**School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of North Carolina**

Case Studies in Public Relations

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| Course Number: 431.003 |
| Time: 3:30-4:45pm, Mondays and Wednesdays, Rm. CA 253 |
| Laura H. Marshall, [lhmarsha@unc.edu](mailto:lhmarsha@unc.edu) |
| Office: CA 394 |
| Come visit my office Mondays and Wednesdays before class, starting at 3pm! |

**Prerequisite**: JOMC 137, “Principles of Advertising and Public Relations.” If you have not taken this class, let me know.

**What is this class about?**

“Case Studies in Public Relations” is just what its name says: a place where you'll study individual cases of public relations successes and failures and determine what elements made them succeed--or fail. You'll learn to closely examine the specific ways in which public relations professionals work to proactively present an issue or reactively respond in crisis situations, and how to enact the appropriate responses to situations like those yourself.

We'll examine public relations in corporate, government and nonprofit public relations settings, building on material covered in previous courses. This is a class that will help prepare you to work in the PR profession. We'll talk about the factors that affect how public relations is practiced every day, such as identifying stakeholder groups and relevant audiences, understanding message development, accommodating diversity and recognizing ethical issues. You will also learn how management decisions are made and how they can affect the job of a public relations practitioner, organizational issues, strategic communication and crisis communication.

**What will I know at the end of the semester that I don’t know now?**

* You’ll be able to knowledgeably critique public relations research, strategies and tactics (and know the difference between those two things), and execution of good PR practices.
* You will learn how to analyze public relations cases and recommend alternative methods of handling them.
* Your ability to critically analyze public relations practices will sharpen.
* You’ll be better prepared to handle the practice of PR in the “real world” when a challenge presents itself or an opportunity arises.
* As in many classes, you will work with a group to create a final project and presentation—and learn how to elicit the best performance from yourself and your group members in the process.

**Text and additional readings:**

* Public Relations Cases, by Jerry A. Hendrix, Darrell C. Hayes, and Pallavi Damani Kumar, 9th Edition (available as a Kindle rental as well as in the Student Store and on Amazon)
* APA Stylebook: You don’t have to buy a copy, but watch the tutorial if you aren’t already familiar with it. You’ll use it in reaction papers and your final project. <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>

**How to prep for class:**

Yes, everybody tells you to do the class readings. They’re right. Do them. You’ll be expected to discuss them in class—and I will call on folks who don’t volunteer—so read the cases, think about what you would do differently, and be ready to talk about what the PR people in those cases did right and what they did wrong.

You will also be expected to keep up on current news events and bring to class a short summary of a case you found yourself that you think was handled well (or badly) and be able to say why. We’ll use two or three examples of these every week, so when you see or hear of a good example take note of it and write down a few sentences on what makes it exceptional. You can find these in the DTH, online, in a magazine, or on radio or TV.

**Attendance policy:**

By now, you’ve been in college for a couple of years and you know that showing up for class makes a difference. You are expected to be here, and unexcused absences will make it much tougher to keep up. We’ve all had those days when it’s tough to get out of bed, but since this is an afternoon class you’d have had to stay up REALLY late to have that problem here. If you have a medical or other personal reason for missing class, and you know that ahead of time, email me and let me know. If you have three or more unexcused absences, each one will take one point off your final grade. I will notice if you’re not here and I haven’t heard from you in advance.

**Written work should look professional.**

If you worked for Lululemon, or Coca-Cola, or Instagram, and turned in a paper that had typos and grammatical errors in it, your boss would not be impressed. Same thing goes here. Typos will count against you; grammatical errors will too. Use Word for all written assignments. You can hand in hard copies or email them to me (via Sakai or UNC email), but use naming conventions for any electronic copies. By that I mean always name your files this way: lastname\_firstname\_assignment. In other words, marshall\_laura\_RP1.docx. (Or .doc if you have an older version of Word.) Doing that ensures that when I download all your assignments to grade them, you won’t get somebody else’s grade.

Late assignments require prior notification: if you are going to be handing in an assignment after it’s due, you must let me know first—before the deadline—and why. If you’re having problems, we can talk about it, but if I don’t know why an assignment is late I will assume it’s carelessness, not an issue we can work out.

