Course Description

A discussion of theories in public relations through the exploration of models, roles, communication, media platforms, ethics, and culture to serve as a foundation for professional practice.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Articulate an informed definition of public relations;
- Understand the evolution of public relations philosophy and theory;
- Identify the skills and strategies necessary to practice effective and ethical public relations;
- Identify the trends that are occurring within public relations practices, and
- Successfully advise an organization on how to improve their public relations using theory and trends discussed.

Required or Recommended Readings


Other required readings will be posted on Blackboard. Students should verify that they receive Blackboard notifications, emails and messages and should check for messages daily.

Course Assignment and Grade Distribution

Writings for this class should adhere to the 6th edition of APA style guide.

Assignments:

- Attendance (5 pts each)  \[ 5 \times 14 = 70 \text{ pts} \]
- Weekly reflection (10 pts each)  \[ 10 \times 14 = 140 \text{ pts} \]
- Discussion leader (30 pts each)  \[ 30 \times 2 = 60 \text{ pts} \]
- Annotated Bibliography  \[ 50 \text{ pts} \]
- Final Research Paper  \[ 100 \text{ pts} \]
- Total  \[ 420 \text{ pts} \]
Grade distribution:
A = 378 – 420 pts
B = 336 – 377 pts
C = 294 – 235 pts
D = 252 – 293 pts
F = 251 and lower

Weekly Reflection
After completing the weekly readings, you will be required to post a reflection to the discussion board on Blackboard. Select two of the readings (or all of them, if there are only two articles assigned) for the week and offer a response to each in the form of a one-paragraph reaction to the piece and a discussion question that you would like to raise to the class. Examples of reading responses would include an insight about what you read, a comment about the method, a case analysis that is relevant to the theories discussed, or a concern about the application of the theory. If more than one topic is being discussed in a week, be sure to respond to at least one reading from each topic. Simple summarizations of articles are not allowed. Each response should be of 300 words minimum (600 words minimum in total). You do NOT need to respond to the articles that you are assigned to present.

Deadline: Responses should be posted to the discussion board by noon on Tuesday before class.

Discussion Leader
You will choose two topics to present during two class periods this semester. The readings for the topic appear in the syllabus. You should locate one additional reading on the theory or topic, read it, and create a two-page double-spaced extended abstract to be handed out to the class. On the day that the topic is being discussed, you will give a presentation that shares the new article and raises interesting questions about the reading assigned for that day. You should engage the class in the presentation, ideally by providing real-world examples and/or posing questions for discussion about the readings. The discussion of the topic, including your presentation and class interaction, should continue for approximately 50 minutes.

Deadline: in class.

Annotated Bibliography
Students are expected to 1) construct a research topic of their interest and to 2) conduct an annotated bibliography to inform their research question. The annotated bibliography should consist annotations of a list of articles that are relevant to the research topic. Each annotation should consist 1) summarization of the article; 2) critique on the methodology and 3) discussion of the theories and findings in the article. The annotated bibliography should be at least 8 pages in length. More instructions will be posted on Blackboard.

Deadline: 04/03 at 11:59pm on Blackboard.

Final Research Paper
Students in this class are expected to write a final research paper (topic decided in annotated bibliography assignment) that may ultimately be carried out or developed into a conference presentation, journal publication or groundwork for a master’s thesis. Each student will be required to present and discuss their paper during class. The final paper should be at least 15 pages. More instructions will be posted on Blackboard.
Deadline: 05/08 at 11:59pm on Blackboard.

**Classroom and Learning Expectations**

In this class, students are expected to:

- attend the class on time and stay for the entire class
- actively listen, think, and reflect on class materials, ideas and thoughts shared in the classroom
- participate in class discussions and in-class exercises
- respect others and foster a safe learning environment
- limit cell phone use for emergencies only
- use laptops to take notes only, not to browse the Internet, check on social media, shop or email

**Course Policies and Procedures**

**Attendance**

Attending the class is mandatory. Unexcused absence will result in a 5-point deduction of attendance. Only situations that are genuinely unavoidable will be considered excused. Situations that are not considered unavoidable include, but are not limited to, weddings, friends and/or family members’ birthdays, leaving early for vacations, etc. Foreseeable absences (i.e. religious holiday, excused university activity) are only considered excused if the student informs the instructor in advance. Unforeseeable absences (i.e. extreme illness, family emergency) should be explained as soon as the student returns to the classroom. Students are responsible for informing the instructor about their excused absences and providing related proof.

