

INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATIONS • PRCA 2330 • SPRING 2009

Georgia Southern University ▪ College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences ▪ Communication Arts

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

PRCA 2330 is designed to introduce you to the theories, practices, principles, and the history of public relations. You will also gain knowledge of tasks commonly associated with the practice of public relations and its role and purpose in various organizations. Analysis and examination of how to apply principles and theories will also be provided in this course.

PREREQUISITIES: COMM 2332

REQUIRED RESOURCES

Wilcox, D.L., & Cameron, G.T. (2009). *Public relations: Strategies and tactics* (9th Ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

At least one USB drive (minimum 1G)

Pack of multi-color markers

Occasional use of a notebook computer in class

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

Li, C., & Bernoff, J. (2008). *Groundswell: Winning in a world transformed by social technologies*. Boston, MA: Forrester Research, Inc.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who complete this course will be able to:

1. Define public relations and identify instances of public relations in multiple contexts
2. Apply theories and principles of public relations to solve PR challenges
3. Use theory & strategy to choose appropriate and ethical PR tactics
4. Use theory and strategy to create and implement some basic PR techniques

GRADING

Course Grading: Your grade for this course will be based on the activities listed in the table below. Points by assignments for each activity are listed to the right.

Blog Posts	30% or 300 points
Interview of a PR Professional	5% or 50 points
In-Class Exercises/Instructor Discretion	15% or 150 points
RATS (Online Quizzes)	25% or 250 points
Final Exam	15% or 150 points
Engagement & Participation	10% or 100 points

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Blog Posts: Each student will create and maintain a blog at Wordpress.com. Detailed instructions about the content and layout of your blog will be available at <http://publicrelationsmatters.com> by the end of Week 2.

Readiness Assessment Tests (RATS): Readings are designed to provide you with knowledge regarding public relations basics. Readiness assessment tests will be given over each reading assignment from the *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics* textbook. The open-book, multiple-choice RATS will be administered via GeorgiaVIEW prior to you coming to class, so that our class time can be more focused on discussion and application, rather than lectures. You may take each of the RATS twice, and the higher of the two scores will count. Most RATS will have fewer than 10 questions. RATS grades will be averaged and will comprise 25% of your grade in the class. Students missing no more than one day of class (for any reason) may drop their lowest individual RATS grade.

More details on the remaining assignments will be provided by the end of Week 2.

COURSE POLICIES:

1. Attendance: Your attendance in class is expected and necessary for your success in this course. Because every speaker needs an audience, you need to be an active class participant, even on days when you are not speaking. In addition, to achieve the objectives of this course, your involvement and participation are necessary.



Six (6) or more total absences (on any course day, lecture or speech) will automatically result in a failing grade for the course. THERE ARE NO EXCUSED ABSENCES; AN ABSENCE IS AN ABSENCE, for whatever reason. Additionally, to insure that each of you has an audience, NO MORE THAN TWO (2) ABSENCES WILL BE PERMITTED ON SPEECH OR GUEST SPEAKER DAYS. Each subsequent absence on a speech day will result in the loss of half a letter grade (5 percentage points) off your final grade for the course.

The current Georgia Southern University catalog states the following in regard to class attendance: "The student is responsible for all material presented in class and for all announcements and assignments whether or not the student is in attendance. The University does not issue an excuse to students for class absences. In case of absences as a result of illness, representation of the University in athletic and other activities or special situations, instructors may be informed of reasons for absences, but these are not excuses."

Think of your schoolwork as your job; just as you would not miss work, you should not miss class. Schedule doctor's appointments, advising appointments, etc. for times that do not conflict with this class. *It is your job to keep track of your total absences; I am not responsible for reminding you about your total absences.*

2. Tardiness: You are expected to be in class on time for every class meeting. Coming into class late is disruptive, not only for the other students, but for me. Tardiness in excess of 15 minutes will be considered an absence. At my discretion, excessive tardiness (less than 15 minutes on multiple occasions) may be converted to an absence. Similarly, you are expected to remain in class for the entire class period; early departures will be treated in the same manner as tardy arrivals. Thus, you should schedule appointments (such as advising, doctor, etc.) in such a manner that they do not overlap with class time.

