



MCOM 4683 Public Relations Principles

Fall 2020 | TR 02:00-03:20PM | FA D101

Instructor Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Eunji Cho

Office: Fain Fine Arts Center D205

Office hours: Mon & Wed 2:00PM-4:30PM and by appointment (through Zoom)

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Course Description & Objectives

The course provides a broad understanding of the nature of public relations, its development and practice, and its impact on society. We will also discuss current issues and trends. Students are expected to apply key concepts to public relations planning and management by working in a group on a PR campaign project. Students will conduct research and analyze information that promotes understanding of PR principles and explore various scenarios to develop their PR skills. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Define public relations and how it differs from other forms of mass communication.
2. Clearly describe the role of public relations in modern society.
3. Understand PR's strategic management function and its communication activities.
4. Understand and apply legal, social and ethical standards to the PR campaigns.

Course Design

This course is "Split Week"

- Students will be split into two groups (group A and group B).
- Each group comes to class once a week for lecture.
 - Group A comes to class on Tuesday at 2:00 PM and Group B comes on Tuesday at 2:40PM.
 - Every 3 weeks, the order will be changed.
- On Thursday, we all meet online during the regular class time (2:00 pm) for lecture.

Required Text & Materials

- Think Public Relations, by Wilcox, et al. 2nd edition (2013).
- Additional materials will be distributed during class, through email, or posted to D2L (Desire-to-Learn).

Required Technology

- Throughout the semester, D2L will be used as the primary source for lecture materials and communication. For this reason, students are required to check D2L, and email hosted via D2L, regularly.
- Be ready to use Zoom. We will meet once a week (on the online day) through Zoom.
- Computer:
 - You will need a computer that can accommodate Zoom and D2L
 - Be sure that you have reliable WiFi access.
- If you have problems with any of these requirements, please contact me immediately.

Course Requirements

- **Exams:**
 - Over the course of the semester there will be 2 multiple-choice exams that will test your knowledge of the required reading material and class discussion. (A study guide will be provided prior to each exam.)
- **Lectures:** (both physical presence day and online day):
 - There will be a lecture in the classroom once a week for each group (group A and group B).
 - There will be online lecture sessions on Thursday during the regular class hours.
 - All lecture materials will be uploaded to D2L.
- **In-class activities:**
 - During the class, we will have various in-class activities including creating PR plan with various media platforms. The details and instructions will be provided in class.
- **PR Analysis:**
 - In order to assess your learning over the course of the semester, there will be a PR analysis essay. Each student will be required to analyze a particular public relations situation. Specific guidelines and procedures for this assignment will be discussed later on in the semester.
- **Press Conference (group project):**
 - You will have a chance to demonstrate how you can apply the key concepts and the PR process to a presentation (press conference).
 - Key components are:
 - 1) identifying the problem for the selected company
 - 2) doing research
 - 3) coming up with ideas to address the identified problem

- 4) developing a comprehensive PR campaign plan
- 5) presenting your idea in the form of a press conference. You will be expected to answer a lot of questions from “journalists” (your classmates).
 - All necessary group meetings with group members and me will be conducted through Zoom.
 - The details and instructions will be provided in a timely way.
- **Quizzes:**
 - Students will take 3~5 quizzes online.
 - The quiz questions will be from lecture notes, student presentations, and class activities.
- **Participation:**
 - This class includes various class activities for both in-class and online sessions. The activities are designed to be interesting and to help you learn. Thus, your active participation will affect how much you learn and how well you do in the course.
 - If emergencies arise or your circumstances change, please communicate with me. This will help us work together to try to find a solution for your situation.
 - In class and online meetings, please:
 - behave professionally
 - arrive on time
 - be prepared
 - pay attention
 - actively participate
 - treat others with courtesy and respect
 - use language thoughtfully
 - avoid inappropriate surroundings (online)
 - On your online day, please try to join class from a suitable, quiet location, with a device that permits full participation in the class activities.
 - If you miss class, you miss the chance to participate in your education and the education of others in class. Your peers are counting on you to be in class and to participate.

Grading

- Exam #1 = 20%
- Exam #2 = 20%
- PR analysis = 10%
- Press conference (group project) = 20%
- In-class activities = 10%
- Quizzes = 10%
- Participation = 10%
- Total = 100 %

Grading Criteria

The following scale will be used to determine the final grade:

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89%
- C = 70-79%
- D = 60-69%
- F: Less than 60%

