



JOUR 510: Legal, Ethical & Social Foundations of Strategic Public Relations

3 credit hours

Fall 2015 – Thursdays – 3-5:40 p.m.

Location: ANN 408

Section: 21499D

syllabus v. 1, updated 8/24/2015

Instructor: Daren C. Brabham, Ph.D.

Office: ANN 310K

Office Hours: Appointments are best. Generally available Tuesdays & Thursdays 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Available online.

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I. Course Description

This course provides an applied, working understanding of the interconnecting legal, ethical, and social responsibilities affecting the contemporary practice of public relations. It weaves together ethical concepts and theories; policies and legal precedents; and a critical understanding of the social dimensions of public relations. The Annenberg PR program examines a number of ethical framing models but emphasizes the Potter Box concept.

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

This course is intended to:

- Help students understand fundamental U.S. legal concepts in media and strategic communication
- Enable students to develop an understanding of 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 concepts related to social responsibility programs, and provide an opportunity to develop social media/marketing recommendations

Mastery of course content will be assessed through a variety of activities, including class discussion and interactive/experiential exercises; interaction with guest lecturers; supplemental learning through readings/multimedia presentations beyond the texts; and written assignments, including reflective writings and papers.

III. Assignments

a. Description of Assignments

Presentation of News Articles to Class – 100 points total (2 article presentations @ 50 points each)

Bring and present an article to class pertaining to recent/current “real life” events or issues involving ethical, legal, or social aspects of public relations. Students will sign up for presentation days at the beginning of the semester. Discussion materials should be posted to the appropriate spot on Blackboard at least 24 hours in advance of class. On a presentation day, the student will get about 10-15 minutes to briefly explain a current events issue, provoke a class discussion, and encourage continuing discussion among peers. Preparing a few juicy discussion questions is good practice.

- ✓ Example: A *New York Times* article discusses how New York City is being criticized for destroying tons of counterfeit designer clothing that could have been donated to homeless Haiti Earthquake victims. The mayor wants a press conference. Discussion questions might include: What should be said and done by the mayor going forward? What PR opportunities exist for fashion houses in the city to get involved? Should homeless advocacy groups lead the way on this controversy?

Journal Summaries – 150 points total (3 summaries @ 50 points each)

The study of ethics and comprehension of our own standards for moral behavior can be enhanced through self-reflection; ergo, you will be asked to regularly record your thoughts and feelings associated with select assignments (based on either your own personal/professional experience or that of others), and submit brief summaries. Guidelines for each Journal Summary will be provided during class. **Note:** Journal Summaries will be graded on full/half/no credit, as they are intended primarily for personal reflection.

Midterm Exam – 250 points

You will be able to choose from 5 different topics, and will be asked to write 2 different blog articles ranging from 500-1,500 words. You should be prepared to discuss your blog articles in class. The blog articles should demonstrate critical thinking and apply concepts you have learned in class by analyzing an ethical and/or legal challenge faced by an organization.

Final Exam – 350 points

You will be able to choose from 5 different topics, and will be asked to write 3 different blog articles ranging from 500-1,500 words. You should be prepared to discuss your blog articles in class. The blog articles should demonstrate critical thinking and apply concepts you have learned in class by analyzing an ethical and/or legal challenge faced by an organization.

Discussion/Class Participation – 150 points

It is important to attend class and actively participate, since class activities and interaction with peers encourage creative dialogue and diversity of perspective, which helps enhance your learning. It is expected that students will come to class having read the materials and prepared to join class discussions, contributing questions and comments about the materials. If you are unable to attend class for some reason, please notify the instructor as soon as possible, and assume personal responsibility for gathering notes from other classmates. At the end of the semester, points will be allocated to students based upon:

- ✓ Consistent (i.e., every week) demonstration that they have read the material for scheduled class discussion
- ✓ Contribution to class discussion; answering questions, asking relevant questions (sitting quietly with perfect attendance is not considered participation)
- ✓ Engagement with in-class activities
- ✓ Demonstrating respect for fellow classmates, guest speakers, and instructor (including appropriate use of personal technologies during classroom time)
- ✓ Mature classroom behavior that supports learning

Alternative Assignment: A Publishable Teaching Case Study – 600 points total (250 points for midterm draft progress, 300 points for final case, 50 points for presentation to class)