3. Late Work and Make-Ups: No late work for speeches will be accepted. You will be expected to speak, prepared or unprepared, on the day you are scheduled. Excuses such as forgetting your note cards or your visual aid or not being prepared are unacceptable. **Deadlines are a fact of real life.** If an unexpected occurrence (car accident, hospitalization, family death, etc.) keeps you from class, you must consult the professor prior to class or as soon as possible. If you know in advance that you will not be in class on a speech day, then you should sign-up for one of the other speech days for that set of speeches.

4. Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: The Georgia Southern University Honor Code states: "I will be academically honest in all of my course work and will not tolerate the academic dishonesty of others." As members of the campus community, students are encouraged to actively support academic honesty and integrity in the classroom. The Communication Arts Department and I take the issue of academic dishonesty very seriously and will pursue instances of alleged dishonesty to the fullest extent. Therefore, you should familiarize yourself with the provisions for academic dishonesty in the Georgia Southern University *Code of Student Conduct* found in the current *Student Guide*. This policy applies to all course work, oral and written. In this course, academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, receiving or giving aid on any quiz or examination, submitting a speech outline written by another, and delivering a speech developed or written by another. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty shall be subjected to the procedures for adjudicating academic dishonesty outlined in the current *Student Guide*. For findings of a first offense within this course, the penalty shall be a zero on the assignment. For findings of a second offense within this course, the penalty shall be a final grade of "F." These penalties are in addition to any penalties imposed by the University per the above referenced procedures.

5. Classroom Decorum & Behavior: The Preamble to the current *Student Guide* states, “A student-centered University is characterized by civility, respect, cooperation, responsibility, and understanding among all its members. A student-centered University conveys high expectations for appropriate behavior and is designed to assist students in the development of an informed set of values, ethics, and beliefs. It fosters a climate that promotes civility and respect. Georgia Southern University students are expected to engage in behaviors that are consistent with the attainment of academic integrity and moral values. As members of the campus community, students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to actively support . . . civil discourse among all members of the campus community, treating each student with dignity and respect regardless of personal differences.” Likewise, Section IV.6.C of the *Student Conduct Code* defines “any classroom behavior that interferes with the instructor’s ability to conduct class or the ability of other students to learn” as “disorderly conduct” and in violation of the Student Conduct Code.

You are expected to behave in class in accordance with these provisions of the Student Conduct Code. Violations will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

6. Speech Day Behavior: You are expected to show respect for speakers by being attentive and non-disruptive. This means that you should not be sleeping, reading, text messaging, engaging in conversation or any other potentially distracting behavior while others are delivering their speeches. Any inappropriate behavior observed by me will adversely affect your speech grade.

7. Cell Phones and Electronic Devices: Because your friends and family may not know your class schedule, turn off your cell phones in class. Ringing cell phones are annoying and disruptive, especially during speeches. Furthermore, because of the advance technology of text messaging and digital imaging, the use of any personal electronic devices (cell phones, PDAs, iPods, headphones, etc) is prohibited during examinations. The use of any such item during an examination will result in immediate dismissal from the classroom and the examination.

8. Disability Accommodations: This class complies with the Americans with Disabilities (ADA). Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations must: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC); and, (2) provide a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating what your need may be for academic accommodation. The SDRC can be reached at 871-1566.

9. Religious Holiday Policy: In accordance with University Policy, students observing religious holidays will NOT be disadvantaged *when advance arrangements are made* with the professor to make-up course work.

10. Group Work: You will be assigned to a group at the beginning of the semester and will remain in that group throughout the semester. The groups are primarily for in-class discussions and activities, but may also be used for additional purposes. Grades will be individual grades.

10. Agreement with Syllabus Content: This syllabus is an agreement between the professor and the student, between me and you, to respectively provide and complete a worthy learning experience. By remaining a registered student in this course, you have identified your understanding of and agreement to the obligations set forth in this syllabus for satisfactory completion of this course, including the course policies as well as the assignments. The professor reserves the right to modify this syllabus during the term.

