



**Communications Theory and Practice – I\***  
**JMC 296.2**  
**ID 02729**

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Prerequisites: MC 238  
Course Status: required  
Credits: 1.5  
Language of teaching: English  
Classes: Thu from 8 am through 9:15 am  
Consultations: (by appointment)



*In a democratic society, the interests of power and the interests of the public are often at odds. The rise of public relations is testimony of the ways that institutions of vested power, over the course of the twentieth century, have been compelled to justify and package their interests in terms of the common good.*

*Stuart Ewen*

*PR! A Social History of Spin, 1996*

**Course Description**

This introductory course aims at teaching you the applied aspects of the field of communications, public relations, a theory, a broader societal context, and how to analyze a communication/ public relations problem using research techniques and results. You will also beef up your advocacy/ public relations skills through hands-on assignments and in-class discussions. In public relations, you are paid to give voice to an organization (or individual) and represent it in communications with its publics. Many organizations and individuals claim to practice public relations, yet implement techniques that are not based on research, which gives an understanding of the situation (real-world behavior), or that lack ethics. The term “public relations” gets bandied about often in the news media and political discourses, but there is still much confusion over the definition of public relations and its scope. This course will introduce you to the theory, principles, and techniques of public relations.

**Course Objectives:**

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to:

1. Explain public relations to a client (or a friend).
2. Identify instances of public relations in practice.
3. Understand public relations terms and how to use them.
4. Understand public relations tactics and create some of the samples for a given context.

**Class Format:**

We will have group discussion, lecture and class projects. It is expected that much of your learning occurs outside of class time. It means that you should be prepared for in-class assignments and projects and also look for instances of public relations in your everyday life. I encourage you to bring in issues/ articles/ ads related to public relations and we’ll share them with the class. On some days, I’ll give you a task – that we haven’t discussed – to complete by the end of the class. This is to prepare you for the “real” world. If you are serious about a career in public relations or strategic communication, you’ll need to learn to think on your feet, always



be ready with an alternative option, and work until the job is done right. The field of public relations is exciting and can be glamorous – however, it requires hard work. When your organization’s reputation and goodwill are at stake, you cannot stop until the job is done. **The bottom line** is you can expect to work hard in this class.

My expectations of you are that you will perform as you would in a professional environment – courteous, respectful, thoughtful, thorough and punctual. The grade you earn will depend much on your attitude, your work ethic, your smarts, and your willingness to think outside the box.

**Required Textbook & Readings:**

1. Lattimore, D., Basking, O., Heiman, S.T., Toth, E.L., & Van Leuven, J.K. (2004) Public Relations. The Profession and the Practice. New York: McGraw-Hill.
2. Wilcox, D. L. & Cameron, G. T. (2006) Public Relations. Strategies and Tactics. (8<sup>th</sup> Edition). Pearson Education Inc.
3. The course reader.

**Highly recommended:**

*AP Style guide, The New York Times, The Washington Post, local newspapers and magazines, Advertising Age, PR Tactics.*

**Resources:**

Library of the American University – Central Asia

National Library

Internet, World Wide Web, international e-mail contacts

Database EBSCO

**Grading:**

|                                     |            |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Press release                       | 100 points |
| Fact sheet/ backgrounder            | 100 points |
| Case Study Report – Presentation    | 100 points |
| Research/ Situation Analysis Report | 110 points |
| Exam 1                              | 100 points |
| Final Exam                          | 150 points |
| Take-home essays (4 @ 50)           | 200 points |
| Class participation                 | 140 points |

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|---------------|--------------|
| Total points: | 1,000 points |
|---------------|--------------|

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| Exams:         | 25% |
| Project:       | 21% |
| Assignments:   | 40% |
| Participation: | 14% |

**By Percentages:**

**A** = 100 to 90; **B** = 89 to 80; **C** = 79 to 70; **D** = 69 to 60; **F** = didn’t try hard enough.

**Note:** I reserve right to award a + or – to the grade based on attitude and performance. Final grades are NOT negotiable. It is your responsibility to keep up with your grades during the semester.



## Grading Standards:

Your assignments will be graded on:

- **Content**
- **Creativity**
- **Organization**
- **Grammar**

**A = Outstanding.** This grade is for work of professional caliber (publishable/usable). The writing is clear and well organized; it requires virtually no editing. It is complete and leaves no significant questions unanswered. The work is turned in by or before deadline, needing no changes before submission to clients or editors.

**B = Good.** This grade is for work that could be raised to professional standards without extensive alteration. Writing and execution is grammatically correct but may lack the thought and depth of “A” work. The main questions are answered but may miss the proper emphasis, best sources, or creativity in thought. The work is turned in by deadline and needs minor revisions in such areas as reorganizing, rewriting, reformatting or providing more or better sources. “B” work doesn’t necessarily have anything wrong, but it could be better.

**C = Adequate.** This grade is for work that indicates a problem at least in one area, such as research, strategy or organization. It does not measure up to professional quality but could be saved by revision. Work is incomplete by deadline and/or needs more than minor revision before submission to a client or supervisor. The paper may have weak ideas, concepts or presentation. In summary, the work is an adequate first draft but isn’t yet ready to show a client or supervisor.

**D = Unacceptable performance.** This grade is for work that is clearly unacceptable even in a classroom setting. The work is unorganized, confusing and sloppy. The conceptual underpinnings are flawed and indicate poor research or strategic judgment. Work may miss the deadline.

**F = Failing.** This grade is for work that is not completed in a professional, timely way. For whatever reason, it has the appearance that the student did not take the assignment seriously. Such performance is often the result of personal or time-management problems.

