

**PR 428: Social, Legal and Ethical Foundations of  
Public Relations  
4 Units****Spring 2020 — Wednesdays — 2-5:20 p.m.****Section:** 21256D**Location:** ASC 240**Instructor:** Laura Min Jackson, MSOD**Office:** ASC classroom or lobby**Office Hours:** By appointment on Wednesdays, 1-2 p.m.**Contact Info:** laurajac@usc.edu Phone: 714-234-9267**I. Course Description**

PR 428 covers the complex intersection of legal standards and regulations, ethical practices and decision-making, and social responsibilities for public relations/strategic communicators, with an emphasis on personal decision making.

**II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment**

This course explores principles and concepts of legal, ethical and social issues that a PR professional may encounter during their career. Through reading and written assignments, in-class exercises and discussion, lectures, supplemental learning through readings/multimedia materials, reflective and other learning activities, and group presentation(s), this course is intended to:

- Provide knowledge of fundamental U.S. legal concepts in media and communications
- List and explain 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 recommendation

**Prerequisites:** PR 250**III. Course Notes**

**Blackboard** – Announcements, assignments, lecture PowerPoint slides, supplemental readings, interim Gradebook scores, and other information will be posted on the site for this class. It is the student's responsibility to download slides, supplemental readings and assignments that are posted on this class' Blackboard Site. Announcements and important information may be communicated to students via Blackboard's email function. It is the student's responsibility to check the email account associated with Blackboard for updates, assignments, and new information. The instructor will communicate exclusively through this email account.

**IV. Description of Assignments**

- **Ethics Food For Thought (FFT) Briefs (17%):** 1-2 page written analyses of and recommendations pertaining to recent/current "real life" events or issues involving ethical, legal, or social aspects of public relations. Details will be discussed in class.

- **Journal Summaries (17%):** 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 Journal Summaries will be provided in class.
- **Midterm Paper/Presentation (11%):** Write and be prepared to discuss a 500-750 word paper in which you:
  - Describe, analyze, and compare the Codes of Ethics of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ).
  - Develop your own personal Code of Ethics.
  - Present a summary of your personal Code of Ethics in class.
- **Case of the Week (6%):** You will be asked to identify and summarize a current situation in which an organization is grappling with some kind of legal, ethical and/or social challenge. Additional details regarding these presentations will be discussed in class.
- **Final Group Presentation (22%):** Working in small groups, you will research, write and deliver a presentation in which you demonstrate critical thinking and apply concepts you have learned in class, by analyzing a current or recent situation in which an organization faced ethical challenges having reputational implications. Additional details will be discussed in class.
- **Final Paper/Blog Submission (17%):** Students will be able to choose from several different topics, and will be asked to write a long-form blog articles of 750 words, demonstrating critical thinking and applying concepts learned in class by analyzing an ethical and/or legal challenge faced by an organization. Additional details will be discussed in class.
- **Class Discussion/Participation (10%):** 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 will come to class having read the assigned reading(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, Class Discussion/Participation points will be based upon:
    - ✓ Consistent demonstration that students have read the material for scheduled class discussion
    - ✓ Contribution to class discussion; answering questions, asking relevant questions
    - ✓ Demonstrating respect for fellow classmates, guest speakers, and instructor (including appropriate use of personal technologies during classroom time)
    - ✓ Mature classroom behavior that supports learning

## V. Grading

### a. Breakdown of Grade

Following is a breakdown of the contributions made to the final grade by each assignment.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Ethics Food For Thought Briefs (3)	75	17%
Journal Summaries (3)	75	17%
Midterm Paper/Presentation	50	11%
Case of the Week	25	06%
Final Group Presentation	100	22%
Final Paper/Blog Submission	75	17%
Class Discussion/Participation	50	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>100%</b>

## b. Grading Scale

The Grading Scale for this class is based on the following percentages:

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

## c. Grading Standards

### Written Materials Rubric

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 meet with the Annenberg School's designated Writing Coaches (details posted on Blackboard). With the exception of the Journal Summaries, written materials 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. Journal Summaries will be graded on full/half/no credit, as they are intended primarily for personal reflection.

**"A" projects** have writing near professional quality; one or no mistakes; clearly proofread and edited material. All required elements included (catchy headline, solid lead, varied vocabulary; supporting facts/figures; quotes as required). Excellent organization and flow; original thinking. Showed creativity in packaging/distribution method. High end of scale: publishable today as is.

**"B" projects** have two to five spelling, grammar or AP Style mistakes. One or more required elements missing or poorly displayed (i.e., boring headline; confusing lead, etc.). Shows potential as a good writer. Adhered to inverted pyramid. High end of scale will have at least one extraordinary element such as astonishing lead or little-known facts or pithy quote. Some creativity shown. Publishable with medium editing.

**"C" projects** have more than five errors (spelling, grammar, AP style). Poorly edited and/or proofread. May have adhered to inverted pyramid but strayed at beginning or end. Hackneyed elements such as trite headline or uninteresting lead. Little or no facts/figures included. Passive rather than active verbs become the norm. Little or no creativity shown. Publishable with major editing.

