

MEJO 531.01

Case Studies in Public Relations

Fall 2023

TuTh 12:30–1:45 p.m.

CA 058

Zoom Meeting Link: unc.zoom.us/my/andy.cagle

Passcode: 8675309

Instructor

Andy Cagle

Adjunct Instructor

Email: acagle@email.unc.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

The course helps students think as public relations professionals who deal with the demanding, dynamic environment of corporate, government and nonprofit public relations. Students examine real-world situations and strategies, discussing factors that affect how public relations is practiced in organizations, including identifying stakeholder groups, developing strategies, embracing diversity, and recognizing ethical issues.

Since communicating with publics does not exist in a vacuum, this course will occasionally incorporate other disciplines that impact public relations practitioners, including:

1. Marketing;
2. Advertising;
3. Crisis Communications;
4. Investor Relations;
5. Social Media; and
6. Marketing Communications.

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.

Learning Objectives

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

1. **Critique** public relations research, strategies and execution;
2. **Identify and address** today's public relations opportunities and challenges;
3. **Research and examine** real-world public relations cases and make recommendations;
4. **Apply** the foundations of public relations to solve public relations problems; and
5. **Create** your own research and write case studies that reflect your knowledge and expertise as a public relations professional.

ACEJMC Accreditation Core Values and Competencies

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.

Class Text

Swann, P. (2020). Cases in Public Relations Management: The Rise of Social Media and Activism, Third Edition. New York, NY: Routledge.

AP Stylebook, 56th Edition (optional, but helpful)

Additional readings may be assigned and posted to Canvas, made available in class or in the Park Library.

Prerequisites

MEJO: Principles of Advertising and Public Relations

Evaluation and Grading

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

Class/Forum Participation and Attendance	20%
Cases in the News Presentation/Forum Posts	15%
Homework and in-class assignments and quizzes	10%
Midterm Case Study	20%
Final Case Study	35%
Total	100%

Requirements for the Course

Class Participation

This is a discussion-based course. To promote interesting and insightful discussion, you must be prepared to discuss the assigned reading. The points will be based on in-class discussion and attendance. Class discussion points will be based on voluntary actions, such as offering your thoughts or asking questions. To help you prepare for our discussions, there will be required questions on Canvas to help us collectively organize our thoughts and be as prepared as possible.

So, do the reading, post to the discussion board and be prepared to contribute your perspective.

Negative participation, (i.e., non-active participation, distracting others or not treating the course or others with respect) will result in a more substantial loss of points.

We will occasionally have a guest speaker (I'm still working on the schedule with some friends from work). Participation on these days will be super important – don't embarrass me in front of the wizards.

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. You have to earn an "A" in participation, just as you would by studying for the exams in other courses.*

My personal thoughts: look, we want you to express yourself, okay? Now if you feel that the bare minimum is enough, then okay. But some people choose to do more and we encourage that, okay?

Attendance: I consider this a professional environment. In the professional world, attendance is a requirement. That said, I understand that life happens, and, especially in 2023, family issues, health issues, and other concerns may, and do, occur. So, there are no attendance requirements, but attendance will be considered as a significant part of your participation grade. That said, what I've learned is that really one of the most important things in life is showing up.

TLDR; Don't come to class, you shall not pass.

And Friday is Hawaiian shirt day. (Just kidding, we don't meet on Fridays.)

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 Presentation/Forum Posts

Once during the semester, you'll lead the charge, you'll lead the band. Each student will have the opportunity to present a **current** public relations issue for an individual, a corporation, or a nonprofit organization that you find on your own. These can come from traditional and non-mainstream news outlets, the internet, books, trade publications, magazines, or other sources.

In the same vein, students will be required to participate in **four** discussion forums posted to Canvas throughout the semester, in addition to any asynchronous sessions that may arise.

Homework, In-class Assignments and Quizzes

This class does have a homework component that will primarily consist of pre-class Canvas discussion primers. There will also be in-class assignments that will be turned in at the end of class (if you're not in class, you can't do it and that will impact your grade in a negative way). In-class quizzes are also part of this grading component.

Midterm Case Study

A written case brief will serve as your midterm exam.

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%).

A full grading rubric will be placed on Canvas several weeks in advance of the assignment. We will discuss it in class at length.

