
MEJO 531.3

Case Studies in Public Relations

SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND JOURNALISM

Tuesday/Thursday 3:30-4:45 p.m.

142 Carroll Hall

Sakai site URL <https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/c346e6a5-9d36-49f8-ad06-d8223b74d64c>

Fall 2019

INSTRUCTOR: LEE MEREDITH

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Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 2:00-3:15 p.m. or by appointment

Prerequisite

MEJO 137 – Principles of Advertising and Public Relations

Course description

This course will advance your knowledge and confidence about the practice of public relations to a level that will be beneficial as you begin your career as a PR professional or work in another field alongside PR practitioners. With its research and critical thinking components, the course will also be helpful for those who decide to pursue graduate studies and/or deeper research into effective public relations.

You will learn how think strategically and analyze real-world cases from a professional public relations perspective, while gaining a deeper understanding about such PR disciplines as crisis communications, media relations (social and mainstream), multicultural relations, consumer relations and marketing PR, investor relations, corporate social responsibility, government relations, and employee communications.

There is no substitute for serving in an actual public relations role. That said, this class, Case Studies in Public Relations, will help you assess various areas of possible PR concentration and prepare you for eventual PR challenges and opportunities. Throughout the semester, you will review, discuss, engage with, and evaluate PR research approaches, strategies, tactics and outcomes (both successful and not so) from different sectors, including business, sports, leisure, entertainment, travel, tourism, consumer marketing, trade associations, the media, government/politics and nonprofits.

This class that will allow you to play “Monday Morning Quarterback,” critiquing various aspects of how professionals in the field managed actual PR cases. By examining the art and the science of public relations from a management perspective – as broken down in real-world case studies – we will discuss key factors impacting how PR is practiced in a variety of organizations by both internal practitioners and external agency consultants.

The course will include numerous opportunities for class participation and learning from reflections of fellow classmates. There will also be opportunities to speak in class and lead class discussions, including both formal and informal presentations. This will be helpful in gaining presentation experience and public speaking confidence in the pursuit of future internships and career opportunities.

Objectives

By the end of the semester – through numerous PR case studies from the textbook and “in the news,” and two major case analyses – you will be equipped to:

- Fully understand the public relations process.
- Critique different approaches to PR research, strategy, execution and evaluation.
- Consider public relations theories, communication models and ethical concerns that are relevant to various case studies and PR practitioners at the center of them.
- Present to groups with greater confidence and effectiveness following formal class presentations and several informal speaking opportunities.
- Conduct research literature reviews stemming from the midterm and final case analyses.
- Address various PR challenges and opportunities that may arise in your post-graduation careers.

Course Requirements

Attendance: This is a class about learning to become a public relations professional. The first requirement of of a professional employee is actually showing up for work. If you cannot attend a class

due to illness, notify me by phone or email **prior** to class, otherwise your absence will be unexcused. If you believe you will need to miss a class for a reason that falls within the policy on University Approved Absences, please communicate with me in writing as soon as practical.

Regular tardiness (more than 10 minutes late on three occasions) will also be treated as an absence.

Required text: *Cases in Public Relations Management – The Rise of Social Media and Activism* – Second Edition – Patricia Swann.

Other readings: Reading the Wall Street Journal and PR media trade journals is greatly encouraged. You will have to rely on business journalism when it is your turn to present your “case in the news.”

Some resources for public relations-focused news outlets include PR Week (available in Park Library or online), Ragan’s Public Relations Daily, PRSA Issues and Trends, and CommPRO Executive Briefing.

Additional readings will be posted on Sakai, made available through the Park Library, or are accessible on the web. One good example is the PRSA Silver Anvil Award site at <http://anvils.prsa.org/silver-anvil-awards/overview>.

The Park Library News, Information and Academic Research Portal for “Case Studies in Public Relations” is at <http://guides.lib.unc.edu/mejo531>.

