

# Introduction to Public Relations

## COMM 2330 – Spring 2021

Instructor: Charles L. Ehrenfeld  
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Class Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m., CM 156.  
Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 9-9:30 a.m., 2:30-4 p.m.; Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9-9:30 a.m., 1:30-2:30 p.m.; Fridays, 9 a.m.-noon; or by appointment.

**Course Description:** This course is an exploration of the history and development of public relations. The course is a presentation of the theory behind and the process of public relations, including the planning, implementation and evaluation of PR campaigns.

### Required Text:

Seitel, F.P. (2017). *The Practice of Public Relations*. **13th edition**. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

### Assignments:

1. **Five-minute papers:** Near the end of each class, you will have approximately five minutes to write down what you thought were a few of the main points made on the topic covered that day or other thoughts about the class.
2. **Case Study Questions:** You are expected to provide written responses to four sets of case study questions that appear at the end of specific chapters in your course text book.
3. **Press Release:** The press release is an essential tool in public relations. You will be responsible for writing a press release from information that will be provided.
4. **PR Professional Interview:** Interview an individual whose primary job responsibility is handling public relations for a for-profit or non-profit company or other entity. You will be given a set of guidelines for the interview, and you will be expected to give an oral report and turn in a written report.
5. **PR Campaign:** You are expected to research, plan and implement a PR campaign for a for-profit or non-profit company, business or community organization, then provide a written and oral presentation of the project. Guidelines will be provided.
6. **Exams:** You will have two exams (one mid-term, one final) that cover the material presented in lectures and chapters covered in the texts.

<b>Course Grades:</b> The grading scale is:	90-100	A
	80-90	B
	70-79	C
	60-69	D
	below 60	F

Your grade will be determined by the following:

Five-Minute Papers (3 pts. each)	69 pts.
PR Ethics Exercise	40 pts.
Press Release	30 pts.
Case Study Questions (20 pts. each)	80 pts.
PR Professional Interview	50 pts.
PR Campaign	150 pts.
Exams (2, 100 pts. each)	200 pts.
Participation/Initiative**	5 pts.

\*\*Good public relations professionals need to show initiative in their professional lives. This portion of the grade is intended to reward students who exhibit such initiative in this course. The criteria include, but are not limited to: attending class; being on time for class; participating in a thoughtful manner in class discussions; turning in assignments on time (do not request deadline extensions); taking responsibility for your actions; and not whining.

**Course Objectives:** Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Define public relations.
- Explain how public relations evolved in the United States.
- Distinguish public relations from other management functions.
- Demonstrate how to organize and compose a news release.
- Develop an understanding of public relations as a management function.
- Describe the various contexts for public relations.
- Describe the activities of public relations.
- Identify an organization's key publics
- Plan, produce and evaluate basic PR campaigns using a variety of communications avenues.

**Absence Policy:** Because class participation is essential, missing more than *three* classes (unexcused absences) will result in your *final* grade being lowered by a full letter grade. You may be dropped from the course after four consecutive absences (at the discretion of the instructor). Students are expected to attend all classes in order to be successful in a course. A student may be administratively withdrawn from the course when absences become excessive.

**Deadlines:** ALL deadlines are absolute. You need to get used to deadlines that exist in the off-campus world. All assignments will be due at the beginning of each class, and any late assignments will be penalized harshly.

**Excuses:** Don't bother to try any. I've heard most of them and have used some of them myself. Only deaths of immediate family members (parents, grand parents, siblings – ONLY), or your own, may be considered for an excused absence. Of course, you will need to provide proof (such as the obituary notice). Student athletes, or those participating in other college-sponsored activities that require an absence, will be excused, with prior notice to me and appropriate documentation.

**Please Sanitize:** You're encouraged to sanitize your desk and work space prior to leaving class. If using a computer, sanitize BEFORE and AFTER use.

**Mask Policy:** Masks are required to be worn in all college classrooms and hallways. **It is the policy of South Plains College for the Fall 2020 semester that as a condition of on-campus enrollment, all students are required to engage in safe behaviors to avoid the spread of COVID-19 in the SPC community. Such behaviors specifically include the requirement that all students properly wear CDC-compliant face coverings while in SPC buildings including in classrooms, labs, hallways, and restrooms. Failure to comply with this policy may result in dismissal from the current class session. If the student refuses to leave the classroom or lab after being dismissed, the student may be referred to the Dean of Students on the Levelland campus or the Dean/Director of external centers for Student Code of Conduct Violation. Students who believe they have been exposed or may be COVID-19 positive, must contact Health Services, DeEtte Edens, BSN, RN at (806) 716-2376 or [dedens@southplainscollege.edu](mailto:dedens@southplainscollege.edu).**

**ADA Statement:** Students with disabilities, including but not limited to physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities, who wish to request accommodations in this class should notify the Disability Services Office early in the semester so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodations must provide acceptable documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Services Office. For more information, visit the Disability Services Office in the Student Health & Wellness Center, or call (806) 716-2577.

