

Syllabus/J328/Public Relations Principles
Division of Journalism (J126)
Mass Media, Communication and Theatre
Texas A&M University-Commerce

Fall, 2013, 2-3:15 p.m. TR, Journalism Building 205

Instructor: Dr. Lamar W. Bridges, Professor and Journalism
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Course description: “An introduction to the fundamentals of public relations and the functions of reputation management. A beginning examination of publics, research techniques, media outlets, and public relations techniques. Prerequisite: Jour 114 or consent of the instructor.” (University Catalog)

Textbook: *You will be given reading assignments.*

Outside Reading: The instructor may place materials on reserve reading in Gee Library. These assignments/readings will be announced in class. You are responsible for all reserve materials for class discussion, for class questions, and for examinations. Public relations is a changing field, with events and issues emerging without notice. The reserve system and online citations are ways to examine current ideas on a topic or person.

Subject-related sources: There is adequate literature in the field of public relations. There also is a great deal of literature in the related fields of advertising, marketing, promotion, and in the social sciences and humanities in general. At a minimum, I think any student of public relations should be aware of *Public Relations Tactics* and *The Public Relations Strategist*. In addition, I recommend *Advertising Age* and *Bloomberg Businessweek*.

In addition, students should keep current about the news and events of the day by being attentive to contemporary affairs. Keeping up with the literature and the business/trade press is something that will be part of your professional life. **In brief, public relations people must know what is going on about them and how those events affect their organization or institution.**

You should read a “good” daily newspaper. An obvious suggestion in our area is *The Dallas Morning News (hard copy or online)*. But, absent access to a "good," serious newspaper, at least read a news magazine such as *Time*, or watch CNN to obtain headlines about the news of the world. One cannot represent an organization or institution and be ignorant of the issues shaping the world about him or her.

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Course objectives: This is a first and basic course in exploring the process of public relations and in exploring the effects that today’s public relations processes have upon U.S. society. The focus will be upon public relations in America, although one should realize that public relations is a part of today’s international communications picture.

More specifically, the course’s objectives are (1) to **introduce** the student to the field of public relations and its **management** functions; (2) to present some of the **current** ethical, legal, and practical considerations of today’s public relations fields; (3) and to **examine some of the tools** of the public relations practitioner and to **explore some of the “theoretical” concepts** underlying the field.

Class attendance: Attendance is expected, and absences are recorded, as mandated by University policy. The University's statement on class attendance is explained in the current A&M-Commerce Catalog, which is on the University’s website.

I will reserve the option to recommend that any student be dropped from J328 after three absences, that is, the fourth absence may trigger my recommendation to the department head and the dean’s office.

My premise is simply that one cannot learn when one is not in class; moreover, one learns through participation, through listening to others’ ideas, and through the organization of classroom efforts. My experience has shown that students who attend class, and who participate, and who have a good attitude toward learning earn better grades because of their efforts.

I also expect students to be in class on time. You will find later that your boss will expect you to be at work on time and to complete your work on time and without complaining. Accountability is expected here, and it will be expected "on the job".

Plagiarism: I will distribute a statement on plagiarism. Please read the statement and note that I support the statement. A signed copy must be returned for my files. I do not evaluate any papers without a signed statement which is current for the class.

During class, turn off your cell telephones, pay attention, do not read a paper or you may be asked to leave the class. Period. Civility is expected, and courtesy toward your classmates and the instructor is expected. Common terms such as good morning, thank you, you are welcome, pardon me and so forth are not outdated and, indeed, are the mark of a caring person.

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Advisory: Before outlining specific components of the course, you should note these two statements that the University has asked faculty to insert into syllabi. The first previously issued said: “All students at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.”

Secondly, the University has issued a statement concerning students with disabilities. That statement will be distributed to you. Note the contact numbers.

Specific course requirements: First, attend each class. Second, participate in the class. That does not mean your hand has to go up each time the instructor seeks a response but it does mean that students should be willing participants in the subject matter at hand that day. Third, completion of all daily and weekly assignments – oral and written – per deadline and per instructions as to preparation is a must. NO handwritten assignments will be accepted unless so announced for that assignment. Fourth, four tests will be given to divide the course material into manageable portions. Fifth, a report (written and/or oral) or mini-project will be required as a data gathering and writing exercise.

Grading: These requirements obviously have to be incorporated into a system that results in a grade, as required by University policy. I would not like to give any Incomplete or “X”.

Four tests at 50 points each	200 points
Practical work TBD with values announced*	250 points
Report or mini-project*	50 points
Attendance, participation (0-50)	50 points
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	550 points

***Must be submitted on time and per directions; otherwise the grade is a zero.**

A vital skill: A central concern of most professionals is a lack of good writing skills among public relations students and graduates. It is apparent that many students have not been grounded in the fundamentals of sound writing for publication. It is also apparent most students do not write much. One learns to write by writing, not by “talking” about writing or by memorizing AP style. Writing will be incorporated into J328.

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Nothing will keep you out of the professional “fast-track” quicker than the inability to write acceptable content. Ask public relations professionals and indeed communicators in many fields – newsletters, newspapers, advertising, *et cetera*. So, we will write some, and such exercises will be important. Journalism 329 is focused more on this aspect of the business of promotion, but J328 is a beginning effort.



Weekly schedule (subject to change as needed)

Section one: background of the field

A schedule of the next section will be given after Quiz One.

August 27 – Introduction to course, PR as promotion
August 29 – What is public relations?

September 3 – The subfields of public relations
September 5 – Evolution of the field (Bernays *et al*)

September 10 – The evolution and growth continued
September 12 – The issues of ethics in PR

September 17 – Ethical questions of PR continued
September 19 – Legal concerns within PR work

September 24 – Legal continued
September 26 – Finish section one of class

October 1 – Quiz One (50 points) on materials to date

-LWB, 8-27-13

