

**JOURNALISM 452 – PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ENTERTAINMENT
FALL 2007**

Instructor:

Larry Winokur – Adjunct Professor

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Entertainment public relations is a distinct subspecies of a unique profession: persuading media (e.g., newspapers, television, radio) to report favorably on a subject, whether a person, company, place or product. This course will give students an insider view into this exciting field and will provide an opportunity to interact with seasoned P.R. practitioners. In addition to instructor Larry Winokur, a 30-year veteran of entertainment public relations, some of Los Angeles' leading figures in film, television and music will also offer insights on their specialties, while print and electronic journalists will share tips on media relations from their perspective. Students will be expected to research and analyze current and past examples of public relations campaigns.

The class meets every Thursday from 6:30-9:45 p.m., except during holidays (see syllabus below).
Course requirements include:

- Class attendance and participation
- Mid-term paper
- Research and writing assignments
- Final project
- Daily reading of entertainment trades

Your grade will be based on the following: papers (30%), participation (10%), mid-term (30%), final (30%). There will be assignments each week which are given at the end of each class and due the next week. Please show respect for the class and our guest speakers by arriving on time – chronic tardiness and/or unexcused absences will adversely affect your final grade.

REQUIRED READING:

- Entertainment trades: Variety, The Hollywood Reporter (daily)
- Major national dailies: Los Angeles Times, USA Today, New York Times (regularly)

OPTIONAL READING:

- *The Entertainment Marketing Revolution* (Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2002), by Al Lieberman and Pat Esgate
- *Entertainment 101: An Industry Primer* (Pomegranate Press, 1999), by Roger Claire
- *Life: The Movie – How Entertainment Conquered Reality* (Vintage, 2000), by Neal Gabler
- *The New PR Toolkit: Strategies for Successful Media Relations* (Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2003), Deirdre Breakenridge and Thomas DeLoughry

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or writings from another and passing them off as one's own; in public relations and journalism this means appropriating the words of another without clear attribution. The following is the Annenberg School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity as published in the University catalog: "Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and will be dismissed as a major from the School of Journalism. There are no exceptions to this policy."
- No doubt this syllabus will be subject to some adjustment through the semester in order to accommodate timely, late-breaking topics and events, the unique needs of each student and groups of students, etc. Students having any doubt or questions regarding assignments, schedules, etc. should immediately check with their fellow students and/or the instructor.
- Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is 213-740-0776.

Standard Procedures/Ground Rules

- All written assignments are to be double-spaced with 1.5 inch margins and 12 point font, ideally Arial or Times New Roman.
- Students are expected to attend all classes. Unexcused absences, tardiness, and failure to meet deadlines will have a negative impact on the student's final grade. Students who unavoidably miss a class are still responsible for getting that classes' assignments in on time, getting any new assignments from other students, and completing the work by the assigned due date. All written assignments must be typed.
- Grammar, spelling and writing ability are of critical importance. This is not a course in English and/or writing, per se, and the instructor expects students to have learned from prior courses and experience how to produce written materials that are error-free and meet the quality standards of this school. All students' written work will be evaluated according to the same standards. Students who are not confident of their abilities in this area are urged to purchase and utilize a standard grammar reference work and an Associated Press Stylebook and/or seek remedial coaching (available in this school).
- Cell phones and pagers are to be turned off before class. Answering them during class will result in a full grade reduction for the entire course.
- Students and instructor must work collaboratively to maintain the feel of a true seminar experience. To that end, the instructor intends to manage the class as he would an agency brainstorming or professional development session, with similar ground rules applied:
 1. There are no bad ideas. All ideas are to be treated with respect for their creators and acknowledgement that ideas of all stripes and types can contribute to ultimate success. Nonetheless, it is always wise to mentally review the strategic appropriateness of any idea before vocalizing it.
 2. Constant student/instructor interaction and feedback are extremely important. Everyone is expected to contribute.
 3. Only one meeting/discussion can take place at a time, and it must be the one in which the instructor is participating. Avoid disconcerting side conversations.
 4. Always pay attention, because to do otherwise is a sign of an unprofessional attitude.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:

