

**LEGAL, ETHICAL AND SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF PR (JOUR 510)**

*Schedule # 21479 R 1800-2040 ASC 328*

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**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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Office Hours: By Appointment on Thursdays  
immediately prior to class; please call or email at  
least 24 hours in advance

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Explores the origins, effects of, and processes for adhering to the complex network of legal, ethical and social responsibilities of the contemporary PR practitioner. (*Source: USC Catalog*)

**PRIMARY COURSE OBJECTIVES & LEARNING GOALS**

This course explores principles and concepts of legal, ethical and social issues that a PR pro may encounter during their career. The course is intended to:

- Help students understand fundamental legal concepts regarding media and communications practices
- Enable students to develop an understanding of the principles of moral reasoning and ethical problem-solving/decision-making
- Offer experiential and reflective opportunities for students to explore their personal values and ethical perspectives
- Examine leading social responsibility programs

**COURSE ACTIVITIES**

During the semester, students will participate in:

- Class discussion and small group interactive/experiential exercises
- Interaction with guest lecturers
- Supplemental learning through readings/multimedia presentations beyond the text
- Written assignments, including reflective writings and papers.
- A group presentation (details provided below and to be discussed in class).

**REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS & RESOURCES**

- TEXT: Fitzpatrick, Kathy and Bronstein, Carolyn (ed.). (2006). Ethics in Public Relations – Responsible Advocacy. Thousand Oaks, CA. SAGE Publications. ISBN: 1-4129-1798-0.
- TEXT: Block, Peter (2002). The Answer to How is Yes. San Francisco. Berrett-Koehler. ISBN: 1-57675-168-6.
- Additional readings from handouts, multimedia/websites, and other sources.

**COURSE RESOURCES**

- **Blackboard** – Announcements, assignments, lecture PowerPoint slides, cool supplemental resources, interim Gradebooks, and other information will be posted on the site for this class.
- **Annenberg Resource Center** – on occasion, supplemental materials for this class may be archived and accessed through the Annenberg Resource Center (ASC 104).

## GRADING POLICIES

The Annenberg School of Journalism requires a minimum grade of C (2.0) in a course to receive graduate credit. Work graded C- or below is not acceptable for subject or unit credit toward any master's or doctoral program. A grade point average of at least B (3.0) on all units attempted at USC toward a graduate degree is required for graduation, whether or not all such units are applied toward the degree.

## BASIS FOR GRADING

A total of 300 points is available in this class, allocated as follows:

	<u>Points Possible</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
Written Assignments (4)	100	33%
PR Program Recommendations/Presentation	100	33%
Final Paper	50	17%
Class Discussion/Participation	50	17%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Written Assignments (33%):** Throughout the semester, you'll be asked to complete 4 written assignments. The specifics and due date of each exercise will be discussed during class. Submissions will earn points based on overall quality, encompassing: (1) proper organization, style and presentation; (2) appropriate research and citation of sources; (3) demonstration of sound PR judgment; (4) creativity; and (5) timely submission. As PR practitioners, we strive for impeccable quality, and materials will be evaluated against that aspiration. All written materials should represent your best quality work, and reflect proper editing, grammar, spelling, and formatting. Students who struggle with language, grammar, spelling, or writing should speak with me about the Annenberg School's designated Writing Coaches.

**PR Program Recommendations/Presentation (33%):** You will be expected to participate in a group project to develop PR Recommendations associated with a social responsibility project. All team members will be expected to participate in presenting the final proposals, using criteria provided in class. Additional details will be discussed in class.

**Final Paper (17%):** You will be asked to submit a final paper on a topic that requires consideration of legal, social and ethical issues, and that reflects your critical thinking and comprehension of key concepts presented during the course. Details will be discussed in class.

**Attendance/Class Discussion/Participation (17%):** It is important to attend class and actively participate, since class activities and interaction with peers encourage creative dialogue and diversity of perspective, and help enhance your learning. It is expected that you come to class having read the assignment(s) and prepared to join class discussions, contributing questions and comments about the materials. Classes begin promptly, so please arrive on time. If you are unable to attend class for some reason, please notify me as soon as possible, and assume personal responsibility for gathering notes from other classmates. At the end of the semester, points will be allotted based upon:

- Consistent demonstration that they have read the material for scheduled class discussion
- Contribution to class discussion; answering questions, asking relevant questions
- Demonstrating respect for fellow classmates and instructor
- Mature classroom behavior that supports learning

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

In this class, case studies and projects of a sensitive nature are likely to be discussed; unless already public, the information is considered confidential and should not be shared outside of the classroom without the explicit consent of the person(s) involved.

**RESEARCH AND CITATION**

On occasion, you may be asked to prepare materials on topics with which you have little knowledge. Many online resources are available to assist you, and thorough secondary research is encouraged. Please note, however, that the largely subjective nature of “wiki’s” makes them unacceptable resources for this course. Additionally, all public relations writers must learn to create original work, and inappropriate use of existing resources/materials – including failure to provide proper citation, verbatim usage of other materials, presenting existing material as one’s original work, lack of proper citation, and/or similar practices – may be construed as an act of plagiarism, and subject to the university’s disciplinary policy on acts of academic dishonesty (see below).

**PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or writings from another and passing them off as one’s own; in journalism and public relations, this includes appropriating the reporting 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 from the School of Journalism. There are no exceptions to the school’s policy.”

**ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

Any students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. The office is located in the Student Union room 301, and their phone number is 213-740-0776.

