

COMM 206: Public Relations and Digital Media

Instructor: Dr. Zachary McDowell

Office: BSB 1152D

Course IRL: MW3:30p- 4:45 Science & Engineering Offices 1200

Course site: Blackboard

Office hours: MW 230-330 (and by appointment) email: zjm (at) uic (dot) edu

Course Description

This class will provide a historical, interpretive, and *critical* overview of the history of public relations as well as its role in contemporary society, with particular emphasis on contemporary digital media campaigns. This is *not* a “how to do public relations course.” Rather, we will study how public relations messages build identities and persuade publics by identifying and shaping audience understandings, beliefs and values. We will also study how public relations messages offer the corporation as the source of both social stability and progress. Through this understanding, students will learn to analyze, address, engage with, and craft public relations messaging.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to apply the principles of public relations to specific cases studies, organizations, and professional situations.
2. Students will be able to design, construct, and disseminate public relations campaigns and strategies for all media –print, analog, digital, and social.
3. Students will be able to identify and analyze the use of ethics in public relations and social media.
4. Students will be able to critique the use of social media in public relations.

IMPORTANT: A laptop or similar device (tablet with keyboard) is required for this course. If you do not own one, ACCC has a two-day PC laptop loan program for students. One of their locations is here in BSB next door to Au Bon Pain. The loan can be extended on a needs basis.

Readings / Course Texts

All required readings are linked from the course

Resources

- Advertising Archives Webpage <http://www.advertisingarchives.co.uk/>
- Public Affairs Council <http://pac.org/>
- Public Relations Student Society <http://www.prssa.org/>
- Institute for Public Relations
http://www.instituteforpr.org/research_single/new_model_media_content/
- Public Relations Watch <http://www.prwatch.org/>
- Source Watch http://sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Main_Page
- Spin Watch <http://www.spinwatch.org/>
- Corporate Watch <http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?lid=1570>

- Biography of Public Relations figures and organizations
<http://faculty.buffalostate.edu/smithrd/PR/pioneers.htm>

Note: Unlike most courses, I EXPECT you to read Wikipedia. I also expect you to understand it, critique it, and contribute to it.

Course Expectations

1. Read the material in order to succeed
2. TURN OFF or MUTE ENTIRELY electronic devices, including computers during class (unless specified for group work).
3. *Students must try to get to class in a punctual way and must not wander in and out of class during the class period - aka "BE ON TIME"*

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access to and/or participation in this course are welcome, but must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Contact DRC at 312-413-2183 (v) or 312-413-0123 (TTY) or email drc@uic.edu and consult http://www.uic.edu/depts/oaa/disability_resources/faq/accommodations.html

Resources for Undocumented Students

UIC is committed to diversity and supporting all students. The website [*dream.uic.edu*](http://dream.uic.edu) provides information and resources regarding enrollment and UIC services for undocumented immigrants. Support services — from academic and personal counseling, to financial aid and legal referrals — can help you balance being a part/full-time student while handling other day-to-day challenges.

Course Schedule

The course schedule, including due dates, is posted on the Wikipedia Dashboard. Other course materials are posted on Blackboard

Course Policies

Full course policies are posted on Blackboard. These include how attendance will be scored, technical requirements for your projects (don't lose points!), and academic dishonesty. Any case of plagiarism or cheating will result in an automatic failure of the course, and a complaint will be filed with Student Judicial Affairs. There are a number of other course policies of which you should be aware, and to which you will be held.

Academic integrity/Plagiarism

Academic Dishonesty: Any case of plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, cheating, or other academic misconduct will result in an automatic failure of the course, and a complaint will be filed with Student Judicial Affairs in the Dean of Students Office. Information about the student disciplinary policy is available at <https://dos.uic.edu/conductforstudents.shtml>

This is an academic community; being uninformed or naive is not an acceptable excuse for not referencing your sources or citing another's ideas properly.

More information about how to avoid plagiarism:

<https://writingcenter.ashford.edu/steps-avoiding-plagiarism>

Attendance

Attendance is required. I cover material not in the readings, and discussions are intended to enhance what you have already read. I will take role at the beginning of each class. Missing a class due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances will receive no penalty as long as the absence is supported by documentation (i.e. a doctor's note or other official record). I will penalize five or more unexcused absences by dropping your final grade by ten points (the equivalent of a full grade).

Course Readings

You will read all the assigned material. I do not lecture on the assigned readings, so you will need to read before you attend class. Class is intended to engage you on these concepts and ideas.

Assignments:

In the world of PR and Marketing, you need to function as a team. Therefore most of the assignments are group assignments. To ensure that you understand how PR campaigns and activities function, you will work together to study and propose PR campaigns. This gives you the opportunity to learn by doing, and promotes insight into the complexity of PR in the real world.

