

School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## **JOMC 435.001 “Public Information Strategies”— Fall 2013**

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Class meets TR at 1 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. in Carroll 253  
Office: Carroll Hall 223  
Office Hours: 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. on Thursday  
or by appointment

Faculty Biography: <http://www.jomc.unc.edu/faculty-staff-advertising-pr-faculty/byars-queenie>

### **General Requirements, Testing and Grading**

#### **Prerequisites:**

To take this course as an undergraduate you must have completed JOMC 153, “News Writing,” and JOMC 137, “Principles of Advertising and Public Relations.” Graduate students will have an additional special assignment related to the work in this class. I will meet with graduate students during the second week of class to discuss this in detail.

#### **Course Overview:**

“Public Information Strategies” provides a comprehensive assessment and understanding of the role of public relations professionals throughout government and the nonprofit sector. It examines the effectiveness of communication programs from the perspective of policy formulation and execution. The course introduces students to the broad range of activities and concerns that public information practitioners face everyday. It highlights the unique requirements placed on communicators who are simultaneously responsible for representing their respective organizations and keeping the public informed. Additionally, it focuses on the ethical responsibility and behavior of communicators who are entrusted with maintaining public confidence.

#### **Course Objectives:**

Mastery of course content will help prepare students for entry into government and nonprofit public relations careers. By the end of the semester, you will be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- (1) Analyze public information programs of government and nonprofit organizations.
- (2) Research and analyze internal, community and media relations practices.
- (3) Outline major challenges to effective public relations in government and nonprofits
- (4) Write a public information profile.
- (5) Synthesize how public information practitioners help contribute to organizational goals and objectives.
- (6) Use effective presentation skills.
- (7) Investigate career opportunities

We will examine the decision-making process within government and nonprofit organizations and how public information supports the overall process. In doing so, we will discuss key communication program elements, i.e., internal information, community

relations and media relations and their relationship to each other. Additionally, we will examine strategic communication and how it integrates the overall communication process and helps promote public understanding of organizational programs and activities.

**Required texts and materials:**

*The Practice of Government Public Relations* (2012), edited by Mordecai Lee, Grant Neeley, Kendra Stewart, published by CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group.  
ISBN 978-1-4398-3465-7.

*A Responsible Press Office* by Marguerite Sullivan, a U.S. Department of State publication available online at [http://www.america.gov/publications/books/resp\\_press.html](http://www.america.gov/publications/books/resp_press.html)

Additional readings will be handed out in class, or made available on Sakai or in the Park Library. It is also recommended that you subscribe to a Rich Site Syndication (RSS) feed to receive current news, press releases, announcements, speeches, and Pod casts generated by communicators representing government or nonprofit organizations that you choose to monitor. Reviewing print or online versions of *Government Executive Magazine*, *Congressional Quarterly*, *USA.gov*, *The New York Times*, *The Nonprofit Times*, *Charity Navigator* are a few helpful resources for monitoring reports on public information programs and activities.

**Supplemental Reading:**

Student-selected books about public information, public affairs, and government PR and nonprofit PR.

**NOTE:** Please consider attending the NC PRSA PR & Marketing Seminar, Oct. 10, 2013, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at The Friday Center

[http://ncprsa.org/content.php?page=PR\\_Marketing\\_Seminar](http://ncprsa.org/content.php?page=PR_Marketing_Seminar). Participation in organizations such as Heelprint Communications and PRSSA is also encouraged.

**Method of Study:**

Lectures and class discussion about government and nonprofit public information organizations are the major teaching tools for this course. Lecture materials will highlight the role communicators play in government and nonprofit organizations. Guest speakers will provide insight into real-world public relations activities and challenges. Each student is expected to read the assigned reading prior to the class in which the material is to be discussed and participate in class discussion. There will also be a number of class exercises where students will work in groups to evaluate the communication programs and activities of various organizations.

