**MEJO 830.1: Public Relations Theory and Research**

School of Media and Journalism

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Fall 2019

Monday, 9:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Carroll 340A

**Instructor**

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Office Hours: M 1:00-3:00 pm or by appointment

**Course Description**

This course is designed to examine theoretical approaches and their applications in the field of public relations.

**Learning Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

* To examine theoretical/conceptual development in public relations research and practices.
* To explore methodological frameworks used in public relations research and practices.
* To learn how to independently plan, conduct, and report an academic research project or professional project.
* To generate a new body of knowledge in the field of public relations.

**ACEJMC Competencies**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies. This course is particularly relevant to the following competencies:

* Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
* Think critically, creatively and independently
* Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
* Contribute to knowledge 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
* Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work

The full list of competencies is available here: <http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

**Accessing readings and other scholarly articles:** Most of the required readings are available to you on Sakai under “Resources.” Many of the articles are available online, too. To find full text of these and other scholarly articles from off-campus locations, log in to the university library system first. Then search for the article on Google Scholar or an electronic research database. Our Park Library website has links to many tools under “Scholarly Articles”: <http://parklibrary.mj.unc.edu/>

**Recommended Reading**

Shoemaker, P. J., Tankard, J. W., & Lasorsa, D. L. (2004). ***How to build social science theories***. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**Research project:** You will research an area of public relations/strategic communication of interest to you. The main objectives are 1) to summarize the current literature in a specific area, with emphasis on the role of theory in that area, and 2) to propose a theory-based research study/professional project. The assignment will put to work many of the skills that you are learning in your graduate program, including: reviewing and synthesizing the literature, proposing innovative ideas in a field of study, and applying research methods to a proposed study. More details on the paper will be provided early in the semester. You will turn in the paper in stages (synopsis, annotated bibliography, first draft, and final draft) throughout the semester.

The choice of topic for the paper should be one that will advance your research and professional interests. The basic requirement is a proposal for a theory-based study or professional project. However, i**f you are a PhD student beyond your first year (or if you already have solid background in theory and methods), you are strongly encouraged to use the class as an opportunity to propose a study and to carry out as much of it as you can within the semester**. You should then submit the paper to conference, and ideally later to journal. Communication conference deadlines that fall around the end of the semester are early November for ICA and early December for AEJMC Southeast Colloquium. In the spring, other possibilities are late March for National Communication Association, and early April for AEJMC. Alternative projects meeting special needs and interests of graduate students may also be proposed with my prior approval.

**Grades**: The graduate scale (H, P, L, F) is in effect for all assignments for this seminar. Yes, it’s a bit ambiguous, so here are the basic grading criteria I will follow:

* **H** = Your very best work. These students read and critically engage with all materials. Their class participation and written assignments demonstrate the ability to apply the materials, extrapolate ideas, expand the material into new areas of thought, and contribute to the body of scholarship in the area. *Reserved for truly extraordinary work – I will actually say “wow!”*
* **P** = Your very best work. These students read and critically engage with all materials. They are able to apply the material and to extrapolate ideas in many instances.
* **L** = Students read most of the material but do not often critically engage with it. They are able to apply the material and extrapolate ideas in some instances.
* **F** = Students miss one or more classes without prior arrangement, do not always read the material, and fail to critically engage with it.

**Academic integrity**: As UNC-CH students, you are required to adhere to the UNC Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing when these actions involve academic processes or University, student, or academic personnel acting in an official capacity; and the Campus Code, which prohibits students from significantly impairing the welfare or educational opportunities of others in the University community. Haven’t read it recently? You may refresh your memory at <http://honor.unc.edu/>.

**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 Accessibility Services website at [https://accessibility.unc.edu/](https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?SURL=JO45WrxQokyh0LJ91CuugFytofEC1BDX5kVsLticLFEwH9BcpKHSCGgAdAB0AHAAcwA6AC8ALwBhAGMAYwBlAHMAcwBpAGIAaQBsAGkAdAB5AC4AdQBuAGMALgBlAGQAdQAvAA..&URL=https%3a%2f%2faccessibility.unc.edu%2f)

**Diversity:** The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is committed to equality of educational opportunity. The University 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. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University’s nondiscrimination policies.

