

PR 250 Strategic Public Relations: An Introduction 4 units

Spring 2021 – Mondays – 6-9:20 p.m.

Section: 21087D

Location: Online

Instructor: Clarissa Beyah

Office: Online

Office Hours: by appointment

Contact Info: beyahc@usc.edu

I. Course Description

This course will familiarize students with strategies and practices in the growing field of public relations/strategic communication through analysis of current events, landmark cases and practical implementation with special emphasis on historical roots, evolution, current and future practices. The practical implementation will include simulation activities where students are asked to operate in groups as agency and in-house communication teams through several simulation scenarios. This course is the foundation of the public relations program.

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

This course is designed to introduce you to public relations as a professional practice.

Through lectures, reading, practical exercises, guest speakers, research, writing, teamwork and individual effort, we will explore the world of PR:

- Public relations definitions, tenets, practices, job opportunities in PR (agency, corporate, non-profit...); basic process of PR planning and strategy development; use of PR to achieve organizational goals

Upon completion of PR 250, students can expect a:

1. Solid grasp how public relations is defined and practiced by career, by discipline, and by personal interest.
2. Strongly developed awareness of the myriad of specialized choices that exist for a public relations professional.
3. Foundation for why and how public relations is employed by nearly everyone.
4. Practical knowledge of the rationale for, and process to achieve, sophisticated, disciplined planning.
5. Basic grasp of the profession sufficient to succeed in USC Annenberg's undergraduate Public Relations Studies major or minor.

III. Course Notes

The class is lecture style; however, students will participate and contribute their thoughts and insights. Blackboard is used for updates, posting homework and assignments and to take quizzes and exams.

IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments

Every class will consist of several of the following (when applicable):

- **Lecture / discussion** – Everyone must participate. I will ask you to share your thoughts.
- **Case studies** – We will study actual and practical case studies to understand what the best PR programs entail. Participation during case study reviews counts towards your participation grade.
- **Industry news/updates** – You must stay informed of current topics in the public relations industry. You are required to read PR industry or other news and be prepared each week to discuss something

interesting you came across. Each week students will be asked to share news events and relate them to the lesson. This is part of your participation grade.

- **Quizzes and midterm exam** – Based on the textbook and class lectures.
- **Team Simulation-** You will experience what is like to operate as a PR agency and as an in-house team and be required to apply the concepts to creating PR plans. Simulation teams will create plans and at least one full-campaign, which will be part of your Final exam.
- **Final group project/presentation** – Development of a public relations campaign to be presented during the final class and **an individual PR Portfolio**.

V. Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
Quizzes (based on textbook and lectures)	20%
Homework/Assignments	10%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final	30%
Participation	15%
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” grades have writing near professional quality; one or no mistakes; clearly proofread and edited material, professionally organized. You follow instructions that we cover in class. Excellent organization and flow; original and creative thinking. You clearly demonstrate the concepts and ideas that we discuss in class and thoroughly follow the planning model. High end of scale: professionally presentable today as is.

“B” projects have two to five spelling, grammar or AP Style mistakes and shows potential as a good writer. You follow most of the instructions we cover in class. High end of scale will have at least one extraordinary element such as astonishingly creative idea or strategy. Some creativity shown. Publishable with medium editing. You demonstrate a general understanding of the ideas we discuss in class.

“C” projects have more than five errors (spelling, grammar, AP style). Poorly edited and/or proofread. Hackneyed elements such as trite strategies and tactics. Little or no facts/figures included. Little or no creativity shown. You don't follow the planning model or you improperly apply concepts that we discussed in class.

“D” projects have more than 10 errors (spelling, grammar). Needs to be completely rewritten. Poorly organized with little or no understanding of the concepts we covered in class. Needs to work with writing coach.

“F” projects are not rewritable, late or not turned in.

d. Grading Timeline

Assignments, quizzes and the midterm will be graded within a week after it's due. Grades are updated and tracked in Blackboard.