Larry Winokur has successfully led B|W|R Public Relations for nearly three decades. Along with partners Nanci Ryder and Paul Baker, he built B|W|R into one of the largest entertainment-based public relations firm in the world, which was bought by Ogilvy Public Relations (itself owned by WPP) in 1999. During his extensive career Mr. Winokur has provided counsel to a broad cross-section of political and corporate leaders; actors, musicians and other talent; and production companies that create film, television, music and other content. He has worked closely with three U.S. presidents and now represents former Vice President Al Gore in the launch of his television network, Current TV. Prior to establishing his PR firm, Mr. Winokur received a law degree following his graduation in journalism from California State University. He relishes this opportunity to teach in a university that wouldn't have him as a student 30 years ago!

ABOUT THE T.A.:

Julie Holland graduated from University of California, Santa Barbara with a degree in business economics and accounting. After working as an auditor for Ernst and Young LLP, she changed her focus to the communications world. Julie's diverse background in business, corporate communications, and sales and marketing with MTV Networks has allowed her to approach public relations from a unique vantage point. She currently works in the TV Department at B|W|R Public Relations on myriad clients, from the WWE to Tae Bo creator Billy Blanks.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Please note: Guest speakers are currently being confirmed for classes. To ensure a diversity of perspectives, speakers will include knowledgeable entertainment publicists as well as recognized performers, filmmakers, studio executives, journalists and the like.

Aug. 30 **I**

Introduction

Starting with a brief history of public relations, this intro module will examine strategies and tactics as essential tools of the trade, look at the media's role as The Fourth Estate, and offer personal tales from the trench. Course requirements will also be reviewed.

Assignment: Analyze the most recent oversaturated media story and provide your recommendations for managing it.

Sep. 6 **II**

Client Relations

Before you can enthusiastically represent your client to media, you must develop an open and honest relationship with them. To span from the wooing and signing of a client, to choices in imaging, media planning, client privacy and crisis management.

Assignment: You are a P.R. practitioner soliciting a meeting with your favorite star or television program for representation. Design an impactful approach that will get you that meeting.

Sep. 13 III

P.R. Writing

The pen is mightier than the sword, but effective P.R. writing must capture attention like the blade of Zorro, especially in the entertainment field. Guest speaker to discuss the best way to interview clients and write effective press releases, pitch letters and bios.

Assignment: Write a press release based on the raw information provided in class by the guest lecturer Robin Weitz, Senior Staff Writer at B/W/R Public Relations.

Please note: In light of Rosh Hashanah, any observant students are requested to attend morning or afternoon services; otherwise, please contact Prof. Winokur the week prior to class.

Sep. 20 IV

Television

Read a fascinating story about a TV show or one of its stars? Chances are it's not the result of investigative journalism, but rather a well-connected publicist. Whether stoking anticipation for upcoming shows or shoring up viewership for current ones, television publicists work to highlight plotlines and personalities, waging tune-in campaigns often integral to a program's success.

Assignment: TBD

Sep. 27 V

Event Marketing & Product Placement

From the grand opening of hotels, retail stores and restaurants to charity and corporate events, leveraging the cachet of celebrities and industry luminaries can draw media – and desired coverage. In the specialized category of product placement, live events are complemented by films, TV shows, music videos and other vehicles for gaining “organic” exposure for a client.

Assignment: You will be provided with a fact situation and will be asked to write a three-page proposal with ideas certain to generate press coverage.

Oct. 4 VI

Motion Pictures

Production notes. Key art and EPKs. On-set media visits. Talent junkets. Screenings, festivals and premieres. All these elements go into publicizing a motion picture. Learn how a film's assets can determine strategy, and how P.R. can help reach a sophisticated target audience wary of advertising.