**Professionalism**

Graduate students must be professional in every sense. Professionalism in this course means:

* Attending class throughout the semester.
* Being prepared for class (including completion of readings and thoughtful ideas for class discussion)
* Treating classmates with respect during discussions and other interactions. Discrimination or harassment with regard to race, gender, creed, etc., will not be tolerated.
* Completing class and project assignments on time. Your grade will be reduced by 25 percent for each day it is late.

**Accuracy**

The value of your work and creativity are neutralized by errors. You will be graded down when your work contains factual errors, grammatical flaws and/or misspelled words. Refer to the latest edition of *American Psychological Association Manual* on all questions relating to correct style.

**Form**

Prepare all work as if it were to be submitted in a professional setting. No handwritten work will be accepted. Unless specified otherwise, all writing assignments should be (1) submitted on 8 X 11 inch paper; (2) printed on one side of the page only; (3) prepared in a 12-point typeface; and (4) free of handwritten corrections.

**Evaluation**

1. **Paper Synopsis**: **(5%)** This assignment is a one-page synopsis or outline of the topic you plan to address in your final paper. This should convey why you are personally and professionally interested in the topic, as well as what the contribution to the field/organization will be.
2. **Annotated bibliography (10%)**: Critical assessment of at least ten sources that will help you develop your final paper. These sources should be academic in nature – books, academic journals (e.g., *Public* *Relations Review*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*), etc. Although trade magazines (*PR Week*, *Advertising* *Age*) may have useful background, they should not be the focus of this exercise. Instead – get your feet wet in the theoretical lit. Below are a few sources to help guide you in this endeavor.
   * UCSC Library – How to write an annotated bibliography: <http://library.ucsc.edu/ref/howto/annotated.html>
   * Online Writing Lab (OWL) – Annotated bibliographies <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>
3. **First draft (15%)**: This assignment is designed so I can give you feedback on what you’ve accomplished around mid-semester. If you’re doing a literature review for your thesis, you should include as far as you’ve gotten on: (1) Introduction to your topic – what is the purpose of this paper? (2) Critical assessment of relevant literature related to your topic. What have others discussed? What areas could still use some attention? (3) Research questions and/or Hypotheses – how will you apply the theory/theories you’ve explored in your thesis? You may access copies of completed theses projects and traditional research theses through the Park Library website. For PhD students or anyone planning to submit a conference paper, outline the methods section, including proposed study design, measures, analysis plan, etc.

1. **Final paper (30%)**: This assignment is the full proposal. Revise your paper based on comments I made on the first draft. Anyone aiming for conference submission should now write up the methods and also include as much of the results and discussion as possible. A deadline is provided, but if you are submitting to a conference, consider turning in your paper early so you have time to receive feedback and incorporate it into your submission.
2. **Final paper presentation (10%)**: This assignment is designed to give you practice presenting in a conference-style format and to receive feedback on your work.
3. **Discussion leader (10%):** You are leading class discussion based on the article assigned. After a brief presentation (10 to 15 minutes) in class, you will lead class discussion.
4. **Discussion questions (10%):** Prior to class, you must upload three questions at Sakai-assignment from the readings that are meant to start a discussion in class. Therefore, you should give context to your questions and explain what prompted your questions. Your questions might stem from what the researchers investigated and found, and how that contrasts to what other articles found. You could also ask how topics covered in the readings might apply in other domains. Your questions should be broad, not narrowly asking why they studied a specific element. You need to consider the broader implications of the research.
5. **Class participation (10%)**: This is a graduate seminar, which means everybody plays every class period! Please keep up with the readings and engage during discussions, etc.

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| Paper synopsis | 5 |
| Annotated bib | 10 |
| First draft | 15 |
| Final paper | 30 |
| Final paper presentation | 10 |
| Discussion leader | 10 |
| Discussion questions | 10 |
| Class participation | 10 |
| **TOTAL** | **100** |

**Course Schedule**

The following is a tentative outline of topics over the course of the semester and is subject to change.

