

Graduate Public Relations Course Description Handbook

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*It is important to note that the MA in Strategic PR follows a specific path: enrollees must complete six required courses, noted with an asterisk below, before taking any electives.

PR 501: Advocacy Communications

This course is designed to familiarize students with the key strategies and tools used in communications campaigns designed to influence public policy. Student will develop skills in analyzing and evaluating such campaigns. Whether the topic is global warming or charter schools, a variety of players outside of government are influencing policy debates by using the tools of public relations to promote information, ideas and positions. Conversely, the public policy arena has become a critical laboratory for the development of new means of practicing public relations. This course will examine the communication strategies employed by advocates, think tanks and philanthropies to shape policy deliberations and decisions. While examining all aspects of a policy campaign, including litigation and lobbying, our focus will fall on messaging strategies. We'll assess the imagery, language and media conduits used to influence public opinion, news media coverage and ultimately decision makers.

PR 504: Strategic Public Relations Research, Evaluation and Insights*

This course is designed to provide a theoretical and applied understanding of the roles research can play in public relations and marketing. The course will cover research methodologies, techniques, design, and analysis with a focus on application. Course discussion and exercises will link the applied use of research to strategic direction, messaging and evaluation. Enrollees will conduct and present a full-scale research project.

PR 508: Introduction to Strategic Public Relations*

This course offers a practical and theoretical survey of the strategic public relations profession as it is currently practiced, focusing on its key role in today's information-based society. The course provides a social/contextual backdrop for further study of the field. Emphasis is placed on strategic problem-solving skills rather than tactical execution.

PR 510 Legal, Ethical and Social Foundations of Strategic Public Relations*

This course explores the origins of, effects of, and processes for understanding and adhering to the complex network of legal, ethical and social responsibilities of the contemporary PR practitioner. It includes an exploration of the philosophical foundations of ethical thought, analysis of contemporary (and in some, cases, real-time) case studies, and opportunities for self-exploratory and experiential learning opportunities that enable the student to define for themselves what it means to be a "good" practitioner of strategic PR.

PR 527: Multimedia Content Creation for Strategic Public Relations*

In this class, we will examine media that is created and published by today's public relations practitioner. The Internet and growth of digital content have enabled brands, organizations and individuals to become publishers and directly engage their audiences. This class examines strategies and tactics needed to be an effective publisher including, digital content created for social and owned media channels.

This course is designed to teach students about the array of public relations tools available to them, with particular emphasis on writing, digital content creation and production of other communications collateral. Students will be exposed to social media and digital communications writing, multimedia content creation, basic principles of design, photography, video storytelling, production and editing. This is a lab course – a great deal of hands-on activities such as writing, graphic design, video production and oral presentations will be assigned.

PR 529: Business and Economic Foundations for Public Relations*

As public relations and communication are evolving into a discipline that is central to the success of organizations of all types, practitioners increasingly need to be familiar with fundamental aspects of business and economics as they relate to the corporate communication function. To be a valuable counselor to the executive management team and/or clients, PR practitioners need to be conversant in the language of the boardroom.

At the same time, changes in the media landscape and the rise of social media have created a dynamic employment market, lowering the threshold for entrepreneurially minded practitioners to build their own communication firms. This requires a solid understanding of media and consultancy business models.

PR 530: Strategic Public Relations Management

An analytical, case study-based approach to strategic campaign planning, management and execution, with heavy emphasis on problem solving and the role of research.

PR 532: International Public Relations

Public information policies and practices of national and supranational government units and national and multinational corporations involved in international relations.

PR 534: Case Studies in Public Relations

Each week, we examine and develop case histories via a "Socratic Dialogue," a time-tested method for discussing and debating all aspects of an issue. The case will be studied in three ways: general review, industry overview and competitive analysis. In addition, students will be expected to familiarize themselves with the intended audience(s) for each case. For each case study, students will be required to look at different points of view to apply to the case. We also will discuss the cases presented each week by the instructor or guest speakers

PR 535: Writing for Strategic Public Relations*

This course introduces students to the array of writing assignments a PR practitioner might encounter. It is based on the School of Journalism's rigorous newswriting standards. Through in-class drills and homework, students will learn to organize and plan their writing both with and without deadline pressure. Some assignments will cover the essentials of news and the basic building blocks of providing information; others will include elements designed to provide insight for working with marketing and human resources departments as well as clients. Specific writing styles for print, online and broadcast media will be reviewed, plus copy for online content, newsletters and business correspondence.

PR 536: Digital, Social and Mass Media Public Relations Strategies

This course is about understanding the dramatically changing media landscape and the role traditional, social and emerging digital channels play in communications and conversations. How a brand, organization or cause utilizes the numerous "media" channels in today's ever-changing communication environment is explored and examined. The course examines the evolving modern communication ecology and how paid, earned, sharable and owned media fit into the practice of modern public relations. The PESO model is used throughout the semester.

