

SYLLABUS, MCM 381, Principles of Public Relations  
Dr. Bridges, Summer I, 2008

**Office:** 329 Dan Rather Building, 294-3651  
[jabridges@shsu.edu](mailto:jabridges@shsu.edu)

Office Hours: 2-3:30 M-Th and by appointment

**Text:** Lattimore, Dan; Baskin, Otis; Heiman, Suzette T.; Toth, Elizabeth L.; Van Leuven, James K. *Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice*. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2004.

**Catalog Description:** This course will examine the principles of public relations, advertising, sales promotions, direct marketing and on-line communication with emphasis on the way organizations promote their products and images to their publics. The traits of leadership, crisis management and ethics will be explored.

**Prerequisites:** Sophomore standing.

Principles of Public Relations will be taught by a combination of lecture, class discussion, and problem solving. The course is designed to provide you with a foundation of the major academic issues in public relations, the thought (or problem-solving) processes in analyzing/resolving public relations problems, and practice in applying these issues and processes to practical public relations situations.

After completing this course, you should be able to understand and APPLY:

1. the four historical phases in the development of public relations
2. theories underlying the practice of public relations
3. the legal and ethical environment of public relations
4. the role of research in the public relations process
5. the role of planning in the public relations process
6. the choices of program action and communication in the public relations process
7. the role of evaluation in the public relations process
8. five of the major publics in public relations: media, employees, the geographic community, consumers, and the financial community
9. the three settings for public relations: public affairs, nonprofit organizations,

corporate organizations

10. the trends in public relations: technology and global settings

You will be assigned two major written assignments – others may be assigned in class. When an outside assignment requires written material, that material must be typed, double-spaced, on **one** side of the paper. Hand-written assignments will not be accepted.

**ATTENDANCE** -- see **Attendance Policy (below)**: You are expected to be present, to have completed the readings and to contribute during class discussion. You are responsible for any and all assignments made in class. Missing an announcement is not considered an excuse to make up an assignment.

**IMPORTANT**: No make-up tests or assignments will be permitted except for **unforeseen, documented** excuses approved by the instructor. A doctor's appointment at class time is not an acceptable excuse if your absence is not required for the entire day.

Students who anticipate extensive absences because of university-sanctioned activities will be assisted in making up work but might wish to consider taking the course at a less congested time in their programs.

1. **Make-up quizzes**: You can expect a quiz to cover the readings assigned. Because quizzes are over material that has not been discussed in class, **no make-up quizzes are given**. For a university-sanctioned absence, you may take a quiz early.
2. **Late assignments** lose 10 percent per day.
3. **Beepers and cell phones**, including the **text function**, must be turned off during class.
4. You may not read other material/newspapers/magazines and/or work on material for other classes during this class.

Your understanding of the material will be assessed by a midterm, a final, an interview report, and one paper/presentation. Tests will be primarily objective and short answer. One essay may be included.

The interview report will be individual work. The paper/presentation will be a group effort. The individual report will be an interview with a public relations professional. The group paper will be a case analysis of an organization either discussed as a case in your text or assigned. Your group will present the case in class.

**Grades** will be based on the percentage of 1000 points (90%+, or 900+ points, = an A; 80% to 89.99%, or 800-899 points, = a B, etc). Points will be assigned as follows:

Midterm	200 points
Final	200 points
Interview paper	100 points (due June 11)
Case Paper	200 points (written, due June 27)
	100 points (presentation, June 30)

Daily Grades/Quizzes 100 points\*  
Class participation 100 points (see attendance policy, below)\*\*

\*14 quizzes are assigned; the highest 10 quiz grades will be counted. Therefore, we drop four (4) quiz grades without penalty.

\*\*Class participation is based primarily on attendance. (see below).

If additional points are assigned during the term, they will be added to the existing total; your grade will still be based on the percentage of 1000 points.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** Cheating in any form is academic dishonesty that can result in an F for the assignment and possibly the course. However, two particular forms of academic dishonesty need to be identified here.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarized papers will not be accepted. Plagiarism occurs when one person claims credit for another person's work. It is a form of intellectual dishonesty that is treated with great severity by professionals and by the university. **NOTE:** the university subscribes to TURNITIN and I use this program.

Be certain you understand the meaning of plagiarism: a paper using quotes without quotation marks and attribution is plagiarized. But plagiarism is more than unrecognized quotes. Conclusions that are not yours originally, information that is not common knowledge, and specific facts must be attributed: tell who said it and cite or footnote it, even if this information is not a direct quote.

Although quoted material is not plagiarized, a paper made up of a series of quotations is not a paper written by you. Use quotes sparingly and for specific reasons, such as providing evidence to support a point. Not understanding the material is not an acceptable reason for using a quotation.

