. If your behavior does not follow the course etiquette standards stated below, the grade you receive for a posting may suffer.

- The instructor reserves the right to remove any discussion messages that display inappropriate language or content. Do not use offensive language.
- Rudeness or slamming will not be tolerated.
- Show respect for your fellow students, even if you disagree with something that was stated.
- Clearly state what you believe, even if it means that you're disagreeing with someone. Never, however, respond in anger – take care to discuss ideas, not the person.

Grading:
Topic discussion posts will be graded during the week following the date that the discussions are due. 20 total points are possible for each discussion topic. You will post 1 original post and respond to at least 2 classmate's posts each week. The discussion topic will be provided in each module. In determining your grade, the following components are considered (see the *Grading Rubric for Discussions* in the section that follows for a complete breakdown):

Criteria	Critical Analysis	Relevance to Post	Contribution to Learning Community	Quality of Writing	Timeliness
Exemplary **(4 points)**	Response goes beyond the understanding of the content and includes relevant information from outside sources to support the main points.	Post is relevant to the discussion content and discusses other outside sources relevant to the content.	Attempts to motivate further discussion beyond the required participation. Interacts freely.	Free of grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors. Writing style promotes communication.	Original posts are added during the first half of the discussion period.
Proficient **(3 points)**	Response indicates an understanding of the content including concepts and terminology. Proper citation.	Post is related to the content of the discussion content.	Responses contribute to the discussion by asking related questions, elaborating on relevant topics discussed in post, or making an educated oppositional statement.	Mostly free of grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors. Writing style mostly promotes communication.	Original posts are present, but may have been posted during the last half of the discussion period.
Limited **(2 points)**	Response does not go beyond summarizing the reading. Little or no reference to outside sources or relevant current applications. Incorrect or no citations.	Responses mention the reading, but does not discuss any points from the reading. Response is short and/or irrelevant to the post.	Responses sometimes contribute to the discussion by asking related questions, elaborating on relevant topics discussed in post, or making an educated oppositional statement.	Some grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors.	Original posts are added at the last minute, leaving no time for classmates to respond.
Incorrect **(1 point)**	Little or no evidence that the readings were completed or understood.	Response is all opinion-based or anecdotal evidence. Does not reference the content.	Feedback is irrelevant or says something along the lines of, "I agree with her."	Use of texting/informal language; several grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors.	Post is made after the deadline
Unacceptable **(0 points)**	No post.	No post.	No feedback to fellow student.	No post.	No post.

Case Briefs

(CB) Case Briefs (60 points: 20 points each)
Use the textbook to answer the questions from each assigned case study. Each question should be answered thoroughly. Five points will be assigned for the case brief's spelling, grammar and clarity of thought, and the remaining fifteen points on succinct and accurate answering of the above questions.

Handout

(PRH) PR Content and Application Handout (50 points): During Week 6, you will choose between chapters 17,18, 19, and 20 (whichever chapter interests you the most). Read through the chapter you choose, find supplemental information on the topic, and create a handout providing a summary of the information you found. The handout should be informative and readable. More information will be provided in the Week 6 module.

Final Project

(FP) PR Proposal (130 points): Each student will participate in a group and prepare a public relations plan proposal for a client. Clients and groups will be assigned by the instructor. The project will consist of several smaller assignments. Specific instructions for the project will be distributed at the time the project is assigned. **Each group is required to meet in-person.**

Each student group will be part of the COMM 240 PR Agency that will research, prepare and present a plan and proposal that addresses public relations problems and/or opportunities for our client.

Every group member must make a substantial contribution to each group's effort. Each student in the group will have the opportunity to receive the same grade for group assignments, although each student is not entitled to the same grade as the rest of the group. Each student will be required to submit an evaluation of both his or her contributions as well as every other group member's contribution to the team project. Thus, each individual's grade is subject to a performance adjustment based on student evaluations and conversations with the instructor and the client, and other measures of evaluation. When such an adjustment occurs, an individual's group-project grade may be higher or lower than the grade assigned to the group.

Course Assessments	Points Per Assignment	Number of Assignments	Approx. % of Grade	Total Points
Syllabus Mini-test	20	1	3%	20
Discussion Board	20	13	40%	260
Mini-tests	10	15	22%	140
Case Studies	20	3	9%	60
Handout	50	1	8%	50
Final Project	120	1	18%	120
				650

Above is complete list of all required activities.

