



**PR 351A: Strategic Public Relations
Media and Content
4 Units**

Spring 2022 — Mondays — 6-9:20 p.m.

Section: 21149D

Location: ANN 211

Instructor: Darryl Ryan, MBA, MS.

Office: Room or meeting area

Contact Info: darryl.ryan@usc.edu,

Course Description

Today's public relations professionals need to understand and be competent in many forms of communication. The business world they work in is rapidly evolving with earned, owned and paid media converging. Media relations, social media content creation and influencer engagement, and paid media are now equally important for any organization's strategic communications. The role of the public relations practitioner has changed to reflect this shift and training needs to include intensive writing plus creating high-quality multimedia content for traditional, emerging and social media.

This is an intensive, hands-on course designed to provide students with the skills necessary to engage with, and produce compelling content for, contemporary media channels of all types.

What defines the media? Who are they? What do they do? How do they get their stories? What tools are needed in today's media environment? How do we best engage media in today's environment of media convergence?

***Public Relations is...** a management function that maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its successes or failures depend.*

Student Learning Outcomes

This class will provide an understanding of how to write and produce content and tools used to engage traditional and emerging media. We will examine the rapidly changing fields of digital media and their roles in the relationship between public relations and the modern media.

The emphasis will be on writing and actual content production such as short interview videos and photos that tell a story and enhance your overall communications strategy.

The success of the public relations professional has as much to do with writing ability as anything else. The ability to write well, write creatively, to capture the attention of your audience is essential for an exceptional career. Writing skills are the essence of being an excellent content creator.

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Identify an array of traditional and emerging print, broadcast and online media outlets and understand their inner workings.

- Craft and pitch a story to any of the aforementioned media, with a keen understanding of what constitutes “news” for every type of audience.
- Write materials and create content for both media outlets and general audiences.
- Prepare a detailed media relations plan that reflects an understanding of the role of integrated strategy and effective targeting of the audience, message and outlet.

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU:

1. Class starts at on time. Chronic tardiness will affect your final grade, as will absences. You don't have to ask me for permission to miss a 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.
2. Assignments are due to me at the time I designate. All assignments will 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.**
3. There will be no make-ups for the midterm. There will be no extensions for the final project. You must complete the midterm and final project to pass the class.
4. There will be quizzes. If you are late and a quiz is in progress, you may not take it, nor can you make it up. You may not borrow a style guide to take a quiz or test. Bring your own each class.
5. If you miss class, you are responsible for getting notes and assignments from a fellow student. I do not email notes or handouts.
6. 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 for class work ONLY.
7. The syllabus is our guideline and will change during the course of the semester to accommodate current events and speaker schedules
8. You are expected to check Blackboard every week for updates on homework and assignments. I will post the week's homework within 24 hours of our last class. 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 love teaching and come to class each week with enthusiasm and a strong desire to help you learn. My goal is to help you prepare for the world of public relations.
2. I am open to your questions and welcome the opportunity to discuss any issues concerning you. Please don't hesitate to talk to me.
3. I am fair. When you get a paper back from me, you'll 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.
4. This syllabus is a general guideline for what we will cover during the semester. Other assignments, such as written homework and class projects will be assigned. In addition, we will have in-class writing most weeks.
5. 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.
6. I am available for questions and conversations before and after class and by appointment. Ready access is through email. I will respond to all messages within 24 hours, unless my message service indicates otherwise.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Grading

a. Grading Breakdown

Assignment	% of Grade
In-Class Assignments/Participation	10%
Take Home Assignments/Homework	15%
Quizzes	15%
Mid-term Exam	25%
Final Project	35%
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

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

In general, all written submissions will be graded before the next class session so that students may keep pace of the writing fundamentals. Your midterm and final projects will be graded and returned within one week of submission.

Assignment Rubrics

The general grading rubric for coursework falls under the Grading Standards section above.

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are due on the dates specified. Without prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will not be accepted.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

1. You must bring your laptop to every class.
2. *“The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law.”* Associated Press, 2014
3. Dictionaries and other writing references are indispensable. You need to have easy access to one or more guides to spelling, grammar, punctuation and writing style. *“Woe is I”* by Patricia O’Connor and *“The Elements of Style”* by Strunk and White are among the best of the shorter volumes.