OTHER ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

- To do well in this course, you need to attend class regularly, read the material, complete assignments, study and prepare to adequately discuss the information and issues in the course.
- Materials for exams will come from lectures, textbooks, guest speakers, handouts, websites and occasional DVDs and podcasts.
- All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, using 12-point font, with one-inch margins all around, unless otherwise specified. Give attention to AP Style, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and general appearance.
- Deadlines are given to provide each student adequate and equal time for completion. Hence, **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**
- Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period or as noted in GeorgiaVIEW.
- You are responsible for all materials, deadlines, and assignments presented in class, whether you attend class or not. If you are absent, obtain material from a classmate or the professor as soon as possible.
- Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Be considerate of others in the classroom.
- NO CAPS: Caps, hats, etc. are not allowed on exam or presentation days.
- NO CELL PHONES: Be certain to have all cell phones, etc., turned to silent upon entering the classroom.
- Failing to not attend class without officially withdrawing will result in an F for the course: **Last day to withdraw without penalty March 9, 2009.**
- Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Contact me as soon as possible in the **case of serious personal or medical circumstances via phone or e-mail.**
- **FINAL EXAM:** The Final Exam is due in GeorgiaVIEW no later than Wednesday, May 6, 2009, at 5:00 pm.

BARBARA B. NIXON'S TEACHING & LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

Several years ago, a colleague shared with me this quotation by longshoreman and philosopher Eric Hoffer:

"In times of change, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."

This quotation struck a chord with me. Put simply, my overarching goal in teaching is to ensure that our world has more learners than learned. I am fortunate to be in a role in life where I can have an impact on our future world leaders.

What do I expect from my students?

- Students should be fully read on all of the chapters (or other reading assignments) and to be ready to discuss any part of the readings.
- Students should raise questions when they are uncertain of the material we are discussing, including questions that I will have no easy ("pat") answer for.
- Students should make every effort to gain the most value that they can from the class. They should want to become independent learners.
- Students should become aware of not only how what happens in the world (current events) impacts them, but also how what they do impacts the world. Campus is not a cocoon.

And what can my students expect from me?

- Because I am aware that students learn in many different ways, I will not lecture at my students daily from behind a raised podium. Instead, I will provide instruction to them in an interactive manner. In a typical week, students will experience partner discussions, small group discussions, Internet scavenger hunts, and even crossword puzzles, in addition to short (less than 20 minute) lecturettes. "Death by PowerPoint" will not happen in my class.
- I will provide them with the most current information I have available. I stay current on topics and trends in the industry.
- I will stay abreast of current technology and apply it in the classroom whenever it adds to the learning experience. (Examples include current software, Vista, podcasts and blogging, to name a few.)
- I will make every effort to help guide students through the issues that they raise, and we will seek resolution together.
- I will make every effort I can to make sure that students understand the issues and concepts my courses present.
- When I have positive feedback to share, I will share it openly in the classroom and call attention to students by name in the process. My goal in this is to enhance or maintain the students' self-esteem, not to break it down. There are plenty of other places in the world where their self-esteem may be diminished. Constructive criticism will still be provided to students, but not by name in front of a whole class.
- I expect for us to have fun in class. Laughter and learning go hand in hand in my book. If we are not enjoying ourselves in class, there's something amiss.
- And perhaps most importantly, I will listen to my students so that I can learn from them, too.

Department of Communication Arts – Academic Policies Statement

Responsibility and Accountability

The Department considers students to be individuals who are responsible for their own behaviors. Students are expected to make decisions with an awareness of the consequences which will most likely result from these decisions. Decision-making without considering the resulting consequences is not justifiable behavior if the consequences put the student's academic efforts at risk. In other words, if you enroll in a class, you are obligated to meet the responsibilities of this class, regardless of other commitments, including work, family, and other class obligations.