The course explores an increasingly complex universe of media. It takes special aim at identification of target audiences -- the people to be reached through public relations -- and engaging them with the right messages through the right media. Primary and secondary research tools, as well as logic and experience are a focus in this process. Students will learn how to connect strategic public relations goals with the changing media "channels" that exist in today's digital world. They will also learn the difference between "free" and "paid" media and the varying degrees of control and message integrity that accompany each. Along the way, a variety of strategic considerations will be revealed, e.g.:

- Identification of target audiences
- Effective media strategies
- Development of newsworthy messages/message tracks
- Brainstorming creative approaches to capture media attention and your audience
- How to utilize the power of digital communication platforms and maximize message amplification
- The importance of ethnic and specialized media considerations
- The role content, especially multimedia, plays in connecting with audiences at different times
- Discovery of content and the role search engines play; how to use search engine optimization

PR 537: Public Relations and Branding

This course is designed to deepen students' knowledge of the role of public relations in the contemporary practice of branding and brand communication. The first part of the course provides an overview of the concept of branding, with an emphasis on understanding the anatomy of a brand and how it is manifested through all forms of communication. We will develop an in-depth analysis of a specific brand. The second part explores how public relations and marketing can harness insights and ideas to build a brand. We will examine a series of current case studies and create a brand building communications campaign for an individual brand.

PR 538: Image Management in Entertainment

This class will examine the role of public relations and publicity in managing the public images of performers, executives and entertainment companies. Through the real life experiences of some of the top journalists, executives and public relations practitioners in the entertainment field, we will discuss the role of PR and the importance of creating and

maintaining a personalized, positive image through media of all types. This includes reputation evolution and crisis management. Analysis of current news stories will be an integral element of these discussions.

PR 561: Principles of Public Relations [for online enrollees only]

Principles of Public Relations offers a practical and theoretical survey of the public relations profession as it is currently practiced, focusing on its key role in today's information-based society. The course provides a social/contextual backdrop for further study of the field. Emphasis is placed on strategic problem solving skills rather than tactical execution.

PR 562: Foundations of Effective PR Writing [for online enrollees only]

This course is designed to provide students with practical writing experience. Special emphasis is placed on composing materials for a variety of audiences and an array of assignments. Through writing drills – many of them timed, to replicate the pace of today's business world – and evaluation of one another's work, students will learn to write more effectively; that is, to ensure that the intended audience not only pays attention but is persuaded to take action, whether it be to vote for a candidate, donate to a cause, purchase a product or foster understanding of an issue.

PR 563: Promotional and Product Public Relations

This class will train students in how specific promotionally oriented theories and practices of the public relations discipline, particularly in the area of product promotion, can dramatically enhance the reach and effectiveness of multi-disciplinary communications campaigns. Students will understand how to devise, implement and evaluate public relations strategies to help achieve promotional and sales objectives. Special emphasis on 360 degree integrated programs.

PR 565: Corporate Public Relations and Reputation

In PR 565 students study the planning, management and evaluation of strategic public relations campaigns with a focus on corporate reputation. Emphasis is on real-world examples; the class features visits by many senior corporate communications executives from Fortune 500 companies and incorporates a semester-long project that provides students the opportunity to work together as a team with a senior communications "client."

PR 566 Public Relations for Multicultural and Niche Audiences

Developing, managing and evaluating campaigns designed to reach audiences segmented by culture, lifestyle and other factors.

PR 568: Crisis Management in Strategic Public Relations

This course is designed to train students in the art of Critical Thinking and how to apply these concepts to a variety of challenges including Crisis Management and Mitigation. During the semester, we will focus on how to communicate in a time of crisis to effectively manage the situation and disseminate key messages to various stakeholders. Through case studies and in-class exercises, the students will learn the critical communication skills needed for an array of practical problems. There is heavy emphasis in this course on interaction within the class sessions and examining issues/problems from a 360-degree perspective.

PR 569: Ethics in Public Relations

Application of public relations principles to ethical conduct in a business, government agency, non-profit organization or consulting entity; emphasis on applicable cases and dialogue.

PR 597 Financial and Investor Communications

This course provides a practical, working understanding of financial communications, concerned primarily with articulating a company's value, not only as it relates to matters of corporate image and the cultivation of a favorable financial and investment environment but also, for publicly traded companies, with the legal interpretation of and compliance with SEC and other government regulations, as well as with the disclosure requirements of the securities exchanges. A look at investor relations focuses on corporate disclosure responsibilities, stockholder relations, and relations with the professional investor community including analysts.

Also important is the ability to help articulate an enterprise's position at sensitive and often high-profile times such as:

- Friendly and contested transactions

- Bankruptcies and restructurings
- Crises, litigation, shareholder activism and other proxy-related issues
- All capital-raising activities

In an environment where markets and audiences are increasingly blurred, it is important for practitioners to advise management teams and boards of directors how to tell the story behind their strategic decisions and business imperatives. This not only reduces risk but because each relevant audience understands their actions, companies can successfully manage their corporate brand, reputation, and, critically, valuation. Financial public relations practitioners, therefore, require knowledge in such areas as tender offers and takeovers, public offerings, proxy solicitation, and insider trading, which are covered in this course.