Course Syllabus

COMM-3341_001 – Public Relations Cases & Strategies
Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30-1:45pm, Center for Instruction 109

Dr. Michelle M. Maresh-Fuehrer
Office: Bay Hall 329
Hours: TR 3:30-4:30, W 2:30-4:00pm, and by appointment
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I am happy to connect with you on social media sites, but please do not ask me questions about class via social media!

Course Description
A study of the key issues in the practice of public relations as a form of corporate discourse; exploration of nature, history, and present status of public relations. Using a case study approach, the material presented in this course provides students with an opportunity to understand the role of ethics, behavior, professionalism, and values in the strategies and tactics used in public relations campaigns. We will study various cases of employee, community, investor, consumer, media relations, as well as individual and corporate crisis management.

Student Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:
- Identify components that make public relations messages (in) effective and (un) ethical according to a clearly stated set of criteria;
- Recall and critique strategies in external and internal corporate discourse;
- Understand the history and present state of public relations as a profession and as a field of study; and
- Apply language accurately and effectively through critical analysis of public relations contexts.

Required Text
You will not be required to purchase a textbook for this course.

Course Assignments & Grade Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Assignment</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Report &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (9 quizzes at 10 points each)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Project</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (25 days at 5 points each)</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Points: 390

Grade Calculation:
- A: 90% of the total points 351 points – 390 points
- B: 80% of the total points 312 points – 350 points
- C: 70% of the total points 273 points – 311 points
- D: 60% of the total points 234 points – 272 points
- E: 50% of the total points 000 points – 233 points

A Successful Course Experience
A successful experience in this course will depend on your individual commitment and work ethic, as well as your ability to be an “active participant observer.” I encourage all students to visit with me frequently throughout the semester, rather than waiting until the end of the semester to ask questions or express concerns. As in most courses, students should be proactive about their work and ready to discuss concepts and share examples during class. Furthermore, a professor who is familiar with their students is better able to help their students accomplish their personal goals, so make yourself known! Be known for doing good work, contributing during class discussion, and talking about your concerns, challenges, successes, and goals with me outside of class. If you have suggestions that will enrich your learning experience, please let me know.
Dropping a Course

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this course; however, at times, events can occur that make dropping a course appear to be a wise decision. Before deciding to drop this course, please talk with me to be sure that this is the best possible decision for you. If you do decide to drop this course, you must initiate the process by going to the Student Services Center (the “round building”) and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation will not automatically drop you from the course. The last day to drop a course this semester is Friday, November 7.

Course Policies

Am I required to attend this course?

- Prompt arrival, attendance, and participation are all vital to your success in this course. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and contribute to the classroom experience by actively listening, asking questions, sharing examples, participating in discussions, and taking part in class activities.
- Attendance and participation will be graded. Each student will earn 5 points for every class session that they attend. If students attend but do not participate in class, I reserve the right to assign 0 points for the day. In all fairness, students will be notified that their lack of participation will result in 0 points before the points are assigned.

What are your expectations for my assignments?

- It should go without saying that quality work is an expectation. As a Communication major, it is expected that you will have effective writing and speaking skills and that you will seek my help if you need assistance in these areas. It is also expected that your work will be free from plagiarism, will demonstrate critical thinking, and will show that you are thinking “beyond the textbook.”
- All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date shown on the course syllabus, unless otherwise noted. If otherwise noted, assignments are due on the exact date and at the exact time noted on the assignment. If an assignment is late/forgotten/otherwise not turned in on time, the student will not receive credit for the assignment.
- Assignments should be turned in as a hard copy unless otherwise noted. If an assignment is turned in using a means other than hard copy, the student will not receive credit for the assignment. Students should complete assignments on time to reduce the risk of emergencies, such as running out of ink, paper, or not having access to a printer or computer. Students should also save their files in multiple locations to reduce the risk of losing their work.

What if I am absent?

