

**MEJO 531: Case Studies in Public Relations**  
Spring 2019  
**Class Time: 5:00pm to 6:15pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays**  
**Room: CA 283**

Instructor: Joseph Cabosky, J.D., Ph.D.

Office Hours: 4:00-5:00pm Tuesdays and Thursdays, or by appointment

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Prerequisite: MEJO 137 – “Principles of Advertising and Public Relations”

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, you will be better equipped to:

- (1) Critique public relations research, strategies, and execution;
- (2) Address today’s public relations challenges and opportunities;
- (3) Research and examine a recent real-world public relations case and make recommendations;
- (4) Critically analyze a wide spectrum of public relations cases;
- (5) Practice effective written and presentation skills;
- (6) Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- (7) Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to public relations;
- (8) Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.

### **Required Text and Readings**

- *Cases in Public Relations Management – The Rise of Social Media and Activism* – Second Edition – Patricia Swann
- Additional Readings to be assigned and posted to Sakai, made available in class or in the Park Library

### **Sakai**

Other than this syllabus, important information can be found on Sakai. The UNC Sakai service can be found at <http://sakai.unc.edu>. Updates will be frequent, so check back often for important course information. You are responsible for any course changes that may be made on Sakai, including changes to the syllabus or assignments.

### **Class E-Mail**

Check your school email. You are responsible for any course communications I send through email.

### **Extra Credit**

It's rare you will receive any extra credit opportunities in this course. In the rare event that they occur, they will be class wide, so don't ask for individual extra credit assignments.

### **Special Accommodations**

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

### **Seeking Help**

If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. 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, an illness, etc.

### **Honor Code**

I expect that each student 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. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

### **Diversity**

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2018-2019 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and 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. Please

see more about our MJ Diversity and Inclusion plan here:  
<http://mj.unc.edu/diversity-and-inclusion>.

## **Accreditation**

The School of Media and Journalism's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here:

<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on:

- 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.
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;

## **Grading and Assignments**

### ***Course Structure and Preparation***

The case study method is the major teaching tool for this course. I will present lecture material relevant to class cases and provide real-world examples of a variety of public relations situations when appropriate. Group discussion of cases is the heart of the class. Each student is expected to have read assigned cases and be ready to discuss them critically come class time.

**NOTE:** Class attendance is essential. It will be impossible to get an "A" in this course without active and thoughtful participation in the discussion of the cases along with additional research. Students will also be called on to present case facts, as well as analyze public relations strategies for assigned readings.

## ***Professionalism of Work***

I expect all of your work to be correctly edited and professionally presented. Written assignments must be typed using professional guidelines, single-spaced and in a 12-point font, preferably Times New Roman. Print your assignment and turn in a hard copy to me. Please maintain a copy of each assignment until final grades have been reported at the end of the semester.

**Late assignments will lose 10% for every day that they are late.** Assignments are late if they are not turned in at 5:00pm on regular class days when assignments are due.

### **Course Grading**

Class Participation	150
Cases in the News	150
Midterm Case Study	250
Final Presentation	100
<u>Final Case Study</u>	<u>350</u>
	<b>1000</b>

### **Requirements for the Course**

#### **Class Participation**

**150**

This is a discussion-based course. To promote interesting and insightful discussion, you must be present and be prepared. Arrive on time for class. Be prepared to discuss the assigned reading.

The 150 points will be based on in-class discussion, attendance and tardiness. In class discussion points will be based on voluntary actions, such as offering your thoughts or asking questions. You will also be graded on me asking you questions in class. I will call on you and ask you questions about the reading and about your thoughts beyond the reading. So, do the reading and be prepared to answer questions. Not being prepared automatically results in a loss of a letter grade on your participation grade.

Negative participation, i.e., not paying attention, being late to class, using social media, distracting others, or not treating the course or others with respect will result in a loss of points.