To make these projects more "doable," you work on them in small groups (working together over the entire semester). Peer participation evaluations will allow each member to evaluate each other. This will help ensure that everyone pulls their weight in the group. That being said: **if you have issues with a group member, I expect you to contact me *as a group* as soon as possible.** I encourage everyone to work out their differences amicably and act as a team in this course.

Percentage breakdown:

Individual Tasks	20%
- Wikipedia training (Individual) MUST COMPLETE ON TIME	10%
- Wikipedia Article Peer Review (Individual)	10%
Group Tasks *	40%
- Group Project Proposal	5%
- Group PR Company Overview	10%
- Group Project Final Reflection Presentation	10%
- Wikipedia (Group) contribution assignment	15%
- Peer participation evaluations (see note below)	% of total
Take Home Tests	30%
- Test 1	15%
- Test 2	15%
Participation and attendance	10%
Total	100%

Grades: A 90-100; B 80-89; C 70-79; D 60-69; F 0-59

**** Wikipedia Group tasks are all calculated at the end by a percentage of your peer participation evaluations.***

Wikipedia Training – 10% VERY IMPORTANT

You will be responsible for completing all the training on the dashboard assignments, on time.

Note: If you “forget” how to do something, you will be expected to have completed the training, which means you will know how to “re-learn” this skill.

Group Project Proposal - 5%

One of the first group projects will be to pick a group project, do some research, and present it to the class for discussion.

Group PR Company Overview - 10%

From your initial picking of a group project, you will summarize your research into a “company overview” written in the vein of a PR outreach (eg: their own website, but better).

Wikipedia Group Draft - 5%

You will then take this company overview and eliminate the “PR” words to draft a Wikipedia article.

Wikipedia (Group) contribution assignment - 15%

This group project will be a significant improvement to a Wikipedia stub (short article) or a new article that accurately and neutrally covers a local nonprofit. Your group will collaborate on finding proper sources, writing a neutral and balanced article that adheres to the guidelines, as well as commenting on other groups’ projects.

See the guidelines here:

[https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hub/403249/file-1630283194-pdf/Wikipedia and the Communications Professional.pdf](https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hub/403249/file-1630283194-pdf/Wikipedia%20and%20the%20Communications%20Professional.pdf)

Assignment Rubric:

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d2/Wiki Education Classroom Program example grading rubric.pdf](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d2/Wiki_Education_Classroom_Program_example_grading_rubric.pdf)

Wikipedia Project Group Reflection - 10%

In addition to the actual contribution on Wikipedia, this project will culminate with a short group presentation on your article/contribution. This presentation will be a reflective one, and will be discussed in class.

Wikipedia article Peer Review – Individual - 10%

You will review other another group’s article, giving substantive feedback and making suggestions. This will be discussed in class.

Tests (Take Home) - 2 x 15%

Two tests covering topics discussed in class and in readings leading up to the take-home. More information TBD.

Peer Participation Evaluations – X Percentage of Wikipedia Assignment

PR is not something one does alone. You are on a team, and will work together as a team in and out of class (online, via email). At the end of the semester, you will be asked to evaluate others in your group via a provided form.

Here's how this works: If your group gets 100% of the points for the group work, but you don't participate, and your group believes you haven't participated, you will only get X% of the total points that align with your overall group score.

As mentioned above, if there are serious problems beforehand, I expect you all to address them with me.

If you're actually reading this, email me a picture of "Alf" that you found on Google images with the subject line "COMM 206 - It's Alf!". I'll give you extra credit.

Attendance and Participation – 10%

Everyone is expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. I will pass around a sign in sheet. **If you are more than five minutes late, you will not be able to sign in.**

Some days we will have specific in-class participation assignments (eg: group pop-quiz, class participation in discussion, etc). In-class participation cannot be made up, and class participation will be factored into final grades. Grades will be calculated whether you actively participate in class discussions.

Proposed Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week 1	Jan 13	Course Introduction Discussion: What is Public Relations? Read: Persuasive Techniques in Advertising (PDF) https://drive.google.com/open?id=1v72FwCzxlE1fFk8BS-KItnIZkXsOKOdl Discussion: Basic appeals and where you find them
	Jan 15	Introduction to The Public Relations Industry Read: PRSA, All About PR https://www.prsa.org/all-about-pr/ Glossary of terms https://www.prsa.org/about/all-about-pr/glossary-of-terms PRSA Ethical Statement http://apps.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/Ethics/CodeEnglish/