Grading Scale

To calculate your grade, divide the number of points you have by 660 (the total number of points in the class).

93% & up	A	83-86.99%	B	73-76.99%	C	63-66.99%	D
90-92.99	A-	80-82.99%	B-	70-72.99%	C-	60-62.99%	D-
87-89.99%	B+	77-79.99%	C+	67-69.99%	D+	59.99% & below	F

Late papers or assignments:

Late posts or responses are accounted for within the grading rubric for the discussion board because late posts have an effect on the ability of your peers to finish their assignments. Other late assignments will lose 10% each day late, and will never be accepted after five days past the due date.

Expectations

Time
While the organization and the actual activities of this course may be different for a session offered during a regular semester, the expected learning outcomes and the time commitment required to meet those outcomes is the same. This is a full semester course being taught completely online. This means that all the time you would normally spend in class meetings. To be successful in this course, you should plan to allot 3-4 hours per week for "in-class" time which does not include reading the textbook or completing assignments. **I strongly recommend setting aside the same one or two time slots each week to treat as your class time in the same location.**

Communication
You are expected to communicate respectfully. Using formal English. Texting short-cuts not acceptable. Emoticons may be used to help convey feelings, but they are not a substitutes for clearly written statements. Because I will be eight hours away, the best way to reach me is by email. We can arrange a time to connect by phone, or by video conference if you want to talk through some particular aspect of the course. I will monitor my email daily up until 8:30 (EST) at night. If I receive an email from you, you can expect a response within 48 hours. It may be sooner if received during online office hours. If a question is asked that is answered in the syllabus or on Blackboard, I reserve the right to not respond, or reply with "Please see the syllabus."

Reading
There will be a significant amount of reading in this course. Some the reading will be in the assigned textbook, but some may require you to read an article online. When you are reading these materials, you are expected to connect the information read to concepts we are discussing and things you already know. You will be expected to demonstrate your understanding through mini tests and discussion boards. There will be no videos of lectures.

Academic Integrity
Academic integrity violations (including cheating, plagiarism, and facilitating either) are serious matters and will not be tolerated. See the West Virginia Wesleyan College Student Handbook for further discussion. Any violations of academic integrity in will result in, at minimum, failure of the assignment and likely failure in the course. All incidents are reported to the Dean of the College. **MAKE SURE YOU CITE ALL OF YOUR WORK**.

Student Support

I realize that a variety of academic and non-academic issues may arise during the time of this course. What follows are brief descriptions of the types of support available to you during the semester. More details and specific resources can be found in the Student Support course link at the left. It is just below the Content course link.

Withdrawing
Throughout the duration of the semester, you can email the professor and the registrar when you want to withdraw. The add/drop period is during the first week of the semester. If you want to withdraw from the class after that period, you will need to retrieve a withdraw form from the registrar, fill it out, and return it to the registrar.

Special Learning Needs
If you have a physical, medical, psychological, or learning disability that is going to or require accommodation, please let me know immediately. More information is found in the Academic Support and the Accessibility folders in the Student Support course link at the left.

Library
The WVWC Library offers information resources for students at all levels and all disciplines. Library resources are a key component of academic success. Google and Wikipedia as research tools will not lead to acceptable research assignments, papers, or presentations. The library's reference and instructional staff is available by phone, by email, by text, and via reference chat on the library homepage to assist students with research inquiries. Starting place for accessing library resources is here.

Technical Support
Use the "Technical Support" folder for computer or internet issues. If you cannot find the answer to your issue, contact the HelpDesk. Their contact information can be found here. For troubleshooting and information in general about Blackboard, follow this link or click the "Help with Blackboard" link in column on the left-hand side of our class.

Personal Support
Should you become overwhelmed during this course, there are a variety of avenues for working through this difficulty. Feel free to contact me by email or telephone. Also, at the Student Support course link at the left side of each page, you can find a folder titled "Personal Support." In that folder you have contact information for advisors who can help you. There are also a variety of links to guidance and practices which may help you manage this demanding period of time.

Institutional Policies
The Student Handbook is here along with direct links to the institutional policies on non-discrimination, students with disabilities and academic integrity.

Financial and Registration Issues
This gives you the contact information for issues relating to billing and financial aid.