Cell phones and laptops: Cell phone use is not permitted in class. Silence your cell phone and keep it stored. Laptops and tablets are permitted; however, I reserve the right to ask you to close your laptops during presentations or class discussions. You are expected to use your laptop/tablet only take notes for class or view course materials.

Late work: Assignments are due prior to class on the dates noted in the course schedule. Work that is submitted after the time it is due will be accepted, but it will be docked one letter grade for being late. An additional letter grade will be deducted for each additional 24-hour period that it is late.

In-class participation: You will need to actively participate in class. 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.

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 affect your grade negatively.

NOTE: Unlike some courses, do not think participation percentage 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.

Reaction papers: You may be asked to write one or more reaction papers in response to designated class events. The events may include guest speakers and role-playing exercises. Reaction papers will be two to three pages in length, double-spaced. These papers will be graded pass/fail.

Cases in the news: “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 internet, or magazines.

You’re expected to turn in a one-page overview of the real-world example at the beginning of class on your assigned day. You will open class on your assigned day by sharing your case and getting us talking about what you found, what the public relations implications are, and assessing how effective the strategies were. The document you turn in should include the following:

- Your name
- Your cited sources (can be any sources)
- Organization’s mission statement or general purpose (if you’re talking about an individual, ID who it is and what the individual is known for)
- Organization’s/individual’s key publics
- Your reaction and thoughts about the issue/event (bullet points are fine)
- Two or three questions for the class based on this case

Expect to present these major points for 5-10 minutes. Presentations can be informal, i.e., without PowerPoint. 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. Please be prepared to discuss how your case relates to other cases we have covered so far in the course.

Midterm case study: A written case brief will serve as your midterm exam. This brief should be ten to twelve pages in length (not including citations), typed in 12-point font, preferably Times New Roman, and double-spaced. The MLA citation system should be used. These must be turned in to me in Sakai before the beginning of class on the day they are due. Papers and work from other classes are not accepted for this class.

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 (written portion): 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. Topics must be approved by me in advance. This brief should be 12 to 15 pages in length (not including citations), typed in 12-point font, preferably Times New Roman, and double-spaced. The MLA citation system should be used. These must be turned in to me in Sakai before the beginning of class on the day they are due. Papers and work from other classes are not accepted for this class.

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.)

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

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- 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 MLA citation format.

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 presentations: Your case study presentations will comprise your final for this course. Presentations will be made on the scheduled exam day for this course. Because of the size of the class, additional presentations will be held during our last two classes. 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.

Syllabus

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including due dates and test dates (excluding the officially scheduled final examination), when unforeseen circumstances occur. These changes will be announced as early as possible so that students can adjust their schedules.

Grading

A numerical grade scale will be used on the exams and a letter grade on the paper. Reaction papers are graded pass/fail. Here are the letter equivalents that will be used:

A = 95-100

A- = 90-94

B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86

B- = 80-82

C+ = 77-79

C = 73-76

C- = 70-72

D = 65-69

F = below 65

Evaluation

Class participation/attendance/reaction papers & quizzes (if any)	20%
Cases in the news	10%
Midterm case study	25%
Final case study	35%
Final presentation	10%

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. Using a set-up sound bite is a violation of the honor code. 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 C. A. Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Seeking Help

If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with me. 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 and Inclusivity

The University is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive academic community, and it prohibits discrimination and harassment. The University's policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination are outlined here: <https://unc.policystat.com/policy/4514917/latest/>. In summary, 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 or disabilities. Moreover, the University 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. I am fully committed to fostering the University's goals and enforcing these policies. If you need assistance with a discrimination or harassment issue, please bring it to my attention or The Office of the Dean of Students, dos@unc.edu or 919-966-4042.

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 Department of Disability Services website at <http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/>

Accreditation

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication'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 the last six bullet dots under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above.