Some students may prefer to undertake a substantial research project throughout the semester rather than take the midterm and final exams. For those students, there is an alternative assignment available: the writing of a teaching case study focused on ethics, law, or social issues in strategic communication that is of publishable quality. The product at the end of the semester will be a high-quality teaching case paper that would stand a reasonable chance of passing scholarly peer review at a journal such as *Case Studies in Strategic Communication*, be competitive in the *Arthur W. Page Society Case Competition*, or stand a chance at being published/winning in a similar reputable venue. The case will follow the structure and guidelines of the chosen target publication/competition venue, though will likely be between 4,000 and 8,000 words in final form. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor early in the semester if interested in this option, and will choose a topic in conjunction with the instructor, typically a fairly recent case that has not otherwise been covered extensively in the scholarly or trade press and is not discussed at length in the course. Case topics should be chosen two weeks before the midterm exam date. On the midterm date, students will submit a draft of research progress. About a third of the content of the case should be written by this point and more than half of the research for the case should be done. The final case should be in polished, final form. The presentation to the class will happen on the last day of regular class and will be a 10-15 minute presentation of the case and a managed discussion.

b. Research and Citations

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 “wikis” 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 School’s or university’s disciplinary policy on acts of academic dishonesty and plagiarism (see below). You may use any acceptable mainstream citation style – in-text parentheticals, footnotes, endnotes, APA, MLA, Chicago, etc. – so long as your style is consistent, you adhere to the rules of a particular style, and all citations are complete. Use of photos, illustrations, etc. from other sources also requires attribution in a caption.

IV. Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points Possible
Presentation of News Articles	100
Journal Summaries (3)	150
Midterm Exam	250*
Final Exam	350*
Class Discussion/Participation	150
TOTAL	1,000

**Students may choose to substitute the writing and presentation of a teaching case study to account for these 600 points of the grade. See Description of Assignments for details.*

b. Grading Scale

Final course grades are calculated as the total of points earned as a percentage of total points possible. Grades follow a typical pattern: A = 94-100%, A- = 90-93%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 84-86%, B- = 80-83%, and so on. Performance below 60% receives a failing grade (“F”). Please note that for graduate credit, a “C-” is considered a failing grade.

c. Grading Standards

Please consult the grading guidelines available in the USC Office of Academic Records and Registrar: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/grades/index.html>. Grades are earned, not given, and “A” grades are reserved for truly “excellent” performance. Work that meets the minimum requirements of an assignment or demonstrates a basic command of course concepts will likely earn a “good” grade in the “B” range, give or take with regards to other factors, such as writing quality. Work in the “A” range not only checks all the basic boxes of an assignment and is error-free but also demonstrates deeper, more sophisticated understanding of course concepts; incorporates additional research or perspective beyond what was discussed in class; and/or is somehow provocative or creative or interesting. In other words, to earn top marks in the course, students will need to go above and beyond in some way. Note that a claim of “hard work” or expending considerable time on an assignment is not relevant to how the resulting product will be graded.

d. Late Work Policy

Work is considered late when it is not turned in by the start of class on the day it is due (or by another specific time as stated in the assignment/syllabus). See submission policy below. All late work receives a failing grade right from the start. That is, an assignment that is late receives an automatic 40% deduction. If the assignment is not turned in within 24 hours of the due date and time, the grade drops another 20% from the original points possible. After another 24 hours, it drops another 20%. Assignments will not be accepted after 48 hours of being late. Some assignments may also be noted as being never accepted late. You are strongly cautioned to allow plenty of time before an assignment is due to account for spotty Internet connections, computer glitches, traffic jams, and other impediments beyond your control. Do not put turning in an assignment off until the last minute. You are also strongly encouraged to save your work frequently and to periodically back up your files onto flash drives or remote backup servers. If you manage your time well, you should have enough of a cushion to account for pretty much all possible hindrances. For all other major impediments known in advance of a due date, such as family emergencies, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor to discuss possible deadline adjustments (note: instructor reserves the right not to honor a deadline extension request or to see documentation of emergency).

V. Assignment Submission Policy

This is a paperless course. All of your work will be turned in electronically via Blackboard unless otherwise stated on a specific assignment.

VI. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

There is no book to purchase for this class. All materials required for the course can be found as digital files or links to websites organized on the course Blackboard site. The course is designed to provoke student engagement in sometimes heated debates about ethical and legal principles. Course materials are thus eclectic and sometimes contain extreme views (often paired with articles that express opposite opinions). In a given week, students will read scholarly journal articles; sections of books; and popular press articles; watch video clips from news sites and sites like YouTube; explore corporate social media accounts; and more.

