

Communication 2920: Introduction to Public Relations

Fall 2017. Section 001. 3 Credit Hours.

Room: Coleman Hall 1621 TR 2-3:15

Instructor: Dr. Scott Walus
Email: smwalus@eiu.edu

Office: 1810 Coleman Hall
Office Hours: M 6-8 p.m., T&R 1-2 p.m.

Required Texts:

Texts will be readings provided via flash drive during the first week of class. There is no learning management system. Bring a notebook and pen as well.

Course Description:

This course surveys the history, growth, theories, messages, and effects of the public relations field. It provides the necessary foundation about the public relations practice for future practitioners. This foundation includes understanding the role of research and evaluation of messaging through a variety of channels to diverse publics.

Course Objectives:

1. You will be able to identify the historical development of public relations.
2. You will be able to identify public relations practice in the world around you.
3. You will be able to critique the public relations practice.
4. You will be able to analyze and assess a public relations campaign/message.
5. You will be able to understand the ethical implications of public relations practice

Professionalism/attendance:

While attendance is not required, reading and attending class are critical for gaining a working knowledge about public relations. In-depth discussion and unpacking are irreplaceable, and the course is structured around these two activities. Furthermore, you are expected to read for class as the both the “brings” and class discussions revolve around the concepts.

Assignment Policy

I do not accept late work, although the coupon policy allows you two extensions throughout the semester (read the coupon at end of the syllabus for complete terms). All assignments are due within the first five minutes of class and must be in printed, hard copy form (I do not accept e-mailed assignments). You also must be present for the duration of the class for the assignment to be accepted.

General Grading Guidelines:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

100-90% = A

89-80% = B

79-70% = C

69-60% = D

59– 0% = F

In any course, it is important to remember that each of you begins with zero points and must earn your way up to each of these grades. I am here to support you in this process, but this process is ultimately your own evolution as a scholar as you demonstrate not only an understanding of the material, but also the ability to apply to real life situations and critically evaluate the material and case studies. Grading will be done as follows:

C: Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect. This score does not indicate any shortcoming. All the work was done adequately and completely, and the work showed basic understanding and mastery of the course material.

B: Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. Not only were all the basic expectations met, they exceeded minimum expected quality levels. This work probably showed one or more of the following characteristics: excellent understanding of the class material, excellent application of theory to practice, unusual thought and thoroughness in thought and preparation.

A: Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. This work is superior in every respect and represents the highest level of achievement. Its quality is good enough that even though there is still room for improvement, it would be unreasonable to expect a college student to do better.

D: Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it does not fully meet course requirements. While there was merit to what was done, there were also deficiencies that meant the work did not fully meet the minimal expectations.

F: Represents performance that fails to meet the course requirements and is unworthy of credit. This work shows serious deficiencies in regard to the expectations for the assignment.

Point breakdown:

14 points Daily “brings”

For 29 class periods, you will bring a mix of research, examples, and reflection as specified by that day's prompt. They are meant to drive the conversation about the topic and add texture with multiple examples and vantage points. These must be typewritten and handed in within the first 5 minutes of a class or they will not be accepted and you must stay for the duration of the class in order to get credit. There are 29, and two “brings” equal one point. To gain credit for a “bring,” each component must be addressed completely and thoughtfully. I am always glad to look at them in advance to guarantee that you get credit. As this is 64% of your total grade (with each “bring” constituting 2.2% of your total grade), I suggest spending a significant amount of time on them.

3 points Issue framing and narrative comparison

In this report, you locate a recent controversial issue and compare the sides in depth using the theories of framing and narrative. Complete directions will be provided orally weeks before the assignment is due. If done satisfactorily, you receive full points. If not, you receive zero points. You do, however, have the opportunity to revise the paper within two weeks of receiving it back to receive full points on the assignment. These papers must also be handed in within the first five minutes of the class period that they are due.

5 points Career path presentation and arc

In this report and presentation, you will find three positions in the public relations field which would be an ideal position for you. After mapping out the necessary skills for the position, you will then demonstrate in a detailed report how you would use your time at EIU (through course work, RSOs, internships, and self-learning) your path toward becoming the ideal candidate for that position.