Tentative Course Schedule

Aug. 20	Introduction
Aug. 22	PR Review – Theories of PR Readings or Assignments : Chapter 1 & Appendix C
Aug. 27	Media Relations Readings or Assignments : Chapter 4: Intro and Case 7: Are You Pouring on the Pounds?
Aug. 29	Media Relations Cont'd Readings or Assignments : Chapter 4: Case 8: Face Value; Case 9: Only in Texas
Sept. 3	Media Relations Cont'd Readings or Assignments : Chapter 4: Case 10: Two Employees with a Video Camera
Sept. 5	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"
Sept. 10	Community Relations Readings or Assignments : Chapter 9: Intro; Case 27: I'm Watching You...; Case 28: "It's the Real Thing"
Sept. 12	Community Relations Cont'd Readings or Assignments : Case 29: Hallmark Writers on Tour
Sept. 17	Consumer Relations

	Readings or Assignments : Chapter 7: Intro; Case 18: The Five Seasons of Salem
Sept. 19	Consumer Relations Cont'd Readings or Assignments : Chapter 7: Case 19: Getting Away From it All; Case 20: Making the Potato Top of Mind
Sept. 24	Consumer Relations Cont'd Readings or Assignments : Chapter 7: Case 21: Sony PlayStation: It Only Does Everything!; Case 22: Kryptonite: Radioactive Publicity
Sept. 26	Cultural Considerations Readings or Assignments : Chapter 10: Introduction; Case 30 Quran Burning
Oct. 1	Cultural Considerations Cont'd Readings or Assignments : Chapter 10: Case 31: Fukushima Nuclear Meltdown; Case 32: Containing the Deadly Marburg Virus
Oct. 3	Corporate Social Responsibility Readings or Assignments : Chapter 3: Intro; Case 4: Food for Thought;
Oct. 8	Corporate Social Responsibility Cont'd Readings or Assignments : Chapter 3: Case 5: Apple iProblem; Case 6: Developing Wines with a Conscience
Oct. 10	Activism Readings or Assignments : Chapter 6: Intro; Case 14: "Beyond Disgusting;" Case 15: Guitar Hero Strikes a Chord
Oct. 15	Activism Cont'd Readings or Assignments : Chapter 6: Case 16: Break the Silence. Make the Call; Case 17: Undercover Video Captures Chicken Abuse MIDTERM CASE STUDY DUE
Oct. 22	Conflict Management

	Readings or Assignments : Chapter 5: Intro; Case 11: “Lean Finely Textured Beef” or “Pink Slime”
Oct. 24	Conflict Management Cont’d Readings or Assignments : Chapter 5: Case 12: The Politics of Pink
Oct. 29	Conflict Management Cont’d Readings or Assignments : Chapter 5: Case 13: Deepwater Horizon Blowout
Oct. 31	Entertainment and Leisure; CRASH DAY in class Readings or Assignments : Chapter 8: Intro; Case 23: Penn State Fumbles
Nov. 5	Entertainment and Leisure Cont’d Readings or Assignments : Chapter 8: Case 24: Rush to Judgment; Case 25: Tabloid Tiger
Nov. 7	Entertainment and Leisure; Career Tips...by Joe Readings or Assignments : Chapter 8: Case 26: What Price the Regal Reputation?
Nov. 12	Financial Communications and Investor Relations Readings or Assignments : Chapter 11: Intro; Case 34: Paychex, Inc. See Big Payoff in First Investor Day
Nov. 14	Financial Communications and Investor Relations Readings or Assignments : Chapter 11: Case 35: Best Buy Fights for Survival; Case 36: “A Plate of Black Beauty”
Nov. 19	Internal Communications Readings or Assignments : To Be Assigned
Nov. 21	Review Readings or Assignments : None

Nov. 26	Final Presentations Readings or Assignments : Presentations for those Assigned
Nov. 28	Thanksgiving holiday
Dec. 3	Final Presentations Readings or Assignments : Presentations for those Assigned Final Written Case Study Due
Dec. 12	Final Exam, 4:00 p.m., CA 142 Final Presentations