**"D" projects** have more than 10 errors (spelling, grammar). Needs to be completely rewritten. Poorly organized with little or no understanding of journalistic style/standards. Needs to work with writing coach.

**"F" projects** are not rewritable, late or not turned in.

### Research, Attribution and Citation

On occasion, students may be asked to prepare materials on topics with which they have little knowledge. Many online resources are available to provide assistance, and thorough secondary research is encouraged. Please note, however, that the largely subjective nature of "wiki's" makes them unacceptable primary 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 and attribution, 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).

## VI. Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be given a grade of F.

- A. Unless otherwise specified, all assignments must be formatted as PDFs and submitted via email to [laurajac@usc.edu](mailto:laurajac@usc.edu) on or before the respective deadline.
- B. All assignments will be discussed in class, *and* written instructions will be posted on Blackboard in the “Assignments” folder for each assignment.
- C. The file names for all assignments should include the student’s last name and assignment name when being submitted, i.e. Johnson.FFT1.pdf

## VII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials/Resources

- Fitzpatrick, Kathy and Bronstein, Carolyn (Ed.). (2006). Ethics in Public Relations – Responsible Advocacy. Thousand Oaks, CA. SAGE Publications. ISBN: 1-4129-1798-0
- Additional content from handouts, multimedia/websites, and other sources – will be posted on Blackboard.

## VIII. 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 Digital Lounge](#) for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, please visit USC’s [Information Technology Services](#) website.

## IX. Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 1/13/20 – 5/1/20)

**Friday, January 31:** Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

**Friday, January 31:** Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W,” except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001

**Tuesday, February 4:** Last day to drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund for Session 001

**Friday, February 28:** Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript for Session 001. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

**Friday, February 28:** Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade for Session 001. [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

**Friday, April 3:** Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

## X. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

### Topics by Week (subject to change)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Title of Topic(s)</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
<b>Week 01</b>	<b>Course Overview, Expectations &amp; Introductions</b>	None
<b>Jan. 15</b>	Defining Ethics; Making Ethical Decisions; Categories of Potentially Unethical Behaviors; Sensemaking; Implications of Creativity, Sensemaking and PR.	

<b>Week 02</b> <b>Jan. 22</b>	<b>“From the Ancients to PR Today”</b> Philosophical Foundations of Ethics; Views of Morality: Universalism vs. Relativism; Overview of Western Philosophic Models; Ethical Behavioral Theory; Implications for Contemporary PR & Media Practices; Personal Exploration - Values.	Fitzpatrick & Bronstein (F&B) – Ch. 1 Supplemental Reading(s) (posted on Blackboard)  In-class: COW #1
<b>Week 03</b> <b>Jan. 29</b>	<b>Industry Codes of Ethics &amp; Working With Activist Publics</b> Activism, Autonomy & Angry Publics; Assessing Relationships; Real-Life Examples and Considerations for PR pros.	F&B – Ch. 4 Supplemental Reading(s)  <b>FFT #1 Due</b>  <b>In-class: COW #2</b>
<b>Week 04</b> <b>Feb. 5</b>	<b>Responsible Advocacy for Nonprofits</b> Nonprofits and PR Ethics; Charities & Foundations; Commercial Fundraising; California Regulations; Corporate Giving Considerations; Assessing Charitable Gifts; Resources.	F&B - Ch. 5 Supplemental Reading(s)  <b>In-class: COW #3</b>
<b>Week 05</b> <b>Feb. 12</b>	<b>Personal, Professional &amp; Organizational Values</b> Corporate Values; How Organizational Culture Impacts Ethical Decision-Making; Organizational Mores, Rituals, Artifacts and Beliefs; Emotional Contagion of Unethical Behaviors; Ways of Encouraging More Ethical Behavior; Personal Exploration – Personal/Organizational Values.	Supplemental Reading(s) / Assessments  <b>J-SUMM #1 Due</b>  <b>In-class: COW #4</b>
<b>Week 06</b> <b>Feb. 19</b>	<b>Ethical Decision-Making Models</b> Contemporary Models Based on Rights & Relationships – Rawls, Nodding & Fitzpatrick; Decision-Making Models in Business; Potter Box Model.	Supplemental Reading(s)  <b>In-class: COW #5</b>
<b>Week 07</b> <b>Feb. 26</b>	<b>Responsibility and Accountability &amp; Cultural Considerations in Ethics</b> Time and Ethical Thinking; Responsibility vs. Accountability in PR; Moral Excuses; Groupthink; Becoming Aware of Bias Potential; Becoming More Inclusive in PR Writing; Literacy Levels and “New” Literacy Models: Health, Financial, Medical; Implications for PR Pros.	F&B - Ch. 2, 3 & 10 Supplemental Reading(s)  <b>FFT #2 Due</b>  <b>In-class: COW #6</b>
<b>Week 08</b> <b>Mar. 4</b>	<b>MIDTERM PRESENTATIONS</b> <b>“Values-Based Recommendations”</b> <i>Group Presentations/In-class Experiential</i>	None