Please bring these to class each week as you will need them for in-class writing exercises. As needed, additional reading assignments will be given during the semester.

Additionally, please watch, listen and read the following:

Traditional Media

1. *The Los Angeles Times* and at least one other newspaper such as *NY Times* or *USA Today*
2. One news magazine such as *TIME*
3. Watch television news, magazine and interview shows;
4. Listen to radio news and talk radio. (i.e.- *KNX* and *NPR*)

Tradigital Media

1. Daily Beast
2. techcrunch.com
3. TMZ
4. Huffington Post
5. Mashable

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: 1/10/2022 – 4/29/2022; Final Exam Period: 5/4-11/2022)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20221/calendar/>

Last day to add: Friday, January 28, 2022

Last day to drop without a mark of "W" and receive a refund: Friday, January 28, 2022

Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit: Friday, January 28, 2022 [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Last day to add/drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Audit: Tuesday, February 1

Last day to withdraw without a "W" on transcript or change pass/no pass to letter grade: Friday, February 25, 2022 [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.]

Last day to drop with a mark of "W": Friday, April 8, 2022

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.*

January 10/WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION. A LOOK AT STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA CHANNELS

- Housekeeping: Presentation of syllabus. Going over class requirements and outlining of what to expect over the semester.
- Down to business: Define public relations/strategic communications. Begin to define who are the media and what do they need or want with the public relations professional.
- Summary of strategic media channels used by public relations – traditional, emerging tradigital, social and owned.
- Discuss the need to create content for all of these channels through a strategic communication process: Developing target audiences, messaging and connecting with appropriate channels.

In class:

- Review of news stories on each media channel. How does the traditional mainstream news story compare to tradigital or social media reports?
- Review news releases from distribution sites such as BusinessWire.com, PRnewswire.com or MarketWire.com. Discuss if you think it is an effective announcement.
- Write a one-page biography telling me your route to USC and PR.

Homework: Due Jan. 16

- (1) Track a story on Business Wire, Marketwire or PRnewswire to see where it received media attention and how/if the story was changed from its original release. (2) Bring the original story and a typed analysis of the subsequent media coverage. (3) In addition, track how else the company played its announcement with its own vehicles: website, Twitter, Facebook, blogs, YouTube,

Pinterest? List the ways the company used media channels to get the story out. (4) Bring a news story you think was run as a result of a PR pitch. (5) Type a brief explanation. (6) Review class notes

January 17/WEEK 2

Martin Luther King Jr's Birthday (Holiday) – NO CLASS

January 24/WEEK 3: ADVANCED MESSAGING AND AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

- Review homework.
 - Discuss the perceived target audience for the PR news stories brought to class.
 - Identify key messages aimed at audience
 - Discuss why the story was carried by specific outlets
- Discuss the type of writing that makes news
- Development of target audience, creation of messages to connect with specific audiences and the choice of outlets to reach each audience segment.

In class:

- Take any of the stories addressed in class and develop a different audience and messaging structure for the story.

Homework: Due Jan. 31

- Write a 6-page, audience-segmented promotion from your hometown

January 31/WEEK 4: MEDIA COLLATERAL – THE MEDIA ADVISORY, NEWS RELEASE AND BEYOND

- Discussion of the fundamentals of good writing and how to fine-tune your press release, paying attention to details.
- The type of news release and the situations for each type
- How the advisory and news release sound on TV and other forms of media
- Packaging of materials: First the news release and then what?