VI. Assignment Rubrics

Rubrics for assignments will be provided with assignments.

VII. Assignment Submission Policy

1. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated. I will accept early assignments, but I will not accept late assignments. Late assignments will automatically be given a grade of 0/F.
2. Assignments must be submitted via Blackboard, unless I have given you different instructions.

VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Besides reading the required textbook, you must keep up with current events. Please browse one or more of the following PR news websites. Periodically we have class discussions based on news/case studies from these news sites.

- prweek.com (Annenberg students receive free subscriptions)
- publicrelationstoday.com
- prnewsonline.com
- prdaily.com
- odwyerpr.com
- adweek.com

IX. 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.

USC technology rental program

We realize that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. To apply, please [submit an application](#). The Student Basic Needs team will contact all applicants in early August and distribute equipment to eligible applicants prior to the start of the fall semester.

X. Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 1/15/2021 – 4/30/2021; Final Exam Period: 5/5-12/2021)

Friday, February 5: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, February 5: 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 9: Last day to drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund for Session 001

Friday, March 5: Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript for Session 001. 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 (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, March 5: 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 9: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

XI. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students: Please check Blackboard for announcements on homework, quizzes, writing assignments or tests. 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.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 1/18	No Class: MLK Day		
Week 2 1/25	PR 250 Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course overview Syllabus review Expectations Policies and procedures Simulation Team (First Round Simulation Teams Announced) Origins of Public Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is public relations? Misconceptions about public relations The history of PR – How it got started; how it has evolved into a strategic function The functions of PR The model of public relations 	Preface, chapters 1 and 2	
Week 3 2/1	The Public Relations Process: Research and Theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is research so important; how is it done; how to use it Common PR research methods The role of strategy with regard to research 	Chapter 4	PR/industry news discussion
Week 4 2/8	The Public Relations Process: Planning, Objectives and Tactics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning: The value of a communications plan; how to create a plan The role of strategy with regard to planning Putting plan to action 	Chapter 5	PR/industry news discussion

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of strategy with regard to tactics 		
Week 5 2/15	No Class: President's Day		
Week 6 2/22	The Public Relations Process: Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to know if we succeeded Common PR evaluation methods Second Round Simulation Team Announced 	Chapter 5	PR/industry news discussion
Week 7 3/1	Reaching Audiences through Mass Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collateral materials: What are they? How are they used? Mass media: radio, TV, newspapers, blogs, etc.	Chapters 6, 7 and 8	PR/industry news discussion
Week 8 3/8	Public Opinion/Persuasion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why public opinion matters Tips/best practices to help tell our story and persuade audiences		PR/industry news discussion
Week 9 3/15	Meeting and Events PR campaigns often include large and small meetings and events. We'll review types of events, event planning concepts and best practices. Third Round Simulation Team Announced		PR/industry news discussion
Week 10 3/22	Midterm		
Week 11 3/29	PR in Corporations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Social Responsibility, community relations, reputation management, social responsibility, employee communications and investor relations 	Chapters 10 and 11	PR/industry news discussion
Week 12 4/5	Issues Management and Crisis Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are conflicts and crisis situations Conflict management lifecycle Strategies for dealing with issues, risks and crisis Restoring corporate reputation FINAL Simulation Team Announced- These are the teams that will go into course Final Presentations together 	Chapter 12	PR/industry news discussion
Week 13 4/12	Ethics and Law in Public Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical guidelines in PR How does law affect PR Final Simulation Team Announced 	Chapter 3	PR/industry news discussion
Week 14 4/19	The Future of PR		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discuss changes PR executives, professionals, scholars and students foresee in the PR industry in the future ▪ Review research studies conducted by USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations. Reports include: Relevance Report / Global Communications Report 		
Week 15 4/26	1. Specialty Practice Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is PR and communications in sports, entertainment, non-profits, education and government 2. Preparation for final		
FINAL EXAM PERIOD 5/10, 7-9 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final will include final simulation group presentation in addition to individual portfolio submission. 		