In-class assignments missed during excused absences should be made up within one week after the deadline. Work missed during unexcused absences may not be made up. Students are responsible for obtaining the information covered in class.

**Late Work and Missing Assignments**

Assignments’ due dates are listed in the course schedule unless otherwise notified by the instructor. If you fail to submit your assignment on time, the assignment is considered late. Normally, students may have up to one week to make up the assignment; each calendar day the assignment is late will result in 10% deduction of the grade of that particular assignment. Beyond one week, the assignment is considered missing and may not be made up. Students should discuss with the instructor if he/she genuinely needs more than one week to make up the late work due to unavoidable reasons. Late work or missing assignments due to unexcused absences may not be accepted.

**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism**

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in reduction of one’s grade and/or failure in the course.

**Academic Honesty/Plagiarism**

Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. Plagiarism is a violation academic expectations, but it is sometimes difficult to understand what
plagiarism actually is. Often, students commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Plagiarism includes:

- Using the work of another as your own,
- Downloading or purchasing ready-made essays off the web and using them as your own,
- Using resource materials without correct documentation,
- Using the organization or language of a source without using quote marks and proper citation.
- Turning in a researched project without citing sources in an appropriate documentation style.

When you are confused about citation of quotes or ideas, please visit the Writing Center or me to get help. Information on MLA documentation rules and APA documentation rules is available at Purdue University’s OWL: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/), and from our local Writing Center at CASA.

**Classroom/professional behavior**

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 VII 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, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

**Disabilities Accommodations**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Academic Advising**

Students pursuing the Master of Arts in Communication will be paired with a graduate faculty member advisor in their first semester. Students should contact their advisors within the first two weeks of a semester to arrange a meeting during which degree plans, tracks, and opportunities for professional development should be discussed. If you have a question as to who your academic advisor is, contact Dr. Stephanie Rodriguez, Graduate Coordinator (361-825-5753; stephanie.rodriguez@tamucc.edu). To finalize your degree plan and register for graduation, you must also meet with the Graduate Student Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Center for the College of Liberal Arts. This office is located in Driftwood 203E and can be reached at (361) 825-3466.

**Dropping a Class**

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. *Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course.* Should dropping the course be
the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class.

Grade Appeals

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf.

For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.
## Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Remarks/Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01/16</td>
<td>Course introduction and syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/23</td>
<td>Excellence Theory</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>01/30</td>
<td>Relationship Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/06</td>
<td>Contingency Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/13</td>
<td>Situational Theory of Publics</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/20</td>
<td>Agenda setting/framing</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/27</td>
<td>Nonprofit Public Relations</td>
<td>Decide on annotated bib/final research paper topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/06</td>
<td>Crisis communication and risk communication theories</td>
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<td><strong>IPRRC Conference</strong></td>
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<td>03/13</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/20</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/27</td>
<td>International Public Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/03</td>
<td>Public Relations and Digital Media</td>
<td>Annotated bibliography assignment due at 11:59pm.</td>
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<td>04/10</td>
<td>Diversity in Public Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/17</td>
<td>Final Research Paper Discussion</td>
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<td>04/24</td>
<td>Public Relations Ethics</td>
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<td>05/01</td>
<td>Final Research Paper Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/08</td>
<td>Final Research Papers Due</td>
<td>Final research paper due at 11:59pm on Blackboard.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Tentative Reading List (available on Course Reserve, subject to change):

### 01/16 Course Introduction

What is public relations? [https://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/publicrelationsdefined/](https://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/publicrelationsdefined/)


### 01/23 Excellence Theory


**01/30 Relationship Management Theory**


**02/06 Contingency Theory**


**02/13 Situational Theory of Publics**


**02/20 Agenda Setting and Framing**


**02/27 Nonprofit Public Relations**


03/06 Crisis Communication and risk communication

TBA

03/20 Corporate Social Responsibility


03/27 International Public Relations


04/03 Public Relations and Digital Media


04/10 Diversity in Public Relations


**04/24 Public Relations Ethics**