**INTERNSHIPS:** The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course who undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to one percent of the total available semester points for this course.

**CLASS SCHEDULE—Topics by Week (subject to change)**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Title of Topic(s)</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
<b>Jan. 15</b>	<b>Course Overview &amp; Introductions</b> Personal Values Exploration – Pt 1	None
<b>Jan. 22</b>	<b>Communications Law</b> Guest Speaker	Fitzpatrick & Bronstein - Ch. 1
<b>Jan. 29</b>	<b>No Class – Instructor Travel</b> <i>Comparing PRSA &amp; SPJ Codes</i>	Download Instructions and documents from Blackboard
<b>Feb. 5</b>	<b>Philosophical Foundations of Ethics</b> Personal Values Exploration – Pt 2  <b>PAPER #1 DUE</b>	Block - Intro, Ch. 1-2 & 4 Supplemental Readings (posted on Blackboard)
<b>Feb. 12</b>	<b>Negotiating With Activist Publics</b> Watchdog & activist groups	Fitzpatrick & Bronstein - Ch. 4
<b>Feb. 19</b>	<b>Ethical Decision-Making Models</b> The Potter Box & Others	Supplemental Reading (posted on Blackboard)
<b>Feb. 26</b>	<b>Responsible Advocacy for Nonprofits</b> Case Studies & Considerations  <b>PAPER #2 DUE</b>	Fitzpatrick & Bronstein - Ch. 5
<b>Mar. 5</b>	<b>Truth, Transparency &amp; Crisis Communications</b> Whistleblowers	Fitzpatrick & Bronstein - Ch. 6
<b>Mar. 12</b>	<b>Strategic Risk Communications</b> Case Studies & Considerations	Fitzpatrick & Bronstein - Ch. 8
<b>Mar. 19</b>	<b>SPRING RECESS</b>	<b>Enjoy Your Break!</b>

<u><i>Date</i></u>	<u><i>Title of Topic(s)</i></u>	<u><i>Readings/Assignments</i></u>
<b>Mar. 26</b>	<b>Industry Focus: Healthcare</b>	Supplemental Reading (posted on Blackboard)
<b>Apr. 2</b>	<b>Corporate Social Responsibility</b> Fundamentals Case Studies & Considerations	Supplemental Reading (posted on Blackboard)
<b><i>PAPER#3 DUE</i></b>		
<b>Apr. 9</b>	<b>Trust &amp; Reputation; Diversity &amp; Bias</b> Edelman Trust Barometer Case Studies & Considerations Avoiding Bias	Supplemental Reading (posted on Blackboard)  Fitzpatrick & Bronstein - Ch. 3
<b>Apr. 16</b>	<b>Public Affairs &amp; Integrity</b> Guest Speaker Campaigns, PACs, and Public Affairs	Supplemental Reading (posted on Blackboard)
<b><i>PAPER #4 DUE</i></b>		
<b>Apr. 23</b>	<b>The Corporate (or Client) Conscience</b> Personal Values Exploration – Pt 3	Block - Ch. 6-11 Supplemental Reading (posted on Blackboard)
<b>Apr. 30</b>	<b><i>FINAL PRESENTATIONS</i></b>  <b><i>FINAL PAPER DUE</i></b>	

**CHANGES TO SYLLABUS:** This syllabus is subject to change. Announcements in class take precedence over any other communication.

### **Instructor Bio**

Laura Min Jackson is an award-winning writer and communications professional with more than two decades of experience working with start-ups, established corporations, and national consultancies.

Prior to launching her own consulting practice, Laura was vice president of global communications for the CardioVascular division of Baxter Healthcare International, a Fortune 500 firm, and Edwards Lifesciences, an NYSE-traded, MidCap 400 firm.

At Baxter CardioVascular and Edwards, she was responsible for all strategic communications, including employee communications, branding, executive communications, media and community relations, crisis response, and strategic philanthropy, including the creation of a \$20 million foundation. She led all communications related to Edwards' global launch upon its spin-off from Baxter, and helped senior executives significantly strengthen their communications effectiveness with investors, employees, customers, and the media. She also created and led numerous training programs in such areas as interpersonal effectiveness, media relations/public presentations, and crisis preparedness, response and recovery.

Previously, Laura was senior vice president at Porter/Novelli, where she was a member of the Los Angeles office's leadership team and West Coast Director of the firm's healthcare practice. As vice president at PainePR, she specialized in healthcare, B2B and crisis communications, and was instrumental in fostering the agency's growth from a small start-up to a nationally recognized firm. Earlier in her career, Laura was an account executive in the Technology and Consumer Goods practices at Burson-Marsteller. She also worked in the government and nonprofit sectors, focusing upon employee communications and community outreach and health promotion.

Laura has been a guest speaker and facilitator for such organizations as AmericaSpeaks; Nara Bank; the American Speech-Language Hearing Association; Columbia University; the Conference Board; Korean Airlines; Women in Thoracic Surgery, and Il Foro Cardiovascular (Madrid).

In addition to her consulting work, Laura is an adjunct professor at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Journalism, and at California State University, Fullerton, where she teaches in the Mihaylo College of Business & Economics.

Laura earned her master's degree in Organization Development from Pepperdine University, and her bachelor's degree in Communications from California State University, Fullerton. She is a member of the Asian American Business Association, OCTANe, and the California Faculty Association. She also is a contributing author to *Awakening the Workplace: Achieving Connection, Fulfillment and Success at Work*, and a certified instructor of The Nia Technique®, a unique mind-body health and well-being practice.