

SPRING 2005 * CHRISTINA KNOPF
“INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATIONS THEORY & PRACTICE”

Course Objective: As explained by authors Wilcox, Ault, Agee, and Cameron in *Public Relations: Strategies & Tactics*, public relations is a management function through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain relationships with others. The primary objective of this course is to give you an overview and solid foundation of public relations in its theory and practice. Throughout the semester, you will learn public relations principles and theory by examining real-world examples of public relations, and you will be given the opportunity to apply your knowledge with some fictitious public relations challenges. By the end of the course, you should have the ability not only to define and describe public relations, both in theory and in practice, but also understand and apply public relations processes to actions and campaigns; grasp the role of public relations in the production of mass media messages; see the importance of research in public relations programs and actions; know and feel comfortable using public relations tools; and be able to recognize the ethical and legal aspects of public relations.

Texts: *Selections from*

Seitel, F.P. (1998). The Practice of Public Relations, 7th edition. Prentice Hall Publishing. [This is the course’s main text.]
McElreath, M.P. (1996). Managing Systematic and Ethical Public Relations Campaigns, 2nd edition. McGraw Hill Publishing.
Hendrix, J.A. (2001). Public Relations Cases, 5th edition. Wadsworth Publishing.
Bivins, T.H. (1999). Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style & Format, 5th ed. NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group.

- <http://www.prsa.org>
- <http://www.101publicrelations.com>
- <http://aboutpublicrelations.net>

Course Units: Understanding PR * PR Ethics & Law * Types of PR * PR Research & Writing * Media * Crisis Management 5 Wrap-up

Grading: The course will consist of discussions, email correspondence, worksheet activities, case studies, and short writing assignments. The course final will be the planning of a P.R. campaign. The following breakdown is a tentative plan for the number of assignments that will be tackled during the semester, though some adjustments may be made contingent on student interest and progress.

- Preparation for discussions: 5% (weekly in person or via email)
- Case study critiques: 10% (1 per unit, to be tailored to student interests)
- Worksheets: 10% (4)
- Unit quizzes: 20% (4-6)
- Applied writing assignments: 25% (max. of 8, depending on student interests)
- Final Campaign: 30%

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The following signatures indicate an agreement as to the focus and requirements of this course.

Instructor Signature Date

Student Signature Date

Applied writing assignments: 25% (max. of 8, depending on student interests) 20%
Memo (grad), Memo (rewrite), UA Internal Relations (stories), UA Internal Relations (update),
Press Release (Mina)

Final Campaign: 30%
PR Plan, Press Release, Memo

Public Relations Glossary

Community Relations:

Enhancing your organization's participation and position within a community through outreach efforts for the mutual benefit of the organization and the community. See Public Affairs below.

Crisis Management:

Maintaining relations with the public, government agencies, news media, employees, shareholders, and other affected parties on behalf of an organization involved in a crisis situation.

Employee Relations:

Typically representing an organization's management to inform and motivate the organization's employees through internal communications, training, awards programs, and other events.

Government Affairs:

Representing an organization's interests to governing bodies and regulatory agencies, often through direct "lobbying" efforts, and also through public affairs and other PR activities building issue constituencies.

Internal Communications:

Serves as a conduit for information flow between management and the ranks. Grounded in communication theory, IC taps tools of newsletters, Intranet pages, management memos, position statements, presentations and special events to disseminate information regarding company updates, management policies, Human Resources issues & benefits, business initiatives, crisis management, etc.

Investor Relations:

Developing confidence and positive relations for your organization with investors in the financial community. Also called Financial Relations and Shareholder Relations.

Marketing Communications:

Within the four P's of Marketing (Product, Price, Place, Promotion), PR helps meet the marketing communication needs of promotion (along with components of the other P's) to advance sales of products and services. PR plays a role in advertising, publicity, packaging, point-of-sale display, trade shows, and special events. Also called Marcom.

Media Relations:

Conducting outreach or responding to the news media on behalf of your organization or client. Media relations is often considered a specialized function within a public relations campaign.

Public Affairs:

Involving your organization in the development of public policy, or helping to adapt your organization to public expectations. Public Affairs is sometimes used synonymously to refer to public relations activities (especially in the government and military).

Public Relations:

There are many definitions of Public Relations, ranging from the profound to the profane. In a phrase (courtesy of the Public relations Society of America), "Public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other."

Publicity:

Furthering your organization's or client's interest through target-media coverage of strategic messages and events. A good publicist knows how to work the angles for free media coverage.

Pick one of these news stories, identify whether you think the information could be important for the *students* or for the *faculty* and explain why. Full stories can be accessed at <http://www.albany.edu/news/>

Top Stories

Inaugural Scholarship Fund Gathers Support

Assuring that qualified undergraduates have the financial resources they need to attend the University at Albany is the goal of the Inaugural Scholarship Fund. More>>

Kermit L. Hall Takes Office as UAlbany's 17th President

Declaring that "our goal will be to always put academics first," Kermit L. Hall, a constitutional law scholar and legal historian, has taken office as the 17th president of the University at Albany. More>>

UAlbany Athletes Make the Grade

Student-athletes at the University at Albany on Division I scholarships are making the grade, according to new data released by the National Collegiate Athletic Association. More>>

UAlbany College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering Awards First Ph.D. Degrees in Nanoscale Science

The College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering (CNSE) of the University at Albany - State University of New York, the first college devoted to the study of nanoscale scientific concepts, announced that it has awarded the world's first Ph.D. degrees in nanoscience. Drs. Spyridon Skordas and Wanxue Zeng received their degrees during the UAlbany December Graduation Ceremony. More>>

Middle Earth Students Win National Awards in Alcohol and Drug Prevention

The University at Albany's Middle Earth peer counseling students received national honors for their work in alcohol and drug prevention at the BACCHUS and GAMMA Peer Education Network National Conference held November 11-14 in Chicago. UAlbany won a total of four awards, more than any of the 88 competing colleges and universities. In addition, two UAlbany students were elected to national office. More>>

B) Final homework assignment:

** Write a press release announcing your own upcoming graduation. Headline should read “Liu Earns Communication Degree.” You do the rest. Try to format it properly, too. Press releases are short. One like this should be 1-3 paragraphs long.

** The packet of information about General Motors is for your final project. You will also find a chapter on crisis communication to help you. GM has had to recall several models of vehicles for safety purposes. Your job is to:

- 1) Write a press release to get the news sources to announce and explain the recall. (Use the Yahoo! News Story to get the information)

- 2) Write a memo to investors to notify them of the problem & to reassure them about their finances.

- 3) Write a 2-4 page paper to outline what type of public relations campaign you would recommend to General Motors to help them to maintain their credibility and to get these vehicles off the streets before people get hurt. You really have 2 audiences for this task, investors and the public. You might want to consider writing 2 pages about the member relations tactics you would use for the investors and 2 pages about the media/marketing techniques you would use for GM consumers. Make sure to consider ethics when making your plans.

More information on General Motors can be found by going through their Web site at www.gmc.com.