Assignment: Based on visual images provided, create a motion picture title and slogan (e.g., for a movie poster or newspaper ad). Also, write a one-paragraph synopsis of the fictitious film you've “created” that would lead the production notes.

- Oct. 11** **VII** **Music**
 What does it take to help break a new artist, promote a record, or drive attendance for a multi-market tour? From seeking personal appearance and media opportunities for clients to staging stunts and promotions, music publicists make sure everything's in tune, whether on stage, on the radio or even just behind the scenes.
- Assignment: Go to a local club that features live music and write a pitch letter to Los Angeles Times Music Editor Robert Hilburn soliciting a Calendar story for an act that you see. If possible, interview one or more members of the band.*
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- Oct. 18** **VIII** **The Business of Entertainment**
 Agents and managers and production companies... *oh my!* Nothing says "We're not in Kansas anymore" than the esoteric business of entertainment. Pull back the curtain and see who's pulling the levers in Hollywood, why two trade papers control the reality that everyone believes, and how to move news to earn that coveted "page 1 above the fold."
- This class will involve a panel discussion with Hollywood Reporter and Variety reporters. In-class assignment: Read both day's trade papers and ask pertinent questions to guest lecturers regarding that day's news.*
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- Oct. 25** **IX** **Part I: Media Training**
 Dale Carnegie knew that next to death, nothing frightens people more than public speaking. Even for performers used to having a microphone in their face, media training can ensure that only the right messages are communicated – in that concise package known as the sound bite – whether in stand-up interviews or formal press conferences.
- In-class assignment: Dress and groom for class as if you were preparing for an on-camera interview. You will be videotaped in class and must respond to challenging questions. Assignment: Write a critique of your own performance.*
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- Nov. 1** **X** **Part II: Media Training**
In-class assignment: Dress and groom for class as if you were preparing for an on-camera interview. You will be videotaped in class and must respond to challenging questions. Assignment: Write a critique of your own performance.

Nov. 8	XI	<p><u>Paparazzi</u> Their flash bulbs no longer explode like they did in the 1940s, but celebrity photographers can still have an explosive effect, one way or another, on the career of entertainers. Learn about modern paparazzi and how publicists can work to maximize their positive use at parties, fashion shoots and other live events.</p> <p><i>Assignment: You are on assignment for People Magazine’s “Star Tracks.” Using a camera of your choosing, get “the money shot,” whether you are on line at a premiere or waiting in the parking lot of a chic restaurant. Bring your best photo to next week’s class.</i></p>
Nov. 15	XII	<p><u>Brainstorming P.R.</u> Do you work best alone or with others? When pressed for your creative thoughts in a public forum, do you focus or freeze? Examine the public relations tool of brainstorming: the process of ideation, collaborating in a group dynamic, the quest for The Big Idea. Let your defenses down – and let those synapses fire!</p> <p><i>In-class assignment: A newsworthy challenge will be offered and ideas solicited – participation required by all students.</i></p>
Nov. 22	N/A	Thanksgiving holiday – no class
Nov. 29	XIII	<p><u>Books & Theatre</u> Walk into a major book retailer and you’ll see why heralding a new publication can be daunting. The same goes for the “legit stage,” where even the most promising shows must court the press and patrons with equal aplomb. Learn how to nurture a best-seller or Broadway hit, from the comfort of an office chair.</p> <p><i>Assignment: Track a new book or play release in the media and analyze the breadth and tone of coverage.</i></p>
Dec. 6	XIV	<p>Surprise Session – Special guests & panel discussion</p> <p><i>Final Assignment: Amass all your course work in a bound presentation as if you are applying for a P.R. job and this was your portfolio.</i></p>
Dec. 13	XV	<p>Recap / Final Exam</p> <p><i>Your final exam will involve presenting your portfolio to one of three senior staff hiring committees.</i></p>