Final Case Study

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 midterm assignment. This assignment is longer in length, allowing you space to offer a more critical examination of your case (we don't doodle, we draw conclusions). 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:

1. Identify a problem, opportunity or ethical issue that an organization (for-profit or non-profit) faced that required significant public relations involvement;

2. Collect detailed, thorough background information about the organization, including its goals, mission, values, financial standing, products/services, and history;
3. Collect detailed information on the issue/challenge that the organization faced;
4. Describe the public relations strategies and tactics that the organization developed and implemented to deal with the situation;
5. Identify key messages; and
6. Research and analyze the media coverage, or any other relevant reaction and feedback, that the organization received as it relates to your issue.

Again, the above is just a summary. A full grading rubric will be placed on Canvas in advance of the assignment. Students will be briefly presenting their final case study during the allotted final exam time.

Late Work

Unless otherwise noted, all homework assignments are due at the beginning of the designated class period (aka, 12:30 p.m.). Late papers (12:31 p.m. and later) will lose 10 points. No assignment will be accepted if it is turned in more than 24 hours after its deadline unless prior arrangements have been made.

It's not possible.
No; it's not probable.

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%	<i>Note: I do not round up.</i>

Form of Work

All written assignments should be submitted via Canvas edited and professionally presented in 12-point font with 1.15 spacing in Word document. I will not accept printed copies of work. Feedback on each

assignment will be given in the form of comments/additions to your original document.

Note: Really? Right in front of my AP Stylebook?

As a public relations professional, most of your written work will be passed on to journalists. Therefore, we will be using AP Style in this class.

I began working in newspaper at 11 and had AP Style beaten into my skull by old, cigarette-smoking newspaper men and women. That said, it would behoove you to have access to the 56th Edition of the AP Stylebook. When it comes to editing for style, I can do it all day.

Professionalism

There are several tenets of professional behavior that students are expected to follow in class and in interactions on Canvas:

- 1. Be prepared.** Do the readings and come ready to discuss.
- 2. Be respectful.** This class only works if it is a free exchange of ideas. Belittling the opinions of others will not be tolerated. We don't have to all agree (that goes for me as well), but everyone has different experiences, and we will value their point of view.

Be curious; not judgemental.
- 3. Everyone's time is valuable.** Please be mindful of things that can prevent others from being successful. We have scant time in class during the semester, let's make the most of it.

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. Visit the [UNC Office of Student Conduct website](#) for more information.

TLDR; don't cheat. Baskin Robbins always finds out.

Student Accommodations

If you need accommodations to participate in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. If you need information about accommodations visit the [Accessibility Services website](#).

Diversity

The University's policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination are outlined [here](#).

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 at dos@unc.edu or 919.966.4042.

Use of Laptops and Other Technology

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

Virtual Synchronous Sessions

Occasionally, it will be necessary for us to meet via Zoom at our appointed class time. I will give notice in a timely fashion (i.e. you won't show up for class and get a "Surprise! We are meeting virtually today."). The Zoom link is [unc.zoom.us/my/andy.cagle](https://unc.zoom.us/j/9123456789) (passcode 8675309). Cameras are required to be on during the session, so plan accordingly. The same rules for participation and distractions will apply.

Asynchronous Days

Occasionally, it will be necessary for class to be held via Canvas discussion (Sept. 12, for example, I will be in glorious Madison, Wisconsin for a meeting of some sort). You will have questions to answer in a Canvas discussion board. The questions will be based on readings. Details to follow.

Class Schedule

The following is a **tentative** outline of topics and cases for this semester; it is subject to change. Updates will be clearly communicated within the class site on Canvas and/or via email.

Date	Topic	Reading/Assignment
Aug. 22	Welcome/Syllabus Review/Guiding Principles/Class Contract	None
Aug. 24	Public Relations Basics/Refresher	Readings Ch. 1 intro (pp. 1-15) and appendices D, E and F Homework Prep Canvas Questions
Aug. 29	I'm going to steal The Declaration of Independence	Readings Textbook: Appendix A – Guidelines for case study Appendix B – Case preparation

		<p>The Declaration of Independence: What Does it Say?</p> <p>The Declaration of Independence Is the Greatest Press Release... Ever!</p> <p>The 5 Major PR steps to the Declaration of Independence</p> <p>Declaration of Independence: The First PR Opportunity?</p> <p>Homework Canvas Discussion Board</p>
Aug. 31	Ethics and the Law	<p>Readings Ethics, Copyright and PR Practice: Ethical and Legal Considerations for Communicators Public Relations Bring Ethics Under the Spotlight </p> <p>Homework Canvas Prep Questions</p>
Sept. 5	Well-being Day	No Class – Go do something important/fun
Sept. 7	Ethics and the Law	<p>Readings Chapter 2</p> <p>Homework Canvas Prep Discussion</p>
Sept. 12	Asynchronous Class Corporate Social Responsibility	<p>Readings Chapter 3</p> <p>Homework Canvas Discussion Board</p>

