

COMX 351: Principles of public relations

Fall 2019

Contact Information

Professor name: Megan O'Rourke, B.A., M.A.

Phone: (208) 509-8474

Email: megan.orourke@mso.umt.edu

Skype ID: mg179119

Course description and learning outcomes

This course is designed to help students develop the knowledge base and analytical skills necessary to evaluate public relations programs and campaigns. The course will explore public relations' role in organizations and society through its historical foundation as a discipline. Students will develop an understanding of the theories, principles, issues, and trends in public relations, including global and ethical issues. Students will examine real world public relations successes, failures, and mishaps to help them develop a framework for designing campaigns and advising on public relations matters.

Student learning outcomes

1. Demonstrate an understanding of concepts and problem-solving techniques in public relations.
2. Analyze how public relations affects different aspects of modern society.
3. Engage in critical thinking to solve public relations issues.
4. Demonstrate effective problem-solving skills.
5. Develop skills from professionals to apply to challenges that affect public relations locally and globally.
6. Apply key processes in public relations such as research, planning, strategy, and evaluation.
7. Differentiate between ethical and unethical practices.
8. Create a framework to resolve ethical issues in practice.
9. Create messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context.
10. Influence public discourse.

Required course materials

You are REQUIRED to purchase the eBook, Introduction to strategic public relations: Digital, global and socially responsible communication by Page and Parnell (2018). This digital product contains important videos and resources used throughout the semester. Here's how to register:

1. Go to [VitalSource.com/login](https://www.vitalsource.com/login).
2. If you have a VitalSource account, log in. If not, [create an account](#).
3. Once you've logged in, [purchase the eBook version of the text](#).

Format

The course objectives are met entirely online. Taking an online course may be new for you; it may take a while to get used to the format beyond the time you might usually spend on a class.

I am committed to the endeavor of teaching, whether online or in a classroom. I believe I can meet my goals for teaching this course and you can meet your goals in taking this course, even though this will not occur in a traditional classroom setting. The more contact students make (both with their peers and

with their instructor), the more successful they are in the course. Thus, my goal is to encourage you to interact and engage as fully as possible.

I should note that I live in Boise, Idaho, not Missoula, so we are unable to meet in person. I also work full-time so I'm unavailable between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday-Friday. While we won't meet face-to-face, your questions, comments and feedback are never viewed as a distraction. I check my email at 8:30 p.m. (MT) Monday-Friday, so if you have a pressing question, email me by 8:30 p.m. for same-day service. Please don't feel uncomfortable calling me, either. I wouldn't include my personal number if I didn't want students to call when they had questions. You can also make an appointment to Skype with me if you prefer to see a face at the other end of the line.

Policies

Deadlines

Though many of the constraints of time and location have been removed, deadlines are still inevitable and are designed to help you stay caught up. All assignments must be submitted by 11:55 p.m. (MT) on the deadline. Late work is not accepted. Communicate with me immediately if you foresee any difficulties in meeting a deadline. You'll find I can be flexible and understanding if you inform me of difficulties meeting deadlines before assignments are due; difficulties meeting deadlines after assignments are due are excuses, and I don't accept those.

Academic integrity

All students taking this course must adhere to the University of Montana's academic dishonesty policy as presented in the [Student Conduct Code \(SCC\)](#). You're responsible for reading and understanding this code. If you have any questions, please contact me or the department chair.

Original work

I expect all the work you do in this class to be completely original. No work that has been done by classmates (current or previous) may be used by you, in whole or in part, for your work in this class. Nothing you have written previously (for any other course, in this course if you have taken it previously or anything you have written for other jobs or organizations) may be submitted to fulfill the assignments in this class. Finally, absolutely no plagiarism will be tolerated. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive a zero on the first offence. If you are caught again, you will fail the class and steps will be taken to initiate university sanctions as provided for in the SCC.

