

Comm 325: Public Relations Seminar
Dr. Marlene G. Fine
Spring 2011

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Office hours: Wed & Fri, 11 am-12 pm; Wed 5:30-6:30; and by arrangement

Required Text

Swann, P. (2010). *Cases in public relations management*. New York: Routledge.

Course Description

James Grunig and Todd Hunt define public relations as “the management of communication between an organization and its publics.” Comm 325 focuses on the strategic choices organizations (profit, non-profit, government) and individuals make in managing their communication with their publics. We will use case analysis as our primary method of learning

In addition, we will be participating in the Wikipedia Public Policy Initiative. That means that each student will be responsible for researching, writing, and editing material that will appear on Wikipedia. The material will be related to the course content but will focus on public policy aspects of the issues. For example, students might research and write about product recalls, an event that has serious implications for the brand image of an organization. The Wikipedia work might focus on government regulations on risk communication about product recalls while our class discussions will focus more on how product recalls affect brand image and/or how government regulations regarding risk communication affect public relations messages about product recalls. The Wikipedia work will be assigned in class. Researching, writing, and editing for Wikipedia will give you an opportunity both to develop some of the skills needed to write for the web and to participate in a “real world” project.

Attendance, reading, and participation

This course is interactive and depends on your participation. I expect you to come to class having read and prepared the assigned cases (you should bring your case notes to class with you), and ready to answer questions about the material in class. Your notes and participation will be graded. In addition to the assigned cases, I hope you will bring relevant news items to class for discussion. All absences must be cleared with the instructor. Three absences will lower your grade by half a letter grade; four absences will lower your grade by a full letter grade; etc. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to

contact other class members to find out what you missed. Work missed during an unexcused absence will receive an “F”; work missed during an excused absence must be completed by the next class session.

Professional Conduct

You are preparing to enter the professional world, so I expect you to conduct yourself as a professional. Professionals attend class and arrive on time, participate in class discussions, read the assigned materials, type their assignments (including case notes), and have them ready to turn in (printed and stapled) at the beginning of class on the date they are due. Professionals do not wander in and out of class; answer their cell phones, send or read text messages, or surf the internet during class (unless doing so is part of the class work for that day); or have private conversations with other students during class. You would not do these things during a meeting with a client, so I expect that you will not do them during class. Also, public relations professionals are expected to meet deadlines and turn in high quality work that is free of errors. Clients do not want to know the technical problems that you had producing their work; they expect you to turn in the work on-time regardless. And they expect that you have edited and proofread your work before you give it to them. I have the same expectations. Your Wikipedia writing will be reviewed by external editors and read by Wikipedia users. They, too, will have the same expectations.

Assignments

The course assignments include case notes, 1 case presentation (including responsibility for leading the class discussion of the case), and a major group project in which you describe, analyze, and evaluate a current public relations response (e.g., BP’s handling of the Gulf oil well leak). In addition, you will have assignments that are part of our work with Wikipedia; those assignments will culminate in a polished article that will be posted on Wikipedia. All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, with 12 point font and 1 inch margins. Written assignments must be free from mechanical errors (spelling, grammar, and punctuation). Assignments that do not meet these requirements will be returned ungraded. **All assignments, both oral and written, must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course.**

Grades

Final grades will be based on the following factors:

Wikipedia project	30%
Group pr project	30%
Case notes and participation	30%
Case presentation	10%

Class Schedule

- January 19 Introduction of course and Wikipedia projects
Definition and role of public relations
Reading: Swann, chapter 1
- January 21 Developing a public relations strategy
Reading: Swann, chapter 2
- January 26 Campus Ambassadors introduce Wikipedia
Readings:
 “Welcome to Wikipedia” brochure
 “Wikipedia: Five pillars” on Wikipedia
Assignments (due Feb. 2):
 Create Wikipedia user account, user page, and add your name to course page list of students
 Contact Online Ambassador as mentor
 Practice editing features of Wikipedia by leaving message for classmates on user talk pages
- January 28 The case method: How to prepare a case
Reading: Swann, chapter 3
- February 2 Campus Ambassadors introduce online chat system
Assignments (due Feb 9):
 Critically evaluate an existing Wikipedia article and leave suggestions for improving it on article’s discussion page
 Research and list 3-5 articles on your Wikipedia user page that you will consider working on as your Wikipedia project; ask your Online Ambassador mentor for comments
- February 4 Ethics
Reading: Swann, chapter 4, pp. 40-47
Case: City Utility or Cash Cow, pp. 49-58; prepare questions #1-5, p. 56 and #4, p. 57
- February 9 Ethics
Case: City Utility or Cash Cow, continued
- February 11 Media relations
Reading: Swann, chapter 5, pp.78-82
Case: Break the Silence—Make the Call, pp. 90-96; prepare questions #1-9, p. 95