**NOTE: Unlike some courses, do not think participation points are a cushion or a pad to your grade. You will not get an “A” in the participation section just by doing nothing wrong, i.e. losing points for being late or unprepared. You have to *earn* an “A” in participation, just as you would by studying and prepping for the exams in other courses.**

**Attendance:** I consider this a professional environment. In the professional world, there's no such thing as not attending a meeting or workday "just because." So, treat attendance as a requirement.

That said, I understand that life happens. Family issues, health issues, and other concerns may, and do, occur. So, everyone will get **THREE** absences with no penalty. They can be excused or unexcused. Use them wisely, as anything beyond these absences, whether there is a good reason or not, will result in point deductions. So, again, don't use up your three excused absences just because...something may come up later in the semester when you really do need to miss class.

For every class beyond three absences, you will lose 15 points or 1.5% of your overall grade.

Laptops: Laptops are for purposes of taking class notes or doing in class assignments only. If you are caught using a computer for other means, you may lose the privilege of using it for the rest of the semester.

Cell Phones: I reserve the right to answer your calls if your phone rings or vibrates. I'm also good at texting.

**If you are late**, i.e., more than 5 minutes late, it will count as 1/2 an absence. 15 minutes late and it will count as a whole absence. Class will start on time, so, even being a minute late will result in participation deductions, even if you are not 5 minutes late.

**NOTE:** Below are brief descriptions of the assignments. Full grading rubrics and assignment instructions will be handed out for each assignment during the course of the semester. You are responsible for following these assignment rubrics and requirements.

### **Cases in the News**

**150**

"Cases in the News" items are real-world, current news events that present a public relations issue either for an individual, a corporation or a nonprofit organization that you find on your own. These can come from newspapers, the Web, books (other than our class textbook) or magazines.

**Each individual** is expected to turn in a brief overview of the real-world example at the beginning of class **on their assigned days**. It can be handwritten or typed. Each student will also open class those days by presenting these cases. This will engage the class in discussion at the start of each lesson. You will open one class during the semester.

The card or document you turn in should include the following:

- Your name, your cited sources (can be any sources), and the due date

- Organization's mission statement or general purpose
- Organization's key publics
- Your reaction and thoughts about the issue/event -- Incomplete sentences are fine. These notes are to help you share coherently with the class.

Presentation of the cards: Expect to present these major points for 5-10 minutes. Presentations can be informal, i.e., from your seat without power point. We will then engage in class discussion about that current event for at least 5-10 minutes. Though informal, be prepared with your facts to fully engage in a discussion. I may ask you specific questions about the event and case, so make sure to have your event mastered. Beyond the above, I expect your presentations to also include: **a) your connection of the case to other cases we have covered so far in the course**, and b) one to three questions for the class, based on your case.

### **Midterm Case Study**

**250**

**Due: March 7th at 5:00pm**

- A written case brief will serve as your midterm exam. Case briefs are several pages in length (not including citations), typed in 12-point font, preferably Times New Roman, and single-spaced. These must be turned in as a hard copy to me at the beginning of class (or before) on the day they are due.
- Your brief will be graded in two parts: (1) the synopsis of the case situation/facts (30%), and (2) the analysis of the case, including course terminology (70%).
- The synopsis (Part I) should include the pertinent facts of the case including the organization involved, a brief description of the situation, stakeholders and the outcome. Save your critique/analysis for the second part. Use your own words; do not regurgitate what you've read. Present to me everything that's important and relevant so that I can properly judge your analysis that follows.
- In the analysis (Part II), examine what the organization did and then discuss whether its tactics and strategies would be considered effective public relations. Address whether the research used was appropriate given the situation (if available), whether the organization had measurable goals and objectives, and whether it accurately identified its publics. What messages were communicated? Did the organization formally evaluate its efforts (if known)? You should refer to other cases that we have discussed or will discuss to make a comparison or contrast. Your opinions should be based on what you have learned about effective public relations. Write this section from the first person point of view. Use your own thoughts. What would you have done, or did they do a great job? Be thorough yet efficient and demonstrate to me your ability to think critically. Though this is in the first person, be extremely professional in your writing style.