- Students should send me a direct e-mail prior to the time that class starts on the day that they will be absent, informing me of their absence. Regardless of the students’ excuse, as long as this step is followed, the student will receive an excused absence and will not lose their attendance/participation points. If students do not follow this step, they will be considered unexcused unless they can supply documentation of a traditional excused absence (i.e., athletics, family emergencies, health issues). In this situation, I reserve the right to decide whether an absence is considered excused.
- Late work will only be accepted for excused absences and must be completed and turned in within 7 days of the absence.
- In the event of an unexcused absence, students will not receive credit for their attendance or missed assignments.
- Regardless of the status of an absence, when a student they are responsible for obtaining the information that was missed during class. Students may wish to select a classmate(s) at the beginning of the semester that will agree to help with this task.

I have a question about one of my grades, what should I do?

- Should a student have a question about their grade on a particular assignment, I follow the 24/7 rule: students must approach me no sooner than 24 hours and no later than 7 days after the assignment has been returned. Once 7 days have passed, the topic will be closed for discussion.

What type of citations should I use in my writing and speaking assignments?

- All assignments that require scholarly citations should adhere to the 6th edition of the APA style manual. If you do not have access to this manual, please visit: http://library.nmu.edu/guides/userrguides/style_apa.htm#website
I need help with my work, what should I do?

- Come talk to me!
- I am happy to help students with their understanding of assignments by reading through drafts and answering questions about class assignments; however, I will not be able to provide adequate assistance within 36 hours of a deadline, so students should be proactive about starting their assignments and seeking feedback early.
- Should any situation arise, where I can be of assistance (i.e., you do not have a printer), please come talk to me.

What are the rules for classroom conduct?

- I treat my classroom as a small community; thus, we will maintain a harassment-free environment that is welcoming to different viewpoints and ideas. Any profane or inappropriate ethnic, gender, racial, age, appearance, and/or lifestyle-related comments will not be accepted. Any student who violates this policy will be asked to leave the classroom.
- Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VIII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, online classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Notice to Students with Disabilities

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Academic Advising

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

Grade Appeal Process

Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details in the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

Academic Honesty

Students unaware of the university’s statement on academic honesty should review it in the Undergraduate Catalog or Student Handbook. Examples of academic dishonesty and plagiarism are using someone else’s ideas and not giving them credit; presenting a paper that is not originally yours; handing in assignments that are not originally yours; presenting “facts” or lifting ideas from sources without crediting the source; presenting falsified opinions and figures; cheating on an exam; and turning in the same work in multiple classes. If you are uncertain as to what actions constitute plagiarism or dishonesty, please ask your professor. Students who violate the code of honesty in this class will receive a 0 on that assignment. Any student receiving more than one “0” for academic dishonesty or plagiarism will fail the course and may be expelled from the program. Note: All violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Dean and Office of Student Affairs who maintains documentation of such offenses for at least 5 years.
Assignment Descriptions

**Please do not use these guidelines to begin your work early, as they are incomplete. Full descriptions and grading rubrics will be provided to you closer to the respective due dates.**

**Interview Assignment (50 points)**
Students will be required to conduct a 30-45 minute interview with a public relations professional of their choice. Students will be given a list of 10 required questions to ask during the interview and will write a 3-5 page paper discussing the information that they learned during the interview. This assignment will be evaluated based on: a signed business card (or e-mail from the professional to me, if a long-distance interview is conducted), writing quality, and the connection of course concepts to the information received in the interview.

**Case Report Discussion (25 points)**
Each student will be required to complete a 5-7 minute presentation over a current public relations case that corresponds with the topic we are discussing on the week that they are assigned to present. In this presentation, students should discuss: a) summary of the case, 2) strategies used in the case, 3) critique of how the case was handled. The student should research the case and strategies using the Internet, newspaper, television, magazine articles, etc. This assignment will be evaluated based on the application of strategies to the case and the quality of the information presented.

**Quizzes (9 quizzes at 10 points each; 90 points)**
Students will be given a total of 9 quizzes; one quiz after each unit. The purpose of the quizzes is to assess whether students grasped the material before moving on to the next unit. Students should be prepared for multiple choice, short answer, and application-style questions.

**Applied Project (100 points)**
Students will have two options for completing the final project. Class time will be designated toward allowing students to work on these assignments prior to the due date:

1) **Mini-Internship:** Students will be required to partner with a local organization (non-profit or for-profit) that may need help with public relations. Students should provide free PR services for the organization. Students will be required to spend at least 20 hours working for this organization. For their final project, students will need to turn in a) signed documentation from the organization’s management, logging the dates/hours that the student worked for them, b) a 5-7 page paper describing what they were required to do and how specific concepts from our class discussions helped them in their “mini-internship,” and c) a portfolio of evidence of the work that students completed. This portfolio should be similar to what would be used in a job search.