In class:

- Writing the media advisory and the news release

Homework: Due Feb. 7

- The media advisory and news release assignment

February 7/WEEK 5: MULTIMEDIA CONTENT AS A PR TOOL

- The news release has evolved from the traditional written media relations tool to a complex multi-media advocacy tool to promote an individual, company, non-profit or government's position.
- SEO'ing your media collateral, making your work searchable and public relations services

In class:

- Review online newsrooms
- Review the 6 Secrets of SEO
- In class writing assignment: Media advisory and news release

Homework: Due Feb. 14

- The media advisory and news release assignment
- Watch WordPress Essential Training on Lynda.com

February 14/WEEK 6: ONLINE NEWS ROOMS

- What do they look like; what's in them; who uses them and why?
- How to create a digital press kit and develop an effective online newsroom.
- Writing a blog and the effective blog strategy
 - Creating posts and pages, inserting multimedia, using links, theme design, creating menus and sub-menus.
- We'll examine myriad ways to enhance your story: blogs, features, op-eds. What are the differences, what are they used for, and when to use them.
- Creating materials for a variety of platforms: print, web, social media

In class:

- Creation of Wordpress.com blog
- Add graphics, photos, links
- Write a blog "environment" and "solution" with aligning graphics and titles
- In class review of monumental photographs that impacted history and examine the content, message and placement of those photos.
- The art of media image storytelling, writing compelling titles and photo captions.

Homework: Due Feb. 20 via email by 6PM

- Write your blog assignment for the new product

February 21/WEEK 7:

- NO CLASS - President's Day

February 28/WEEK 8: MIDTERM REVIEW

In class: Review all in class content and writing content

Homework: Midterm next week

March 7/WEEK 9: MIDTERM

In class:

- In-class writing exam: Writing of elements covered in class to date.

Homework: Due Mar. 11

- Blog on music album/artist

March 14/WEEK 10: SPRING BREAK

- Spring Break – NO CLASS

March 21/WEEK 11: DEVELOPMENT OF A PRESS/INFORMATION KIT – HOW DO WE DELIVER INFORMATION FOR MEDIA TO REPORT?

- While the press release is an important component in your media relations toolbox, equally important are the ancillary materials that reporters use. To be viewed as a valued resource, you must also know how to prepare other materials to tell your story: Statements (what, why, empathy), fact sheets and bios – other ways to hook the media.
- Writing for crisis communications

In class:

- Review the types fact sheets
- Write company statements from the prompted scenarios

Homework: Due Mar. 28

- Create and write a Company fact
- Write statements for the scenarios

March 28/WEEK 12: PITCHING THE MEDIA/ INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

- How and when to talk to the media; what media to target; how to get your story delivered.
- How to prepare for an interview. How to develop key messages. How to weave main points into responses. How to deal with the tough questions.

In Class:

- Write email angels for a pitch.

Homework: Due Apr. 4

- Write the email pitch for the product assigned.
- Watch online video tutorial *iMovie '09 Essential Training* on Lynda.com.

April 4/WEEK 13: CREATION OF B-ROLL VIDEO and the BIO

- A summary of video production techniques using modern HD video cameras including mobile phones, SLRs, etc.
- An overview of editing techniques for non-professional editing programs such as iMovie.
- What make effective video?
- To be viewed as a valued resource, you must also know how to prepare other materials to tell your story: Feature stories, backgrounders, and bios – other ways to hook the media.

In class:

- Review and post the (executive) bio with photos, graphics and links.

Homework:

- Create a video sound bite for your favorite restaurant

April 11/WEEK 14: CREATING A MEDIA EVENT AND WORKING WITH MEDIA

- Media Events: press conferences and press events. When to use them, when to avoid them and how to throw them.
- What works and, almost as importantly, what doesn't. Giving the media materials flexibility to meet the needs of different audiences.
- The relationship between the public relations and the media. Tools for working with the media.
- How to talk to the media; when to talk to the media; what media to target; how to get your story delivered. Making sure your pitch isn't the tree that falls in the forest when no one is in the forest.
- Writing the speech/talking points for the media event

In Class:

- Students will work in small groups to develop a plan for a media event.
- Review talking points and speeches

Homework: Due April 18

- Write the speech the program launch

April 18/WEEK 15: INTEGRATING MEDIA COMPONENTS INTO A ROBUST CROSS-PLATFORM CAMPAIGN

- You've developed all your media materials and had your media event, now let's amplify, aggregate and curate across our social and owned media channels.
- Social channel for final product or service

In Class:

- Develop social media and engagement channel for final project
- Spin Doctor

April 25/WEEK 16: Review Class

- **Review and finalize your final projects at this session.**

May 9, 7-9 p.m.: FINAL PRESENTATIONS/FINAL PROJECTS DUE

- **Deliver Speech**
- **Present Social media site**
- **Final projects are due.**

Final Project

Write a blog and create an online newsroom. In the blog, you will announce/promote the launch of a topic (product or service), fact or fiction. You will include all of the aspects of media collateral we have covered in class, and any other material you consider relevant.