**Assignments explained**

The case study is the major teaching tool for this course. Cases from the text and from the experiences of guest speakers will provide real-world examples of public relations situations. Group discussion of cases is the heart of the class. Each student is expected to have read assigned case material before the class in which it is to be discussed and to be prepared to participate actively in the case discussions. As you read each case, it’s helpful to organize information in terms of the SWOT framework, something that’s widely used in the professional PR realm.

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| **Organizational Information** |
| **Strength**: What are the internal features of a company that give it an advantage over others? |
| **Weakness**: What are the internal features that place the company at a disadvantage? |
| **Opportunity**: What external opportunities in the marketplace/issue are good matches for the company’s strengths? |
| **Threat**: What external events may cause trouble for the company? |

**Student PR Firms**

In addition to in-depth analyses of cases, a key teaching tool of this class is collaborative work with peers. The class will be divided into teams of four students that will operate as public relations firms. Each firm will have a single account/topic to follow throughout the semester and to present in-depth as a final project. Accounts will be determined during the second week of class. Teams will give a 10-minute briefing on the account twice during the semester.

**Potential topics:**

* Health (e.g., obesity epidemic, health care reform, apps or other technology to promote health & safety)
* Business/industry (e.g., green energy, “buy local” movement, foreign markets)
* Technology (e.g., social shopping, privacy issues)
* Environment (e.g., high-speed rail, alternative transportation, global warming)
* Entertainment (e.g., reality-show controversies, college athletics)
* Any other issue of sufficient scope and importance that requires PR efforts with multiple publics (see me).

**Course grading**

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| 1. [Peer Evaluation](#peereval) | 10% | |
| 2. [Class participation](#particip) | 5% | |
| 3. [Current PR Events](#current) | | 10% |
| 4. [Reaction Papers](#RPs) | | 15% |
| 5. [Team Case Study and Presentation](#team) | | 30% |
| 6. [Individual Written Case Study](#indcase) | | 30% |
|  | | 100% |

**1. Peer Evaluation**

At the end of the semester, your peers (those in your work group) will evaluate you and the other members of your group based on your attendance at group meetings, how much you contributed, and how well and promptly you did your group work. This matters. In the work world, you will also work in teams, and if you don’t meet your responsibilities it will affect your evaluations there—and your future career.

**2. Class Participation**

Recognizing that some people are shy, I will make every effort not to embarrass you. That said, you will be expected to be part of class discussions. If you don’t pitch in, I will call on you—sensitively and thoughtfully, but I will call on you. You wouldn’t be at UNC if you didn’t have a good brain, so use it and speak up: lively discussion helps you think, and brainstorming an idea only strengthens it. There are no stupid questions: don’t be afraid to ask.

**3. Current PR Events**

These are the cases you will find yourself. Those situations you see on TV, or read about in the Daily Tar Heel, or hear on the radio (if anybody still listens to radio news) or catch online. When you see or hear a case where you know good public relations has been accomplished—or would have made a difference if only they’d known how—remember it and what made it stand out to you, and bring that case to class. We’ll talk about those at the start of class to get our brains in gear.

**4. Reaction papers**

These are the written versions of current PR events, analyzing cases you’ll be assigned three times early in the semester. We’ll read cases from the text, and you’ll write about what one case focused on, how it went right—or wrong—and what could have been done differently. RPs will count for 15% of your grade.

**5. Teamwork**

On our second class day, we’ll form teams of three or four people. Each team will have a semester-long project in which you’ll choose a client and create a strategy for their approach to a public relations idea or issue. (We’ll discuss the difference between strategies and tactics in class.) You can pick the client as a group, choosing a company, non-profit, or other group that interests you.

**6. Individual Case Study**

You will choose a case that relates to the issue your group has chosen to focus on—each group member covering a *different* relevant case—and include in your two-page analysis the facts of the case, references to the case (where you read about it and any other sources you found), and your evaluation of how and why it was a successful example of public relations or an unsuccessful one. The idea is that you’ll come up with strategies and tactics you can use in your final project, and with each team member focusing on a different case you should have multiple good ideas to work with.

