

COMM 375-201-3967 Media Relations, MWF, 1:40-2:30
Corboy Law Center - Room 302

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Loyola Chicago, Fall 2023 – August 28 – December 15
Final exams – December 11-15
Last day to withdraw without a W – September 10

Course Prerequisites:

COMM 100 and either COMM 210 or 211; graduate students majoring in either Digital Media & Storytelling or Global Strategic Communication (GSC) are also eligible.

Course Overview:

COMM 375 is designed to introduce students to the theory and practice of media relations, focusing on perhaps the most publicly visible and commonly known aspect of public relations. Students learn to develop influence through earned media. Skills taught include identifying news values, writing/creating multimedia press releases and media alerts, AP style, media training, creating media lists using subscription media databases like Muck Rack as well as other sources, working with syndication services, search engine optimization for news releases, creating a social presence and working with social media influencers.

Although not classified as a ***writing intensive*** course, fundamental applied skills that focus on PR strategies and writing for a variety of media platforms is a critical component of this course. We will focus on including print, broadcast, and digital media with an understanding of organizational objectives, news values and formats. This course will examine media relations against the backdrop of current business and social issues relevant to the field.

We will examine the journalism profession, which is the focus of media relations. Students will learn how and when to contact members of the media – and when not to. We will also examine the “why” behind media relations, and how the function fits not only within the overall practice of PR but also the larger corporate strategy. We will work on developing the critical storytelling skills needed to successfully create information that journalists use, and the tools with which to communicate that information.

Required Texts:

The AP Stylebook, 55th ed. ISBN: 978-0-917360-69-5. Publisher: Associated Press, 2020
The AP Stylebook is the definitive style manual for the journalism and public relations professions and is the standard that will be used to grade your assignments.

On Deadline: Managing Media Relations, 6th ed. Howard, et al. ISBN: 978-1-4786-4605-1.
Publisher: Waveland Press, 2021

<https://www.vitalsource.com/referral?term=9781478646631>

Additional Reading: Links to additional course readings from current events and lecture notes

will be posted in Sakai throughout the semester

Basic Expectations:

Students are expected to have already mastered the basic elements of good writing: spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence construction, composition and proofreading. ***This is critical – errors in these areas will significantly hurt your future career.*** Don't be surprised or discouraged if your first few assignments are heavily edited; it is important to learn the basics before you move on to major projects. However, repeating the same errors without improvement will negatively impact your grades.

Student Accommodations:

Loyola University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with Student Accessibility Center (SAC), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Professors receive the accommodation notification from SAC via Accommodate. Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential. Please note that in this class, software may be used to record class lectures in order to provide equal access to students with disabilities. Students approved for this accommodation use recordings for their personal study only and recordings may not be shared with other people or used in any way against the faculty member, other lecturers, or students whose classroom comments are recorded as part of the class activity. Recordings are deleted at the end of the semester. For more information about registering with SAC or questions about accommodations, please contact SAC at 773-508-3700 or SAC@luc.edu.

Course Learning Objectives:

The academic assignments you will complete during this course are designed to meet course objectives set by the department and prepare you to excel in your profession. Specifically, you will:

- Understand the role of media relations in the public relations discipline and within the wider organizational structure.
- Learn how to develop the appropriate media relations strategy to achieve organizational goals.
- Understand how journalists and broadcasters “think” and how their approach to determining what is “newsworthy” impacts media relations.
- Master the different tools required for each of the involved communication disciplines and be able to choose and implement the appropriate format for the situation.
- Strengthen writing skills and apply these skills to the media relations function.
- Understand the various elements of the media relations process, including concept development, preparation, style and “voice,” writing/editing/proofreading and pitching content to journalists.
- Incorporate appropriate theories of persuasive communication and strategy into communications materials and messages to target appropriate audiences.

Methodology:

This class will consist of a combination of lectures and discussions to examine current practices in media relations and how they are evolving to adapt to society and the current media environment. Assignments will involve both preparing actual media relations documents, reflections/examinations of media relations scenarios. There will be a bio + headshot, mock news conference, Crisis management response/group project, two quizzes, in-class responses, and a final media kit/presentation.

- The instructor reserves the right to adjust the course schedule to accommodate the progress of the course, and to allow for periodic guest speakers, discussions of current events involving media/public relations, or other issues affecting our schedule. Changes will be announced in class and posted on the Announcements in Sakai, but it will be YOUR responsibility to keep up with syllabus schedule changes, including assignment due dates. Links to online reading sources are in the syllabus and will also be posted in Sakai.