Types of plagiarism

The advent of the internet has made plagiarizing simpler. However, keep in mind that if you can find something online, I can, too. Generally, plagiarism occurs in three forms:

- Incremental: Failing to properly attribute source material (e.g., using incorrect style to cite your source, omitting information such as the date of publication or page number or failing to include a source both in the body of the work and on your References page).
- Patchwork: Copying and pasting material from one or more sources with very little modification (e.g., visiting three web sites and cutting and pasting snippets from each).
- Global: Taking the full text of another source and passing it off as your own work.

Disabilities

If you have a disability which may impact your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a coordinator in the Office of Disability Affairs so accommodations can be

arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, please contact me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

Consideration

Help foster an atmosphere where a priority for education and a respect for all students is valued by engaging in comments that relate to course content and show tolerance for opinions different from your own. Please understand that whether it is a face-to-face or online, harassment of any kind is inappropriate and intolerable, and disciplinary action will be taken should it occur.

Assignments

All assignments must follow APA formatting (typed, double-spaced on standard-sized paper [8.5" x 11"] with 1" margins on all sides, and use 12 pt. Times New Roman font).

Chapter quizzes (16 @ 15 points each)

To encourage you to complete the assigned readings, you will have a 15-question quiz on each chapter.

Discussion questions (16 @ 12 points each)

Discussion questions are designed to help you demonstrate your critical thinking skills, retain material you just read, and interact with your classmates. **Discussion questions are available until 11:55 p.m. on the day they are due.** For each chapter, you are expected to post one question about the text and respond to two of your peers' questions. Detailed rubrics for discussion questions are posted in Moodle.

Introduction to APA style (50 points)

It is expected that you will consult outside sources to complete your written assignments. Regardless of whether you cite them directly or paraphrase them, you need to cite your sources using APA format, both in the body of your assignment and on your references page. This assignment is designed to introduce you to the specifics of APA style.

Article reviews (3 @ 100 points each)

It's important to become familiar with trends and industry publications. You will select and summarize an article, identify its implications for the practice of PR and critique the article.

Case studies (2 @ 100 points each)

You will select a public relations occurrence and conduct a critical analysis of it using our readings and discussions as a guide. Further research must be conducted, as specific dates and events will be necessary to construct a thorough case analysis.

Get out of jail free

I give each student an opportunity to miss one deadline with no penalty each semester. If you miss a deadline, I'll still accept your work, but you'll forfeit the extra credit points; if you never use your get out of jail free card, it's worth 10 extra credit points at the semester's end. The caveat is you must submit your assignment within one week of the deadline.

Redo assignment

You have an opportunity to redo any assignment of your choice the second to last week of class. It can be an assignment you did poorly on, did not turn in or even one you want to improve for personal edification. There is one exception: if you are caught plagiarizing and subsequently earn an F on an assignment, you may not redo it.

Grading

There are 982 points possible for this course, and you will be graded with traditional letter grades. I do not curve grades, round up or add in extra points you have not earned.

100%-97%=A+

96.9%-93%=A

92.9%-90%=A-

89.9%-87%=B+

86.9%-83%=B

82.9%-80%=B-

79.9%-77%=C+

76.9%-73%=C

72.9%-70%=C-

69.9%-67%=D+

66.9%-63%=D

62.9%-60%=D-

<60%=F

All grades will be posted within two weeks of the deadline.

Contesting grades

I am willing to review any assignment with you to discuss your concerns. This is more difficult online than in person, so we'll have to work with what we've got. Please wait 24 hours after receiving an assignment before you contact me. When you do, please write down your specific concerns and your backing for these concerns and I will research your situation. We'll take it from there if further discussion is necessary.

Submitting work

All written assignments should be saved as Word documents to avoid problems with opening files. If I can't open your files, I can't grade them, and if I can't grade them, you'll earn a zero. If you don't have access to Microsoft Word, use a computer on campus or visit the bookstore to take advantage of deeply discounted student pricing on software. Moodle is the ONLY place I will accept written assignments; if you email me an assignment, you will receive a zero.