**Organization Presentations:**

Students will also be called on to present facts as well as analyze the effectiveness of public information programs and activities of various government departments, agencies and nonprofit organizations. Each student will have a single government agency or nonprofit organization to monitor and present updates on throughout the semester. You will also be required to give a 10-minute presentation in conjunction with handing in the written public

information organization profile (presentation dates will be listed on weekly course schedule).

**Verbatim Weblog:**

Starting in September, the class will produce and publish *Verbatim*, an online record of official statements made by public information professionals and officials. Verbatim will be published every two weeks during the semester.

The quality and quantity of student participation in class discussions will be assessed by the professor and figured into the final grade. Active and thoughtful participation to include no more than two excused absences and additional research is essential in order to receive an "A" in this course. Make-up work for in class exercises and assignments is not possible. NOTE: Class attendance is essential and absences will affect your class participation grade and final grade.

**Public Information Profile:**

Each student must write a public information profile on a government or nonprofit organization as a term project (see Public Information Profile Format for instructions). Profiles must be submitted in hard copy format in 12-point Times New Roman font and seven single-spaced pages in length (excluding source citations).

Work handed in by students is expected to be typed and as professional as possible. That includes presentation of material as well as the thoroughness and quality of ideas. Papers and exams will be graded accordingly with points deducted for poor writing, organization, grammar or spelling.

**Book Review:**

Each student must read and complete a book review on the topic of some aspect of public information, public affairs or nonprofit communication. The book reviews will be proof edited for publication on *Verbatim*. The professor must approve book selections in advance in order to satisfy the requirement. Book reviews should be typed, double spaced and 500 words in length. Use the heading format below to include the title, editor or author, publisher, copyright date, number of pages in book, price and pbk for paperback or hbk for hardback. Don't forget to include a recommendation on whether or not the book is appropriate as supplemental reading for future public information strategies courses. Additionally, the book review must be read, peer reviewed (edited) and initialed by at least one other student in the class prior to turn in.

Sample Book Review Headings:

*Taking Our Country Back: The Crafting of Networked Politics from Howard Dean to Barack Obama* by Daniel Kriess, Oxford University Press, 2012. 248 pp.\$ 24.95

*Communicator-In-Chief: How Barack Obama Used New Media Technology to Win the White House.* Edited by John Allen Hendricks and Robert E. Denton, Jr., Lexington Books, 2010. 171 pp. \$26.82 pbk.

**Examinations:**

There will be a multiple choice midterm exam and final exam. Both will consist of 25 multiple-choice questions. Make-up exams will be allowed only at the discretion of the professor. Textbooks, readings, in-class discussions and guest lectures will be covered in the exam. *NOTE: You should plan to take notes in class as the lecture expands beyond the weekly PowerPoint presentation.*

**Course Grade Calculation:**

Measurement percentages

Grading Scale

<b>Organization presentations</b>	<b>10%</b>	A=100-94
<b>Public information profile</b>	<b>15%</b>	A-= 93-90
<b>Book review</b>	<b>10%</b>	B+=89-87
<b>Verbatim weblogs</b>	<b>10%</b>	B= 86-84
<b>Midterm exam</b>	<b>20%</b>	B-=83-80
<b>Final exam</b>	<b>20%</b>	C+=79-77
<b>Class discussion/exercises</b>	<b>15%</b>	C= 76-74
		C-=73-70
		D = 69-65
		F = 64-0

**In-class reading assignments:**

All reading assignments are to be completed before the class period during which we will discuss a particular topic (refer to weekly class schedule for assignments). Additional readings will also be posted on Sakai. You may be called on in class to answer questions related to the day's reading(s). Remember, class discussion is an important part of your grade.

**Attendance:**

Attendance is expected and you are responsible for following all announcements and schedule changes made in class. There is no substitute for attending class, participating, listening, and taking notes. Attendance will be monitored, and I reserve the right to lower the course grade for students with unexcused absences. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to borrow notes from classmates.

**Honor Code:**

It is expected that each student in this class will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class, which includes outside writing assignments. Use of former students' writing assignments constitutes a breach of the honor

code and will be dealt with accordingly.