- February 16 Referencing on Wikipedia
Reading: “Referencing on Wikipedia”
Assignments (due Feb 23):
- Choose article you will work on and list it on the course page
 - Compile bibliography of relevant sources
- February 18 Media relations
Case: The “4Cs” of a Great Picture, pp. 107-110; prepare questions #1-9, p. 110; also answer research questions #1 and 2, p. 110, and be prepared to present your spokesperson and defend your choice
- February 23 Wikipedia sandboxes and Wikipedia culture/etiquette; Q & A with Campus Ambassadors
Assignments (due Mar 2):
- Write a 3-4 paragraph summary of your article (with citations) in your Wikipedia sandbox
 - Begin working with your mentor to polish starter article and fix major transgressions of Wikipedia norms
 - Continue research for expanding your article
- February 25 Consumer relations
Reading: Swann, chapter 7, pp. 152-155
Case: Mashing the Low-Carbohydrate Craze, pp. 156-160; prepare questions #1-6, p. 160
- March 2 Wikipedia work
Readings (in class handouts):
- “Moving article from sandbox into main space”
 - “Did you know nominations”
- Assignments (due Mar 16):
- Move your sandbox article into Wikipedia’s main space
 - Nominate your article for “Did You Know” status
 - Monitor the nomination for issues identified by editors
 - Begin expanding article into comprehensive treatment of topic
- March 4 Sports, entertainment, and travel
Reading: Swann, pp. 181-184
Case: Queen of Talk Walks the Talk, pp. 185-188; prepare questions #1-6, pp. 187-88 and prepare ideas for open scenario challenge, p. 187

March 9	Spring Break—NO CLASS
March 11	Spring Break—NO CLASS
March 16	Wikipedia workshop on article ratings and adding images (place TBA) <u>Assignment</u> (due Mar 30): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Draft comprehensive treatment of your topic
March 18	Community relations <u>Reading</u> : Swann, chapter 9, pp.206-210 <u>Case</u> : “It’s the Real Thing”—Protest at the Jewish Museum, pp. 211-216; prepare questions #1-9, pp. 215-216
March 23	Wikipedia work
March 25	Employee relations <u>Reading</u> : Swann, chapter 10, pp. 234-238 <u>Case</u> : Sago Mine Tragedy, pp. 238-242; prepare questions #1-7, p. 242
March 30	Wikipedia work <u>Assignment</u> (due April 6): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peer review two (2) classmates’ articles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leave suggestions and comments on their discussion pages ○ Copy-edit their articles
April 1	Employee relations <u>Case</u> : Communicating Organizational Growth: General Motors’ Strategic Integration of Internal-External Communications, pp. 247-253; prepare questions #1-9, p. 252
April 6	Wikipedia discussion of neutrality, media literacy, and impact and limits of Wikipedia <u>Assignments</u> (due April 13): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revise your article based on peer feedback <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nominate your article for “Good Article” status <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prepare in-class presentation on your Wikipedia-editing experiences
April 8	Government relations <u>Reading</u> : Swann, chapter 11, pp. 256-260 <u>Case</u> : Abu Ghraib: Part 1, pp. 268-275; prepare questions #1-7, p. 275

April 13	<p>Wikipedia student presentations</p> <p><u>Assignments</u> (due May 6):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Add final touches to your Wikipedia article <input type="checkbox"/> Write a reflective essay on your Wikipedia contribution and editing experiences
April 15	<p>International public relations</p> <p><u>Reading</u>: Swann, chapter 12, pp. 289-292</p> <p><u>Case</u>: Shark Fin Soup: Hong Kong Disneyland Seeks Cultural and Environmental Balance, pp. 295-298; prepare questions #1-6, p. 298</p>
April 20	NO CLASS
April 22	NO CLASS
April 27	Wikipedia work
April 29	<p>Financial relations</p> <p><u>Reading</u>: Swann, chapter 13, pp. 307-314</p> <p><u>Case</u>: From Humble Beginnings: The World-Class Story of Teva Pharmaceutical Industries, Ltd., pp. 315-317</p>
May 4	Group public relations project presentations
May 6	Group public relations project presentations

It is the policy of Simmons College to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodations in this class, please talk with me.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change by the instructor.