22 points total

There are only 22 points in the class, and you must earn every one of them as you climb “Point Mountain.” In your academic career, if someone told you that “everyone starts in the class with an 'A,’” they were lying. Everyone starts with a zero and must climb her/his way up to the top. As a professor, nothing is more gratifying than seeing you at the summit of Point Mountain. I am here to support in every way possible, but ultimately it is your climb.

Cell Phones & Digital Devices:

No cell phone / tablet / digital device usage is allowed in this class. Unless directly directed to use the device for in-class research or if you inform the professor about an urgent situation where someone will be contacting you, device usage is banned. This classroom is a space for complex thought and conversation. In order to have complex thought and conversation, you need to be present without disruption.

A Massachusetts Institute of Technology study demonstrated that it is impossible for the brain to multi-tasking and any attempt to do so “ruins productivity, causes mistakes, and impedes creative thought.” Disrupting a thought process by checking digital content is not good for learning or the generation of new ideas. Checking your phone also makes class time emotionally less enjoyable. The National Institute of Health found that a rise in anxiety and stress is directly related to problematic cell phone usage. If you believe you will have a difficult time abstaining from digital devices, you are not alone. A Baylor University study found that 60% of college students felt mentally and physically addicted to their cell phones.

In order to encourage a singular focus, I will not accept whatever assignment is due that day from you and you will receive a zero on it if you look at your digital device during class. This is any glance at a cell phone or table. If you are choosing to take notes on a lap top, this includes literally anything besides a word processing document being open. There are no warnings. If you continue to look at the device, you will lose a previous “bring” point for each infraction. To add some spice to the equation, if I miss the infraction, and your classmate informs on you, he/she gets the “bring” point taken from you.

I run a classroom that places a premium on showing up and engaging with a topic. Under this system, conversations are more intriguing, students report a deeper understanding of material, and every class period goes by faster. “Be here now,” as there is no advantage to thinking about somewhere else.

Academic integrity:

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU’s Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards. You are expected to write your own papers and generate your own answers on quizzes and exams. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Consequences of academic dishonesty range from failing of the course to expulsion from the university.

Students with disabilities:

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

The Student Success Center:

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, text taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581- 6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

Student Standards:

All faculty in the Department of Communication Studies are expected to uphold the standards of good scholarship and we expect our students to do the same. Students earning a degree in Communication Studies will develop superior reasoning/critical thinking, argumentation, writing and presentational skills while also building comprehensive knowledge of their content area. Students in Communication Studies classes will be expected to read all assigned materials, write extensively, complete their own work, and

engage in respectful interactions in the classroom. We, as a faculty, agree to hold our students to these standards.

Tentative Class Schedule:

- Positioning public relations -

Week 1

T – Introduction to the course

R – What is PR?

Bring: A one sentence definition of public relations in your own words. Also, keep a diary of every piece of PR that you see in your life for a four hour period (both interpersonal and through mediated circumstances).

Week 2

T – The history of PR.

Butterick (2) - “The origins of Public Relations”

Bring: Create a timeline of the 10 most important events in the entire history of public relations.

R - A question of information.

Ellul (in Jowett & O'Donnell) - “The characteristics of propaganda”

Bring: Print out and bring an example of propaganda. In a paragraph, tell me what makes it propaganda using three concepts presented by Ellul.

Week 3

T – The rise of corporate identity

Marchland (2) - “AT&T: The vision of a loved monopoly”

Bring: Print out three messages from your cellular provider describing themselves (web, social media posts, press releases) and type a paragraph synthesizing how your cellular carrier portrays itself as a helpful service. Make a list of five infinitely positive terms that you see in their messaging.

R – Corporate reputation and image (brand)

Martin & Hetrick (1) - “The importance of the corporate agenda and its links with human resource management”

Butterick (4) – “Reputation management”

Bring: If you could pick any company in the world, which one would you work for? Select this one company and tell me about their reputation and brand in a paragraph. Use at least three specific quotes from their web site and audience social media posts.