Civility

Students are expected to communicate in a civil manner in their academic interaction at all times, both in and out of the classroom. This means that interactions are to be carried out in a polite, courteous, and dignified manner, which are respectful and understanding toward both peers and professors. Failure to behave in a civil manner may result in disciplinary actions as described by the Student Conduct Code.

Plagiarism

Cheating, in its multitude of forms, is a serious offense to the University and compromises the learning process of the violators and their classmates. Ultimately, the reputation of the institution is at risk. For these reasons, the Department expects students to understand the provision of the Student Conduct Code that addresses academic dishonesty and the penalties for it, and to conduct themselves with integrity in their academic efforts. To that end, students are expected to follow both the letter and the spirit of academic honesty and to consult beforehand with their instructors whenever those ethical standards are even remotely at risk.

Attendance

It is the Department's policy that any student who misses twenty-five percent (25%) or more of the scheduled class days, for any reason, will receive a failing grade for the course. All days when a student is not present will be counted as an absence. Individual instructors may impose stricter attendance policies. Instructors are not responsible for reminding students about their total absences.

Definition of Grades

The Department adheres to the following definitions as found in the *Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog* (p. 38):

- The 'A' grade may be interpreted to mean that the instructor recognized exceptional capacities and exceptional performance.
- The grade of 'B' signifies that the student has, for any combination of reasons, demonstrated a significantly more effective command of the material than is generally expected.
- The 'C' grade is the instructor's certification that the student has demonstrated the required mastery of the material.
- The student is graded 'D' when his/her grasp of the course is minimal.
- The 'F' grade indicates failure to master the essentials and the necessity for repeating before credit is allowed."

Posting of Grades

It is the Department's policy **NOT** to post any student grades at any time during, or at the conclusion of, the semester.

Georgia Southern University General Education Outcomes

Georgia Southern University has identified ten categories of general education outcomes comprising knowledge, skills, and perspectives which it seeks to instill in its graduates. Please see

http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/provost/instruction/gened_outcomes.html

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TENTATIVE DAILY SCHEDULE (as of 7 January 2009)

DATE	TOPICS	READINGS
WEEK 1 (Jan. 12 & 14)	Welcome & Course Overview What is Public Relations?	 Ch. 1
WEEK 2 (Jan. 21 only)	New Technologies in PR NOTE: Bring notebook PC if possible	 Ch. 13
WEEK 3 (Jan. 28 & 28)	The Evolution of Public Relations	 Ch. 2
WEEK 4 (Feb. 2 & 4)	Ethics and Professionalism	 Ch. 3
WEEK 5 (Feb. 9 & 11)	TBA	
WEEK 6 (Feb. 16 & 18)	Public Relations Departments & Firms	 Ch. 4
WEEK 7 (Feb. 23 & 25)	Research	 Ch. 5
WEEK 8 (Mar. 2 & 4)	Program Planning	 Ch. 6
WEEK 9 (Mar. 9 & 11)	Communication Evaluation	 Ch. 7 & 8
WEEK 10	SPRING BREAK	
WEEK 11 (Mar. 23 & 25)	Public Opinion and Persuasion	 Ch. 9
WEEK 12 (Mar. 30 & Apr. 1)	Conflict Management Reaching a Multicultural & Diverse Aud.	 Ch. 10 & 11
WEEK 13 (Apr. 6 & 8)	TBA	
WEEK 14 (Apr. 13 & 15)	Public Relations and the Law News Releases, etc.	 Ch. 12 & 14
WEEK 15 (Apr. 20 & 22)	Radio, TV and the Web Media Interviews, News Conferences, etc.	 Ch. 15-16
WEEK 16 (Apr. 27 & 29)	TBA	TBA
Week 17 (May 4)	Course Wrap Up	
FINAL EXAM	The Final Exam is due in GeorgiaVIEW no later than Wednesday, May 6, 2009, at 5:00 pm.	

Circled dates are for RATS (Readiness Assessment Tests); these must be completed in Vista by noon on that day, and cover the materials in the Readings column for that week. ***Caveat: The above schedule and procedures are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. When possible, you will be provided at least two (2) class days of advance notice of any changes.***