XII. Policies and Procedures

What I Expect From You

- Class starts on time. You don't have to ask me for permission to come to class, leave early or come late, or provide a written excuse. I leave those decisions to you. You receive no credit for in-class work that day. There is no make-up for material we cover in a class you miss.
- Assignments are due to me at the time I designate. All assignments must be complete and typed, with no handwritten edits. Assignments completed not following directions will be graded lower. If you are absent, you are responsible for getting me your homework by the due date/time. **No late assignments are accepted.**
- There will be no make-ups for the midterm or final exam.
- If you miss class, you are responsible for getting notes and assignments from a fellow student. I do not email notes or handouts.
- Class participation is expected and will help your final grade. Everyone is expected to contribute. Lack of participation will reduce your participation grade.
- No texting or any use of cell phones or other forms of electronic communication during class. Doing so will have a negative impact on your grade. Computers are for class work only. If I have to stop class to ask you to stop using your cell phone or other device, you will lose participation points for that class.
- There should only be one discussion going on at a time in class. Paying attention to the speaker, whether it is the instructor, fellow student or guest, is a sign of respect and professionalism. Disruptive behavior, such as talking out of turn and carrying on side conversations, will negatively impact your grade.
- The syllabus is our guideline and will change during the course of the semester to accommodate current events and speaker schedules.
- You are expected to check Blackboard every week for updates on homework and assignments. You are also responsible for checking your USC email account, which is how I will communicate with you.

What You Can Expect From Me

1. I am open to your questions and welcome the opportunity to discuss any issues concerning you. Reach out to me. I am here for you. **beyahc@usc.edu**
2. I am fair. When you get an assignment back from me, you should have a good idea why you earned the grade you did and what can be done to improve your writing. However, if things are not clear, let's talk. The more discussion, the better the understanding.
3. This syllabus is a general guideline for what we will cover during the semester. There will be in-class writing, homework and other assignments. Please suggest topics that are of interest to you and I will do my best to incorporate those ideas into assignments so that we can broaden our horizons into more diverse writing.

4. I'll guide you along to improve your writing, but feel free to help guide our discussions. Bring to class your questions, observations and opinions about how you see the role of public relations at work in the real world. Our most pertinent and interesting class time will come from what's happening in our world today.
5. I am available for questions and conversations by appointment. Ready access is through email. I will respond to all messages, unless my message service indicates otherwise.

Communication

I am always available to speak or meet with students to answer questions, review assignments, or share career advice. Please feel free to contact me by email to set up a time to meet. I do my best to reply to all emails within 48 hours.

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.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

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

Clarissa Beyah is currently the Chief Communications Officer [Union Pacific railroad](#) and a Professor of Professional Practice at USC.

Clarissa’s expertise spans professional services, healthcare, technology, transportation and utilities sectors. Clarissa is the President and Founder of the [Writer’s Block Ink](#) – a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating and launching diverse young leaders using the arts. Since its inception the Writer’s Block has helped more than 1,000 at-risk youth use the arts to transform their lives.

Clarissa has led teams on nearly every continent and served as a chief communication advisor for numerous Fortune 50 companies. Some of her prior roles include Vice President, Global Communications, Aon; Vice President, Pepco Holdings Communications, Exelon; Chief Communications Officer, GE Transportation; Global Communications Leader GE Healthcare IT; and Vice President, Corporate Communications, Northwestern Mutual. Clarissa spent a decade at Pfizer and held several roles including head of Communications for Europe and of Pfizer’s first generics business unit, which grew from \$2B to \$18B in four years.

Clarissa is an educator with a passion for engaging and empowering youth. She founded the Writer’s Block Ink to help at-risk youth *ignite social change on the page and stage*. Writer’s Block productions address social issues ranging from domestic abuse to genocide. Youth enter as artists and rise to become leaders. Past Writer’s Block participants hold community leadership roles across the nation.