Week 4

T – Differentiating PR

Butterick (3) - “Marketing, advertising, and public relations: Similarities and differences explored and explained”

Bring: In one sentence per (three in total), detail how public relations are different than marketing, advertising, and propaganda. Print out and include an example of each related to the same subject (four in total about the one subject).

- Framing reality and persuasion through storytelling -

R – Variables in persuasive messages

McGuire (in Rice & Atkin) - “McGuire's classic input-output framework for constructing persuasive messages”

Bring: Find the most persuasive piece of promotional material you can remember recently seeing. Print out the example. Then, looking at McGuire's framework, detail how a message variable, channel variable, audience variable, and target variable all promoted its persuasiveness.

Week 5

T – Selecting salient elements from reality.

Entman - “Framing”

Assign: Issue framing and narrative comparison assignment.

Bring: Find a controversial issue which you truly care about. Find two organizations with diametrically opposed viewpoints. Print out 2-3 press releases for each as well as the mission statements from their web sites. Read and underline what you believe to be the most important phrases for defining the issue.

R – Framing continued.

Entman - “Framing affirmative action”

Bring: Extending your first controversial issues, find three organizations from each side that use the same frame to discuss the issue (six organizations in total). Print out one message from each organization that demonstrates this. Then, find and print out two news stories (one from each side) that utilize the same frame.

Week 6

T – Narratives.

Fiske - “Narrative”

Schley & Nichols - “Brand Story”

Bring: Find and print out the best-written and most engaging brand narrative you can locate. Next, work out the narrative structure in bullet form (this, but then, which led to), identify the central conflict, and characters.

R – Narratives continued.

Kent - “The 20 recurring plots in public relations narratives”

Bring: Locate and print five public relations narratives (web content, press releases, social media posts) that represent five of Kent's 20 master narratives. For each one, provide a sentence on why it is indeed this master plot.

Week 7

T – Frame and fame.

Cavin (in Jowett and O'Donnell) - “Evening Gowns to Burqas: The propaganda of fame”

Bring: Find three celebrities of any kind who have a long-standing relationship to a noble cause. For each, make a timeline of his/her involvement with the cause. Include all noteworthy moments, both good and bad.

R – Mitigating factors of persuasion.

Hornik (in Rice & Atkin) - “Why can't we sell human rights like we sell soap?”

Due: Issue framing and narrative comparative assignment.

Bring: Find and print out an excellent example of a human rights campaign. Looking at the Hornik article, if you could change three elements about the campaign in order to make them more persuasive, what would they be?

- Strategizing relationships -

Week 8

T- Strategy in communication.

Butterick (10) - "Strategy, research, measurement, and evaluation"

Bring: Select any organization of your choice. Conduct a SWOT analysis and a PEST analysis.

R - Class not held as usual. Watch "PBS Frontline: The Persuaders"

Bring for Tuesday: For three brands not represented in the video, detail their "ideal consumer" and in two sentences, tell me what lifestyle they sell.

Week 9

T – Employee relations.

Matrin & Hetrick (8) - "Corporate communications and the employee relationship"

Bring: Find an employee handbook for a company or organization with a compelling corporate culture. Read it, and in a paragraph tell me about how they construct their employees/partners/associates.

R – Media and community relations.

Dorfman & Wallack (in Rice & Atkin) - "Putting policy into health communication: The role of media advocacy"

Bring: Find a specific public health campaign. Print out specific examples of community action and media advocacy. What was their ultimate goal? What frame was deployed?

Week 10

T – Brand relations.

Frohlich & Scholler (in Duhe) - "Online brand communities" New public relations challenges through social media"

Valentini and Kruckeberg (in Duhe) - "New media versus social media: A conceptualization of their meanings, uses, and implications for public relations"

Bring: Locate a brand community. Print off multiple interactions you deem indicative of the community. Create a flowchart demonstrating how ideas circulate in the community. Also, in a few sentences, if you were in charge of the brand who specifically would you contact in the community and what would your communication strategy entail?

- Agenda-setting, diffusion, and crisis management -

R – Agenda-setting

McCombs & Shaw- "Agenda Setting"

Kiousis, Popescu, & Mitrook - "Public relations, media coverage & agenda setting/building"

Bring: Over the course of a six hour period, keep a diary of all the agendas brought up in your conversations and media usage.

