About the class / Course Objectives

The term “public relations” covers a wide range of communication and relationship building practices: it's strategic communication, it's advocacy/activism, and it's a major component of media content. By the end of the term, you should 1) have solid knowledge of concepts, terms, and practices of public relations in a variety of settings, 2) understand how public relations practice by organizations shapes contemporary culture, and 3) have experience analyzing public relations problems. Throughout the class we'll balance two perspectives: as students, you will read academic research and journalistic accounts and ask questions about the role of public relations; as potential practitioners, you will read textbooks and industry publications to become familiar with the field.

The Iowa Dozen

We will focus on these elements:

• explore the history and structure of media institutions as we see how pr practitioners interact with mass media
• explore the role of media (with a focus on the public relations practices of organizations) in shaping cultures;
• use mass communication theories and concepts in public relations planning and communication;
• look at the diverse global communities that are publics for contemporary organizations;
• conduct research and write an analysis of an organization’s publics, a media audit, and a case study;
• use creativity and independence to develop a communication plan.

Reading


This is a breezy text that provides a broad context for the profession now. We'll add to it in class and through reading in other books, journals, web as posted on ICON. You'll also do regular reading and listening to keep up with news generally and in the media/pr industry.

What to Expect in Class

A mixture of lecture and discussion with problem solving exercises, group work, guest speakers, and videos. You should prepare for class by reading assigned material from textbook, public relations trade publications, and other sources. Public relations practitioners must keep up with news and issues; classes will include discussion of current events. I will count on you all to make this a good class by being active participants. Ask questions, share your thoughts and reactions—tell a joke (and give me a break by laughing at my sorry attempts).

Exam and Assignment Policies

Exams must be taken as scheduled. If you have an unavoidable conflict, talk with me in advance. In an emergency or illness, be in touch as soon as you can, in advance if possible. Exams missed because of mandatory participation in recognized student org activities may be rescheduled consistent with CLAS/university policies. Please talk with me if class obligations conflict with a religious observance.

Please submit your work as specified for each assignment. For major writing assignments, you will upload a copy to an ICON dropbox and also turn in hard copy. In some cases, I will ask for hard copy or ICON submission—read assignment carefully. Pages must be stapled. If not, I will base your grade on the first page. Unless I tell you otherwise, assignments must be typed. Please note: I will not accept assignments by e-mail.

Always keep a copy of your assignments. We all do our best, but papers or electronically submitted material can go astray. You are responsible for providing a copy if necessary.
Representing the work of someone else as your own or getting credit in two classes for the same work is academic dishonesty. While I encourage you to discuss assignments with others, I expect that anything you hand in is your own research, analysis, and writing. I expect that each person in a group has contributed equally and can provide a full description of his or her effort. Work for this class must be original—not revised versions of research or writing you have done or are doing for another class. Please talk with me if you have questions or want to discuss specific situations.

Late work is accepted only in cases of illness or other emergencies that you have discussed with me. Note: computer or printer problems do not count as emergencies; plan ahead; remember to back up your work.

Correct and careful writing is a basic expectation for all assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS/EVALUATION

Exams and quizzes 225 pts
Three exams cover lecture, reading, and discussion + current events. Exam format is short answer, matching terms, some multiple choice, short essay.

Public relations research and writing 100 pts
Analysis of publics (50) Research-based analysis of audiences for an organization of your choice.
Case (50) Summary and analysis of a contemporary public relations problem/situation of your choice.

News/trends/media 25 pts
Set up news reader account (5)
News of the week or Topics (10)
Read/respond to news articles (10)

Class preparation and participation 35 pts
Occasional short research / writing assignments to prepare for class discussion / in-class group work, possible quizzes. (Must be in class to receive credit)

Total- 435 pts / Final grade (A+ not used)
404 = A  
391 = A-  
378 = B+ 
361 = B 
348 = B- 
335 = C+ 
below 261 = F

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ATTENDANCE AND CLASSROOM POLICIES

You are responsible for your attendance; I won’t keep track. You will be most successful, of course, if you come to class regularly, on time, ready to be an active participant. Unannounced bonus points may be given for classroom activities.

You are responsible for all material, assignments, and schedule changes whether or not you attend class.

Please talk with me if class or an assignment conflicts with a religious observance.

I discourage students from using laptops or tablets during class and may sometimes ask they be closed. Studies show that students who use laptops in class get worse grades than those who don’t. A laptop or tablet is a distraction and a physical and psychological barrier between you and the rest of us. You are less likely to talk, less likely to pay attention to discussion, and less likely to remember what we do.

This will be an informal and, I hope, friendly and enjoyable class. Please respect your classmates, the J-School, and me by following these guidelines:

- no cell phones (that means turned off, put away, no checking messages or texting—really!)
- no food unless you bring enough to share (water, coffee, soda ok—don’t leave cups, cans)

If you need to use our class period for doing work for another course, reading the DI, you should do so—but please don’t come to class.

Arriving late or leaving early may occasionally be unavoidable, but please don’t make it a habit. If you have an on-going conflict with this class, please resolve it or drop the class.

TENTATIVE TERM-LONG SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS
ALWAYS CHECK SCHEDULE POSTED ON ICON

Week of

25/27 Aug  Intro to class / Definitions and basics / organizations/field
1/3 Sept  (continued)
8/10 Sept  Publics and connections / Origins of public relations as a practice
15/17 Sept  Legal and ethical issues (analysis of publics assignment due*)
22/24 Sept  (continued) / Exam one*

THE BIG PICTURE

PR / STRAT COMM PLANNING PROCESS

29 Se / 1 Oct  Research/audiences/communication
6/8 Oct  Strategies and tactics
13/14 Oct  Opinion, issues, persuasion
20/22 Oct  Putting it together
27/29 Oct  Crisis comm / Exam two*

STRAT COMM / PR IN ACTION

3/5 Nov  Corporations / Nonprofits
10/12 Nov  Govt relations / Media relations
17/19 Nov  Marketing / Entertainment,sports
24/26 Nov  THANKSGIVING BREAK
1/3 Dec  catch up / Exam three*
8 / 10 Dec  Group work and presentations (case analysis due*)

*Detailed reading and assignment schedules will be posted on ICON. Exam, assignment dates may be changed. You are responsible for all changes announced in class or posted on ICON.