- Note: Grammar, spelling, formatting and other written presentation errors will be looked upon harshly. Typos, poor sentence structure, and related issues will lower your grade to at least a “B” on the assignment (one full letter grade). More pronounced presentation issues will result in a grade of “C” or lower (two full letter grades).
- **The above is just a summary. A full grading rubric will also be placed on Sakai several weeks in advance of the assignment.**

**Final Case Study and Presentation** **450**

**Written Portion** **350**  
**Due May 7th at 4:00pm**

- The purpose of this assignment is to act as a capstone to all that we have learned in this course. You will select another case example that is different from your mid-term assignment. This assignment is longer in length, allowing you space to offer a more critical examination of your case. This occurs as you will have learned more in the semester by this point than at the time of your midterm.

You will need to:

- Identify a problem, opportunity or ethical issue that an organization (for-profit or non-profit) faced that required significant public relations involvement.
- Collect detailed, thorough background information about the organization, including its goals, mission, values, financial standing, products/services, and history.
- Collect detailed information on the issue/challenge that the organization faced.
- Describe the public relations strategies and tactics that the organization developed and implemented to deal with the situation.
- Identify key messages.
- Research and analyze the media coverage, or any other relevant reaction and feedback, that the organization received as it relates to your issue.

You may collect information using a variety of search strategies, including the library, Internet and interviews with those responsible for developing the public relations campaign. Be sure to include communication materials and copies of significant media coverage, including web, newspaper or magazine articles where possible. (Inclusion of these materials does not count toward your page count.)

The written case study will be due at **4:00pm, May 7th**. Hard copies must be submitted. **No late case studies will be accepted.**

**No case studies will be accepted by email.** Your paper must include:

- A thorough description of the public relations challenge
- A well researched background about the organization
- A thorough description of the organization's response to the challenge
- A thorough description of the media and other significant publics' responses
- A critical analysis of the organization's strategy and tactics
- A thorough use of class terminology and comparisons to other cases we have discussed throughout the semester
- Suggestions that you would offer the organization's management based on what you know of the case and what you have learned about effective public relations practices
- A plan forward, in which you more thoroughly detail these suggestions for the organization moving forward
- A list of all sources cited in a proper citation format (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) (Please put these in Endnote format).
- **The above is just a summary. A full grading rubric will also be placed on Sakai several weeks in advance of the assignment.**

## **Presentations**

**100**

**Your case study presentations will comprise your final for this course.** Presentations will be made on the scheduled exam day for this course, **May 7th at 4:00pm. Because of the size of the class, additional presentations will be held during class time, likely on April 23rd and 25th. We will discuss assigning dates voluntarily, then by lottery if necessary.** You will make a 10-minute presentation that will include:

- A thorough description of the public relations challenge
- A well researched background about the organization
- A thorough description of the organization's response to the challenge
- A thorough description of the media and significant publics' responses
- A critical analysis of the organization's strategy and tactics, focusing on comparisons to class lessons and other cases discussed over the course of the semester
- Suggestions based on what you know of the case and what you have learned about effective public relations practices.

**AGAIN: NOTE ON ASSIGNMENTS: Additional Grading Rubrics will be handed out throughout the semester to assist you with your assignments; those rubrics will be the basis of your grade for each assignment, so make sure to follow those rubrics when completing assignments. The information in this syllabus merely acts as a summary of**

each assignment.

