



PR 457: The Role of Celebrity in Public Relations
4 Units

Spring 2021 – Thursdays – 6:30-9:50 p.m.

Section: 21269R

Location: Online

Instructor: Jennie O'Hagan

Office: ANN Lobby

Office Hours: One hour before class by appointment

Course Description

This course examines the history and application of the celebrity in Public Relations. While the main focus will be the entertainment industry, we will also explore politics and other fields (sports, fashion, etc.) looking at both traditional and social media. We will investigate what it means to be a “celebrity” in the 21st century via case studies, news articles and guest speakers.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will learn and understand: when, where and how celebrity presence enriches a situation; identify advantageous opportunities as well as issues that may hinder a celebrity; be able to strategically advise organizations and individuals how to elevate their brand as well as manage in moments of crisis; manage traditional and social media as they pertain to celebrity interaction with the public.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

- News and Case Study of the Week - Class will begin most sessions with a discussion of celebrity activity in the news. A student or pair of students will also present a celebrity case study.
- Speaker Questions & Thank You – Prior to each class with a guest speaker - by **Wednesday** at midnight, students will submit (in blackboard) a minimum of **ONE** question to ask the speaker. Subsequently, student will write a thank you note to guest, submitted to blackboard by **Friday** at noon - including **TWO** things they've learned from the guest speaker.
- Writing Assignments - There will be five (5) writing assignments throughout the semester.
Midterm – Working in assigned teams, students will examine and analyze the rise and, in some cases, fall of highly visible celebrities and icons in various industries (e.g. sports, fashion, politics, TV, film, etc.)
- Final Project – In-depth study of a celebrity - in groups (to be determined), students will act as publicists at an agency and put together a comprehensive public relations plan for an assigned celebrity. (More details to come later in the semester.)
- Reading Material – instructor will post key articles and other misc. reading materials to Blackboard.
- Class Participation – As public relations/communications is an extremely hands-on field, class participation and active discussion will be a key component of the class and of the final grade.

Grading Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Case Study	15	15%
Midterm	20	20%
Class Participation	10	10%
Writing Assignments	25	25%
Guest Questions / Thank Yous	10	10%
Final Project	20	20%
TOTAL	100	100%

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

Grading Standards

Public Relations

“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.

Grading Timeline

Every attempt will be made to input grades for assignments within three weeks of due date.

Assignment Submission Policy

- A. 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.
- B. Assignments must be submitted via Blackboard prior to that day’s class, unless otherwise specified by instructor.

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.

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

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.*

Week 1 – 1/21

What IS a celebrity? Syllabus review, overview of course and key assignments. Discussion about what it means to be a celebrity in the 21st century, emphasis on the entertainment industry. Overview of the rise and fall of celebrities and icons.

Case Study information

Celebrity Interview Assignment Instructions

Reading/Homework:

New York Times, May 19, 2013: Celebrating Inequality

Week 2 – 1/28

How celebrities have invaded/dominated our society. We’ll take a look into recent crises that have plagued the entertainment industry.

News and Cases of the week

Guest speaker TBD

Reading/Homework:

HuffPost, December 4, 2015: The Dangerous American Obsession: Why Are We So Fascinated With Fame?

The Odyssey Online, September 14, 2015: What Reality TV Says About Our Culture

Week 3 – 2/4

Gaining celebrity status in Film and Television

News and Cases of the week

Guest speaker TBD

Reading/Homework:

Fast Company, September 29, 2017: How Instagram Became the Music Industry's Secret Weapon

*Select the blog, Twitter or Instagram account of a celebrity and follow it for a week. Be prepared to discuss it during the next class. One-sheet summary/analysis should be turned in

Week 4 – 2/11

Gaining celebrity status in the Music industry.

News and Cases of the week

Guest speaker TBD

Reading/Homework:

Forbes, March 14, 2016: 10 Fashion Icons and the Trends They Made Famous

Week 5 – 2/18

Gaining celebrity status as a child star.

