

University of Memphis

University of Memphis Digital Commons

Journalism and Strategic Media Syllabi

Journalism and Strategic Media

2021

PBRL 6430: Media Relations (Syllabus)

Tori Cliff

The University of Memphis, tmcliff@memphis.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/journalism-strategic-media-syllabi>



Part of the [Journalism Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cliff, Tori, "PBRL 6430: Media Relations (Syllabus)" (2021). *Journalism and Strategic Media Syllabi*. 1557. <https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/journalism-strategic-media-syllabi/1557>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Journalism and Strategic Media at University of Memphis Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journalism and Strategic Media Syllabi by an authorized administrator of University of Memphis Digital Commons. For more information, please contact khggerty@memphis.edu.

Media Relations

PBRL 4430-501 / 6430-501

Spring 2021

Class meeting: MW 12:40-2:05 p.m., [Zoom](#)

Prof. Tori Martin Cliff

Office Hours: MW 2:15-4:15 p.m. and by appointment (book it [here](#))

Email: tmcliff@memphis.edu

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

Development of media relations skills, including advanced writing of collateral materials, presentations, pitching and media training. Build effective and proactive work strategies with media through various tools including news conferences, media interviews, and media campaigns, and how PR professionals must mix traditional with new media outlets to most effectively promote their clients and employers. Strategic tools and techniques for developing successful media relations will be explored.

Prerequisites

Students must have successfully completed 60 hours of credit.

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Associated Press Stylebook (2018 or 2019). New York: Basic Books. You are responsible for the latest changes, so I recommend having the most current version.

Muck Rack for Educators:

We will be using Muck Rack this semester. Muck Rack is a journalist database, media monitoring and coverage reporting platform, that is trusted by top-tier journalists, entrepreneurs, PR agencies and Fortune 500 companies. This software will allow you to become familiar with the types of real-world tools used to identify contacts, disseminate messages, and measure multiple variables.

Each student will receive an individual login and will be responsible for following all rules and expectations set forth. You are required to use Muck Rack to complete assignments this semester and will need to complete online training courses on your own time outside of class.

Additionally, you will be required to complete the training requirements and become certified in Muck Rack's Fundamentals of Media Relations (free for students through the University Program).

Other readings will be assigned and posted to eCourseware.

Classroom format

The class will include lecture, webinars, discussion, quizzes, surveys, presentations, and in-class activities. Come to class having read the content assigned for each week, and ready to actively participate in class.

Since we will be using Zoom, it is important that you have a reliable internet connection, a desktop or laptop device (unless you are using a lab in campus) a web cam, and audio with microphone. Please keep your camera on during Zoom meetings, but remain muted unless we are having conversation, or you need to say something/respond to a question, etc. This will help to reduce the distraction of our collective background noise.

Class participation. This class is hands-on, and we will all benefit from class discussions and collaborative efforts in our study of media relations, communication tactics, public relations tools, audience and media selection. Your class participation and collaboration not only are appreciated, but they are also expected. Please come to class prepared to have intellectual exchange of ideas, and ready to participate in the class experience.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis eLearn home page: <http://elearn.memphis.edu>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for PBRL 4430-501 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

Course Requirements

PR writing assignments. Individual PR writing assignments will be used throughout the semester and will vary in length and format. Some may be written during in-class writing labs.

Quizzes. Quizzes will be given periodically. Attend class, read your materials and you should do well.

Media relations plan and presentation. In teams, you will select an organization/company with a problem, opportunity and/or initiative that requires media relations support. Your final product needs to showcase your understanding of media relations. You will want to have elements for both traditional and non-traditional media. Each group will give a professional presentation for their media relations campaign. It's recommended that you treat this as you would a job presentation: dress professionally, have visual aids/handouts, practice ahead of time, and be prepared for questions. All group members will also submit peer reviews and outline their own contributions to the effort. In addition to a group grade on the plan and presentation, each group member will be graded individually based on group member's feedback, contribution to the project, participation and poise during the presentation. Additional details on the assignment will be provided separately.

Mock news conference. In teams, you will work to plan and conduct a news conference to include talking points, introductory statement, response to questions and collateral.

Muck Rack Fundamentals of Media Relations Certification. Each student will be required to complete the training and pass the exam to earn Muck Rack Fundamentals of Media Relations Certificate.