**UNC Honor Code**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has had a student-led honor system for over 100 years. Academic integrity is at the heart of Carolina and we all are responsible for upholding the ideals of honor and integrity.  The student-led Honor System is responsible for adjudicating any suspected violations of the Honor Code and all suspected instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the honor system. Information, including your responsibilities as a student is outlined in the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance. Your full participation and observance of the Honor Code is expected.

UNC does not tolerate harassment based on gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture, disability, or for any other reason. It is also a violation of the Honor Code and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Title IX of the Educational Amendments. If you need assistance with a harassment issue or problem, bring it to my attention or The Office of the Dean of Students, [dos@unc.edu](mailto:dos@unc.edu) or 919.966.4042.

Further, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

* Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
* Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
* Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
* Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
* Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
* Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
* Think critically, creatively and independently;
* Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
* Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
* Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
* Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
* Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

**Students with disabilities**

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Learning Center website at <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/ldadhd-services/> or call 919-962-3782.

**Diversity**

The University’s policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination are outlined at <http://policy.sites.unc.edu/files/2013/04/nondiscrim.pdf>. In summary, UNC does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression or disabilities.

**Use of laptops and smartphones**

You’re expected to bring to class a laptop or some other way to take notes: pen and paper are fine, of course. Know that checking Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter or other social media just to find out what your friends are up to during class time is **not** OK, and if you appear not to be paying attention you may well get called on.

| **Week** | **Date** | **Topic** | **Readings Due** | **Assignments Due** |
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| 1 | Aug. 20 | Introductions and syllabus (guest professor Dr. Nori Comello) | Read syllabus |  |
| 2 | Aug. 25 | What is PR? Action and process | Chs. 1 and 2 |  |
| Aug. 27 | Media Relations  Team assignments | Ch. 3 | RP1 |
| 3 | Sept. 1 | LABOR DAY: No class |  |  |
| Sept. 3 | Team project details; planning  Decide on a project topic |  | Project topic due by end of class today |
| 4 | Sept. 8 | Social media: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat et al | Ch. 4 | RP2 |
| Sept. 10 | Internal communication: employee relations | Ch. 5 | Present a case example to class |
| 5 | Sept. 15 | Cynthia Baur, PhD, Senior Advisor on Plain Language, CDC  The Clear Communications Index |  | Read **Index Score Sheet** at www.cdc.gov/ccindex |
| Sept. 17 | Community relations | Ch. 6 | RP3 |
| 6 | Sept. 22 | Team account updates |  | Present at least 3 slides to class |
| Sept. 24 | GUEST SPEAKER: Stephanie Brown, Park Librarian on researching your topic |  | [meet in room 285] |
| 7 | Sept. 29 | Public affairs, government relations | Ch. 7 | RP4 |
| Oct. 1 | GUEST SPEAKER: Rob Lamme |  |  |
| 8 | Oct. 6 | Investor relations: communicating with stockholders | Ch. 8 | RP5 |
| Oct. 8 | Team work session |  |  |
| 9 | Oct. 13 | EXAM #1 and group work |  |  |
| Oct. 15 | Consumer relations  FALL BREAK STARTS AT 5PM | Ch. 9 | RP6 |
| 10 | Oct. 20 | International relations | Ch. 10 | RP7 |
| Oct. 22 | Team account updates  Group work (if time allows) |  |  |
| 11 | Oct. 27 | Special publics: working with specific audiences |  | RP8 |
|  | Oct. 29 | GUEST SPEAKER: Rev. Beach, “We Do” campaign OR Cynthia from CDC? | Ch. 11 |  |
| 12 | Nov. 3 | Crisis communications: public relations in emergencies |  | RP9 |
| Nov. 5 | GUEST SPEAKER: Lt. Scott McBride, USCG | Ch. 12 |  |
| 13 | Nov. 10 | Integrated marketing communications |  | RP10 |
| Nov. 12 | Paper and presentation guidelines  Group work day | Ch. 13 |  |
| 14 | Nov. 17 | EXAM #2 and group work |  |  |
| Nov. 19 | Team presentations (first group) |  | Slides (if your team is presenting) |
| 15 | Nov. 24 | Team presentations (second group)  HAPPY THANKSGIVING! |  | Slides (if your team is presenting) |
| Dec. 1 | Case study feedback and wrap up  Course evaluations in class  Group work |  | Peer evaluations due |
| 16 | Dec. 8 | Final case study papers due by 8am | | |