Sept. 14	<p>PR in the News (Student Presentation)</p> <p>Corporate Social Responsibility</p>	<p>Readings</p> <p>Benefits of Corporate Social Responsibility in PR Strategy</p> <p>Hacking Patagonia's PR Strategy: How to improve your brand's voice and influence</p> <p>PATAGONIA'S MASTERCLASS IN CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS How Patagonia's shakeup challenges marketers to act on sustainability</p> <p>Homework Canvas Discussion Board</p>
Sept. 19	<p>PR in the News (Student Presentation)</p> <p>Cultural Considerations</p>	<p>Readings Chapter 10</p> <p>Homework Canvas Discussion Board</p>
Sept. 21	<p>PR in the News (Student Presentation)</p> <p>Cultural Considerations</p>	<p>Readings Chapter 10</p> <p>Homework Canvas Discussion Board</p>
Sept. 22	Mid-Term Proposal	<p>Homework Mid-Term Topic Due</p>
Sept. 26	<p>PR in the News (Student Presentation)</p> <p>The Art of the Pitch: Media Relations</p>	<p>Readings</p> <p>Media Relations Strategy: 11 Winning Tactics to Market Your Product</p> <p>How to Build and Improve Media Relations: Best and Worst Practices</p> <p>Homework</p>

		Canvas Discussion Board
Sept. 28	PR in the News (Student Presentation) The Art of the Pitch: Media Relations	Readings Chapter 4 Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Oct. 3	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Conflict Management	Readings Chapter 5 Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Oct. 5	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Crisis Communication – Guest Speaker	Readings Evaluating CDC’s crisis communication strategy during COVID-19 Pandemic (resources) CDC Strategy for Global Response to COVID-19 (2020–2023) NCDNCR Crisis Communication Plan (resources) Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Oct. 10	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Entertainment and Leisure	Readings Chapter 8 The Long, Sad Story of the Stealing of the Oakland A's The Oakland A's are Major League Baseball's great shame Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Oct. 12	University Day	No Class
Oct. 17	Entertainment and Leisure	

	Shake it Off: Taylor Swift vs. Scooter Braun and Big Machine Records	RELIVING THE TAYLOR SWIFT CATALOG SALE SAGA (AND FOLLOWING THE MONEY...) Rerecord(R)ed: On Music Copyright and Taylor Swift's Decision to Rerecord Her Songs The PR Genius of Taylor Swift's Rerecorded Music Wildest Dreams? Far From: Why Taylor Swift Is a PR Role Model Communication Lessons from Taylor Swift: Master of the Product Launch
Oct. 19	Fall Break	No Class
Oct. 24	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Activism	Readings Chapter 6 Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Oct. 26	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Activism	Readings Chapter 6 Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Oct. 31	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Community Relations	Readings Chapter 9 Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Nov. 2	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Community Relations	Readings Chapter 9 Homework

		Canvas Discussion Board
Nov. 7	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Consumer Relations	Readings Chapter 7 Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Nov. 9	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Consumer Relations	Readings Chapter 7 Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Nov. 14	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Financial/Investor Communications	Readings Meta Reports Second Quarter 2023 Results SEC Adopts Amendments to Modernize Fund Shareholder Reports and Promote Transparent Fee- and Expense-Related Information in Fund Advertisements How to Create Pre-IPO Momentum Through Public Relations PR For Acquisition: What CEOs, CMOs And Marketers Should Know Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Nov. 16	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Financial/Investor Communications	Readings Chapter 11 Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Nov. 21	PR in the News (Student Presentation)	Readings

	Employee Relations	Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Nov. 23	Thanksgiving Recess	No Class
Nov. 28	PR in the News (Student Presentation) The Curious Relationship Between Public Relations and Marketing	Readings The Convergence of Marketing and PR: What it means for the industry and 4 tips to enter the field Evolving Talking Dog: The Road to Convergence (resources) PR and Content Marketing: Two sides of the same coin Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Nov. 30	PR in the News (Student Presentation) Editorial vs. Advertorial: The Intersection of Public Relations and Advertising	Readings Studying Media and Advertising Convergence (resources) Merging Advertising and Public Relations Homework Canvas Discussion Board
Dec. 5	Final Presentation Prep	Readings None Homework None
Dec. 7	Reading Day	No Class
Dec. 8	Final Presentations	12 p.m.

Before we get started, does anyone want to get out?