Exercises and Assignments:

The assignments for this course will consist of several small (1-3 pages) exercises and a few longer assignments (three pages or more), as well as a final project that can run to as many as 10 pages. The final project will be made up of revised versions of many of the individual assignments you will submit throughout the semester. Detailed instructions and specific rubrics will be posted in Sakai and included in class discussions. NOTE: Items labeled exercises will be written in whole or in part during the class period, to allow the instructor to critique and assist in the first draft as needed before being submitted. Revisions will be done outside of class and then submitted for grading. These dates are also listed in the course schedule at the end of this syllabus.

Group Work v. solo:

In this course, you will work with groups throughout the semester to analyze and create media, both creatively and professionally. Please be responsive and do your fair share of the work. The media industries are all about working with others, and collaboration in this field is impactful. If you prefer to work alone, please email me.

Assignment Requirements:

*To avoid confusion, please include your last name and the assignment/exercise name in the filename, e.g., Executive Bio, and be submitted as a **Microsoft Word file via Sakai submission folders**. Follow the syllabus for all due dates. Because I insert comments directly into your submission using the comments option, **ABSOLUTELY NO Google Docs, shared links, PDF, PowerPoint or ODT files will be accepted. Assignments submitted incorrectly will not be graded and a score of zero will be assigned.***

Deadlines Public relations is a profession of deadlines measured in airtime, column inches, ad space and mentions. Now is when you begin to transition to life as a professional, therefore timely homework completion is important—even if you are absent. All assignments are due electronically in Sakai **by midnight** on the designated date.

Late Submissions:

Late work will lose 10 points for each day it is submitted past the deadline. **Assignments and exercises not submitted within four days of the due date will result in an automatic grade of zero for that submission.** In extreme situations (hospitalization, family emergency such as death of a relative, car accident, etc.) contact me and if possible, arrange for an extension ahead of time. Situations where advance communication is not possible will be dealt with at the discretion of the instructor on a case-by-case basis, within university guidelines.

Assignments Schedule*

| Week | Assignment | Point Values | Due Date |
|------|--|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | Executive Bio draft | 5 | 9/1 |
| 2 | Executive Bio final + headshot | 20 | 9/6 |
| 3 | Choose your client /Boilerplate | 10 | 9/11 |
| | Headline examples exercises | 10 | 9/13 |
| | AP Stylebook Quiz (at-home) | 50 | 9/15 |
| 4 | Interview Questions Exercise | 10 | 9/20 |
| | Feature Story Assignment | 40 | 9/22 |
| 5 | Good Spokesperson, Bad PR analysis | 25 | 9/27 |
| | Targeted Media List Exercise/ Explore Muckrack | 25 | 9/29 |
| 6 | Mock news conference | 50 | 10/2 + 10/4 |
| | Group Feedback (no in-person) | 20 | 10/5 |
| 7 | News Release Assignment | 25 | 10/13 |
| 8 | Pitch letter | 25 | 10/20 |
| 9 | AP Style Quiz 2 | 25 | 10/27 |
| 10 | PSA assignment | 25 | 11/3 |
| | Email about meeting | 10 | |
| 11 | FTC/FCC policy Response | 50 | 11/10 |
| 12 | Speeches or Explainer videos | 50 | 11/17 |
| 13 | Media Kit- Final Project Rough Draft (Backgrounder, Boiler Plate, Team Executive Bio, Briefing, News Release, Feature Story, PSA) | | |
| 14 | Final Project Presentation to Class | 50 | 12/4-12/8 |
| 15 | Turn in Final Media Kit | 100 | 12/16 |
| | Participation | 75 | |
| | Total Points: | 700 points | |

* Instructor reserves the right to adjust the schedule to accommodate the pace of learning in the course.

Grading:

Grades for this course will be determined by the assigned points for each grade item. The grading scale used for this course is as follows:

| Grade | Percentage | |
|-------|------------|---|
| A | 94-100% | <p>Assignments submitted in this class should reflect collegiate level writing skills and standards or above, both in form and content. You are expected to meet the following standards:</p> <p>A- to A 90 – 100% To earn a grade in this range, work must be free from grammar and punctuation errors. It should adhere to the assignment requirements and format as spelled out in the written instructions. The content must be clear and well organized. It should demonstrate a clear understanding of the course content and contain original material. It should be creative and approach professional-level quality.</p> <p>B- to B+ - 80 – 89% A grade in this range reflects work mostly free from grammar and punctuation errors. The writing will be mostly clear, with no more than one or two issues in organization or content. It should demonstrate an above-average understanding of the course material and a good level of creativity.</p> <p>C- to C+ - 70 – 79% Work meets all major assignment requirements. Writing will be generally acceptable, but with minor problems with content, grammar, punctuation or formatting. A grade in this range means that only an average understanding of the material is demonstrated. A lack of creativity will also be apparent.</p> |
| A- | 90-93% | |
| B+ | 88-89% | |
| B | 83-87% | |
| B- | 80-82% | |
| C+ | 78-79% | |
| C | 73-77% | |
| C- | 70-72% | |
| D+ | 68-69% | |
| D | 67-63% | |
| D- | 62-60% | |
| F | 59-0% | |

