

TULANE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA ARTS  
MDAR 261: PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS  
FALL 2007  
PROFESSOR - DR. DENISE WEISS  
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**Text:** Fraser P. Seitel, "The Practice of Public Relations" (10<sup>th</sup> edition, 2007). Prentice-Hall.

**Course Description and Goals:** This course focuses on the communication between an individual or organization and the public to promote public acceptance and approval. This course will explore traditional and emerging components of the public relations process through mass media, examine fundamental issues and events concerning public relations and its role in media and society with an emphasis on PR's role in current news events, crisis communications, media relations, community relations and government relations, as well as identify the needs of different types of businesses, such as corporations, nonprofit organizations, and government offices.

**Objectives:**

After completing the requirements outlined in this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the basic principles of public relations and a public relations professional's role within various types of organizations.
- Describe and understand communication theories and techniques as they pertain to the management of public relations in the private, public, nonprofit, and government sectors.
- Recognize, understand, and be able to utilize various theories relative to public relations and understand their applicability to organizations.
- Understand the public relations process and its application.
- Understand the ethical choices and dilemmas involved in public relations decision making and various challenges that may be presented.
- Understand the current trends, issues, and situations, legal and ethical, which lend themselves to public relations interventions and understand how to skillfully manage such situations.
- Become skillful, proficient, and successful in analyzing and solving compromising situations through challenging case studies presented throughout the semester.

**Prerequisites for Taking an Internet-Based Course:**

Each student enrolled in an Internet-based course will need:

- Computer access (students are welcome to use any of the open computer labs on the campus);
- Minimum computer capabilities (see "Minimum Computer Requirements" below);
- An interest in utilizing the Internet as a distance education mode;
- Self-motivation - with an on-line course students need to take the initiative to review the on-line course materials, keep up with the reading and project assignments and participate in the on-line discussions; and
- Good written communication skills are imperative for a distance online learning course in order to communicate effectively through the mediums of threaded discussions, e-mail and "chat" discussions.

**Minimum Computer Requirements:**

This online course utilizes Tulane University's Blackboard course software. Therefore, the minimum computer system recommendations for using Blackboard software include the following.

- Platform: Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT, ME or XP; MacOS 9 or MacOSX
- Hardware: 64 MB of RAM and 1 G of free disk space
- Browser: Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher, or Netscape 4.78 or higher (JavaScript and Cookies must be enabled)
- Modem: 56 K minimum
- A Tulane University e-mail (rs/6000) account (along with the knowledge of how to send and receive e-mail) [Note: All newly admitted students will be automatically assigned a Tulane University e-mail account (your user name will be sent to you by mail and your password will be your social security number, without the dashes). If you are a currently admitted student that lacks a Tulane University e-mail account, please contact the Computer Help Desk, at (504) 862-8888, to set up an account.]
- Basic computer knowledge (including knowledge of word processing (specifically Microsoft Word), printing files, downloading files, uploading files, etc.

**Assumptions and Expectations:** You are expected to read the text, participate in threaded discussions, and complete weekly course work assignments each week. You are expected to log into the class site at least three times a week, post assigned case studies within the specified time frame and contribute substantive comments to the various on-going group discussions. In addition, students are expected to respond to at least two other threaded discussions posted by other students. This applies to each threaded discussion posted. All class sessions are interdependent upon the other; therefore each class leads into the next class discussion.

Given the asynchronous nature of this course, the expectation is that students will be able to meet all deadlines for completing reading assignments, posting threaded discussions and case study submissions. This class runs from Monday to Sunday every week and the course content is designed to display accordingly. Therefore, all assignments/case studies which are assigned each week are due by the following Sunday. Any case studies received in my drop box after Sunday at midnight will not be accepted. The best approach is posted after that time and case studies will not be accepted after the answers have been posted. No exceptions! You need to pay close attention to the message you receive when uploading your assignments to the drop box. If you do not submit, the assignment is only posted to your drop box. You will receive a warning that you have not submitted your assignment, therefore I will not accept any excuses with regards to students that may post their case studies as opposed to submitting them to me.

If you do not log-in every week and participate as outlined in this course, the content will be unavailable after the dates specified for each week. Tardy postings will compromise the quality of group discussions and accordingly are unacceptable. Only extraordinary or emergency circumstances will merit consideration for a deadline extension and will have to be evaluated by the professor on a case-by-case basis. Also, please e-mail the professor as soon as possible to explain any anticipated or missed deadlines.