Statements Related to the Current COVID-19 Situation

- Given the state of the world, everything in this course could change with very little notice. That means deadlines, projects, even weighted percentages for each component of the course, could change. Please note that I will consult with the class and use students' input to the extent practicable in making decisions about how to proceed. Students should not hesitate to contact me with questions, concerns and, even better, great suggestions. Most students know I will go out of my way to be fair to all.
- Safety and health of all are our top considerations. You are required to follow all best practices as they are developed during this crisis. If you feel sick, do not come to class. If you need to miss class, contact me as outlined under class procedures, and I will work with you.
- Masks will be required in all in-person classrooms, per the governor's order. Those who are unwilling to wear a mask must contact me before the end of the first week of class to discuss. Please see the university's official policy at the web sites listed below.
- A mandatory seating chart, to ensure social distancing and facilitate contact tracing should it be necessary, will be implemented.
- The Mass Comm. Dept. and the College of Fine Arts have adopted specific cleaning protocols, and all students are required to abide by these rules. Students who are unwilling to do their share to ensure everyone's health will be contacted by the professor. In short, you will be required to clean your area before and after class, the first as a safety precaution for yourself, the second as a courtesy toward others. We realize this means some areas may be cleaned twice within a brief time period, but this is better than not at all. This rule holds for traditional classrooms, labs, editing equipment, the newsroom, and public areas such as the work-café.
- All handouts and other information will be available through the university's D2L system, and D2L's Gradebook function will be enabled (I will, nonetheless, keep my own spreadsheet with grades, and students are welcome to contact me for grade updates). Students are expected to understand how to navigate D2L, even if we continue with in-person classes.
 - If you do experience problems with D2L, please let me know as soon as possible. In addition, the D2L page has a "Report A Problem" function on

the top navigation bar as well as a FAQ function in the middle of the page on the right.

- If we are forced to switch to online-only instruction, all students will be required to:
 - Attend class at the assigned time. I will offer to record the sessions but these recordings are supplemental and not replacements for attending at the assigned times. Excuses such as work will not be accepted, and students will be expected to make arrangements to attend every session. Students are also required to attend for the full class session.
 - The same provisions regarding attendance for in-person classes will be in effect if we move to a virtual classroom.
 - Have a computer with a webcam that can accommodate Zoom or other video software.
 - Have reliable WiFi.
 - As to the three requirements above, I know not all students have access to a reliable computer and reliable WiFi. However, you are expected to make arrangements in advance and have a plan. Do not assume you will be able to complete the course using only your phone and/or without attending actual classes during class time. If these requirements present problems for you, please contact me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with students in the hope that they do not have to drop the class as a result of these requirements.
 - Observe proper video meeting etiquette:
 - Arrive on time.
 - Leave your camera on. I realize not all students are comfortable with having their cameras on, but it will be a requirement. Not having the ability to look at you in-person to make sure you are paying attention and understanding what is being discussed, I will need to see you on camera.
 - Pay attention. Devices such as phones will be prohibited, as they are in face-to-face classes. Students who are e-mailing or attending to other tasks while on screen will be reminded of this policy. Continued violations could result in a student facing disciplinary sanctions up to being dropped from the course with an F.
 - Set the mute function as the default. As stated above, discussion is encouraged, both in-person and in video meetings, but we do not need to hear barking dogs, ringing phones, roommates, etc.
 - Use the raise-your-hand function.

- Wear proper clothing. I have heard stories of students sitting in on video meetings with no shirt and in bikinis. This is not appropriate and will not be tolerated.
 - Avoid eating while on camera. As in a face-to-face classroom, you are expected to eat your meals while not in class.
 - Have a proper background.
 - Stay seated. Do not wander around. It will distract the rest of us and make us dizzy.
 - Do not plan to connect to Zoom while you are driving. This is obviously unsafe, as well as a poor atmosphere for learning.
 - Use D2L effectively. As stated above, all syllabi, instructions for assignments/projects and other materials will be posted on the class D2L page. If we are forced to go to an online-only set-up, discussion posts may be required and assignments may have to be submitted through D2L.
 - Communicate with me. It is well-known among faculty and students that I do not share my cell phone number publicly, as some other faculty do. As a result, I do quite a bit of communicating through e-mail, especially if I won't be in my office. I will also make every effort to meet with individual students by Zoom or other video platforms.
 - Related: if adjustments to the normal office hours routine are necessary, I will communicate them to you.
- If we are forced to switch to online-only instruction, deadlines, assignments and other course elements may change. I will provide clear revisions, in writing, and will address any questions/concerns by e-mail or in a video platform.
- Please note that the federal government, state government, various local government units (city, county, health district, etc.) and the university administration have the power to issue declarations that can directly affect how we navigate. Please be flexible, and we will get through these extraordinary times as a team.
- Students are encouraged to visit web sites developed by the university in response to this crisis:
 - <https://msutexas.edu/coronavirus/index.php>
 - <https://msutexas.edu/return-to-campus/msu-texas-commitment.php>
- I reserve the right to drop any student with an F if he/she violates any of these policies. At the same time, I will work with all students to my fullest ability to ensure a worthwhile educational experience.