Week 11

T - Diffusion of innovation.

Atkin, Hunt & Lin - "Diffusion in a new media environment"

Bring: For any product, find one set of messages for each of the five steps of the decision-making process (awareness, interest, persuasion, decision/adoption, and confirmation).

R – Diffusion of misinformation.

Shin, Jian, Driscoll & Bar - “The diffusion of political rumors on Twitter”

Bring: Figure out your favorite lie / conspiracy theory / rumor. Search out multiple threads on social media. Print out three exemplar threads and in 2-3 sentences explain the process of how the rumor propels itself and resists criticism.

Week 12

T – Crisis communication

Fearn-Banks (1) - “Crisis communications today”

Fearn-Banks (2) - “Crisis communications theory”

Bring: Find two crises from the past year. One should have been handled well (with the organization's reputation still in tact) and one should have been handled poorly (causing severe damage to the organization). For each, print out a news report for when the crisis broke and print out their response (4 articles in total).

R – Crisis communication

Fearn-Banks (7) - “Textbook' crises”

Bring: For one of the “textbook” crises in the Fearn-Banks chapter, find out what new and social media that the corporation currently. List out each account, and for each provide 1-2 sentences about how this account would have to address the crisis.

Week 13

T – Crisis communication case studies.

Butterick (5) - “Crisis management: Public relations centre stage”

Efthimiou (in Coombs & Holladay) “Regaining altitude: A case analysis of the JetBlue Airways Valentine's Day 2007 crisis”

Assign: Career path presentation and arc.

Bring: For each of the crises listed, in bullet point form, arc out the narrative. Provide one for while the crisis is occurring, and the narrative that circulated after the crisis.

R – Crisis simulation.

Fearn-Banks (4) - “Communications when the crisis strikes”

Bring: A list of the shareholders with whom you must communicate during a crisis.

Note: Thanksgiving Break week of 11/20-24

- Public relations industry and profession -

Week 14

T – Corporate Social Responsibility

Taylor (in Rice & Atkin) - “Corporate social responsibility campaigns: What do they tell us about organization public-relationships?”

Bring: Print out your three favorite examples of corporate social responsibility not mentioned in the article. Then, in two to three sentences, tell me if CSR is important or unimportant and why or why not. Also, compile a list of relevant EIU course options (in CMN, PR, JOU, and any other areas), RSOs, internships at EIU, or other available experiences here at EIU.

R – Public relations profession and industry.
Seitel (18) – “Launching a career”

Bring: Five classified ads for your ideal PR position out of college. For each position, compile a one-sheet about the company's “greatest hits.” On a separate sheet, list out all of the skills and experiences you would have to have in order to be an ideal candidate.

Week 15

T – Personal brand.

Bring: From the previous class, bring the list of skills and experiences you would have in order to be an ideal candidate. Next to each one, list two activities / experiences you could have while you were at EIU.

R - Presentations of career path and personal brand.

Bring: A draft of your plan of study and experience / knowledge acquisition timeline.

Finals Week

12/11 Monday at 2:45 p.m. as scheduled by the university

Due: Final draft of Career path presentation and arc.

This coupon entitles _____ to turn in any one assignment the next class period of CMN _____ for literally any reason. This includes all excused or unexcused reasons including, but certainly not limited to: illness, alarm clock malfunction, oversleeping, leaving for vacation, printer malfunction, funerals, weddings, "just totally spacing on it," work issues, computer explosions, not understanding an assignment, exhaustion, vehicle malfunction, or literally any reason. This coupon provides you with an extension to do the assignment (from "brings" to major projects) without question or judgment. This coupon must be attached to the late assignment.

EXTENSION COUPON

Usage Notes: There is an absolute limit of two extensions per semester.

This includes both excused and unexcused absences. If you choose to use this coupon on a typically unexcused reason and then you have a family emergency / illness / some other typically excused reason, you are out of luck. Use these wisely.

Restrictions: Non-transferrable, not valid after Week 14, or for group work.

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