**Diversity Statement:** In this class, the instructor will establish and support an environment that values and nurtures individual and group differences and encourages engagement and interaction. Understanding multiple experiences and perspectives will serve to challenge and stimulate all of us to learn about others, about the larger world and about ourselves. By promoting diversity and intellectual exchange, we will not only mirror society as it is, but also model society as it should and can be.

**Nondiscrimination Policy:** South Plains College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-

discrimination policies: Vice President for Student Affairs, South Plains College, 1401 College Avenue, Box 5, Levelland, TX 79336, (806) 716-2360.

**Title IX Pregnancy Accommodations:** If you are pregnant, or have given birth within six months, Under Title IX you have a right to reasonable accommodations to help continue your education. To [activate](#) accommodations you must submit a Title IX pregnancy accommodations request, along with specific medical documentation, to the Director of Health and Wellness. Once approved, notification will be sent to the student and instructors. It is the student's responsibility to work with the instructor to arrange accommodations. Contact the Director of Health and Wellness at (806) 716-2362 or [email cgilster@southplainscollege.edu](mailto:cgilster@southplainscollege.edu) for assistance.

**Academic Honesty and Professional Conduct Policy:** The same standards and ethics will apply to students enrolled in this course as apply to public relations and media professionals. Violations of these standards will result in a failing grade for the assignment and immediate dismissal from the course will be considered. These standards include, but are not limited to:

1. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. You may not take material verbatim (word for word) from other sources such as previously published newspaper stories, books, magazine articles, the Internet, etc... To do so is to plagiarize.
2. Pay strict attention to spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Since the invention of the dictionary and spell checker, there is no excuse for a misspelled word. To allow for a misspelled word to appear in any assignment you submit for a grade is laziness. Any misspelled words or factual errors will be graded harshly.

**Civility Code:** As future public relations professionals, you are to communicate with each other in a professional and civil manner. We all may feel passionately about certain issues; however, passion is no substitute for a solid grasp of the facts and sound, logical reasoning. Disparaging comments about gender, ethnicity, religion, etc... will not be tolerated.

Disruptive behaviors such as cell phones ringing, leaving and returning to class while in session, arriving late to class, talking with others during lectures/discussions, checking your e-mail or Facebook, sending/receiving text messages, eating or drinking in class, etc... will result in a substantial reduction in the participation portion of one's grade and a request that such students leave the class. Cell phones must be turned off, or be on vibrate and out of sight, during this class. They may only be activated in individual extenuating circumstances after consulting with the instructor.

### **Student Learning Outcomes/Competencies:**

- 1). When discussing public relations and how it is defined, the student should be able to:
  - 1.1 Describe Marston's RACE model for the PR process.
  - 1.2 Interpret the PR practitioner's relationship with management.

- 1.3 Define what comprises a public and differentiate between the types of publics.
  - 1.4 Recognize and describe the functions of public relations.
  - 1.5 Define what has become known as spin.
  - 1.6 Describe the skills and characteristics important for the future PR practitioner.
- 2). When discussing the history of public relations, the student should be able to:
    - 2.1 Explain how PR got its start and some of the significant events that shaped it.
    - 2.2 Recognize the early PR practitioners and their role in its development.
    - 2.3 Recognize how PR continues to evolve throughout a changing society.
    - 2.4 Recognize the demographics of the future PR workforce.
- 3). When discussing the role of communication in public relations, the student should be able to:
    - 3.1 Explain the goals of communication.
    - 3.2 Differentiate between communications theories.
    - 3.3 Explain the communication process model.
    - 3.4 Recognize the importance of word choice in forming the message.
    - 3.5 Recognize barriers to receiving and decoding the message.
    - 3.6 Consider the importance of feedback to the communication process.
- 4). When discussing public relations management, the student should be able to:
    - 4.1 Explain how PR programs are created.
    - 4.2 Describe steps to developing a PR plan.
    - 4.3 Describe how to create PR objectives.
    - 4.4 Recognize the role of a budget for PR programs.
    - 4.5 Recognize where jobs utilizing PR skills can be found.
- 5). When discussing the role of public opinion in public relations, the student should be able to:
    - 5.1 Define public opinion.
    - 5.2 Describe how public opinion on an issue can be influenced.
    - 5.3 Explain the factors involved in shaping an individual's attitude.
    - 5.4 Explain how Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs helps define motivation.
    - 5.5 Define persuasion.
    - 5.6 Describe the fallacies or traps regarding public opinion.
- 6). When discussing the role of ethics in public relations, the student should be able to:
    - 6.1 Define ethics.
    - 6.2 Differentiate between ethical approaches.
    - 6.3 Explain how ethics relates to social responsibility.
    - 6.4 Interpret the PRSA Code of Ethics and apply it to multiple scenarios.
- 7). When discussing the role of research in public relations, the student should be able to:
    - 7.1 Explain the role of research in PR program or campaign planning.
    - 7.2 Differentiate between the types of PR research.
    - 7.3 Differentiate between the methods of PR research.

