



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

Spring 2022 – Thursdays 3:00-6:20pm

Location: ONLINE

Instructor: Jennie O’Hagan

Office: ANN Lobby

Office Hours: One hour before class by appointment

Contact Info:

Email is preferred

ohaganko@usc.edu

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. Students will present a celebrity case study once during the semester.
- 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

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation	10	10%
Written assignments	15	15%
Midterm	20	20%
Case Study	20	20%
Thank You Notes	10	10%
Final	25	25%
Total	100	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

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

Assignment Rubrics

Every attempt will be made to make assignment rubrics clear in description both in class by professor and in blackboard where assignment will be submitted. If anything is unclear, please email professor for clarification.

Assignment Submission Policy

- A. All assignments are due on the dates specified. **If your assignment will be late, please speak with Professor to make arrangements.**
- 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: 1/10/2022 – 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

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 must be 3 or fewer minutes in length, followed by class Q&A. Longer presentations will result in points taken off. Please be succinct.

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
Week 1 Dates: 1/10-1/14	What IS a celebrity? Syllabus review, overview of course and key assignments. Discussion about what it means to be a celebrity in the 21 st century, emphasis on the entertainment industry. Overview of the rise and fall of celebrities and icons.		
Week 2 Dates: 1/17-1/21	How celebrities have dominated our society. We'll take a look into recent crises that have plagued the entertainment industry.	News and Cases of the week	
Week 3 Dates: 1/24-1/28	Gaining celebrity status in Film and Television	News and Cases of the week	
Week 4 Dates: 1/31-2/4	Gaining celebrity status as a child star.	News and Cases of the week	

Week 5 Dates: 2/7-2/11	"Cuties" Managing viewer perception in celebrities and media	News and Cases of the week	
Week 6 Dates: 2/14-2/18	Traditional media disruptors - Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, etc - how are they using celebrity to create awareness and make way for themselves in the marketplace.	News and Cases of the week	IN PERSON CLASS AT USC
Week 7 Dates: 2/21-2/25			MIDTERM DUE NO CLASS MEETING
Week 8 Dates: 2/28-3/4	Celebrity endorsements. Can celebrities really boost sales, donations and brand awareness? "The Oprah Effect."	News and Cases of the week	
Week 9 Dates: 3/7-3/11	Celebrities and traditional media. We'll examine how TV, radio, magazines, newspapers and online sites fuel and shape our celebrity culture.	News and Cases of the week	
Spring Break Dates: 3/14-3/18			SPRING BREAK NO CLASS MEETING
Week 10 Dates: 3/21-3/25	Gaining celebrity status in politics	News and Cases of the week	
Week 11 Dates: 3/28-4/1	PITCHING CELEBRITY CLIENTS AND PROJECTS	News and Cases of the week	

Week 12 Dates: 4/4-4/8	Celebrities and social media. Online celebrities – the rise of the INFLUENCER	News and Cases of the week	
Week 13 Dates: 4/11-4/15	Gaining celebrity status in sports	News and Cases of the week	
Week 14 Dates: 4/18-4/22	Discussion about diversity in the entertainment industry.	News and Cases of the week	
Week 15 Dates: 4/25-4/29	ORAL FINAL	News and Cases of the week	IN PERSON CLASS AT USC
FINAL EXAM PERIOD Dates: 5/4-5/11			Tuesday, May 10 2-4pm

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 (and ZOOM) 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.

Communication

I am available via email ohaganko@usc.edu and will get back to you within 72 hours of your note. I can also meet via ZOOM before or after class when previously scheduled. I encourage you to reach out if you need anything. Please note that I am operating in the EASTERN TIME ZONE, so this may cause some delays.

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

ucsa.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://annenbergsuccessfund.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

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 the Executive Producer of Mornings for News12 Connecticut. She often produces Red Carpet coverage during awards season, Executive Produced the ROSE PARADE for KTLA.

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.