**MEJO 531.3: Case Studies in Public Relations**

Spring 2020

Friday 1:00-3:45 p.m.

Carroll 33

**Instructor**

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Associate Professor

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

**Course Description**

This course will help you think and act as a public relations professional who deals with the demanding dynamic environment of corporate, government, and nonprofit public relations. You will examine real-world situations and strategies and discuss factors that affect how we practice public relations, including identifying publics, developing strategies, embracing diversity and recognizing ethical issues.

**Learning Objectives**

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

1. Critique public relations research, strategies, and execution;
2. Address today’s public relations challenges and opportunities;
3. Research and examine a real-world public relations case and make recommendations;
4. Apply the foundations of public relations to solve public relations problems;
5. Understand the transformation that has taken place in the public relations industry driven by digital technology and engagement.

**ACEJMC Accreditation Core Values and Competencies by this course**

1. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
2. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information
3. Think critically, creatively and independently
4. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communication professions in which they work
5. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society

**Required Text**

Swann, P. (2020). *Cases in public relations management: The rise of social media and activism, 3rd ed.* New York, NY: Routledge.

**Prerequisites**

MEJO 137 Principles of Advertising and Public Relations

**Evaluation**

The evaluation of coursework will be based on the following points and percentages:

Cases in the News **15% (150 pts)**

Midterm Case Study **35% (350 pts)**

Final Case Study & Presentation **45% (450 pts)**

Class Participation **5%** **(50 pts)**

**Total 100% (1,000 pts)**

**Grading scale**

A 95.00-100

A- 93.00-94.99

B+ 90.00-92.99

B 83.00-89.99

B- 80.00-82.99

C+ 77.00-79.99

C 73.00-76.99

C- 70.00-72.99

D+ 67.00-69.99

D 60.00-66.99

F Below 60.00

There will be **no round-up**.

**Attendance**

Attendance is expected, and you are responsible for 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 the instructors reserve the right to lower the course grade for students with a pattern of excessive absences (more than two during the semester). If you miss more than two, your final grade will be reduced a letter grade (or 10%).** If you are absent, it is your responsibility to acquire notes from classmates; the instructors will not provide notes outside of regular class time.

**Cases in the News** **(150 points)**

“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. The case should be from the **last three months**. 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 day. You will open class by sharing your case and getting us to talk about what you found, what the public relations implications are, and assessing how effective the strategies were.

Please type your overview (no longer than **1 page; one sided**) including:

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

● Case description

● 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.

● 1-3 questions for the class based on this case

Presentation: Expect to present these major points for **5 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 **your connection of the case to other cases we have covered so far in the course**.

**Midterm Case Study** **(350 pts)**

A written case brief will serve as your midterm exam. Case briefs are

5-6 pages in length (not including citations), typed in 12-point font

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:

● The synopsis (Part I-30%) 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, most importantly, do not plagiarize. Present to me everything that’s important and relevant so that I can properly judge your analysis that follows.

● The analysis (Part II-70%), 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 pts)**

**Due** **April 30 at noon**

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

7-8 pages 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 **12:00 pm, April 30**. 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.

**Class Participation**

This consists of in-class discussion, quizzes, and activities.

**Honor Code**

The Honor Code, embodying the ideals of academic honesty, integrity and responsible citizenship, has governed the performance of all academic work and student conduct at the University for 125 years. Your acceptance of enrollment in the University presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in this code and a respect for this most significant University tradition. Your participation in this course comes with the expectation that your work will be completed in full observance of the Honor Code. For more information, go here: honor.unc.edu.

**Student Accommodations**

If you need accommodations to participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about accommodations visit the Accessibility Services website at accessibility.unc.edu.

**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.

**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 or 919.966.4042.

**Use of Laptops and Other Technology**

You are required bring your laptops or tablets for class participation, lecture quizzes, note-taking, research, and other work as assigned in class. However, to minimize distractions, please do not use your laptop for non-class activities (e.g. Facebook, iMessage, etc.). You should not be on your phone during class for non-lecture related activities. Please consult with the professor if you are recording the lectures.

**Form**

All writing assignments should be (1) submitted on letter size paper; (2) printed on one side of the page only; (3) prepared in a Times New Roman 12-point typeface; and (4) one inch margin at all sides, and (5) double-spaced.

**Course Schedule**

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

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| **Week** | **Date** | **Topic** | **Readings** |
| 1 | January 10 | Course overview; Intro to PR | Chapter 1  Appendix A & C |
| 2 | January 17 | Ethics and the Law | Chapter 2 |
| 3 | January 24 | Corporate Social Responsibility | Chapter 3 |
| 4 | January 31 | Media Relations | Chapter 4 |
| 5 | February 7 | Media Relations continued |  |
| 6 | February 14 | Conflict Management | Chapter 5 |
| 7 | February 21 | Activism | Chapter 6 |
| 8 | February 28 | Activism continued | Midterm Case Study Due |
| 9 | March 6 | Consumer Relations | Chapter 7 |
| 10 | March 13 | **Spring Break (No Class)** |  |
| 11 | March 20 | Entertainment and Leisure | Chapter 8 |
| 12 | March 27 | Community Relations | Chapter 9 |
| 13 | April 3 | Cultural and Other Considerations | Chapter 10 |
| 14 | April 10 | **University Holiday (No Class)** |  |
| 15 | April 17 | Investor Relations | Chapter 11 |
| 16 | April 24 | Presentations |  |
| 17 | April 30 | **Final Exam (Thursday 12:00 p.m.)** | Final Case Study Due |