- 7.4 Explain the two types of sampling and types of random samples.
  - 7.5 Consider appropriate elements for designing a questionnaire.
- 8). When discussing PR writing, the student should be able to:
- 8.1 Explain the four-part formula for writing.
  - 8.2 Consider Flesch's suggestions for making writing more readable.
  - 8.3 Demonstrate the structure of a news release.
  - 8.4 Explain what taboo terms should be avoided when writing a news release.
  - 8.5 Apply the mechanical rules of thumb to follow when writing a news release.
- 9). When discussing print media relations, the student should be able to:
- 9.1 Explain the role of the PR practitioner in dealing with print media.
  - 9.2 Describe situations when publicity is needed.
  - 9.3 Define pitching and its role in media relations.
  - 9.4 Distinguish between the "do's and don'ts" to follow for media interviews.
  - 9.5 Explain guidelines for conducting a news conference.
- 10). When discussing the role of the Internet in public relations, the student should be able to:
- 10.1 Explain the use of web sites as a PR tool.
  - 10.2 Describe functions of the World Wide Web for PR.
  - 10.3 Consider questions that need to be asked when developing a web site.
  - 10.4 Explain the need for the PR practitioner to monitor the World Wide Web.
  - 10.5 Define viral marketing.
- 11). When discussing crisis management, the student should be able to:
- 11.1 Differentiate between issues management and crisis management.
  - 11.2 Explain the instant warning signs of impending crisis.
  - 11.3 Explain the goals of crisis communication.
  - 11.4 Describe the steps to take in dealing with the media during a crisis.
  - 11.5 Describe what should be said to the media during a crisis.
- 12). When discussing employee and consumer relations, the student should be able to:
- 12.1 Explain the importance of employee communications.
  - 12.2 Consider the questions to be asked before producing print or online internal publications.
  - 12.3 Explain the types of tactics for communicating with employees.
  - 12.4 Recognize typical objectives of consumer relations.
  - 12.5 Describe the special publics.
- 13). When discussing the legal implications for public relations, the student should be able to:
- 13.1 Explains the two parts of defamation.
  - 13.2 Differentiate between copyright law and trademark law.
  - 13.3 Define insider trading.
  - 13.4 Explain the keys to litigation visibility.

**Tentative Course Schedule**  
**(subject to change at the discretion of instructor)**

- Jan. 20      Introduction to the Course/Discussion of Syllabus
- Jan. 25      Lecture: What is Public Relations?  
(Read: chapter 1)
- Jan. 27      Lecture: History of Public Relations  
(Read: chapter 2)
- Feb. 1        Lecture: PR Communication  
(Read: chapter 3)
- Feb. 3        Lecture: Influencing Public Opinion  
(Read: chapter 4)
- Feb. 8        Lecture: PR Management  
(Read: chapter 5)  
**(Case Study Due: The Rise and Fall and Rise of Queen Martha, pg. 370)**
- Feb. 10      Lecture: PR Ethics  
(Read: chapter 6)
- Feb. 15      Lecture: PR Research  
(Read: chapter 8)
- Feb. 17      PR Ethics Situations
- Feb. 22      Lecture: Public Relations Writing  
(Read: chapter 15)  
**(Case Study Due: “Up Your Bucket for a Wonderful Cause ..., pg. 286)**
- Feb. 24      Guest Speaker (?)
- March 1      Lecture: Print Media Relations  
(Exercise: “You said what?”)  
(Read: chapter 9)
- March 3      Lecture: Electronic Media Relations  
(Read: chapter 9)
- March 8      Exam Review  
**(\*Press Release Assignment Due)**

March 10      **\*Mid-term Exam**

March 15-19 **Spring Break!**

March 22      PR & the Internet  
(Read: chapter 10)

March 24      PR Professional Presentations  
(\***PR Professionals Interview Due**)

March 29      Lecture: PR & The Law  
(Read: chapter 7)

March 31      Lecture: Consumer & Employee Relations  
(Read: chapter 11, chapter 14)  
(**Case Study Due: “The Tylenol Murders”, pg. 75**)

April 5        Lecture: Specialized Publics

April 7        Lecture: Integrated Marketing  
(Read: chapter 16)

April 12      Lecture: Crisis Management  
(Read: chapter 17)

April 14      Guest Speaker (?)  
(**Case Study Due: “The New CEO’s Trial by Switchgate Fire,” pg. 18**)

April 19      Lecture: The Future of PR  
(Read: chapter 20)

April 21      **PR Campaign Presentations**

April 26      **PR Campaign Presentations**

April 28      **PR Campaign Presentations**

May 3        Exam Review

May 5        **Final Class Day**

May 12      **Final Exam – 8 a.m.**