# **Informal_Annenberg_CardOnWhitePR 250 Strategic Public Relations: An Introduction**

**4 units**

**Spring 2023 – Mondays – 6:30-9:50 p.m.**

**Section:** 21087D

**Location:** ANN 308

## **Instructor: Stephany Villaseñor**

**Office:** ANN Lobby

**Office Hours:** Mondays, 5:30-6:30 p.m., OR by appointment

**Contact Info:** [rodasste@usc.edu](mailto:rodasste@usc.edu), 213-280-6438 (call/text)

## **Course Description**

This course will familiarize students with strategies and practices in the growing field of public relations/strategic communication through analysis of current events, landmark cases and practical implementation with special emphasis on historical roots, evolution, current and future practices. The practical implementation will include simulation activities where students are asked to operate in groups as agency and in-house communication teams through several simulation scenarios. As this course is the foundation of the public relations program, we will examine different types of PR and what a career in PR entails in various professional environments including corporate, non-profit, governmental and agency.

## **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? What tactics are considered good practice? How are the public relations and advertising fields different, or similar? Where might you fit in? How do you create content in a way that is intentional and inclusive?

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 skills. We will cover the basic process of public relations – research, planning, communication, evaluation – and the use of communications strategies to achieve organizational goals. And we will spend time talking about and brainstorming tactics on how to get your messaging out in the world.

Through informative lectures, engaging guest speakers, intriguing discussions, assigned reading, in-class exercises, and case study reviews, students will dive into the world of public relations and familiarize themselves with various industries and PR specialties.

Upon successful completion of PR 250, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a solid understanding of public relations as an industry including history, principles, and foundational practices.

2. Express a firm awareness of the various practices across public relations and be familiar with the diverse professional opportunities available through this dynamic field.

3. Construct a public relations campaign, from research to conceptualization to implementation.

4. Develop creative concepts and messaging targeted to a myriad of audiences.

5. Identify innovative technologies and leverage them to curate compelling content and messaging.

## **Course Notes**

The class is in-person and is lecture style and will feature guest speakers. Students are expected to participate and contribute their thoughts and insights. Blackboard is used for updates, turning in homework and assignments, and to check on grades. Students are expected to come to class prepared to participate in dialogue with classmates, ask engaging questions and foster a positive and fun learning environment.

***Student Expectations:***

* **Be present**. While laptops are allowed for class note-taking, students are expected to be fully present and free of other distractions (e.g. close out all tabs, stay off your cell phones).
* **Be respectful**. Remain attentive throughout class and listen when others are speaking including guest speakers, classmates, etc.
* **Be punctual**. Continual tardiness will impact your final grade.
* **Be honest**. Life circumstances will arise, but assignments are expected to be completed on time to be counted towards your final grade. If you need an extension *due to an emergency*, please connect with me.

# **Description and Assessment of Assignments**

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

* **Lecture/Discussion** – Students will be expected to participate and will be called on to contribute to class discussion.
* **Case Studies** – We will analyze award-winning and successful public relations campaigns in addition to current trends/topics.
* **Industry News/Updates** – Students are expected to stay on top of industry news on a weekly basis. Each week, two (2) students will be selected to present a current topic/campaign for the class to discuss.
* **Pop Quizzes and Midterm Exam** – Based on the textbook, class lectures, and other assigned readings.
* **Final Group Project/Presentation** – Development of a public relations campaign to be presented during the final class.

## **Grading**

### **a. Grading Breakdown**

Description of assessments and corresponding points and percentage of grade.

| Assessment Tool (assignments) | Points | % of Grade |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Participation / In-class engagement | 15 | 15% |
| Homework & In-class share or presenting (x 10) | 35 | 35% |
| Quizzes | 5 | 5% |
| Midterm Exam | 15 | 15% |
| Final Project/Presentation | 30 | 30% |
| **TOTAL** | **100** | **100%** |

### **b. Course Grading Scale**

Letter grades and corresponding point value ranges.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Letter grade and corresponding numerical point range** | | |
| 95% to 100%: A | 80% to 83%: B- (B minus) | 67% to 69%: D+ (D plus) |
| 90% to 94%: A- (A minus) | 77% to 79%: C+ (C plus) | 64% to 66%: D |
| 87% to 89%: B+ (B plus) | 74% to 76%: C | 60% to 63%: D- (D minus) |
| 84% to 86%: B | 70% to 73%: C- (C minus) | 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 will be updated and can be accessed through Blackboard.

## **Assignment Rubrics**

Rubrics for assignments will be provided in advance.