**Week 1 (August 26): Course Orientation**

**Week 2 (September 2): Labor Day (No Class)**

**Week 3 (September 9): Fundamentals of Social Science**

**Week 4 (September 16): Research Paper Meeting/Paper Synopsis Due**

**Week 5 (September 23): Public Relations Models**

Grunig, J. E. (2006). Furnishing the edifice: Ongoing research on public relations as a strategic management function. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 18,* 151-176.

Cancel, A. E., Cameron, G. T., Sallot, L. M., & Mitrook, M. A. (1997). It depends: A contingency theory of accommodation in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 9,* 31-64.

Lee, S. (2012). Co-acculturation in multinational organizations. In G. M. Broom & B. Sha, C*ultip & Center’s* *Effective public relations, 11th ed.* (p. 220). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

**Week 6 (September 30): Defining Publics**

Kim, J. N., & Grunig, J. E. (2011). Problem solving and communicative action: A situational theory of problem solving. *Journal of Communication, 61,* 120-149.

Hallahan, K. (2000). Inactive publics: The forgotten publics in public relations. *Public Relations Review, 26,* 499-515.

**Week 7 (October 7): Focusing Relationship/Annotated Bibliography Due**

Broom, G. M., Casey, S., & Ritchey, J. (1997). Toward a concept and theory of organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 9,* 83-98.

Kim, Y. (2002). Searching for the organizational-public relationship: A valid and reliable instrument. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 78(4)*, 799-815.

**Week 8 (October 14): Rumor Psychology**

Difonzo, N., & Bordia, P. (2007). Rumor, gossip, and urban legends. *Diogenes, 54,* 19-35.

Difonzo, N., & Bordia, P. (2000). How top PR professionals handle hearsay: Corporate rumors, their effects, and strategies to manage them. *Public Relations Review, 26,* 173-190.

**Week 9 (October 21): International Public Relations/Public Diplomacy**

Gaither, T. K., & Curtin, P. A. (2008). Examining the heuristic value of models of international public relations practice: A case study of the Arla Foods crisis. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 20,* 115-137.

Lee, S. (2007). International public relations as a predictor of prominence of US news coverage. *Public Relations Review, 33,* 158-165.

Manheim, J. B., & Albritton, R. B. (1984). Changing national images: International public relations and media agenda setting. *The American Political Science Review, 78,* 641-657.

**Week 10 (October 28): Effectiveness of Public Relations**

Hon, L. C. (1997). What have you done for me lately? Exploring effectiveness in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 9,* 1-30.

Kim, Y. (2001). Measuring the economic value of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 13,* 3-26.

Lee, S.,&Yoon, Y.(2010).The return on investment (ROI) of international public relations: A country-level analysis. *Public Relations Review, 36,* 15-20.

**Week 11 (November 4): Corporate Social Responsibility/First Draft Due**

David, P., Kline, S., & Dai, Y. (2005). Corporate social responsibility practices, corporate identity, and purchase intention. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 17,* 291-313.

Hall, M. R. (2006). Corporate philanthropy and corporate community relations: Measuring relationship-building results. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 18,* 1-21.

**Week 12 (November 11): Public Relations and Social Media**

Briones, R. L., Kuch, B., Liu, B. F., & Jin, Y. (2011). Keeping up with the digital age: How the American Red Cross uses social media to build relationships. *Public Relations Review, 37,* 37-43.

Grunig, J. E. (2009). Paradigms of global public relations in an age of digitalization. PRism 6(2): on-line.

**Week 13 (November 18): Crisis Communication and Reputation Management**

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2008). Comparing apology to equivalent crisis response strategies: Clarifying apology’s role and value in crisis communication. *Public Relations Review, 34*, 252-257.

Holtzhausen, D. R., & Roberts, G. F. (2009). An investigation into the role of image repair theory in strategic conflict management. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 21,* 165-186.

Choi, Y., & Lin, Y. H. (2009). Consumer responses to Mattel product recalls posted online bulletin boards: Exploring two types of emotion. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 21*, 198-207.

**Week 14 (November 25): Final Paper Meetings**

**Week 15 (December 2): Paper presentations**

**Week 16 (December 7): Final Paper (Saturday 8:00 a.m. in class)**