Course Policies

1. **Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism is:** (1) using someone else's source material (published or unpublished, including content from the Internet) without following accepted citation guidelines; or (2) submitting work that is not your own. The instructor will take appropriate disciplinary action for students if a student is caught cheating, plagiarizing or fabricating information. The MSU Student Honor Creed in your student handbook and the university catalog reinforces this policy: "As an MSU student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else to do so." Please acknowledge that you have learned the meaning the term academic dishonesty. Students cannot use the excuse that they do not understand the concept of academic dishonesty.
2. **Disruptive Behavior:** Any student's classroom behavior that interferes with either the instructor's ability to conduct the class or other students' ability to benefit from the instruction – or violates any other Standard of Conduct applicable to the classroom environment – will result in his/her removal from the class. (See MSU Student Handbook, "Standards of Student Conduct.").
3. **Special Accommodations:** Any student with a disability who is registered with the MSU Office of Disability Support Services (940-397-4140, CSC Room 168) and needs specific accommodations, or requires other considerations because of a disability, should notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester to ensure that these accommodations are provided. Please note that all information provided to me remains confidential.
4. **Cell Phones and Other Recording Devices:** The use of cell phones and other recording or electronic devices is strictly prohibited during class. The instructor may permit, from time to time, the use of cell phones for legitimate class reasons. Recording the class is prohibited, unless it is part of a reasonable accommodation under ADA, or unless students have special permission from the instructor. Laptops may be used for the purpose of taking notes during class; however, their use must be limited to course-related activities.
5. **Limited Right:** The university requires faculty to provide this statement to all students: By enrolling in this course, the student expressly grants MSU a "limited right" in all intellectual property created by the student for the purpose of this course. The "limited right" shall include but shall not be limited to the right to reproduce the student's work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and educational purposes.
6. **FERPA:** As a result of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, federal law bars the instructor from releasing information about students to parties outside the university – including parents/guardian - without the student's signed consent. Thus, in almost all cases the instructor will not discuss your academic

progress or other matters with your parents. The instructor will only discuss grades with students. If there are any grade issues, the instructor will discuss grades during office hours.

7. **Campus Carry:** Senate Bill 11 passed by the 84th Texas Legislature allows licensed handgun holders to carry concealed handguns on campus, effective Aug. 1, 2016. Areas excluded from concealed carry are appropriately marked, in accordance with state law. For more information regarding campus carry, please refer to the University's webpage at <https://mwsu.edu/campus-carry/rules-policies>. Please be advised that any violations of the law will be reported immediately.
8. **Senior Portfolio:** All mass communication majors are required to submit a portfolio as part of their internship course, which is a pre-requisite for Senior Production. This requirement is a part of MSU's reaccreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and is non-negotiable. Through the portfolio, students are required to demonstrate communication competence through the written word and visual communication; two examples of each competency are required. As you go through this and other classes, you are responsible for saving course work that could be included in your senior portfolio. Please see your instructor, adviser, the department chair or any Mass Communication faculty member for handouts with more information ("Mass Communication Senior Portfolio Competencies" and "Mass Communication Senior Portfolio FAQ"). These handouts are also available on the department web page: <https://msutexas.edu/academics/finearts/masscomm/>
9. **Social justice:** Social justice is one of Midwestern State University's core values, and I consider the classroom to be a place where students will be treated with respect as human beings, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Moreover, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged. It is my expectation that ALL students be able to consider the classroom a safe environment.

Tentative Class Schedule

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to change and or move around scheduled lectures in order to facilitate for potential unplanned events (cancellations or guest speakers). You will be notified ahead of time of any changes to the schedule.

Week	Dates	Readings	Lecture / Discussion Topic
1	8/25 8/27		Course introduction
2	9/1 9/3	Chapter 1	What is PR?
3	9/8 9/10	Chapter 5	Research and campaign planning
4	9/15 9/17	Chapter 5	Research and campaign planning
5	9/22 9/24	Chapter 6	Communication and measurement
6	9/29 10/1	Chapter 6	Communication and measurement
			Review for the midterm exam (study guide)
7	10/6 10/8	Chapter 7	Public opinion and persuasion
			Exam 1
8	10/13 10/15	Chapter 8	Managing competition and conflict
9	10/20 10/22	Chapter 10	Reaching diverse audiences
10	10/27 10/29	Chapter 11&12	mass media
			Internet & social media
11	11/3 11/5	Chapter 13&15	event promotion, corporate public relations
			starting a final group project: review clients
12	11/10 11/12		review for the final exam (study guide)
			developing a final group project
13	11/17 11/19		Exam 2
			developing a final group project
14	11/24 11/26		Thanksgiving Holidays
15	12/1 12/3		Developing a final group project
16	12/8 12/10		Presentation

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