		Also Read: Wikipedia definition of COI https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Conflict_of_interest Take a look at: Ethics moments Discussion (continued): What is Public Relations? What are ethics in PR? What is a conflict of interest?
Week 2	Jan 20	No Class: Martin Luther King Day
	Jan 22 JAN 24: ADD DROP ENDS	Screening (IN CLASS): Toxic Sludge is Good for You (on Kanopy) https://uic.kanopy.com/video/toxic-sludge-good-you-public-relations-industry-unspun Watch (on your own) : John Oliver Explains Sinclair’s news scandal: https://adage.com/article/media/watch-john-oliver-explain-sinclair-fake-news-scandal/312955/ Read (on your own): Sinclair’s Must Run Anti-Migrant “rant”: https://www.businessinsider.com/sinclair-group-tv-stations-air-must-run-anti-migrant-rant-2018-11?fbclid=IwAR3J2SrBudoQk1JGaXe4hktnl1D4iuYHUuh5MpwRIERRfhAtUAZCAioQh5M Discussion: Truth and representation in media
Week 3	Jan 27	WIKIPEDIA ASSIGNMENT STARTS NOW (SEE DASHBOARD) Enroll here: https://dashboard.wikiedu.org/courses/University_of_Illinois_at_Chicago/Public_Relations_and_Digital_Media_(Spring_2020)?enroll=lapiybuc Read: <i>Propaganda</i>, Chapters 1-3 pp.9-36 Read: Edward Bernays <i>Bernays and the Birth of Public Relations</i> Read: Bernays and Guatemala https://www.modernmarketingpartners.com/chiquita-pr-campaign/ Discussion: Propaganda and the PR industry Milestone: Form Groups Milestone: Start Wikipedia Assignment, create account
	Jan 29	Read: <i>Lexicon of Lies (Data & Society)</i> https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/DataAndSociety_LexiconofLies.pdf Discussion: Misinformation, Disinformation, Propaganda

Week 4	Feb 3	Read: How to avoid swallowing war propaganda https://www.currentaffairs.org/2020/01/how-to-avoid-swallowing-war-propaganda Read: How Disinformation Hacks your brain https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/how-disinformation-hacks-your-brain/ Discussion / Activity: War Disinformation and Propaganda - Identify and discuss Wikipedia in-class exercise: Evaluate an Article (must complete Wikipedia training on article evaluation) Wikipedia Discussion: What is a content Gap?
	Feb 5	Watch (IN CLASS): Last Week Tonight - Astroturfing https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fmh4RdIwswE Watch: Astroturfing and the Manipulation of Media Messages https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bYAQ-ZZtEU&feature=emb_logo Read: "Covert Operations" (Jane Mayer) http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/08/30/covert-operations Read: A major funder of the anti-vaccine movement has made millions selling natural health products https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2019/10/15/fdc01078-c29c-11e9-b5e4-54aa56d5b7ce_story.html Discussion: <i>Astroturfing as PR AKA "Follow the Money"</i>
Week 5	Feb 10	Read about Front Groups: Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Front_organization#Corporate_front_organizations Center for Media and Democracy: https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Portal:Front_groups Read: How Wikipedia dodged public outcry plaguing social media platforms Workshop: Choosing your Wikipedia Article Important: arguing for notability: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Notability_(organizations_and_companies) Read: When to Cite (so you know when to cite information) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:When_to_cite

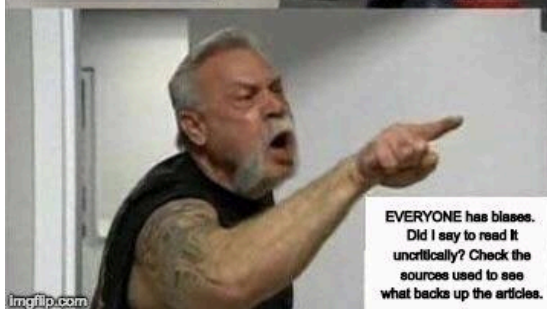
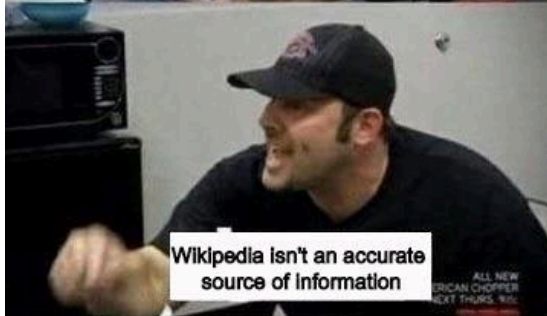
		Additional: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:You do need to cite that the sky is blue
	Feb 12	Screening: Philanthropy, Inc
Week 6	Feb 17	<i>Read: The Fake News Fallacy</i> https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/09/04/the-fake-news-fallacy Check out Propaganda critic: http://propagandacritic.com/ Check out Allsides: https://www.allsides.com/unbiased-balanced-news <i>Read: The Macedonian Teens who Mastered Fake News</i> https://www.wired.com/2017/02/veles-macedonia-fake-news/ <i>Watch (In Class): Think Like a Journalist</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9rBZ5FwFjw Discussion: Fake News and Media Bias Discussion: (high quality) Sources and (avoiding) Plagiarism
	Feb 19	Wikipedia Group Project Presentations: Who, what, where, why? Reminder: You're arguing that this organization meets the "Notability" requirements: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Notability (organizations and companies)
Week 7	Feb 24	<i>Read: Did Media Literacy backfire?</i> https://points.datasociety.net/did-media-literacy-backfire-7418c084d88d <i>Watch (In Class): You think you want media literacy - do you?</i> https://points.datasociety.net/you-think-you-want-media-literacy-do-you-u-7cad6af18ec2 Discussion: Media literacy Exam 1 Available
	Feb 26	Discussion: Company Overview