While it is understood that most of the class members are already involved in demanding careers, business commitments (including travel) will not excuse late work. If you have a

demanding job or travel commitments, it will be your responsibility to work ahead in the course so that you will be able to meet the deadlines specified.

***Students with Disabilities:*** Any student with a disability in need of course or examination accommodations should request accommodations through the University's Office of Disability Services located in the Mechanical Engineering Building. Please do this as soon as possible. Please provide a copy of your approved accommodation form from ODS to me through e-mail correspondence, as well as to each professor in whose course you wish to receive accommodations. I am committed to working with the Office of Disability Services to ensure that all approved accommodations are provided. However, if you do not deliver the approved accommodation form to me, I will not know you have been approved to receive accommodations and will have no basis for providing those accommodations.

If you believe that you require special accommodations for taking the exam and you have not already requested or been approved for those accommodations, please see the Office of Disability Services immediately. Also, if you have been approved to receive exam accommodations, please consider contacting the Office of Disability Services to confirm those accommodations.

***Honor Code:*** All academic assignments in this course are conducted under the provisions set forth in the Tulane University Honor Code. As stated in the Honor Code, "Cheating is giving, receiving, or using, or attempting to give, receive, or use unauthorized assistance, information, or study aids in academic work, or preventing or attempting to prevent another from using authorized assistance, information, or study aids." Plagiarism is defined in the Honor Code as "unacknowledged or falsely acknowledged presentation of another person's ideas, expressions, or original research as one's own work." The Honor Code can be viewed at <http://college.tulane.edu/code.htm> in its entirety online.

***Biography:*** Prepare a short biography and post to your "Course Homepage" during the first week of class. The biography should include a small photo of yourself, your name, e-mail address, professional objective, educational history, work experiences, and hobbies or other interests. More information is contained under the "Course Homepage" section.

***Assignment Requirements:*** All assignments must be satisfactorily completed and submitted to the instructor on time for grading. You will discuss 12 case studies during the semester. Each case study assigned will be worth 40 points. The amount that each case study question is worth varies from case to case. In order to determine the value of each question, divide the number of questions by 40. (i.e., If a case study contains four questions, each question will be worth 10 points each with regards to the content of your answer.) Grammar and punctuation errors will result in an additional subtraction of points. It is imperative to have impeccable spelling and grammar skills in the field of public relations.

Some case study questions may be worded in a way that seeks your opinion. Please note that this is simply the way the questions are worded in order to put you into the actual scenario and case presented. The word "opinion" in any case study question does not imply that you can simply answer the question in order to receive credit. On the contrary, I expect that each question be answered thoroughly by providing observations gained from threaded discussions, other case studies, readings from the text, and personal insights or experiences. At the conclusion of each week, I will post the best approach to each case study. Each student is expected to compare the answers they submit each week to the best

approach that I post in order to understand how they are graded.

The specific grading subcomponents for each case study include: 1) demonstrating a mastery of the subject material; 2) developing a well-written, grammatically correct composition that adheres to the length guidelines provided. Case studies should be typed and submitted using the digital drop box by Sunday of each week. They should be double-spaced with a 12 pt. type. Please use Microsoft Word for your assignments. If you do not have Microsoft Word, please contact me immediately. Writing proficiency counts and will therefore be reflected in your grade on writing assignments. Therefore, grammar, spelling, and punctuation are to be correct on all assignments.

Participation in group threaded discussions will account for 320 points of the 1,000 points in the course. You will earn these points through:

- Providing substantive comments - that include personal or real world examples and back up claims and assertions with relevant sources;
- Responding to a minimum of two of your classmates threaded discussion posts for each threaded discussion question/essay;
- Responding to group members' comments to your posts; and
- Posting all comments in a timely manner. In general, you should aim to respond to group members' comments on your essays within a 2 day time frame. Do not wait until Sunday to log in and post your responses to the threaded discussion and your fellow classmates.

