



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

**Spring 2022 – Tuesdays – 6-9:20 p.m.**

**Section:** 21087D

**Location:** ANN 211

**Instructor:** Melissa Robinson

**Office:** ASC classroom or meeting rooms

**Office Hours:** As scheduled

### **Course Description**

This course will familiarize you with strategies and practices in the growing field of public relations/strategic communication through analysis of current public relations issues, landmark cases with special emphasis on historical roots, evolution, current and future practices. This course is the foundation of the public relations program.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

This course is designed to introduce you to public relations as a professional practice. How is public relations defined? What disciplines make up the public relations profession? What are the tenets of the public relations field? Where might you fit in? How is public relations practiced here and abroad; in a corporation and in an agency; in government, in politics, and in the non-profit sector?

Public relations means different things to different people. We will define what it means to be a public relations professional, how you learn the public relations craft and how you develop and hone your public relations skills. We will also cover the basic process of public relations – research, planning, communication, evaluation – and the use of communications strategies to achieve organizational goals.

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

Upon completion of PR 250, students can expect to achieve:

1. A solid grasp of how public relations is defined and practiced by career, by discipline, and by personal interest.
2. A strongly developed awareness of the myriad specialized areas that exist for a public relations professionals.
3. Practical knowledge of the rationale for the public relations planning processes.
4. A basic grasp of the profession sufficient to succeed in USC Annenberg's undergraduate Public Relations Studies major or minor.

### **Course Notes**

The class in-person and is lecture style. Students are expected will participate and contribute their thoughts and insights. Blackboard is used for updates, turning in homework and assignments, and taking quizzes and exams.

### **Description and Assessment of Assignments**

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

- **Participation:** Everyone must participate. Each student has an opportunity to receive 5 participation points per class. There are several ways that you will be assessed for your participation, including:
  - **Attendance:** First and foremost, attend class. If there is a reason you must miss a class, you must inform the instructor ahead of time.
  - **Lecture / discussion** –During each class, I will call on students to share thoughts.
  - **Case studies** – We will study PRSA Silver Anvil award winning case studies to understand what the best PR programs entail. Providing your point of view, asking questions, offering answers during case study discussions count 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 news and be prepared each week to discuss something interesting you came across. Each week, I will randomly select 2-3 students to share a news item. This is part of your participation grade.
- **Quizzes and midterm exam** – Based on the textbook, assigned reading and class lectures.
- **Final group project/presentation** – Development of a public relations campaign to be presented during the final class.

## Grading

### a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Homework/Assignments	25	15%
Midterm Exam	150	35%
Final Project / Presentation (group)	200	40%
Participation	75 (5/class)	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 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.

#### *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. A grade of F also will be assigned for any plagiarized and/or fabricated material that is submitted.

#### **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.

#### **Assignment Rubrics**

Rubrics for assignments will be provided with assignments.

#### **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.

#### **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 online publications.

- prweek.com (Annenberg students receive a free subscription)
- odywerpr.com
- adweek.com

#### **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: 1/10/22 – 5/12/22)**

Jan. 7	Last day to register and settle without late fee
Jan. 10	Spring semester classes begin for Session 001
Jan. 10-14	Late registration and change of program for Session 001
Jan. 28	Last day to register and add classes for Session 001
Jan. 28	Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W,” except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001
Jan. 28	Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Jan. 28	Deadline for purchasing or showing proof of health insurance
Jan. 28	Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance
Feb. 1	Last day to add/drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Audit for Session 001
Feb. 25	Last day to drop a course without a mark of "W" on the transcript 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.
Feb. 25	Last day to change a Pass/No Pass to a letter grade for Session 001.
March 13-20	Spring recess
April 8	Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001
April 29	Spring semester classes end
April 30-May 3	Study days
May 4-11	Final examinations
May 12	Spring semester ends

### 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.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
<b>Week 1</b> 1/11	<b>PR 250 Overview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Course overview</li> <li>Syllabus review</li> <li>Expectations</li> <li>Policies and procedures</li> </ul>		
<b>Week 2</b> 1/18	<b>The Origins of Public Relations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is Public Relations?</li> <li>Misconceptions about public relations</li> <li>The history of PR – How it got started; how it has evolved into a strategic function</li> <li>The functions of PR</li> <li>The model of public relations</li> </ul>	Preface, chapters 1 and 2	
<b>Week 3</b> 1/25	<b>The Public Relations Process: Beginning with Research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why is research so important; how is it done; how to use it</li> <li>Common PR research methods</li> <li>The role of strategy with regard to research</li> </ul>	Chapter 4	PR/industry news discussion