VII. Laptop Policy

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the [Annenberg Virtual Commons](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website.

VIII. Policies and Procedures

a. 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 that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism class.

b. A Respectful Class Environment

You are expected to be well-prepared for each class meeting, provide value to the class discussion, and remain courteous and sensitive to the needs and opinions of your classmates. Please be on time, be awake, put phones

away, and stay on task on your computer. Interactions with guest speakers should always be professional and enthusiastic.

When contributing to a discussion, make statements that are respectful to other students in the class and different groups of people. Be careful not to personalize your arguments and be aware that not all of your classmates are as comfortable as you may be in presenting ideas in a classroom setting. Different viewpoints are highly encouraged in class discussion – play devil’s advocate if you want. Do not avoid conflict merely because you feel you will be in the minority in presenting your opinion. You are expected to avoid the use of sexist, racist, homophobic, and other intolerant language in your speech and writing. This is more than an issue of so-called political correctness; this is an issue of professionalism and of excellence in communication, knowing how to be precise and fair and accurate in expression, and understanding that there are diverse stakeholders in any conversation.

c. Official Class Communication

As important announcements will be made via Blackboard and Blackboard’s email communication tool, it is important that you check Blackboard and emails sent from Blackboard (which may be forwarded to an email account of your choosing) regularly. Get in the habit of checking your USC email account as that will be utilized in Blackboard.

IX. Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words - is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/b/11-00-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“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 plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

This is, after all, a course about ethics. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating (including how to properly attribute a quote or scholarly source in an assignment), please ask the professor.

b. Support Systems

Equity and Diversity

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the

safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community - such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member - can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <https://sarc.usc.edu/> describes reporting options and other resources. The instructor for this course has received specialized training in working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning students and should be considered a “Safe Zone” if you need to talk confidentially about these or other topics.

Support with Scholarly Writing

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant 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 p.m. The office is located in the Student Union room 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776. Please understand that the professor is not qualified or permitted under university policies to provide any disability-related accommodations without authorization from DSP.

Stress Management

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

Emergency Information

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

X. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students: *Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.*

Date	Topic / In-Class	Before Class You Should:
8/27	Course overview and introductions – student expectations and perceptions regarding the teaching of ethical behavior; warm-up discussions; ethical vs. legal vs. social foundations; discuss syllabus	READ: Rouner’s “No, It’s Not Your Opinion. You’re Just Wrong”

9/3	Philosophical foundations of ethics – application and implications of the Potter Box model; other ethical reasoning models; personal values and organizational values; ethics, capitalism, and democracy in tension	<p>READ: Potter Box (available at http://ethicsinpr.wikispaces.com/Potter+Box)</p> <p>READ: Swain’s “Beyond the Potter Box”</p> <p>READ: Hodges’ “The Essential Questions”</p> <p>READ: Tilley’s “The Ethics Pyramid”</p> <p>READ: Holtzhausen’s “Postmodern Values in Public Relations”</p> <p>READ (optional): Guth & Marsh’s “Ethics and Social Responsibility”</p>
9/10	Industry codes of ethics – thought-provoking issue led by a student based on his/her Journal Summary 1; review and analyze strengths and weaknesses of industry codes of ethics	<p>DUE (and be ready to discuss): Journal Summary 1</p> <p>READ: All of the industry codes of ethics on Blackboard</p> <p>READ: Harrison & Galloway’s “Public Relations Ethics: A Simpler (But Not Simplistic) Approach to the Complexities”</p>
9/17	Corporate social responsibility	<p>READ: Zadek’s “The Path to Corporate Responsibility”</p> <p>READ: Garriga & Mele’s “Corporate Social Responsibility”</p> <p>READ: Stole’s “PR Cause Marketing”</p> <p>READ: Strauss’ “Social Capital Model for PR”</p> <p>READ: Amazeen’s “Gap RED Social Responsibility”</p>
9/24	Continue with CSR; CSR pitches in class (vote with your dollars!); dealing with long-simmering crises	<p>DUE (and be ready to discuss): Journal Summary 2</p> <p>READ: Goetschius’ “Just a Ding?: The NFL Responds to Research on Football-Related Concussion”</p> <p>READ: Langstedt’s “House Football at The Lawrenceville School”</p>
10/1	Ethics and legal responsibility in a crisis; transparency, truth, and timing; Guest speaker: Lt. Scott McBride, Public Affairs Officer, US Coast Guard	<p>READ: Kim’s “Toward an Ethical Model of Effective Crisis Communication”</p> <p>READ: Crandall et al.’s “The Underlying Role of Ethics in Crisis Management”</p>
10/8	Ethics and legal responsibility in a crisis; product recalls and life or death consequences	<p>READ: Hammonds’ “Harry Kraemer’s Moment of Truth”</p> <p>READ: Taylor’s “Cultural Variance as a Challenge to Global Public Relations”</p> <p>READ: Freberg’s “Intention to Comply with Crisis Messages Communicated Via Social Media”</p>