If you are going to be off line for a few days (for example, on an out-of-town business trip), please let me know. If you wait until the final few days of a module to comment on your class members' comments, the benefits of having meaningful discussions on the course material will be lost. Also, untimely comments will compromise the educational experience for others in the class and will be penalized by 50%. Therefore, do not wait until the last day of the weekly module to respond to the threaded discussion. The threaded discussions are intended to provoke thought-provoking discussions amongst the class and most will not have time to respond adequately if a thread is posted the last day of each week. Failure to respond to these threads weekly and in a timely manner will affect your final grade dramatically. The degree of importance to these threads is directly correlated to the overall percentage assigned in the grading components. Your participation points or your participation in the weekly threaded discussions, equate to 32% of your grade. In some circumstances, that could be the difference between passing this course with a C, if you haven't done so well on the other components in this course, and failing this course with an F. I do not scale or curve grades, nor do I offer extra credit assignments at the end of the semester for those in peril of failing the course. If you do not have the time to dedicate to participating accordingly as required in this course, this is not the course for you.

Late or inappropriately completed assignments may result in unsatisfactory scores and ultimately a failing grade. Exceptions to this policy (emergencies, etc.) will be decided by the professor on a case-by case basis. You must contact me well before the assignment is due in order to receive special consideration. If you are an athlete, please provide me with your game schedule at the beginning of the semester.

You are expected to do your own work. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. You are encouraged to use as many sources as possible to gather information. However, you must present it in your own style and words and document where you obtained the information.

## **Assignments and Grading**

**Assignments (please see attached schedule)**

### **Grading:**

Participation & Professionalism	32%
Case Studies 12 @ 40 points each	48%
Mid-term	10%
Final	<u>10%</u>
	<b>100%</b>

Scale:
A=90% - 100%
B=80% - 89%
C=70% - 79%
D=60% - 69%
F=<59%

**Schedule of Classes/Change in Course Requirements:** Listed on the following pages are all assignments along with their corresponding due dates for this semester. However, consider it tentative. Since all classes do not progress at the same rate, the professor may choose to modify the course requirements stated or their timing as circumstances dictate. Therefore, the professor reserves the right to change the syllabus if needed. This syllabus is subject to modification. For example, the professor may choose to change the number and frequency of exams, or the number and sequence of assignments. However, the students will be given adequate notification. *It is the student's responsibility to keep up with all class work and changes. All students will be required to adhere to any changes.* I do not have an office on campus; therefore if you should need to reach me, e-mail me at [deniseweissphd@comcast.net](mailto:deniseweissphd@comcast.net) in order to receive a quick reply. This email account is checked many times throughout the day. However, I do not have access to the Tulane email account during the day; therefore a much longer wait will be required before receiving a response from my Tulane email account. Note: Selecting the email option to contact me within Blackboard will send emails to the Tulane account. You must type in the email address I've indicated above, or you can find my personal email address under my faculty information page.

### **Dates/**

<b>Week of</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Class Topics &amp; Activities</b>
<b>Aug. 29</b>		Introduction to the course, review of syllabus, explanation of assignments, tests and grading system. Work on Biographies. (Due Sunday)
<b>Sept. 3</b>	Ch. 1	What is Public Relations?/Case Study
<b>Sept. 10</b>	Ch. 2	The Growth of Public Relations/Case Study
<b>Sept. 17</b>	Ch. 3	Communication/Case Study
<b>Sept. 24</b>	Ch. 4	Public Opinion/Case Study
<b>Oct. 1</b>	Ch. 5	Management/Case Study
<b>Oct. 8</b>	Ch. 6 Ch. 7	Ethics The Law/Case Study
<b>Oct. 15</b>		<b>MID-TERM EXAM</b>

<b>Oct. 22</b>	Ch. 8 Ch. 9 Ch. 10	Research Print Media Relations Electronic Media Relations/Case Study
<b>Oct. 29</b>	Ch. 11 Ch. 12	Employee Relations/Case Study Multicultural Community Relations
<b>Nov. 5</b>	Ch. 13	Government Relations/Case Study
<b>Nov. 12</b>	Ch. 14 Ch. 15	Consumer Relations/Case Study International Relations
<b>Nov. 19</b>		<b>Thanksgiving Break Nov. 21 - 25</b>
<b>Nov. 26</b>	Ch. 16 Ch. 17	Public Relations Writing/Case Study Public Relations and the Internet
<b>Dec. 3</b>	Ch. 18 Ch. 19	Integrated Marketing Communications Crisis Management/Case Study <i>Last Day of Class December 7, 2007</i> <i>Study Period December 8-9, 2007</i>
<b>Dec. 10</b>		<b>FINAL EXAM</b>