



**PR 250 Strategic Public Relations: An
Introduction
4 units**

Fall 2020 – Tuesdays – 6-9:20 p.m.

Section: 21186D

Location: Online (see blackboard for Zoom link)

Toya Holness

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4-6 p.m. PST

I. Course Description

PR 250 is an introduction to strategies and practices in the public relations field. This course will familiarize students with what public relations is, how it works and why it's valuable. Students will learn about landmark cases and campaign planning with a special emphasis on historical roots, current and future practice. This course is the foundation of the public relations program.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to give students an understanding of the foundations of the public relations profession and what it means to be a communications professional. Students will be able to draft communications materials and develop a strategic public relations plan. By the end of the course, students will also possess the ability to conduct research, plan a campaign and measure success. Through lectures, guest speakers, engaged discussions, assigned reading, in-class exercises, and case study reviews, students will dive into the world of public relations and familiarize themselves with various industries and PR specialties.

Upon successful completion of PR 250, students will be able to:

- Exhibit basic knowledge of public relations history, principles, functions, and techniques.
- Identify different audience segments and how to best reach them.
- Navigate the evolving media landscape and digital platforms.
- Develop public relations plans with objectives, key messages, strategies and tactics.
- Explore career paths and the diverse opportunities available in strategic communications.
- Grasp the public relations profession sufficient enough to succeed in USC Annenberg's Undergraduate Public Relations Studies major or minor.

III. Course Notes

The course is completely online and will leverage Zoom, Blackboard and other applications for class participation, assignments, quizzes and exams. Weekly attendance and active participation are critical to succeeding in PR250. While it's a lecture style class, the course will feature various guest speakers and in-class assignments/exercises.

Students are expected to come to class prepared to participate in dialogue with classmates, ask engaging questions and support a positive learning environment.

Announcements and assignment details will be posted on Blackboard and shared via USC email. Lecture slides will be posted on Blackboard on a weekly basis but are not intended to serve as a replacement for the in-class lecture/discussion.

IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments

- **Class participation, guest speaker engagement and in-class assignments:** Each week, students are expected to ask at least one question of guest speakers, contribute thoughtful commentary that advances the discussion, actively participate in in-class exercises/assignments, and provide helpful feedback to peers during presentations. This will be graded weekly.
- **Homework assignments:** There will be four homework assignments throughout the semester, each accounting for 5%, totaling 20% of the overall grade. Each assignment will be aligned with a class topic and details will be discussed in advance. Late assignments will not be accepted.
- **Quizzes:** Three quizzes will be given throughout the semester. Questions will be based on class lectures and textbook readings. Both quizzes will be timed and take place during class.
- **Midterm:** The midterm assignment will be an in-class presentation about a company's response to a recent current event. The presentation must include key facts about the company and current event, an analysis of their communications response and recommendations on opportunities for improvement. Late presentations will not be accepted. A full grading rubric will accompany the midterm assignment. Grades will be based on accurate and compelling content, appropriate analysis, an informative and digestible presentation deck, and an articulate and intriguing oral presentation.
- **Final Exam:** Students will create an original strategic public relations plan for the final exam, using a prompt provided by the professor two weeks in advance. The final exam is a group/partner assignment. PR plans will be presented live in-class on the final exam day. Late presentations will not be accepted. A full grading rubric will accompany the final exam assignment. Grades will be based on inclusion of all PR plan elements, correctly identifying PR strategies, creativity of tactical ideas, an informative and digestible presentation deck and an articulate and intriguing oral presentation.

V. Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
Participation / In-class engagement	15%
Homework	20%
Quizzes	15%
Midterm Project	20%
Final project	30%
TOTAL	100%

b. Grading Scale

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

A rubric will be provided for each written assignment/project. For written papers, the grading standards are as follows:

“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.

d. Grading Timeline

Grades for in-class participation, homework assignments and quizzes will be recorded quickly. The midterm may take up to two weeks to grade and return to students. The final exam and grades will be submitted in accordance with Annenberg guidelines.

VI. Assignment Rubrics

Grading rubrics will be clearly defined in advance when assignments are issued. In general, all assignments are graded based on content, writing, creativity, and presentation.

VII. Assignment Submission Policy

Due dates for assignments are outlined in the course schedule (below) and should be submitted via Blackboard. Late assignments will not be accepted unless the student has made a prior agreement with the instructor.

VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Required Text: *Introduction to Strategic Public Relations: Digital, Global and Socially Responsible Communication*
ISBN: 97815063

Supplemental reading materials and videos will be posted on Blackboard.

Students are strongly encouraged to read daily stories from various reputable news outlets.

IX. Laptop Policy

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used for class. Please refer to the [**Annenberg Digital Lounge**](#) for more information.

X. Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (13 weeks: 8/17/20 – 11/13/20)

Friday, September 4: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 4: Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, September 4: Last day to drop a class and receive a refund to avoid a mark of “W” on student record and STARS report

Friday, September 4: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Friday, October 2: Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript only. Mark of “W” will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three for session 001 (or the 20 percent mark of the session in which the course is offered) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, October 2: Last day to change a Pass/No Pass course to letter grade