**GRADING SCALE**

A =	93.0-100%	C+ =	78.0-79.99%	F =	<60.0%
A- =	90-92.99%	C =	73.0-77.99%		
B+ =	88.0-89.99%	C- =	70-72.99%		
B =	83.0-87.99%	D+ =	68.0-69.99%		
B- =	80-82.99%	D =	60.0-67.99%		

**Note: I do not round up.**

**MEJO 531 – Spring 2019 SCHEDULE**  
[As of January 5, 2019 and subject to change]

Jan. 10:

Introduction

*Readings or Assignments:* None

Jan. 15:

PR Review – Theories of PR

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 1 & Appendix C

Jan. 17:

Media Relations

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 4: Intro and Case 7: Are You Pouring on the Pounds?

Jan. 22 :

Media Relations Cont'd

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 4: Case 8: Face Value; Case 9: Only in Texas

Jan. 24:

Media Relations Cont'd

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 4: Case 10: Two Employees with a Video Camera

Jan. 29:

Ethics and Law

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 2: Introduction; Case 2: City Utility or Cash Cow; Case 3: “In Washington, I’m Karen Ryan Reporting”

Jan. 31:

Community Relations

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 9: Intro; Case 27: I’m Watching You...; Case 28: “It’s the Real Thing”

Feb. 5:

Community Relations Cont'd

*Readings or Assignments:* Case 29: Hallmark Writers on Tour

Feb. 7: Consumer Relations

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 7: Intro; Case 18: The Five Seasons of Salem

Feb. 12:

Consumer Relations Cont'd

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 7: Case 19: Getting Away From it All; Case 20: Making the Potato Top of Mind

Feb. 14:

Consumer Relations Cont'd

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 7: Case 21: Sony PlayStation: It Only Does Everything!; Case 22: Kryptonite: Radioactive Publicity

Feb. 19:

Cultural Considerations

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 10: Introduction; Case 30 Quran Burning

Feb. 21:

Cultural Considerations Cont'd

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 10: Case 31: Fukushima Nuclear Meltdown; Case 32: Containing the Deadly Marburg Virus

Feb. 26:

Corporate Social Responsibility - CRASH DAY in class

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 3: Intro; Case 4: Food for Thought;

Feb. 28:

Corporate Social Responsibility Cont'd

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 3: Case 5: Apple iProblem; Case 6: Developing Wines with a Conscience

March 5:

Activism

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 6: Intro; Case 14: "Beyond Disgusting;" Case 15: Guitar Hero Strikes a Chord

March 7:

Activism Cont'd

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 6: Case 16: Break the Silence. Make the Call; Case 17: Undercover Video Captures Chicken Abuse

**MIDTERM DUE**

March 19:

Conflict Management

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 5: Intro; Case 11: "Lean Finely Textured Beef" or "Pink Slime"

March 21:

Conflict Management Cont'd

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 5: Case 12: The Politics of Pink

March 26:

Conflict Management Cont'd

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 5: Case 13: Deepwater Horizon Blowout

March 28:

Entertainment and Leisure; CRASH DAY in class

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 8: Intro; Case 23: Penn State Fumbles

April 2:

Entertainment and Leisure Cont'd

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 8: Case 24: Rush to Judgment; Case 25: Tabloid Tiger

April 4:

Entertainment and Leisure; Career Tips...by Joe

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 8: Case 26: What Price the Regal Reputation?

April 9:

Financial Communications and Investor Relations

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 11: Intro; Case 34: Paychex, Inc. See Big Payoff in First Investor Day

April 11:

Financial Communications and Investor Relations

*Readings or Assignments:* Chapter 11: Case 35: Best Buy Fights for Survival; Case 36: "A Plate of Black Beauty"

April 16:

Internal Communications

*Readings or Assignments:* To Be Assigned

April 18:

Review

*Readings or Assignments:* None

April 23:

Final Presentations

*Readings or Assignments:* Presentations for those Assigned

April 25:

Final Presentations

*Readings or Assignments:* Presentations for those Assigned

May 7: 4:00pm - 7:00pm

Final Presentations

*Readings or Assignments: Final Written Case Study Due at*

**4:00pm;**

Presentations for those Assigned