Media training. Media training can teach you how to use your words, tone and body language to deliver your message in a powerful way. Throughout the semester there will be assignments and hands-on exercises designed to expose students to the basic concepts of media communication, including on-camera interview drills and practice in preparing a company's/organization's spokesperson (CEO, subject matter expert [SME], etc.) to do media interviews.

PBRL 6430. Graduate students will also need to complete Muck Rack's Social Media Certification, in addition to the work outlined above.

Grading

Activities/Homework/Exercises/Writing Assignments 20%

Quizzes 20%

Media Relations Plan & Presentation/Peer Reviews 30%

Mock Press Conference 20%

Certification(s) 10%

A = 100-90

B = 89-80

C = 79-70

D = 69-60

F = 59-0

Other issues

Media diet. The very nature of our profession requires us to stay on top of today's happenings. Our responsibility as PR professionals is to assess their relevance to – and their implications for – our clients and employers. Knowledge of current events, government, history and media is becoming more and more crucial. While your undergraduate education will provide a strong base of understanding in these areas, your proactive efforts to continue learning about them will greatly benefit your career. Continue to feed your media diet with a good mix of traditional, specialized and internet news sources.

Other media consumption. While we are studying media relations, be a voracious, critical consumer of media, texts, stories, brands, experiences – and the messages sent about and within them in the media. Look for the exceptional and the #PRFail. Bring these examples of good media relations and bad to class so we can critically analyze and learn from them together.

Attendance. Please make every effort to come to class on time and prepared to participate. If you know you will be absent in advance, please let me know and if we can make arrangements to allow you to turn in work early, I will, at my discretion. If you are late to class, it is your responsibility to let me know at the end of class that you arrived late. Failing to do so will result in my having marked you absent. If you miss class on a day that we do an activity/exercise or presentation, you will not be allowed to make those grades up unless there are verifiable extenuating circumstances.

Communication. We will use [Slack](#) to communicate informally in the class. Please join the channel in my workspace called media_relations. We will also use Marco Polo. Please add the app to your device, set up notifications, and then text me your name and phone number (i.e. This is Your Name). My cell is 731.803.2345. I will then add everyone to a group in Marco Polo so that we can do group video messages, or individual messages as needed. It is a quick and refreshing way to communicate. If we have tech issues in class and I am unable to connect/lose connection to Zoom, I will use Marco Polo to communicate next steps. Email is also a great way to communicate with me. Please only email me from your official university email to my university email: tmcliff@memphis.edu.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1, Jan. 20: Introduction to course

What do we intend to accomplish? Establish Muck Rack Account.

Readings: Ch. 1 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 2, Jan. 25 & 27: | Ch. 1, What Does It Mean to Practice Media Relations

Defining Media Relations

Readings: Ch. 2 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 3 Feb. 1 & 3: Ch. 2, Media Relations in the Era of Information

The Marketplace of Information

Readings: Ch. 3 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 4, Feb. 8 & 10: Ch. 3, Theory in Media Relations

What Makes a Theory a “Good” Theory?

Readings: Ch. 4 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 5, Feb. 15 & 17: Ch. 4, Understanding Audiences

Understanding the Makeup of an Audience / Quiz 1

Readings: Ch. 5 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 6, Feb. 22 & 24: Ch. 5, The Relationship Between Media Relations Practitioners and Journalists

A Quick History of the Relationship Over the last Century

Readings: Ch. 6 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 7, March 1 & 3: Ch. 6, Ethics

Personal and Professional Ethics

Readings: Ch. 7 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 8, March 8 & 10: Ch. 7, Assessing News

(No class Monday, March 8, for wellness break) What is Newsworthiness?

Readings: Ch. 8 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 9, March 15 & 17: Ch. 8, Managing Goals, Objectives, and Expectations

Connecting to Organizational Goals is Essential / Quiz 2

Readings: Ch. 9 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 10, March 22 & 24: Ch. 9 & Media Training Workshop

Tools of the Trade

Readings: Ch. 10 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 11, March 29-31: Ch. 10, Reaching Out, Making Contact, Earning a Response

Who to Target?

Readings: Ch. 11 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 12, April 5 & 7: Ch. 11, A Proactive Approach to Measurement and Evaluation / Media relations plan presentations | Mock news conference assignment (Monday, April 5, will be media relations plan presentations) Due: Media Relations Plans & Peer Review Document in appropriate Dropbox NLT 11:59 p.m. April 5.