**Seeking Help:**

If you need individual assistance, it is your responsibility to meet with me during office hours or to set up an appointment for another time. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

**Diversity:**

The University's policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination as outlined in the 2013-2014 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/intro.html>. 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.

**Special Accommodations:**

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 Department of Disability Services call 919.962.8300. If you need LD/ADHD assistance or services from The Learning Center please contact them at 919-962-7227 or <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>

**Harassment:**

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.

**Career assistance:**

I encourage every student to visit the UNC Career Services Office in Hanes Hall and take full advantage of their programs and services early in the semester. Additionally, you should contact Jay Eubank, JOMC Director of Career Services located in CA162 for help in finding resources and referral information on possible jobs and internships. Additionally, I am available after class should you want to discuss the merits of a potential job or career in nonprofit or government public relations.

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION VERBATIM WEBLOG**

Students will work together in groups of four members each to produce and publish a monthly weblog titled *Public Information Verbatim*. The purpose of the weblog is to encourage you to stay abreast of the latest comments of public information professionals and provide you an opportunity to produce a public relations product for the Web. An editor, four assistant editors and webmaster will be chosen during the second week of classes. Verbatim will be published once during the following months: September, October and November. See weekly schedule for exact dates.

The weblog will consist of timely and informative quotes made by public information officers and officials who represent government or nonprofit organizations. Quotations should be short (approximately 30 words or less) and taken verbatim from the speaker's comments. Proper attribution such as the official's full name, title, the source and date the remark was spoken or published must be included with the citation. Students will conduct research to collect verbatim comments from sources such as public records, speeches, newspapers, magazines, electronic broadcasts, etc. Every verbatim comment must include proper source attribution.

As an online publication, the audience for *Public Information Verbatim* extends well beyond UNC Chapel Hill. *Verbatim* will be a professional product in both appearance and content. Archived comments will be resident and easily accessible on the website. *I will review (along with the editor) and approve all content prior to publication.*

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION PROFILE FORMAT- submit this sheet with profile**

Each student must turn in a written public information profile during the semester. Profiles will be graded as follows:

- Background and history of the organization, mission, values, funding (15 points)
- Evaluation of the organization's website (15 points).
- Identification and discussion of a key organization issue or ethical concern (20 points).
- Critical analysis of public relations, public affairs or public information programs and activities using SWOT analysis (25 points).
- Variety of multiple source citations (website, news articles, video, speeches, interviews, etc., (10 points)
- Overall paper organization, table of contents, spelling and grammar (15 points).

The profile should be seven single-spaced pages (not including source citations). Please put your name, date, and name of the organization you chose to profile in the upper left-hand corner of your paper.

Additional details concerning this requirement will be covered during class. We will discuss this project during the semester and I will meet informally with each student to gauge your progress. Your research and execution of the project includes the following areas:

1. Identifying an appropriate public information organization and current or potential future issues or challenges the organization may face.
2. Researching the history, mission, core values and management structure of the organization. In short, how did the organization begin? What mission(s) or purpose is it committed to addressing? How is top management structured? Where is the public information function aligned within the organization? What affect does the placement of the communication function have on the role of the communicator to keep the public informed? Students should gather pertinent information and background on issues involving the organization. The profile should specify how best to address the specific issue(s) using internal information, community relations and media relations programs. Research sources should include library, Web sites, print and video material on or produced by the organization.
3. Monitoring significant media coverage of the organization.
4. Writing a critical analysis of internal, community and media programs and activities and whether they are optimally integrated to reinforce desired messages.
5. Comment on the presence or absence of a strategic communication framework in keeping the public informed.
6. A separate page listing in proper format all sources used. Multiple types of sources required.

It is required that students contact a public information representative from the organization selected for the profile. The purpose of this project is to introduce students to the requirements of public information professionals. It should offer valuable insight into the day-to-day demands placed upon government and nonprofit communicators. Additionally, it should highlight the need for an integrated and strategic approach to communicating messages and keeping the public informed. It will also allow students to make recommendations on the best course of action available to communicators.

The public information profile is due on the day you give your final presentation.

## **ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications 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 current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.