*(Borrowed/revised from C. Marsh et al.)*

## Class Policies

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Following is a brief summary of what is considered academic dishonesty:

- submitting material as your own work, when it is not
- cheating in class during exam periods or aiding another student to cheat
- failing to cite the work of another in a paper or presentation – whether the student is directly quoting a source or paraphrasing
- submitting falsified medical excuses
- working on an assignment with other students without the instructor’s permission
- downloading sources from the Internet and using them as your own (whether the student has paraphrased the information or used it word for word) without citing the source.



Plagiarism, at least will result in a failing grade for the affected assignment and the submission of the affected assignment to the university's legal counsel. For further information on the penalties please see the university's policy on academic misconduct.

**Assignments:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date unless otherwise specified. No assignment (or part of an assignment) from another class will be accepted in this class. If it is discovered that a student has attempted to do this, it will result in an automatic grade of "zero" on the project. All materials submitted for this class should be new and completely original. It is the student's responsibility to get copies of handout given in class.

**Attendance and Preparation:** Attendance is expected, just as it would be for a "real" job. At this stage, you should view your coursework as a prerequisite for your chosen profession. Each class attendance will earn you three points by default. You are allowed two days of "sick-vacation" leave, as it is reasonable you may need to miss two days of class for some reason during the semester. After your two freebies, you will begin losing points and must tell your instructor in advance if you cannot show up. Call or send an email – but don't ask a friend to pass along the information. Also, please note: two tardies = one absence. I also expect you to have read the assigned material before class (textbook or readings). Students are excused for religious holidays and must apprise instructor in advance.

**Reader and Participation:** Students should check the course's Reader regularly. Readings, class assignments, discussion questions and additional information will be filed there and uploaded to the course online resource. I will often hand out/ announce discussion questions in class that will pertain to the readings due to the next class and will also be filed in the Reader. The course schedule is filed in the Reader and will be updated during the semester, as will updates and other announcements. It is crucial that you check your email account during the week.

**Communications:** Office hours are the best time to get help on projects, to talk about careers and discuss your ideas about what we're doing in class. Email is best for questions requiring short answers (e.g., due dates, format, etc.).

**Extra Credit:** Bonus (up to **25 points**) will be given for creativity, originality, and independence of thinking.

**Exams:** Exams will cover material from lectures, handouts, materials filed in the Reader, guest speakers, films/ videos and the text. Tests will be multiple choice, true/false, and some short answers. No hats or caps may be worn during exam periods. Students may not leave the exam room during the exam. Make-up exams are rarely given and are given at the discretion of the professor. Students **MUST** consult with the professor well in advance of the exam date and provide a legitimate and documented reason for rescheduling. (Family vacations, appearances in weddings, etc. are not considered legitimate reasons to reschedule an exam.) The final exam is cumulative.



### **Tentative Class Schedule:**

The schedule may change at the professor's discretion. Should the schedule be changed, the professor will provide as much notice as possible.

| Date                  | Lecture/Discussion Topic                                         | Readings (due by date listed)                                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The Profession</b> |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| <u>Week 1</u>         |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| September 9           | Course Overview and Introduction                                 | Ch. 1 (Lattimore et. al)<br>Reader: Terry, Postcard from the Steppes |
| <u>Week 2</u>         |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| September 16          | Defining Public Relations and the Individual in Public Relations | Ch. 1 (Lattimore et. al)<br>Terry, Postcard from the Steppes         |
| <u>Week 3</u>         |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| September 23          | History of Public Relations                                      | Ch. 2 (Lattimore et. al),<br>Reader: Bates                           |
| <u>Week 4</u>         |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| September 30          | Public Relations Theory                                          | Ch. 3 (Lattimore et. al)<br>Reader: Grunig: Ch. 19<br>(Caywood)      |
| <u>Week 5</u>         |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| October 7             | Public Relations Theory                                          | Ch. 3 (Lattimore et. al)<br>Reader: Grunig: Ch. 19<br>(Caywood)      |
| <b>The Process</b>    |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| <u>Week 6</u>         |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| October 14            | <i>Independent Study Day (no classes)</i>                        |                                                                      |
| <u>Week 7</u>         |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| October 21            | Law and Ethics                                                   | Ch. 4 (Lattimore et. al)                                             |
| <u>Week 8</u>         |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| October 28            | Secondary Research                                               | Ch. 5 (Lattimore et. al)                                             |
| <u>Week 9</u>         |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| November 4            | Primary Research<br>Exam review                                  | Ch. 5 (Lattimore et. al)                                             |
| <u>Week 10</u>        |                                                                  |                                                                      |
| November 11           | <b>Exam 1</b>                                                    | Chapters 1-5 (Lattimore et. al)                                      |



Week 11

|             |             |                          |
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| November 18 | PR Planning | Ch. 6 (Lattimore et. al) |
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Week 12

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| November 25 | PR Planning and Action<br><i>*Research/Situation Analysis Due</i> | Ch. 7 (Lattimore et. al) |
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Week 13

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|------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| December 2 | Tactics: The News Release,<br>Backgrounders, Fact Sheets | Ch. 7 (Lattimore et. al) (cont.) |
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Week 14

|            |                     |                          |
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| December 9 | Evaluation Research | Ch. 8 (Lattimore et. al) |
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Week 15

|             |            |  |
|-------------|------------|--|
| December 16 | Final Exam |  |
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**FINAL EXAM – Monday, December 16 @ 8 am – 10 am**



*\* The syllabus is developed at the Missouri School of Journalism – Columbia. Teaching materials, including original syllabus, and teaching thoughts of Dr. Maria Len-Rios have been taken to write this syllabus.*