Readings: Ch. 12 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 13, April 12 & 14: Ch. 12, Adapting Your Media Relations Program

Becoming a Flexible Media Relations Practitioner / (Media relations plan presentations continued if needed).

Readings: Ch. 13 and any additional content for this week in eCourseware

Week 14, April 19 & 21: Ch. 13, Engaging with Diverse Audiences / Mock news conferences

The Diversity of Journalists as an Audience / Practice what you've learned

Students will conduct a mock news conference followed by class discussion. Due: Muck Rack Media Relations Certification in Dropbox NLT 11:59 p.m. April 21, and if graduate student, Muck Rack Social Media Certification due too.

Week 15, April 26: Mock news conferences continued

Practice what you've learned (continued) / Quiz 3

Students will conduct a mock news conference followed by class discussion.

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

Five Pillars in PBRL 4430

- *Critical Thinking:* Students will use industry-standard tools to analyze media and their audience and to identify appropriate target media based on the client's public relations objectives.
- *Media Literacy:* Students will develop a deeper understanding of what news is as it relates to public relations and how to assess news and current event relevance to – and implications for – their clients and employers.
- *Multimedia:* Students will use social media platforms to cultivate relationships with media and will prepare materials for online news rooms.
- *Professionalism:* Students learn the professional standards and routines of media and the ways public relations practitioners can work productively with journalists by practicing media relations in a range of settings, identifying key media and learning how to cultivate relationships with them. Additionally, students will conduct print, broadcast and online media interviews and a press conference and learn how to identify and prepare a spokesperson and subject matter experts for interviews.
- *Writing:* Journalistic writing skills will be reinforced in the class. Students will practice identifying news opportunities and presenting them to news media appropriately in writing. Students will be required to write news releases, media advisories, scripts, media pitches, and social media content.

Professional values and competencies for PBRL 4430

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications,
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

How professional values and competencies will be met

Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)

- Learn techniques with writing in a brand voice to a diverse and global audience.
- Apply strategic thinking for communicating an organization's message to media.
- To produce professional grade content that can be used by an organization.
- To use the industry-standard tools that support media relations work.

Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)

- Complete a large-scale project that relies heavily on the skills presented in the class.
- Demonstrate an advanced ability to write in an appropriate and brand-consistent voice
- Demonstrate advanced knowledge of the monitoring and social listening software required for the course.

How assessment of student learning will be met

Awareness

- Become aware of how public relations practitioners work with the media to share information

Understanding

- Develop an understanding of the role of public relations in the media landscape.
- Develop an understanding of the processes by which public relations professionals shape images when working with the media.

Application

- Creation of large-scale projects addressing different media tools, strategies and tactics as applicable to media relations practice.

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

Portfolio requirement

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix or Squarespace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files and writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

Email

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the

University.

Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary).

Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a "job" in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade ("C-") in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor, and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

Academic integrity

In addition to University-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or students receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on their own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, as this is a journalism and strategic media class, students are expected to comply with copyright law and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according

to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. (*Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018*)

Online SETEs

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIDs and email passwords; click on the gray "Student" tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

Disability and accommodations

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Diversity and inclusivity

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Media reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

Weather policy

Always check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the University is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day's work.

Student support

Student who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in

connecting with campus or community support.

COVID-19 protocols for this course

Student Accommodations

Students with accessibility issues or learning accommodation issues due to a disability should contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) to submit an official request for course accommodations. Contact DRS at 901.678.2880 or at drs@memphis.edu. (<https://www.memphis.edu/drs/index.php>)

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. Students guilty of academic misconduct, either directly or indirectly, through participation or assistance, are immediately responsible to the instructor of the class in addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions which may be imposed through the regular institutional disciplinary procedures. (<https://www.memphis.edu/osa/students/academic-misconduct.php>)

Student Health

Students who have a positive COVID-19 test should contact the Dean of Students at deanofstudents@memphis.edu.

Student Resources

Students who need additional resources can visit the Dean of Students Office website at <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php>.

Guidelines for classes, labs and equipment in Meeman Journalism Building in Spring 2021

- Anyone feeling sick should stay home and join class virtually.
- Social distance from all others at least 6 feet.
- Wear a mask at all times when in University buildings and on campus.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer regularly.
- No more than one person in the elevator at a time.
- Disinfect your workstation before and after use, including desks, keyboards, mice and screens. Wash your hands after cleaning.
- Have phone or Zoom meetings with professors and classmates. Do not meet face to face, if possible.