

Course Annotation

Public Relations Cases and Campaigns uses a case-study method to teach students about theoretical and applied principles of public relations campaign management. Students examine successful/unsuccessful examples of public relations in order to learn how to plan more effective campaigns and to evaluate completed campaigns. As part of the course students continue to hone their writing skills and learn to be more critical of the role played by the media, opinion leaders, and multiple publics in the public relations process.

Goals and Objectives

- To learn about successful/unsuccessful organizations in order to benchmark performance and develop strategic evaluation/planning skills.
- To learn about different types of public relations practice including government, financial, nonprofit, crisis, etc.
- To understand how to conduct the research necessary to develop a strategic plan.
- To continue to hone public relations writing skills and to become more critical message producers.

Assignments

The purpose of the cases and campaigns class is for you to learn the basics of how a campaign is run, as well as to learn a variety of heuristics from past practice. Most of the case studies that you examine will be exemplars, although, some will be unsuccessful cases as exemplars of what to avoid. You will write three reaction papers responding to cases from the class. You will evaluate three “Golden Quill” or “Silver Anvil” award winners from the IABC or PRSA Web sites. You will conduct two interviews with current practitioners and write two case studies of your own that you will report to the class. Finally, you will have two exams: one in class and one take home.

The most basic rule of survival in any situation is never look like food.
 Park Ranger,
 Great Smokey Mountains
 National Park

Assignments

	Points
Exam I (Course content up to date of exam)	20%
Exam II (Take home, case study and MBO, 5–7 pp.)	20%
Reaction Paper to Case Studies I (3–5 pp.)	† 10%
Reaction Paper to Case Studies II (3–5 pp.)	† 10%
Reaction Paper to Case Studies III (3–5 pp.)	† 10%
Silver Anvil Award Evaluation (Evaluate 3 related award winners, 5–7 pp.)	‡ 15%
Interview & Case Study (Interview 2 P.R. professionals—essay, pres., 2–3 pp. of hndts.)	Ω 15%
Total	100%

† You will write three “reaction papers” responding to case studies from the course. Review my handout on reaction papers (<http://homepages.wmich.edu/~mkent/Index.html>). In your reaction papers, respond to the following questions: (1) How would what is described in the case study you examined be relevant to other communication contexts? (2) What did the organization in the case study do right, and what did they do wrong? (3) How could the situation described in the case study be improved? Be specific and give examples throughout. Be sure to cite pages and include quotations when relevant.

‡ Visit the IABC or PRSA’s Web site (wherever I direct you for this) and select three award winners (in related organizations, campaigns, categories, etc.) to evaluate. Your evaluation should identify the similarities/differences (in terms of strategies, tactics, publics, goals, etc.—a handout will be provided) of each campaign and explain why the choices made were effective/successful. Your analysis should draw on all that you have learned about communication—intercultural, nonverbal, theories, principles of public relations, etc.—in order to account for the success of the award winner’s campaign.

Ω Identify two public relations professionals to interview. I will provide you with a list of questions to ask in your interviews. *The interviewees selected must have worked on a public relations campaign—you will need to contact several professionals and verify this before arranging interviews.* Based on your interviews you will create two case studies (one with each interviewee) such as is

those illustrated in the samples provided in class, complete with samples of the messages created (obtained from the interviewees). You will also cover what you learned to the class in a presentation to your classmates (10–15 minutes).

Attendance

Attendance is expected. I will take it to help get to know your names. Attendance will be taken into account under “participation.” NB: You will be unable to make up any missed assignments; we are on a very tight schedule.

America—a conservative country without any conservative ideology—appears now before the world a naked and arbitrary power, as, in the name of realism, its men of decision enforce their often crackpot definitions upon world reality. The second-rate mind is in command of the ponderously spoken platitude. In the liberal rhetoric, vagueness, and in the conservative mood, irrationality, are raised to principle. Public relations and the official secret, the trivializing campaign and the terrible fact clumsily accomplished, are replacing the reasoned debate of political ideas in the privately incorporated economy, the military ascendancy, and the political vacuum of modern America.

C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite, 1956, pp. 360-361.

Literature (Required)

Informational materials and readings will be made available via WebCT. Materials include lecture notes, short articles and informational handouts on the topics mentioned in the schedule. A more detailed reading list will be made available by the third week of class.

Public Relations Cases and Campaigns Schedule

Week 1	Introduction/Overview	
Week 2	Theories/Models (ROPE, Systems, Grunig & Hunt, Theories handout, etc.)	
	Read (WebCT): Theories of Communication, Grunig and Hunt	
Week 3	Conducting Campaigns/Management by Objective (MBO)	
	Read (WebCT): MBO	
Week 4	MBO Continued	Reaction Paper I
	Read (WebCT): Do MBO handout for class	
Week 5	Research/Audience Analysis	
	Read (WebCT): Lindenmann, Treadwell & Treadwell, ch. ...	
Week 6	Creating goals and Objectives	
	Read (WebCT): Hendrix, Ch. . . .	
Week 7	Evaluation	Reaction Paper II
	Read (WebCT):	
Week 8	Exam I	
Week 9	Persuasion	
	Read (WebCT):	
Week 10	Media Relations	Silver Anvil Award Evaluation
	Read (WebCT):	
Week 11	Internal Communication Community Relations	
	Read (WebCT):	
Week 12	Public Affairs & Govt. relations Giving Presentations	Reaction Paper III
	Read (WebCT):	
Week 13	Case Study Presentations (case studies due when you give presentations)	
Week 14	Case Study Presentations	
Week 15	Case Study Presentations	
Week 16	Case Study Presentations Exam II due (take home)	