Friday, November 6: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

XI. 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.

	Class Topics / Activities	Readings / Assignments
Week 1 August 18	Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome / introductions• Course overview / objectives• Review Syllabus• Set Expectations	In-class exercise: elevator pitch HW assignment: sign up for daily newsletters / news aggregators
Week 2 August 25	Defining PR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• History of modern PR• Understanding PR• The role of PR in an organization• Career opportunities <i>Guest speaker: Ashley Owen, Strategy Director, Ayzenberg</i>	Read: Preface, Ch. 1 & 2 (before class) In-class exercise: reviewing the headlines (what makes news news?)
Week 3 September 1	Strategic PR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PR theory• Driving business• Research & insights• Ethics & law <i>Guest speaker: Sarah Kane, Global Communications Manager, Intel Corporation</i>	Read: Ch. 3 & 4 (before class) In-class exercise: exploring the media landscape
Week 4 September 8	Developing a Strategic PR Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building and maintaining strong relationships• Planning, objectives & tactics• Evaluating success <i>Guest speaker: Emma Wolfe, Senior Account Director, Kite Hill PR</i> *Review midterm assignment details*	Read: Ch. 5 (before class) QUIZ (during class) HW assignment: analyze a news story (DUE: Mon., Sept. 14, at 12 p.m. PST)
Week 5	PR Writing	Read: Ch. 6 (before class)

September 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your audience / “publics” • The art of persuasion • Style/types of writing <p><i>Guest speaker: Kaitlin Parker, Producer, KCRW’s “The Business”</i></p>	<p>In-class exercise: identifying audiences</p> <p>HW assignment: midterm presentations (DUE: Tues., Sept. 22)</p>
Week 6 September 22	MIDTERM PRESENTATIONS	In-class presentations (DUE: submit slides by Sept. 22 at 12:00PM PT)
Week 7 September 29	<p>The Modern Digital World</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the media landscape • The communications convergence • Digital platforms • Emerging technologies <p><i>Guest speaker: Ani Pfeiffer, Social Media & PR Director, NYX Cosmetics</i></p>	<p>Read: Ch. 7 & 8 (before class)</p> <p>QUIZ (during class)</p> <p>In-class exercise: drafting a social media post</p>
Week 8 October 6	<p>Crisis Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What constitutes a crisis? • Rapid response • Issues management • Current events • Working under challenging conditions <p><i>Guest speaker: Devora Kaye, Assistant Commissioner for External Affairs, NYPD</i></p>	<p>Read: Ch. 12 (before class)</p> <p>In-class exercise: drafting a rapid response statement</p> <p>HW assignment: crisis response case study (DUE: Mon, Oct. 12., at 12 p.m. PST)</p>
Week 9 October 13	<p>Corporate Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate social responsibility • Internal communications • Stakeholder engagement • Reputation management • M&A / investor relations <p><i>Guest speaker: Maura McGreevy, SVP Corporate Communications, IMG</i></p>	<p>Read: Ch. 9, 10 & 11 (before class)</p> <p>HW assignment: draft a company-wide email (DUE: Mon., Oct. 19, at 12 p.m. PST)</p>
Week 10 October 20	<p>Public services & institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-profits, health, education • Advocacy campaigns • Grassroots organizations • Client relations <p><i>Guest speaker: Julia Debo, Director, Bully Pulpit Interactive</i></p>	Read: Ch. 14 (before class)
Week 11	Sports & Entertainment	Read: Ch. 13 (before class)

October 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry trades • Event management • Athlete/talent relations <p><i>Guest speaker: Steven Esparza, Assistant Sports Media Relations Manager, LMU Athletics</i></p>	QUIZ (during class)
Week 12 November 3	<p>The Future of PR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is the profession heading? • What are some emerging opportunities? <p>Final Exam Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review assignment • Q&A <p><i>Guest speaker: Kari Lukovics, Director of Marketing, DealCloud</i></p>	<p>In-class exercise: writing a PR plan</p> <p>HW assignment: select topic for final (DUE: Nov. 6 at 12 p.m. PST)</p>
Week 13 November 10	<p>Public Affairs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government relations • Public affairs • Political campaigns • Public diplomacy • Lobbying <p><i>Guest speaker: Vanessa Valdivia, Communications Director, Peters for Michigan Campaign</i></p> <p>*Course Evaluations*</p>	<p>Read: Ch. 15 & 16 (before class)</p> <p>In-class session: final exam Q&A</p> <p>HW assignment: final presentations (DUE: Tues., Nov. 17)</p>
FINAL EXAM November 17, 7-9 p.m.	FINAL PRESENTATIONS	DUE: submit final slides by Nov. 17 at 12 p.m. PST

XII. Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

Students should regularly check Blackboard, specifically before each class to read the latest announcements and ensure you have reviewed any content that will be relevant to that week's class.

Attendance and participation are part of the overall course grade and as such, students are expected to actively engage in group discussion during class and be respectful of all guest speakers.

Students may not make up any missed quizzes unless an alternative arrangement was made with the instructor in advance.

Communication

If you are not available during the office hours outlined at the top of the syllabus, I encourage you to reach out to me directly via email to schedule an alternative time to meet. I will usually reply to emails within 24 hours. If you need a quick answer on an urgent matter, please call my cell.

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. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, 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

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

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

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, 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.symplcity.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

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

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

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, 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

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.

XIII. About Your Instructor

Toya Holness is Director of Corporate Communications and Marketing at Deluxe Entertainment Services, the world's leading video creation to distribution company. Prior to her current role, Toya served as the Director of Communications for the New York City Department of Education, where she was charged with sharing the agency's vision for providing 1.1 million students with a high-quality education.

Toya has served in a variety of communications roles across sports, entertainment and fashion, including at Endeavor in New York City, DDA Public Relations in London and the Los Angeles Clippers. With over 10 years of experience, her work spans across media relations, corporate communications, internal communications, crisis management, thought leadership, brand marketing, stakeholder engagement, and policy development.

A graduate of the University of Southern California, Toya received an M.A. in Strategic Public Relations from Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. She also earned a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of California, Riverside, where she played Division I soccer.