D- to D+ - 60 – 69%

Work in this range shows serious deficiencies by failing to meet some or most assignment requirements. Writing may have significant errors in grammar, punctuation, formatting or organization. Thoughts are poorly expressed, or creativity could be lacking.

F 59% and below

This grade will be assigned for work that fails to meet most or all of the assignment requirements or is simply not submitted. Submission will be poorly written, with significant errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, formatting and organization. Sections of the assignment may be missing. The assignment demonstrates a lack of understanding of the material. This grade will also be assigned for any plagiarized submission.

Attendance and Participation:

You are expected to participate in class discussions and exercises which cannot be replicated outside of the scheduled class period. An unexcused absence on the scheduled day of your class presentation will earn a zero score. **More than three unexcused missed classes will result in a**

zero for participation. At the beginning of each session, I will be taking attendance verify your presence. If you must miss a class, please notify me by email within 24 hours of your absence (in advance if possible).

Civility and Professionalism:

COMM 375 is designed to be an interactive forum for open discussion, idea sharing, learning, and productivity – essentially recreating in the class the team environment you will experience once you graduate and become a professional. Creating the environment for the free flow of ideas requires respect, tolerance, courtesy, open-mindedness, professional manners, and overall good citizenship. Any type of behavior — including (but not limited to) sexual harassment, degrading comments, derogatory racial remarks, bullying, profanity or other forms of disrespect or intimidation and harassment — that undermines this forum will not be tolerated.

Repeated tardiness is disruptive and makes it difficult to cover all the of material scheduled. If there is a problem with your ability to arrive at class on time, please discuss it with me privately outside of class.

Student Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:

As Loyola’s mission statement holds, “We are Chicago's Jesuit, Catholic University-a diverse community seeking God in all things.” Together, as a community rich in diversity, we are called to “expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith.”

Recognizing and appreciating the diverse collection of identities, experiences, perspectives, and abilities of the students, faculty, staff, and community partners with whom we collaborate, the School of Communication commits itself to enriching academic experiences through the advancement of diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive practices.

Managing Life Crises and Finding Support:

These are extraordinary times that can sometimes feel overwhelming. Should you encounter a crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Center for Student Assistance & Advocacy (LUC.edu/csaa) to submit a CARE referral for yourself or a peer in need of support. If you are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please know that I can submit a referral on your behalf – just email me or schedule a virtual meeting with me. Learn more about the center here:

<https://www.luc.edu/csaa/forstudents/studentresources/>

Privacy Statement:

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording.

School of Communication Statement on Academic Integrity:

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. These examples of academic dishonesty apply to both individual and group assignments.

Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;
- Providing information to another student during an examination;
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Taking an examination by proxy. Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.;
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.

- Submitting the same work for credit in two or more classes, even if the classes are taken in different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at

https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml .

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication. Instructors must provide the appropriate information and documentation when they suspect an instance of academic misconduct has occurred. The instructor must also notify the student of their findings and sanction.

The Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml .

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to similar organizations.

Course Schedule:

| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
|--|--|--|---|
| Week One (August 29- Sept 1) <i>Welcome to Media Relations: The Basics & Class Introductions</i> | | | |
| Monday 8/28 | Introduction, syllabus review | | |
| Wednesday 8/30 | Getting Started | On Deadline – Chapter One, Getting Started | |
| Friday 9/1 | Interest in Media Relations | Proof Reading vs. Revising CBS Sunday Morning: The Father of the Cellphone | Executive Bio- draft version (Printed) |
| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
| Week Two (September 5 - 9) <i>Building the Foundation – Before a campaign begins</i> | | | |
| Monday 9/4 | | NO CLASSES – Happy Labor Day | |
| Wednesday 9/6 | Campaign Example | 1. 8 Crucial Questions Every PR Pro Needs to Ask Their Client Before Getting Started 2. Case Study: Fly Fishing 3. Story Placement Example 4. NYT Piece, Fly Fishing Targets Women as a Source for Growth | Personal Bio + Headshot Final Due |
| Friday 9/8 | Media junk- What's your angle? Choose Groups: choose your company/client, Create fake issue | Clearing the Heavens of Space Junk – CBS Sunday Morning | |

| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Week Three (September 12 - 16) <i>Tools + Planning</i> | | | |
| Monday 9/11 | | On Demand – Chapter 3, Tools of the Trade Chapter 10, Measurement and Evaluation | Client Selection/ Boiler Plate due |
| Wednesday 9/13 | What makes something newsworthy | How to Not Pitch a blogger How to Pitch a blogger | Bring in example of a good headline and a bad headline |
| Friday 9/15 | No in-person | | Quiz 1 (AP Style) |
| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
| Week Four (September 19 - 23) <i>Making News when there isn't any</i> | | | |
| Monday 9/18 | Interview Questions | On Demand – Chapter 4, Reporters What Makes a good story Rules for Writing A Feature Story | |
| Wednesday 9/20 | | The Rise of Storytelling | Interview Questions Exercise |
| Friday 9/22 | | Lazy Eyes – Slate | Feature Story Assignment |
| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
| Week Five (September 26 - 30) <i>News Conference + Being a Spokesperson + Crisis Planning</i> | | | |
| Monday 9/25 | Whose a good spokesperson? | On Deadline – Chapter 5, Spokesperson PR Stunt Backfires | |
| Wednesday 9/27 | | Chapter 9, Crisis Planning Media Questions during a Crisis | good spokesperson or bad PR situation analysis |
| Friday 9/29 | Muckrack | | Targeted Media List Exercise |
| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
| Week Six (October 3 - 7) <i>Mock Conferences</i> | | | |
| Monday 10/2 | Mock Press Conference Week | | |
| Wednesday 10/4 | Mock Press Conference Week | | |
| Friday 10/6 | No in-person class | | Turn-in Group Feedback |

| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
|--|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Week Seven (October 10 - 14) <i>News Kit</i> | | | |
| Monday 10/9 | | NO CLASSES - Mid- Semester Break | |
| Wednesday 10/11 | How to write a news release | News Release | |
| Friday 10/13 | | How to write a pitch letter | News Release Assignment |
| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
| Week Eight (October 17 - 21) <i>Media Events</i> | | | |
| Monday 10/16 | | How to write a pitch letter | |
| Wednesday 10/18 | | Chapter 7 – Media Events | |
| Friday 10/20 | | Tips for Broadcast Writing | Pitch Letters Assignment |
| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
| Week Nine (October 24 - 28) <i>Ethics + Legal Issues</i> | | | |
| Monday 10/23 | | Chapter 6, Ethical & Legal Issues | |
| Wednesday 10/25 | Potential guest lecturer | | |
| Friday 10/27 | No In-person | AP Style | Quiz 2 |
| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
| Week Ten (October 31 – November 4) <i>AI tech + Disinformation</i> | | | |
| Monday 10/30 | AI tech | | Practice using Chat GPT |
| Wednesday 11/1 | PSA | | |
| Friday 11/3 | | | PSA Assignment Sign-up for time slot with June on Zoom or send opt-out email |

| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Week Eleven (November 7 - 11) <i>Communication Policy + Regulation</i> | | | |
| Monday 11/6 | | FTC and Advertising | |
| Wednesday 11/8 | | FCC + Continued discussion on regulatory practices | |
| Friday 11/10 | Meetings with June about final project on Zoom | | |
| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
| Week Twelve (November 14 - 18) <i>Speeches</i> | | | |
| Monday 11/13 | Speeches | 10 Keys to Writing a Speech | |
| Wednesday 11/15 | Write speech script/record | | |
| Friday 11/17 | Share work! | | Speeches or Explainer Videos |
| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
| Week Thirteen (November 21 - 25) | | | |
| Monday 11/20 | NO CLASSES – Thanksgiving Break Begins | | |
| Wednesday 11/22 | | | |
| Friday 11/24 | | | |
| Week Fourteen (November 28 – December 2) <i>Global + Future</i> | | | |
| Monday 11/27 | | Chapter 8, Going Global | |
| Wednesday 11/29 | | Chapter 11, The Future | |
| Friday 12/1 | Presentations | | |
| Meeting Days | Lecture | Readings/ Media | Assignments Due |
| Week Fifteen (December 4 - 8) <i>Presentations</i> | | | |
| Monday 12/4 | Presentations | | |

| | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|--|
| Wednesday 12/6 | Presentations | | |
| Friday 12/8 | Presentations | | |
| Week Sixteen (December 11 – 16) <i>Finals Week</i> | | | |
| TBD | | | Turn in Crisis Communication Plan Kit PDF |

The schedule is subject to change.