E59.1755
PUBLIC RELATIONS: PRINCIPALS AND PRACTICES

Recommended Text: Wilcox, Ault, Agee & Cameron, Public Relations Strategies and Tactics (9th edition) Chapters: 5,6,11,13, 14,15,16

Additional readings: Handouts Press releases found on www.prnewswire.com Case studies found on www.prsa.org

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to teach you how to THINK like a public relations professional. To do so, you will need to understand the importance of research and the critical step in developing a public relations initiative: identifying and understanding your target audience. Once you have identified the public(s) you are trying to reach with your message, you can begin to build your public relations campaign.

Principles and Practices will reinforce the fundamentals of public relations and communications that were presented in Communications & Public Relations (E59.1750). Our goal is for each of you to complete the course with an understanding of how and when to apply the different techniques, applications and tools that can be used in the implementation of a public relations campaign.

Course content is designed to enable students to better identify the specific audiences they seek to reach, the characteristics of each audience, the tactics that are best suited to reach the audience and how various media (print and broadcast, trade and consumer, local and national, blogosphere, Twitter, Facebook, among others) can be used to reach them.

Broad topics will include written tactics, spoken tactics and visual tactics along with the internet and 'new' media.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To learn to think, write and speak like a publicist.
2. To learn to identify 'news.'
3. To understand the workings of the media -- and the 'new media' landscape -- as the conduit to reach your target audience.
4. To understand the different and varied techniques and their appropriate and strategic use.
5. To reinforce the basic concepts of effective public relations.
6. To better understand the impact of public relations on the news and the news on public relations.
7. To develop a public relations campaign.

CLASS STRUCTURE
Every class will consist of several of the following (when applicable):
- Lecture
- Review of assigned cases or reading assignments (every week we will work together to dissect a case study and develop tactics in support of the initiative)
- Discussion of current events as they pertain to assigned cases, reading assignments and class work
- In-class project - creation of a public relations campaign for Radio Shack (aka The Shack)
- Outside (group) project – creation of a public relations campaign to be presented during the final class (December 9)
- General Q&A

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
- **Come to class on time.** Speak up. Shyness is not an option in public relations work.
- Please turn off your cell phones, beepers, Sidekicks, etc.
- Please keep in-class personal chatter to a minimum. There are students in class who are more interested in the subject matter than your personal life.
- **Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and have no place in our class.** Any assignment that is plagiarized will be given a failing grade.
- Participation in all class activities and discussions will significantly impact your final grade.
- All submitted work must be typed and checked for spelling errors. PLEASE edit your work before it is submitted. And, don’t rely on Spell Check.
- Be prepared to review and discuss the actual case study handouts. You may be asked to lead the discussion.
- **ASSIGNMENTS & PROJECTS**

**Final Group Project:** You will be divided into groups; each group will act as a new business team and will be responsible for the development of a public relations campaign. **For this assignment, each group will select its own client.**

Be on the lookout for companies that are launching new products, new services, or new divisions. Perhaps you’re rather pick a company that needs to refresh its image or consumer perception.

Every week you will be given time in class to work on this campaign under my supervision. Free free to ask me specific questions about the direction of your plan in class and by email. During our last class (December 9), each group will make an oral presentation of their campaign before the rest of the class. You will be graded on both the written (content) and oral portions of this presentation.

**Paper #1** Compare and contrast the publicity tactics that were used by the New York Yankees and the New York Mets as each team played its final season in its 'old' stadium and the tactics that each team used to prepare for it's first season in its new stadium. What do you feel was the biggest difference in their
communications messaging? Cite specific tactics. For example, on the day that the final piece of Shea Stadium was dismantled, the Yankees moved Babe Ruth’s shrine to the new Monument Park.

**Paper #2**  Michael Vick: Embarrassment? Or a Debt Satisfied? You are in charge of public relations for the Philadelphia Eagles. Your #1 challenge during the 2009-2010 season is to create a tactical public relations initiative in support of ‘rebranding’ Michael Vick during his tenure as the backup QB behind Donovan McNabb. Where do you start? What is he already doing to repair his image? Do you agree or disagree with the tactics that are already in place?

