



PR 565: Corporate Public Relations and Reputation
3 Units

Spring 2022 – Wednesdays – 6:30-9 p.m.

Section: 2156D

Location: Online

Instructor: Melissa Robinson

Office: Online, by phone or location on campus as scheduled

Office Hours: Any time virtually as needed; please contact the instructor

Course Description

In PR 565 students will learn all aspects of corporate communications and reputation management through guest speakers from some of the world's largest, most admired companies; real-time news analysis; case presentation and discussions. The course incorporates a semester-long project that provides students the opportunity to work together as a team on a real-life reputation problem provided by a real client.

Student Learning Outcomes

Objectives include understanding key stakeholder groups such as investors, employees, policymakers and the media, as well as exploration of reputation drivers for various industries. At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain the nature and importance of the communications function, the role of the corporate communications team and reputation management inside a corporation
- Learn the key drivers of an organization's reputation and how best to manage them
- Gain insights into the nuances of corporate communications and how it differs from the agency environment
- Attain real-world, practical, corporate reputation program planning experience

Course Notes

The course will be taught online. All class information, lecture slides, guest presentations and student generated content will be posted on Blackboard the day following class.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Weekly News Stories: Most weeks two students will be responsible for finding and sharing current news stories involving corporate communications and corporate reputation. These stories will be shared with students via email prior to each class and the students responsible for finding the stories will need to share the story and their thoughts and reactions to their classmates.

Case Study Reading and Discussion: Most weeks, students will be responsible for reading and discussing pre-determined case studies that will be selected from recent winners of the Arthur W. Page Society's Case Competition. The last half hour of each class session will be dedicated to discussing the assigned case, and two students will be identified to share detailed thoughts and reactions as applicable.

Individual Paper #1 – Taking a Stand on Social Issues: Today, more and more companies are expected to weigh in on a whole host of social issues, which is made much more difficult because of the extremely polarized world we live in. In your paper, take a position on whether companies should engage on political or social issues. If not, why not? If so, what factors should companies take into consideration in making the decision to engage? How does the decision to engage or not engage impact the overall reputation of the company? Use specific examples to support your position. The paper should be a maximum of 5 pages in length, double spaced.

Individual Paper #2 – Managing Reputation During a Crisis: Identify a Fortune 500 company that is prominently in the news – and is suffering from a major crisis – and analyze how it is proactively managing its corporate reputation through the crisis. Articulate what you believe the goals of the effort are and cite examples of how the company is pursuing such goals. Share your own assessment as to how effective you believe the effort is and how you believe the company could improve the outcome of its crisis response. The paper should be a maximum of 5 pages in length, double spaced.

Class Participation

Real time participation is an important component of this class. There are a variety of ways to participate, including asking/answering questions of the speakers, offering opinions on news stories and case discussions, and engaging in discussions with fellow students and the instructor. It is vitally important we respect other’s opinions even when they differ from our own.

Final Group Project: Near the beginning of the semester, the class will be divided into four teams with two teams assigned to one company and two to another that they will work with during the semester. Senior communications executives from these organizations will work with the class teams to develop a one-year corporate communications plan, based on needs and issues they are currently facing as outlined in their communications brief.

Each team will be responsible for preparing and presenting a corporate communications plan based on the Strategic Planning Model. Each team will be responsible for putting together a 60-minute oral presentation that will be delivered directly to the client, in class, near the end of the semester.

Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Case Study Presentation and Discussion	100	10%
Individual Paper #1: Taking a Stand on Social Issues	100	25%
Individual Paper #2: Managing Reputation During a Crisis	100	25%
Final Group Project	100	30%
Class Participation	100	10%
TOTAL	500	100%

b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
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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” 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.

d. Grading Timeline

Students will receive grades on assignments the week following their due date.

Assignment Submission Policy

- All assignments are due on the dates specified. You are expected to meet deadlines, just as you will in the world of work. 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.
- Assignments must be submitted via Blackboard and emailed to the instructor directly before the beginning of class when the assignment is due.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- Selected chapters in Corporate Communications, Paul A. Argenti
- Case studies as provided
- Students will be expected to read the business section of a major daily newspaper (e.g., LA Times, NY Times, Wall Street Journal), PRWeek and stay current with breaking general and business news having corporate and financial communications implications

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 Due This Week	Deliverables Due This Week
Week 1 Date: 1/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Review syllabus • Review semester clients, news stories and case studies • Definition of corporate communications as a management function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Chapter 3 in Corporate Communication, Paul A. Argenti: An Overview of the Corporate Communications Function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preview and select cases • Assign news stories
Week 2 Date: 1/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of reputation management • Role of the CCO 		

Week 3 Date: 1/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest lecturer: Jim Olson, CCO Avelo Airlines • Managing messages among myriad audiences: customers, employees, regulators, investors, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories • Posted Reading: Tips on working with a PR agency 	
Week 4 Date: 2/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest lecturer: Heather Wilson, Senior Consultant, Corporate Affairs, Big Valley Marketing • Paper #1 assigned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories • Read Chapter 9 in Argenti: Government Relations 	
Week 5 Date: 2/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest lecturer: The role of Government Affairs in Corp Comm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories • Case discussion: Government Relations – Apple 	
Week 6 Date: 2/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest lecturers: Client briefing #1 & #2 for final projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories • Strategic Planning Model • Read Chapter 7 in Argenti: Internal Communications 	Paper #1 due
Week 7 Date: 2/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest lecturer: Katie O’Neill, Executive Director, Corp Comm, WarnerMedia • Internal Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News Stories • Case discussion: Internal Communications – Google • Read Chapter 8 in Argenti: Investor Relations 	
Week 8 Date: 3/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest lecturer: Investor Relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation Tips • Case discussion: Investor Relations – Boingo 	
Week 9 Date: 3/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corp Comm Team: the company’s glue • Cross functioning teams • Serving as the trusted advisor to internal clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories • Read Trusted Advisor article posted on blackboard 	
March Recess 3/16 – No Class			
Week 10 Date: 3/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest lecturer • Paper #2 assigned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories • Case discussion: Corporate Reputation – J&J 	
Week 11 Date: 3/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest lecturer: Reputation Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories • Case discussion: Taking a Stand on Social Issues – NBA • Read Chapter 5 in Argenti: Corporate Responsibility 	
Week 12 Date: 4/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest lecturer: Corporate Social Responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories • Case discussion: CSR -- Unilever • Read Chapter 10 in Argenti: Crisis Communications 	Paper #2 due

Week 13 Date: 4/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest lecturer: Crisis Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories • Case discussion – United Airlines • Read Chapter 6 in Argenti: Media Relations 	
Week 14 Date: 4/20	Group presentations for client #1	Case discussion: Integrated Communications – General Motors	Presentation deck due
Week 15 Date: 4/27	Group presentations for client #2	Discussion: measuring success, managing expectations	Presentation deck due
Final Exam Period Date: 5/4, 7-9 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group presentation review • Client vs. agency 		

Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

Please be on time for all class sessions. Out of respect for our outside speakers, please limit the use of your laptop to provide your undivided attention to our guests who are willingly volunteering their time to share their experiences and lessons learned.

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

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/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.

XII. 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, reputation management, investor relations, content production, media relations, social media, B2B marketing and sales support, 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 public relations 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.