<b>Week 4</b> 2/1	<b>PR Theories</b>	Chapter 4	PR/industry news discussion
<b>Week 5</b> 2/8	<b>The Public Relations Process: Planning, Objectives and Tactics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning: The importance of a PR/communications plan; how to develop a plan</li> <li>• The role of strategy with regards to planning</li> <li>• Putting the plan into action</li> <li>• The role of strategy with regards to tactics</li> </ul>	Chapter 5	PR/industry news discussion
<b>Week 6</b> 2/15	<b>The Public Relations Process: Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to know if PR objectives were met</li> <li>• Common PR evaluation methods</li> </ul>	Assigned reading	PR/industry news discussion
<b>Week 7</b> 1/22	<b>Reaching Audiences through Myriad Channels: Mass Media, Social Media, Experiential</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content &amp; Collateral</li> <li>• Social media platforms</li> <li>• Mass media</li> <li>• Experiential</li> </ul>	Chapters 6, 7, and 8	PR/industry news discussion
<b>Week 8</b> 3/1	<b>MIDTERM</b>		
<b>Week 9</b> 3/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review MIDTERM</li> <li>• Discuss final group project</li> </ul>		PR/industry news discussion
<b>March Recess</b> 3/15 – No class			
<b>Week 10</b> 3/22	<b>Public Opinion/Persuasion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why public opinion matters</li> <li>• Tips/best practices to help tell our story and persuade audiences</li> </ul>	Assigned podcast/reading	PR/industry news discussion
<b>Week 11</b> 3/29	<b>Industry Events, Conferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PR campaigns often include large and small events and conferences. We'll review types of events, event planning concepts, and best practices.</li> </ul>		PR/industry news discussion
<b>Week 12</b> 4/5	<b>PR in Corporations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Social Responsibility, community relations, reputation management, social responsibility, employee</li> </ul>	Chapters 10 and 11	PR/industry news discussion

	communications and investor relations		
<b>Week 13</b> 4/12	<b>Issues Management and Crisis Communications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are conflicts and crisis situations?</li> <li>• Conflict management lifecycle</li> <li>• Strategies for dealing with issues, risks and crisis</li> <li>• Restoring corporate reputation</li> </ul> <b>Ethics and Law in Public Relations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical guidelines in PR</li> <li>• How does law affect PR</li> </ul>	Chapters 3 and 12	PR/industry news discussion
<b>Week 14</b> 4/19	<b>The Future of PR</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss changes PR executives, professionals, scholars and students foresee in the PR industry in the future</li> <li>• Review research studies conducted by USC Annenberg Center for Public Relations</li> <li>• Class time to meet with final project teams</li> </ul>	Annenberg Center for PR report(s)	PR/industry news discussion
<b>Week 15</b> 4/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My Life in PR: Panel Discussion with Industry Experts</li> </ul>		
<b>Study Days</b> 4/30-5/3 - No class			
<b>FINAL EXAM</b> 5/10, 7-9 p.m.	<b>Final Project Presentations</b>		

## Policies and Procedures

### Additional Policies

Students may not make up quizzes unless there's a legitimate and approved absence for illnesses with a doctor's note, athletes with an approved request, or for religious holidays

### Communication

Email me at [mlobins@usc.edu](mailto:mlobins@usc.edu). If it's urgent, please email me at [mrobinson@boingo.com](mailto:mrobinson@boingo.com), or text/call at (818)321-7234. Please let me know in advance if you want to meet in person. I will reply to emails within 24 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](https://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](https://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](https://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](https://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](https://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](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://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](https://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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776*

[osas.usc.edu/](https://osas.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](https://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/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

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.

## **About Your Instructor**

**Melissa Robinson:** With more than 25 years of experience in branding, strategic communications and marketing, Melissa is vice president of marketing and communications for Boingo Wireless. At Boingo, Melissa oversees corporate communications, thought leadership, B2B marketing and sales support, content production, design and digital advertising. Previously, Melissa served several senior executive roles with global agencies and in-house with major brands. Her roles included: senior vice president overseeing the brand communications practice at PMK\*BNC in Los Angeles; senior vice president of global communications for CKE Restaurants (Carl's Jr. and Hardy's brands); executive vice president managing the consumer marketing and digital practice at Weber Shandwick Los Angeles. Under Melissa's leadership, the Weber Shandwick LA team created award-winning work for General Motors, Chevrolet, PepsiCo, Verizon Wireless, City of Hope, Samsung and others. Melissa also led national consumer marketing and digital campaigns for brands such as Nintendo of America, Sony ImageWorks, Disney, Motorola, adidas, Mazda, Ford and Amazon.com. Melissa began her communications career in Washington, D.C. where she served as a speech writer and public relations manager for MCI Communications.



Melissa has led numerous creative workshops and executive training sessions for professional and educational groups. She received a BA in history and a teaching credential from UCLA.