

PR 250 Strategic Public Relations and Advertising: An Introduction **4 Units**

Spring 2025 – Tuesdays – 6-9:20 p.m.

Section: 21088D

Location: ASC 228

Instructor: Dale Legaspi

Office: Classroom or ASC Lobby

Office Hours: One hour before class begins or by appointment

Contact Info: legaspi@usc.edu; mobile: (650) 931-7762;
Skype: dale.legaspi

Course Description

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

Student Learning Outcomes

This course will introduce you to the public relations profession: defining it, identifying the disciplines that comprise it and developing the skills necessary to succeed in it. This class will help you determine where you might fit in this constantly expanding field and introduce the fundamentals necessary to break into it. While it is not a comprehensive list, some themes we will explore are: in-house vs. agency, corporate vs. consumer, external vs. internal, domestic vs. international, segmenting by vertical market/industry, purpose-driven, non-profit, etc.

Public relations means different things to different people, and it means different things today than it did five or 10 years ago (and than it will in five or 10 years). We will define what it means to be a public relations professional today, explore how to learn the craft, develop your skill set and look forward toward the future of the field. The entire course will be steeped in the basic process of public relations—research, planning, communication, evaluation—and the use of communications strategies to achieve organizational goals.

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

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

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

Course Notes

The class is in-person lecture style. Students are required to attend class, be on time and contribute their thoughts

and insights—**all of this will factor into the participation grade**. Brightspace will be used for updates, turning in homework and assignments, and taking quizzes and exams.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

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

- Discussion: Topics will generally cover relevant news and industry topics. **Everyone must participate**. I will ask you to share your thoughts.
- Industry news/updates: You must stay informed of current topics in the public relations industry. **You are required to read PR industry news and be prepared each week to discuss something interesting you found**. Be prepared, as I may randomly select 2-3 students to share news items each week. *Note: Lively discussions are always interesting and welcome, but we will all be required to maintain professional decorum and keep any debates respectful.*
- Case studies: We will study real-life case studies to understand what the best PR programs entail. **Participation during case study reviews also counts toward your participation grade.**
- Quizzes: These will come at my discretion and be based on assigned readings and class lectures.
- Final group project/presentation: In small groups, you will develop a public relations campaign to be presented during the final class period.

Assignments will be turned in on Brightspace and are due regardless of whether you are in class. In the event of an illness, holiday or other event that requires you to miss class, you must contact me as far ahead of time as possible to request an exception to a deadline.

Grading

a. Grading Breakdown

Description of assessments and corresponding points and percentage of grade.

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
Homework/Assignments	50	10%
Participation	75	15%
Quizzes/Simulation Exercises	100	20%
Midterm	125	25%
Final Project	150	30%
TOTAL	500	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

Public Relations

“A” projects have near professional production quality; one or no mistakes; clearly error-checked and edited material. All required elements included (varied vocabulary; supporting facts/figures/graphics/videos/audio segments; quotes as required). Excellent organization and flow; original thinking. Showed creativity in packaging/distribution method. High end of scale: publishable today as is; client-ready

“B” projects have two to five spelling, grammar mistakes. One or more required elements missing or poorly displayed (i.e., poorly illustrated graphic, confusing chart, misleading language, etc.). Shows potential as a good content producer. All elements are well organized. High end of scale will have at least one extraordinary element such as astonishing lead or little-known facts or stunning graphic element. Some creativity shown. Publishable with medium editing; nearly client-ready

“C” projects have more than five errors (spelling, grammar). Poor production quality, poorly edited and/or proofread. Confusing or uninteresting content. Little or no facts/figures included. Passive rather than active verbs become the norm. Little or no creativity shown. Publishable with major editing; not client-ready

“D” projects have more than ten errors (spelling, grammar). Needs to be completely rewritten/reproduced. Poorly organized with little or no understanding of public relations and advertising standards. Needs to work with an official writing coach.

“F” projects are not rewritable/reproducible, are late or not turned in. material show no understanding of PR/advertising approaches or standards. A grade of F also will be assigned for any submitted work that is found to be plagiarized, fabricated and/or uses AI tools in unattributed ways.

d. Grading Timeline

Assignments, quizzes and the midterm will be graded within a week of their due dates. Grades are updated and tracked in Brightspace.

Assignment Submission Policy

1. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated. I will accept early assignments, but I will not accept late assignments. Late assignments will automatically be given a grade of 0/F.
2. Assignments must be submitted via Brightspace unless I have given you different instructions.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Required textbook: *Introduction to Public Relations: Strategic, Digital, and Socially Responsible Communication* Janis Teruggi Page & Lawrence Parnell; Second Edition (October 2020)

In addition to the required textbook, you must keep up with current events. Please browse one or more of the following online publications.

- One major national news source (NYT, WSJ, etc.) Note: Your selection here can reflect your specific interest in the public relations field.
- One major international news source (Reuters, AP, etc.)
- prweek.com (Annenberg students receive a free subscription)
- publicrelationstoday.com
- prnewsonline.com
- prdaily.com
- odywerpr.com
- adweek.com

It is also highly recommended (though not required) that you invest in an AP Stylebook—either the print version or the online version.

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: 1/13/2025 – 5/2/2025; Final Exam Period: 5/7-14/2025)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20251/registration-calendar/>

Last day to add: Friday, January 31, 2025

Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W,” except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund: Friday, January 31, 2025

Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit: Friday, January 31, 2025 [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 4, 2025

Last day to withdraw without a “W” on transcript or change pass/no pass to letter grade: Friday, February 28, 2025 [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 11, 2025

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.

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.