## **Assignment Submission Policy**

1. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated. Late assignments will receive an automatic deduction in points. Skipping an assignment altogether will result in an automatic fail for that assignment.

2. Assignments must be submitted via Blackboard, unless I have given you different instructions (e.g. via email).

## **Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

Introduction to Strategic Public Relations: Digital, Global, and Socially Responsible Communication, 2nd Edition

Authors: Janis Terrugi Page, Lawrence J. Parnell

Publisher:  Sage

In addition to the weekly textbook reading, students are expected to stay up-to-date with industry news through any of the following publications:

* prweek.com (Annenberg students receive a free subscription)
* publicrelationstoday.com
* prdaily.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**](http://www.annenbergdl.org/) for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, please visit USC’s [Information Technology Services](http://itservices.usc.edu/wireless/support/) website.

**Add/Drop Dates for Session 001**

**(15 weeks: 1/9/2023 – 4/28/2023; Final Exam Period: 5/3-10/2023)**

**Link:** [**https://classes.usc.edu/term-20231/calendar/**](https://classes.usc.edu/term-20231/calendar/)

**Last day to add:** Friday, January 27, 2023

**Last day to drop without a mark of "W" and receive a refund:** Friday, January 27, 2023

**Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit:** Saturday, January 28, 2023 [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, January 31, 2023

**Last day to withdraw without a “W” on transcript or change pass/no pass to letter grade:** Friday, February 24, 2023 [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 7, 2023

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**  
A weekly schedule of the topics, readings, and deliverables for the course.

***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**  **Monday, 1/9** | **Introductions & Class Expectations – Syllabus Review** | N/A |  |
| **Week 2**  **Monday, 1/16** | **MLK Day – NO CLASS** |  |  |
| **Week 3**  **Monday, 1/23** | **What is Public Relations?**   * Understanding the basic principles of PR * The history of PR and evolution throughout history * The functions of PR * The model of public relations | Preface, chapters 1  and 2 | Student presenter and class discussion on current event/PR campaign |
| **Week 4**  **Monday, 1/30** | **Why is research important in PR?**   * The role of research in PR * Common PR research methods * How theory applies to PR | Chapter 4 | Student presenter and class discussion on current event/PR campaign |
| **Week 5**  **Monday, 2/6** | **How do I launch a public relations campaign?**   * Identifying an issue/problem/need * Identifying key audiences * Conceptualizing, developing, and implementing a campaign | Chapters 5 & 6 | Student presenter and class discussion on current event/PR campaign |
| **Week 6**  **Monday, 2/13** | **What tools can I use to launch a PR campaign?**   * Examining different tools across various mediums: traditional media, digital, social, etc. | Chapters 7 & 8 | Student presenter and class discussion on current event/PR campaign |
| **Week 7**  **Monday, 2/20** | **President’s Day – NO CLASS** |  |  |
| **Week 8**  **Monday, 2/27** | **How do I know if my campaign was successful?**   * Understanding key metrics * Evaluating campaigns post-launch | Readings for this week will be posted on Blackboard. | Student presenter and class discussion on current event/PR campaign |
| **Week 9**  **Monday, 3/6** | **Opportunities in PR: Corporate Communications**   * Corporate Social Responsibility * Community Relations * Employee Communications * Investor Relations   *Guest Speaker* | Chapter 9 & 10 | Student presenter and class discussion on current event/PR campaign |
| **Spring Break**  **Dates: 3/13-3/17** | **Spring Break – NO CLASS** |  |  |
| **Week 10**  **Monday, 3/20** | **MIDTERM** | Study guide will be posted to Blackboard. |  |
| **Week 11**  **Monday, 3/27** | **Opportunities in PR Part II: Reputation & Issues Management, Crisis Communications**   * How to effectively manage corporate reputation * Preparing for a crisis * How to navigate crisis   *Guest Speaker* | Chapters 11 & 12 | Student presenter and class discussion on current event/PR campaign |
| **Week 12**  **Monday, 4/3** | **Opportunities in PR Part III:**   * Sports * Tourism * Entertainment   *Guest Speaker* | Chapter 13 | Student presenter and class discussion on current event/PR campaign |
| **Week 13**  **Monday, 4/10** | **Opportunities in PR Part IV:**   * Nonprofit * Health * Education * NGOs   *Guest Speaker* | Chapter 14 | Student presenter and class discussion on current event/PR campaign |
| **Week 14**  **Monday, 4/17** | **Opportunities in PR Part V:**   * Public Affairs * Government Relations * Political Communications   **Ethics & Law in PR**  *Guest Speaker* | Chapters 15 & 3 | Student presenter and class discussion on current event/PR campaign |
| **Week 15**  **Monday, 4/24** | **PR and the Future of Communications**  **How to stand out in the PR job market** | The Relevance Report | **Course Evaluations**  Student presenter and class discussion on current event/PR campaign |
| **FINAL EXAM PERIOD**  **Monday, 5/8**  **7-9 p.m.** | **Final Group Project Presentation and Paper** |  | In-class presentation and paper are due at the start of final class session. |