Material that **must** be included: **Embed .pdf versions of your written collateral**

- Blog
- Media Advisory
- News release
- Fact Sheet
- Pitch Letter
- Speech
- Bio

Material that can be included, but not required:

- B-roll Video (Only include video that you create. It does not have to be perfect. I am looking for effort, not expertise.)
- Statement
- Backgrounder
- Feature story
- Infographic (original creation)
- Artwork (original creation)
- Logos (You may use an existing logo, but I strongly encourage an effort on you creating a new look.)

Whatever you deem appropriate and necessary to tell your entire story, you will include. **You will write everything; absolutely no cut-and-paste of other source material.**

You will use WordPress.com as your platform. You may choose any theme you want to reflect your subject. Create a navigation bar with tabs and submenus to provide organization. On certain materials, like the news release and fact sheet, you will include an embedded .pdf file to allow for clean printing.

Be sure that your project has depth. This is your chance to show me that you've learned and understood the elements to public relations writing. Don't be superficial and don't be short on your use of collateral material. Make sure your copy is clean. You lose points for sloppy copy. There will be no way you can get an A on this project if you turn in a project that includes spelling, grammar and style errors.

How many pieces to include? I know you'd like me to tell you an exact count, but I can't. Each topic is different and will need different materials to tell the story. Every project must have at least one news release and fact sheet. I would say that five written pieces is too little and 20 are too many. And when I say five to 20, I am talking about written content. Other content creation (photos, graphics, etc.) will be counted, but in terms of written content (releases, fact sheets, pitches, etc.) more than five.

GRADING ELEMENTS:

- Overall design of site
- Quality of written materials
- Creativity in storytelling collateral (variety, depth, visuals)

SUGGESTION: Come up with your own idea. Make your own plan to introduce a new restaurant, or launch a new product, or promote a band, for example. In my experience, the more you create your own idea, the stronger your materials. If you are going to choose an already existing topic, I urge you to

not rely on materials that have already been created. It's too easy to use turns of phrases, collateral ideas and physical designs that you see in someone else's work. The more you apply your own creativity, the better the product.

All written materials in your project must be written by you. DO NOT include materials produced, written or created by anyone else (except for photos). If there is even one sentence taken from another source, you will receive a failing grade.

Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

Since this is a writing class where students submit and discuss various writing samples, I ask that you show the utmost consideration for your classmates' submissions and ideas. I've learned that no two people approach the craft of writing in quite the same way, so tolerance and inclusivity are essential elements of this course.

Communication

Feel free to email me outside of class hours but know that it might take me a while to respond. I am happy to chat with you individually either in person or on Zoom, but I do encourage you to pose your questions during class as I've learned that most everyone is facing the same issues/challenges!

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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

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

uscса.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.

About Your Instructor

Darryl Ryan is a seasoned global communications leader with deep expertise in developing and leading proactive brand reputation and integrated communications programs focused on brand positioning, storytelling, thought leadership, and multi-stakeholder engagement for executives and their organizations.

Most recently Darryl served as executive senior director and head of corporate communications for Hologic, Inc. In that role, he provided strategic leadership, management and oversight of communications strategy and communications activities for the organization.

Previously, Ryan has served executive director and chief of communications for Kaiser Permanente. Additionally, he has held executive and senior-level communications roles with Wells Fargo, Time Warner, Southern California Edison and All Nippon Airway as well as press secretary for Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

Ryan holds a Master of Business Administration from the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, Master of Science degree in public relations from Boston University's College of Communication and Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from UCLA.