Week/ Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 Date: 1/14	PR 250 Overview and Self Eval <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Syllabus review and course overview • Personality 		PR/industry news discussion
Week 2 Date: 1/21	Origins of PR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Public Relations, actually? • When/Where did it start? How has it evolved into a strategic function? • What is the model of public relations? 	Preface, chapters 1 and 2	PR/industry news discussion Assignment 1
Week 3 Date: 1/28	The Public Relations Process: Beginning with Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is research so important? How is it done? How do you use it? • What are common PR research methods? 	Chapter 4	PR/industry news discussion

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of strategy? 		
Week 4 Date: 2/4	The Public Relations Process: Planning, Objectives and Tactics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning: How do you develop a PR/communications plan? What is its importance? • What is the role of strategy in developing a plan? • How do you establish objectives and then put the plan into action? • How do you ensure that strategy informs your tactics? 	Chapter 5	PR/industry news discussion Assignment 2
Week 5 Date: 2/11	The Public Relations Process: Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know if you've met your PR objectives? • What are the common methods of PR evaluation? 	Muck Rack Article Forbes Article	PR/industry news discussion Assignment 3
Week 6 Date: 2/18	Reaching Audiences through Mass Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What collateral materials do PR professionals use? How do we use them? • How do you define mass media? What does it entail? • What is the PESO model? 	Chapters 6, 7, and 8 Spin Sucks blog	PR/industry news discussion
Week 7 Date: 2/25	Pre-Midterm Review Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midterm overview: format • Midterm overview: content • Open Q&A • Group study session 		PR/industry news discussion Assignment 4
Week 8 Date: 3/4	MIDTERM		PR/industry news discussion
Week 9 Date: 3/11	The Road: Behind & Ahead <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midterm review • Mid-term review • Discuss final group project Meeting and Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of meetings and events in effective PR campaigns? • What are the types of events, concepts of event planning and best practices? 		PR/industry news discussion
Spring Break Date: 3/18	No Class		PR/industry news discussion

Week 10 Date: 3/25	Public Opinion/Persuasion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why does public opinion matter? • What are the best practices to help tell our story and persuade audiences? • What are the ethical implications of persuading the public? 		PR/industry news discussion Spring Career Fair 3/26
Week 11 Date: 4/1	Corporate Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSR, DE&I...why so many acronyms? And what do they all mean? • What are the roles of community relations, reputation management, employee communications and investor relations? 	Chapters 10 and 11	PR/industry news discussion
Week 12 Date: 4/8	Ethics, Issues Management and Crisis Comms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does PR work when the lines between law and ethics become blurry? • What are conflicts and crisis situations? • How do you apply the conflict management lifecycle? • What are the strategies and best practices for dealing with issues, risks and crises? • How do you restore corporate reputation in the wake of a crisis? 	Chapters 3 and 12 Ethics in Public Relations Handout	PR/industry news discussion
Week 13 Date: 4/15	The Future of PR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do PR executives, professionals, scholars and students foresee in the PR industry in the future? 		PR/industry news discussion Assignment 5
Week 14 Date: 4/22	Final Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open working session and “office hours” 		PR/industry news discussion Assignment 6
Week 15 Date: 4/29	Final Class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course evaluations • Final project presentations 		
Final Exam Period Date: 5/13, 7-9 p.m.	FINAL DELIVERABLES DUE Summative experience		

Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

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

Communication

Email me at legaspi@usc.edu. *If it's urgent (and only if it's urgent)*, please text/call me at (650) 931-7762 and email me at dale.legaspi@zenogroup.com. Please let me know at least a day in advance if you want to meet in person.

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.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation, is prohibited. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

The USC Student Handbook (<https://policy.usc.edu/studenthandbook/>)

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

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.

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

- The submission of material authored by another person or entity (such as an AI tool – see below) 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, articles 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, articles or assignments that another student submits as their own work.

Generative AI Policy

The USC Annenberg Public Relations and Advertising program views generative AI as an addition to USC's digital literacy tools that students are encouraged to experiment with and use inside and outside the classroom. Students may use generative AI tools such as Chat GPT to help complete their class assignments but must disclose such use in the bibliography or notes section. Students are solely responsible for the quality and the accuracy of their submissions, regardless of whether they were completed with the aid of generative AI.

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. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the Financial Aid Office webpage for undergraduate- and graduate-level

SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

Support Systems:

USC Annenberg has an embedded student health counselor, Dr. Kelly Greco. Dr. Greco helps students prioritize their mental health and emotional well-being. In this video, she shares a few tips for how to "Fight On" every day. Students may schedule sessions with her through MySHR or by calling (213) 740-9355 (WELL). USC Student Health services are also available to support student's mental health journey by visiting: <https://sites.usc.edu/counselingandmentalhealth/>

Counseling and 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 - 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 consists 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) - (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) - (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 - (213) 740-2500

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) - (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 - (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 - (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 - 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 - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (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 - (323) 442-2850 or 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

Dale Legaspi is a two-time Annenberg graduate with more than 15 years of experience in public relations/strategic communications for various B2B companies—primarily in tech. He is currently a senior account supervisor at Zeno Group, where he leads multiple client teams across the agency's corporate, tech and healthcare practices. His previous position was in house at a tech company, where he drove communication strategy, working directly with the C-Suite to execute their vision for a repositioning. His previous roles included a stint as an independent consultant and stops at small and mid-sized agencies, where he represented startup and emerging tech companies. He spearheaded delivery of creative programs that raised company profiles, preparing clients for multi-million dollar exit events and launching a startup from stealth mode.

He graduated from USC Annenberg with a BA in public relations in 2005 before returning to complete his MA in 2016. He began teaching in 2022.