# **Policies and Procedures**

## **Additional Policies**

Students are expected to come to class prepared and having completed all designated reading and homework assignments. As this is an introductory class, students are encouraged to ask questions and be unafraid to engage in dialogue with classmates, guest speakers, and your professor.

## **Communication**

I am here to serve as resource with the course and as you explore the dynamic field of PR and communications. If you are unable to attend office hours, feel free to connect with me via email at [rodasste@usc.edu](mailto:rodasste@usc.edu) OR call/text me at 213-280-6438. You can expect a response within 24-48 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 by unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism or public relations class.

## **Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

### **Academic Conduct**

The USC Student Handbook (https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/USC\_StudentCode\_August2022.pdf)

### **Academic Integrity**

USC’s Unifying Value of integrity is a foundational principle that inspires the community to match its values to its actions. Academic integrity is ultimately the sole guarantor of the legitimacy of one’s education, and therefore, is vitally important not just for oneself, but for the entire USC community. The value of all USC degrees is negatively impacted by violations of academic integrity. In the classroom, general principles of academic integrity include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles.

Academic Integrity violations (academic dishonesty) include, but are not limited to:

Plagiarism and Cheating

• The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student’s own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.

• Re-using any portion of one’s own work (essay, term paper, project, or other assignment) previously submitted without citation of such and without permission of the instructor(s) involved.

• Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers, including drafts. Also, all students involved in collaborative work (as permitted by the instructor) are expected to proofread the work and are responsible for all particulars of the final draft.

• Acquisition of academic work, such as term papers, solutions, or other assignments, from any source and the subsequent presentation of those materials as the student’s own work, or providing academic work, such as term papers, solutions, or assignments that another student submits as their own work.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

<https://catalogue.usc.edu/preview_entity.php?catoid=16&ent_oid=3459>

“Since its founding, the 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.”

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.

## **Students and Disability Accommodations:**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](http://osas.usc.edu/). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

## **Support Systems:**

[*Counseling and Mental Health*](http://sites.google.com/usc.edu/counseling-mental-health) *- (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[*988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline*](http://988lifeline.org/) *- 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call*

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)*](http://sites.google.com/usc.edu/rsvpclientservices/home) *- (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[*Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX)*](http://eeotix.usc.edu/) *- (213) 740-5086*

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.

[*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment*](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report) *- (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[*The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS)*](http://osas.usc.edu/) *- (213) 740-0776*

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[*USC Campus Support and Intervention*](http://campussupport.usc.edu/) *- (213) 740-0411*

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[*Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*](http://diversity.usc.edu/) *- (213) 740-2101*

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*](https://emergency.usc.edu/) *- UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

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*](https://dps.usc.edu/) *- UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call*

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[*Office of the Ombuds*](http://ombuds.usc.edu/) *- (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[*Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice*](http://chan.usc.edu/patient-care/faculty-practice) *- (323) 442-2850 or*[otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

​Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

*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.

*Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund*

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students’ continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

# **About Your Instructor**

Stephany Villaseñor is Sr. Manager of Marketing & Communications of Corporate Social Responsibility at The Wonderful Company. Over the course of the past eight years, she has had the opportunity to explore a range of professional opportunities across public relations and communications including corporate, non-profit, agency, and governmental roles.

She started her career in communications at Initiative a media planning/buying agency supporting corporate clients like Hyundai/Kia and Carl’s Jr. She has worked in-house supporting global communications efforts and employee communications at Herbalife Nutrition and transitioned to non-profit communications at the National Health Foundation (NHF) where she served as a one-person comms shop elevating NHF’s role as a leader in addressing social inequities. She transitioned to a role in government communications serving as the Communications Deputy for LA County Board Supervisor Hilda L. Solis during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic prior to her latest role at The Wonderful Company.

In her spare time, Stephany is an avid moviegoer (yes, this means watching a film at a theater!).

Stephany holds an M.A. in Strategic Public Relations from USC Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism (’18), and a B.A. in Media Studies from UC Berkeley (’14).