		Next Steps: <i>Company Overview</i> Discussion: Press contacts / Contacting Nonprofit Read: When to Cite (so you know when to cite information) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:When_to_cite Also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikipedia_is_not_here_to_tell_the_world_about_your_noble_cause Additional: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:You_do_need_to_cite_that_the_sky_is_blue
Week 8	Mar 2	<i>Midterm check in: Round-up... what works, what doesn't? Where are ?</i> Refresh: PRSA Ethical Statement http://apps.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/Ethics/CodeEnglish/ Read: Wikipedia definition of COI https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Conflict_of_interest Exam 1 Due
	Mar 4	<i>Discussion: Overview into Article</i> <i>Read:</i> How to not sound like an advertisement..... https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Identifying_blatant_advertising <i>Read:</i> Words to Watch: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Manual_of_Style/Words_to_watch <i>Read:</i> When to Cite: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:When_to_cite <i>Refresh:</i> Neutral point of view: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view (particularly "impartial tone")
Week 9	Mar 9	<i>The Big Picture: The Misinformation Society</i> http://www.publicbooks.org/the-big-picture-misinformation-society/ Check out PR Watch Continued Discussion: Misinformation, Disinformation, Propaganda

		Milestone: Company Overview Due (send to Instructor)
	Mar 11	Workshop: Company overview into Article (In class - working in sandboxes) Before Workshop Training: <i>Drafting in the Sandbox as a group:</i> https://dashboard.wikiedu.org/training/students/drafting-in-sandbox-group REFRESH (for workshop) Read: <i>How to not sound like an advertisement.....</i> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Identifying_blatant_advertising Read: <i>Words to Watch:</i> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Manual_of_Style/Words_to_watch Refresh: <i>Neutral point of view:</i> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view (particularly "impartial tone") Begin article creation MILESTONE: Nonprofit contact email draft: Send to Instructor
Week 10	Mar 16	Read: Wikipedia and the Communications Professional https://www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/Wikipedia_Manual_Beutler_91614.pdf <i>Discussion: What is "Conflict of Interest" (COI)?</i> Continue working on article in sandbox
	Mar 18	CLASS IS COMPLETELY ONLINE NOW WEBEX IN WITH QUESTIONS AT HOME: Screening: Generation "Like" http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/generation-like/ Read: <i>The Fake News Culprit No One Wants to Identify: You</i> https://www.wired.com/story/fake-news-social-media-danah-boyd/ Read: <i>Finland is winning the war on fake news</i> https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2019/05/europe/finland-fake-news-intl/ <i>Discussion: Personal PR or...?</i>

Week 11	Mar 23	<i>NO CLASS SPRING BREAK</i>
	Mar 25	<i>NO CLASS SPRING BREAK</i>
Week 12	Mar 30	<i>WEBEX ON PEER REVIEWING</i> <i>Milestone: Draft of Article in Sandbox Complete</i> Workshop: Peer reviewing Responding to Peer Review
	Apr 1	Exam 2 Available
Week 13	Apr 6	Milestone: Peer Reviews Complete Milestone: Make edits suggested by peer reviews
	Apr 8	<i>WEBEX MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR</i> <i>Workshop: Transferring Article to Mainspace</i> <i>Discussion: Final Presentations</i>
Week 14	Apr 13	Exam 2 Due <i>WEBEX MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR</i> Group meetings with instructor (all day)
	Apr 15	<i>WEBEX MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR</i> Group meetings with instructor
Week 15	Apr 20	<i>WEBEX WORKSHOP ON IMAGES AND WIKIFYING</i> Workshopping articles Milestone: Articles in Mainspace
	Apr 22	Improving Articles Workshop: Wikifying and Images
Week 16	Apr 27	Final Presentations
	Apr 29	Final Presentations

Fin.



(Hidden meme)