2) **Case Analysis:** Students will be required to conduct an in-depth analysis of a recent public relations case. Students will be required to conduct research and write a 10-15 page paper (page length excludes title page and references). In this paper, students should discuss: a) background of the case, b) strategies used by the PR professionals in charge of the case, c) a critique of the strategies used by the PR professional, and d) recommendations for better strategies for the case.

**Participation (25 days at 5 points each; 125 points)**
Attendance and participation will be graded. Each student will earn 5 points for every class session that they attend and sign the sign-in sheet. If students attend but do not participate in class, I reserve the right to assign 0 points for the day. Students should sign the sign-in sheet before they leave the classroom—the professor will not be responsible for “remembering” that a student attended a class that they did not sign in for.
## COMM-4335_001 Schedule

**This schedule is tentative and subject to change. All changes will be to the benefit of the student.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thur, Aug 28</td>
<td>READ: N/A DISCUSS: Course Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue, Sept 2</td>
<td>READ: Packet #1 DISCUSS: History and Purpose of PR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur, Sept 4</td>
<td>READ: Packet #2 DISCUSS: Public Relations Ethics/Careers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue, Sept 9</td>
<td>READ: Packet #3 DISCUSS: Employee Relations: Theoretical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur, Sept 11</td>
<td>READ: N/A DISCUSS: Employee Relations: Applied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue, Sept 16</td>
<td>READ: Packet #4 DISCUSS: Community Relations: Theoretical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur, Sept 18</td>
<td>READ: N/A DISCUSS: Community Relations: Applied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue, Sept 23</td>
<td>READ: Packet #5 DISCUSS: Investor Relations: Theoretical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thur, Sept 25</td>
<td>READ: N/A DISCUSS: Investor Relations: Applied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue, Sept 30 (No Class)</td>
<td>READ: N/A DISCUSS: N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thur, Oct 2 (No Class)</td>
<td>READ: N/A DISCUSS: N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue, Oct 7</td>
<td>READ: Packet #6 DISCUSS: Consumer Relations: Theoretical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thur, Oct 9</td>
<td>READ: N/A DISCUSS: Consumer Relations: Applied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 14</td>
<td>Packet #7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, October 16</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 21</td>
<td>Packet #8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, October 23</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 28</td>
<td>Packet #9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, October 30</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Tuesday, November 4</td>
<td>Packet #10</td>
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<td>Thursday, November 6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Tuesday, November 11</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Thursday, November 13</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Tuesday, November 18</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, November 20</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, November 25 (No Class—Thanksgiving Holiday)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

Tuesday, October 14
READ: Packet #7
DISCUSS: Media Relations: Theoretical

Thursday, October 16
READ: N/A
DISCUSS: Media Relations: Applied

Tuesday, October 21
READ: Packet #8
DISCUSS: Public Issues Campaigns: Theoretical

Thursday, October 23
READ: N/A
DISCUSS: Public Issues Campaigns: Applied

Tuesday, October 28
READ: Packet #9
DISCUSS: Crisis Communication: Theoretical

Thursday, October 30
READ: N/A
DISCUSS: Crisis Communication: Applied

Tuesday, November 4
READ: Packet #10
DISCUSS: Creating Public Relations Campaigns

Thursday, November 6
READ: N/A
DISCUSS: Creating Public Relations Campaigns

Tuesday, November 11
READ: N/A
DISCUSS: Creating Public Relations Campaigns

Thursday, November 13
READ: N/A
DISCUSS: Training Spokespersons

Tuesday, November 18
READ: N/A
DISCUSS: Event Planning

Thursday, November 20
READ: N/A
DISCUSS: Discuss Interview Assignment Results

Tuesday, November 25 (No Class—Thanksgiving Holiday)
READ: N/A
DISCUSS: N/A
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>READ: N/A</th>
<th>DISCUSS: N/A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, November 27</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, December 2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Applied Project Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, December 4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Applied Project Due</td>
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