**Paper #3 (Due 12/2):** Create a tactical public relations initiative in support of a company (‘client’) who has faced a crisis situation within the last year. If we’re lucky, a company will face a crisis during the semester that we all can focus on! What should they do when the dust settles? How can they reposition themselves and gain back consumer confidence. What techniques should your campaign employ to get the job done? For example (and feel free to use this), Miley Cyrus (Disney’s Hannah Montana) was photographed by *Vanity Fair* magazine by famed portrait photographer Annie Leibovitz. The finished product was very controversial and put Miley and Disney into a tailspin. Tell me about the controversy and what steps Miley and/or Disney took to repair her image. Would you have done anything different?

**Final Paper**  Create a tactical public relations initiative in support of a product that is celebrating an anniversary in 2009. Cite the tactics used during the original launch. What has changed? If you were introducing the product today, what tactics would you use?

**Ongoing in-class project:** As a class, we will create a public relations campaign for Radio Shack (now known as The Shack). Why the rebranding? In the weeks that follow, you must come to class prepared to discuss our client in accordance with the evolving PR plan – from competitive environment, objectives and target audiences to tactics that will comprise the strategic plan. Being accountable and prepared will significantly impact your final grade.

- **‘In the News’ Minutes:** A truly great publicist is a voracious reader. Newspapers, magazines, blogs, trade (vertical) publications. Knowing what is going on in the world is the most basic skill that any solid publicist should have. So read. Read a lot. Watch the news. My goal is to get you to think about what you are reading and watching with a curiosity about how it got there.

And, when you find something interesting, quirky, editorial BLATANTLY procured through a publicity technique come in and tell us about it. There will be time during every class for students to present their findings and engage us in an interesting discussion (often heated!). This exercise will be part of your class participation grade so be prepared!!

A good example would be stories emanating from the release of *Sex and the City: The Movie*. Think about all of the different companies that were able to align
themselves with the film. Don’t think product placement, think publicity. Sara Jessica Parker borrowed a Verdura chain-link gold bracelet to wear in the movie. Verdura, a high end jeweler with a Fifth Avenue salon, wanted to publicize the wearing of the bracelet (SJP’s 3rd party endorsement -- she’s wearing it early in the movie when she apartment ‘shops’ with Big) through publicity. Next thing you know, the New York Times is doing a wrap-up story about S&TC product knock-offs.

**GRADE REQUIREMENTS**

Grades will be determined based on the following:

- Class Participation 15%
- Group Project/Presentation 30%
- Individual Papers 45%
- Final Paper 10%

**Weekly Class Topics and Assignments**

9/9 Do we make news or do we lead the conversation? As public relations professionals, our job is to be both a storyteller and matchmaker. The result? Third party editorial endorsement for our clients. However, the media landscape has changed dramatically in the last five years. How do you keep the conversation lively and relevant now that the elusive 3rd party endorsement happens on a much smaller, more intimate scale?

9/16 Is it News or Publicity?

9/23 The Importance of Research (Chapter 5)
Page 141: Sex and Alcohol: The AMA’s News Release
Page 147: Research Drives Ovarian Cancer Campaign

9/30 The Audience and How to Reach It (Chapter 11)
Page 284: A Cruise Ship Line Builds Brand Affinity with African Americans
Page 286: Paramount Reaches Out to Hispanic Audiences

*Name of Group Client Must be Submitted and Approved*

Chapter 14: News Releases, Media Alerts and Pitch Letters

10/7 The News Release
*Paper #1 Due*

10/14 Other written techniques

Chapter 15: Radio, Television and the Web
10/21  Radio
10/28  Television and the Web

Chapter 16:  Media Interviews, News Conferences and Speeches

11/4  Paper #2 Due

11/11

Chapter 13:  New Technologies in Public Relations

11/18  Group Meetings (by appointment)
11/25  NO CLASS.  Thanksgiving Break
Assignment:  Watch Goodnight, Good Luck and be prepared to discuss
the film's relevance in today's media landscape

12/2  Paper #3 Due
12/9  Group Presentations
12/18  Final Paper Due