<b>Week 9</b> <b>Mar. 11</b>	<b>Legal Issues in PR/Communications I</b> “Top 10 Legal Watchouts in PR/Communications”; Overview of 1 <sup>st</sup> Amendment Rights; Restrictions on Speech; Political & Commercial Speech; Defamation and its Defenses; Invasion of Privacy & Appropriation.	Supplemental Reading(s)  <i>J-SUMM #2 Due</i>  <b>In-class: COW #7</b>
<b>Mar. 18</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	<b><i>Enjoy your Break!</i></b>
<b>Week 10</b> <b>Mar. 25</b>	<b>Legal Issues in PR/Communications II</b> “Top 10 Legal Watchouts in PR/Communications”; Copyright & Protected Marks; Works for Hire; Social Media & DMCA; Creative Commons; Implications of Net Neutrality.	Supplemental Reading(s)  <i>FFT #3 Due</i>  <b>In-class: COW #8</b>
<b>Week 11</b> <b>Apr. 01</b>	<b>Legal Issues in PR/Communications III</b> “Top 10 Legal Watchouts in PR/Communications”; Licensing Content; Right of Publicity; Influencers & FTC Social Media Guidelines on Testimonials & Endorsements.	F&B - Ch. 7 Supplemental Reading(s)  <b>In-class: COW #9</b>
<b>Week 12</b> <b>Apr. 08</b>	<b>Legal Issues in PR/Communications IV</b> “Top 10 Legal Watchouts in PR/Communications”; Domains & Handles; Are On-line Reviews Defamatory?; Employee Social Media Communications Guidelines. Personal Exploration – Conflict Styles.	F&B - Ch. 7 Supplemental Reading(s)  <i>J-SUMM #3 Due</i>  <b>In-Class: COW #10</b>
<b>Week 13</b> <b>Apr. 15</b>	<b>Corporate Social Responsibility</b> Defining CSR – Principles, Forms & Causes; 3BL; Socially Responsible Investing; UNDP Guidelines; Considerations for Designing CSR Programs; Top CSR Companies; Evaluating Success in CSR Campaigns.	Supplemental Reading(s)  <b>In-class: COW #11</b>
<b>Week 14</b> <b>Apr. 22</b>	<b>Truth and Transparency</b> Defining “Truth” and “Transparency”; Financial Transparency, Sarbannes-Oxley & Reg FD; Operational Transparency & UN Global Compact; the Rise of Citizen Journalism & Implications for PR pros.	F&B - Ch. 6 Supplemental Reading(s)  <b>In-class: COW #12</b>
<b>Week 15</b> <b>Apr. 29</b>	<b>Crisis &amp; Strategic Risk Communications</b> Issues Management; Rick Communications Principles & Guidelines; Crises & Ethical Stakeholder Communications; Communicating During Acute vs. Protracted Crises; Ethical Considerations in Crisis Communications for the PR Practitioner.	F&B – Ch. 8 Supplemental Reading(s)  <b>In-class: COW #13</b>
<b><i>FINAL PAPER DUE</i></b>		

**May 11**  
**2-4 p.m.**

**FINAL PRESENTATIONS**  
Discussion of final presentations

**IMPORTANT NOTE TO STUDENTS:** Please 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.

## **X. Policies and Procedures**

### **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.

### **Communication**

If a student would like to meet but cannot do so during designated office hours, I am happy to arrange conversations immediately after class or via phone call at a scheduled time. Please notify in person or email the instructor of your request for a phone call at least 24 hours in advance. In addition, the instructor will make a concerted effort to respond to all student emails or calls within 48 hours of receiving this communication.

### **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 or public relations class.

## **Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

### **a. Academic Conduct**

#### *Plagiarism*

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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/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.

## **b. Support Systems**

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*

[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710*

[uscsa.usc.edu](http://uscsa.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](https://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Annenberg Student Success Fund*

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

*Breaking Bread Program [undergraduate students only]*

<https://undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/>

The Breaking Bread Program is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal classroom setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally “breaking bread” over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! Your meal event can take place anywhere outside of the normal classroom setting. Your venue can be a restaurant or eatery on or off-campus.

## XI. About Your Instructor

Laura Min Jackson is an award-winning communications pro who's worked with global corporations, start-ups and nationally-ranked PR agencies. As an independent PR consultant, her clients have included **Beckman Coulter; Miocean; Johnson & Johnson; Össur**, and **Sony Pictures Entertainment Corp.**

Previously, she was VP/Global Communications for **Baxter Healthcare** and **Edwards Lifesciences**, overseeing Corporate Branding; Internal Communications; Media and Community Relations and Crisis Management, as well as creation of the \$50 million nonprofit Edwards Lifesciences Fund. She also was SVP/West Coast Director of the national Healthcare practice at **Porter/Novelli**, and specialized in Healthcare and Crisis Communications as VP at **PainePR**. She began her agency career at **Burson-Marsteller** after working in the Government and Nonprofit sectors.

Laura earned her M.S. in Organization Development from Pepperdine University, and her bachelor's in Communications/PR from Cal State Fullerton. In addition to teaching at USC, she's been a consultant, guest speaker and facilitator for public health, educational and policy organizations worldwide.

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