10/15	Behaving ethically and legally online; reputation on review sites; FTC section 5; black hat SEO practices Guest speaker: TBD	READ: Luca's "Reviews, Reputation, and Revenue: The Case of Yelp.com" READ: Powazek's "Exploring the Dark Side of Crowdsourcing" READ: Tuschner's "Subverting New Media for Profit" READ: Myers' "Crowdfunding and Public Relations"
10/22	Behaving ethically and legally online; product endorsements; clickbait; data mining/exploitation	DUE: Midterm Exam WATCH: Golbeck's "The Curly Fry Conundrum" READ: Duhigg's "How Companies Learn Your Secrets" READ: Lohr's "How Privacy Vanishes Online" READ: Oremus' "What Jon Stewart Gets Wrong About Clickbait and the Internet"
10/29	PR for diverse audiences; political correctness and language; gender and sexuality Guest speaker: TBD	READ: Kessler & McDonald's "Sense and Sensitivity" READ: Phillips' "Entirely Comfortable with its Orientation" READ: Rosen's "A Simple Suggestion" READ: Kurtzleben's "Do Dove and Axe Sell the Same Message?"
11/5	PR for diverse audiences; segmentation; race, ethnicity, religion, class, disability, and age.	READ: Tindall & Everett's "Going Beyond Race, Ethnicity and Gender to Define Diversity" READ: Burgos' "Ethnic Targeted Marketing: Do We Really Need It?" READ: McGlone et al.'s "Corporate Social Responsibility and the Millennials" READ: Bucic et al.'s "Ethical Consumers Among the Millennials"
11/12	Sticking to your guns; navigating a world where organizational values are unpopular, unethical, or even illegal Guest speaker: TBD	DUE (and be ready to discuss): Journal Summary 3 READ: Watson's "On the Precedence of Natural Law" READ: Derville's "Radical Activist Tactics" READ: Schmall's "The Cult of Chick-fil-A" READ: Murray's "Chick-fil-A Location at DIA Paused" LISTEN: Stuff You Should Know's "Are Zoos Good or Bad for Animals?" READ: Settembre's "SeaWorld Fights Back Against 'Blackfish' Documentary with Truth Team" READ: Schwartz's "Anger Erupts After Danish Zoo Kills a 'Surplus' Giraffe"

11/19	Defamation; contracts and non-disclosure agreements; spec-work; legal issues with minors and protected groups	READ: Galanaugh's "Working with NDAs" READ: SoloPR's "Get it in Writing" READ: FindLaw's "The Basics of Defamation Law" READ: Huffstutter & Graybow's "Did Diane Sawyer Smear 'Pink Slime'?"
12/3	Free speech vs. commercial speech; copyright and copyleft; fair terms of use for websites and contests	READ: Vivian's "Mass Media Law" READ: Ohio State Bar Association's "What is Commercial Speech?" READ: Brudney's "The First Amendment and Commercial Speech" WATCH: Lessig's "Laws that Choke Creativity" WATCH: Lessig's "Re-examining the Remix" READ: Rosenblatt's "Copyright Basics" READ: Sprigman's "The Mouse that Ate the Public Domain"
12/15	No class. This is the final exam period for this course. The final is due online.	DUE (by 2 p.m.): Final Exam

XI. About Your Instructor

Daren C. Brabham, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at USC Annenberg and the founding editor of *Case Studies in Strategic Communication*. His research expertise is in crowdsourcing, an online, distributed problem solving and production model that leverages the collective intelligence of online communities to serve organizational needs. He is the author of the books *Crowdsourcing* (MIT Press, 2013), which has been translated into Chinese and Korean, and *Crowdsourcing in the Public Sector* (Georgetown University Press, 2015). His professional experience includes marketing and development for nonprofits, user experience design for an IT research firm, and crowdsourcing consulting. He has an M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Utah and a B.A. from Trinity University.