News and Cases of the week

Guest speaker TBD

Reading/Homework: TBD

Week 6 – 2/25

Gaining celebrity status in Sports.

News and Cases of the week

Guest speaker TBD

Reading/Homework: TBD

Week 7 – 3/4

News and Cases of the week

Traditional media disruptors - Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, etc. - how are they using celebrity to create awareness and make way for themselves in the marketplace

Guest speaker TBD

Reading/Homework: TBD

Week 8 – 3/11

MIDTERM DUE (NO CLASS)

Week 9 – 3/18

News and Cases of the week

Celebrity endorsements. Can celebrities really boost sales, donations and brand awareness? "The Oprah Effect."

Guest speaker TBD

Reading/Homework: TBD

Week 10 – 3/25

News and Cases of the week

Celebrity culture in the United States and managing celebrity crises; we'll delve into some of the biggest crisis communication situations of the past year.

Guest speaker TBD

Reading/Homework: TBD

Week 11 – 4/1

Cases of the week.

Celebrities and traditional media. We'll examine how TV, radio, magazines, newspapers and online sites fuel and shape our celebrity culture.

Reading/Homework:

Guest speaker TBD

Forbes.com, June 20, 2017, Why YouTube Stars Influence Millennials More Than Traditional Celebrities

Week 12 – 4/8

Cases of the week.

Celebrities and social media. Online celebrities – the rise of the YouTube celebrity.

Guest speaker: TBD

Reading/Homework: TBD

Week 13 – 4/15

Discussion about diversity in the entertainment industry.

Guest speaker TBD

Reading/Homework:

USA Today, November 3, 2017: Brain Science: Here's Why You Can't Resist Celebrity Endorsements

New York Times, June 22, 2008: Nothing Sells Like Celebrity

Week 14 – 4/22

NO CLASS WELLNESS DAY

Week 15 – 4/29

Presentation of Final Projects.

Final Exam Week – 5/6, 7-9 p.m.

Teams will meet to receive feedback on their final presentations. Class Evaluations.

Case Study Requirements: Each student will give a slide presentation about their subject (PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezzi and Google are all acceptable) that includes an overview/history of the celebrity, key findings, and PR implications (e.g. what should a PR practitioner take away from this case). Presentation should be approximately 3-5 minutes in length, followed by class Q&A.

Final Project:

In groups (to be determined), students will act as publicists at an agency and put together a comprehensive public relations plan for an assigned celebrity. (More details to come later in the semester.)

Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

I expect all students to be respectful of one another, of the instructor, and of the guest speakers that we will welcome into the classroom over the course of the semester. This means conducting yourselves in a professional manner, listening and engaging in thoughtful discussion. Participation is an important part of the grade. If you need to miss a class, please let me know ahead of time. Cell phones should be silenced or turned off and put away during the duration of the class. Laptops may be used for taking notes and any other in-class assignments; use of personal social media is prohibited during class.

LAPTOPS WILL BE CLOSED DURING GUEST SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS (WHEN IN THE CLASSROOM.) If you want to remember a few things for your thank yous, etc., take paper notes, please.

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 Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.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.

About Your Instructor

Jennie O’Hagan is an Emmy winning Television Producer and Public Relations Professional. Jennie was the original Entertainment Producer for the KTLA Morning News in Los Angeles and is the currently a producer for LA TIMES TODAY - a daily news magazine on Spectrum News 1. She often produces Red Carpet coverage during awards season, Executive Produced the ROSE PARADE for KTLA and is an Executive Consultant for clients including the OC FAIR and Disneyland; in both publicity and video production.

Jennie has created a social media citizenship primer and media training curriculum to engage young people in a healthy relationship with technology in today’s digital culture. She moderates both programs for parents and students in schools and for young Disney Channel stars and Rose Parade Princesses.

Jennie volunteers with Common Sense Media, sits on the Board of Harvest Home in Venice, CA, is married to Dan, has two adult step-daughters and a daughter, Madeline, who is currently in USC’s Dornsife and Thornton School of Music.