**IMPORTANT:** You must also learn how to cite an author or work used/quoted by a second author.

**Double Dipping:** Double dipping is a form of academic dishonesty that is a misuse of your OWN work and occurs when one paper or assignment is presented to fulfill requirements for another course. This does NOT mean you cannot do additional work on a topic that interests you, but you must be certain you are developing new and original material for each class assignment. Check with your instructor to be certain [fyi, TURNITIN keeps a record of the papers it analyzes].

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:** Students are allowed no more than five Q-drops during their academic career at Sam Houston State University. Classes that are dropped prior to the Q-drop date will not count toward the limit. Students who have used their limit of five Q-drops will need to petition their respective dean to drop a class. If the dean refuses to grant permission to drop the class, the student will be required to remain in the class.

The Q-drop limit took effect with the start of the fall 2004 semester. Any drops accumulated prior to the fall 2004 semester are not included in the five Q-drop limit. Neither are Q-drops from other universities.

NOTE: A Q-drop is a drop made after the last day for tuition refunds (12th class day for fall/spring; 4th class day for summer) but before the date for which a drop would result in the grade of 'F' - as published in the university Academic Calendar.

## READINGS

**READING ASSIGNMENTS** are scheduled for the **day** specified. These dates are the **earliest** you can expect to be responsible for the material. Because cases that supplement the readings and guest speakers sometimes require more time than scheduled, changes may be made in the reading schedule as the need arises.

This is a summer term and the course will move fast -- you need to read and be ready for class. You are expected to purchase the assigned textbook and bring it to class.

### WEEK 1

#### June 3 - **INTRODUCTION**

Ch. 1: The Nature of Public Relations, and pp. 52-53 (roles) in Chapter 3.

#### June 4 - **HISTORY**

Ch. 2: The History of Public Relations, and pp. 53-55 (models) in Chapter 3;  
Quiz 1. [Note: Quiz 1 will include the roles discussed on June 3.]

Understand the four traditions of public relations -- connect to the four models -- and know the major figures connected with each.

**The next three readings focus on settings for public relations practitioners: corporate, nonprofit and public affairs.**

#### June 5 - **CORPORATE PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Ch. 16: Corporate Public Relations, Quiz 2.

We will also discuss your professional interview assignment. Bring your syllabus - it includes directions for the interview.

June 6 - **NONPROFITS**

Ch. 15: Public Relations in Nonprofit Organizations, Quiz 3.

WEEK 2

June 9 - **PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

Ch. 14: Public Affairs: Relations with Government, Quiz 4.

**The next five readings focus on five types of publics associated with public relations. These publics may be part of any or all of the three settings discussed above.**

June 10 - **PUBLICS: MEDIA RELATIONS**

Ch. 9: Media Relations, Quiz 5.

June 11 - **PUBLICS: EMPLOYEES**

Ch. 10: Employee Communication, Quiz 6.

**Written interviews** are due at class time.

June 12 - **PUBLICS: COMMUNITIES**

Ch. 11: Community Relations, Quiz 7.

June 13        **Midterm**

WEEK 3

June 16 - **PUBLICS: CONSUMERS**

Ch. 12: Consumer Relations and Marketing, Quiz 8.

June 17 - **PUBLICS: FINANCIAL**

Ch. 13: Financial Relations, Quiz 9.

June 18 - Cases will be assigned. Library visit for cases.

**The next three sets of readings discuss the four steps in the public relations process.**

June 19 - **THE PROCESS: RESEARCH**

Ch. 5: Research: Understanding Public Opinion, Quiz 10.

June 20 - Work Day for Case Paper. Attendance will be taken.

#### WEEK 4

June 23 - **THE PROCESS: PLANNING** and begin **THE PROCESS: ACTION**  
Ch. 6: Strategic Planning for Public Relations Effectiveness, and Chapter 7,  
Action and Communication, Quiz 11.

June 24 - [Finish ACTION] and **THE PROCESS: EVALUATION**  
Ch. 8: Evaluating Public Relations Effectiveness, Quiz 12.

**The next two readings cover the legal issues that govern and the theories that support the activities in public relations.**

June 25 - **LEGAL ISSUES**  
Ch. 4: Law and Ethics, Quiz 13.

June 26 - **THEORY, part I**  
Ch. 3: A Theoretical Basis for Public Relations, Quiz 14.

June 27 - **THEORY, part II**

**Written Papers due at class time.**

#### WEEK 5

June 30 - Paper Presentations (If you need special equipment, I need to know.)

July 1 - Final Examination

#### **ATTENDANCE POLICY: DR. BRIDGES**

You are expected to attend class, to have completed the readings, and to participate in class discussions. 100 points are built into the course for class attendance or “participation.” Each student is permitted two (2) unexcused absences. Each additional, unexcused absence will result in ten (10) points deducted from the 100-point participation grade. If you come to class after the roll has been taken, you will be counted absent. If you choose to leave class after the role has been taken or after a quiz, a second roll will

be taken before the class ends. You must be on both rolls to be counted present.

Unless you added the class late, your attendance is counted from the first day of class. Therefore, if you were on the original class roll and you were not in class on June 3, you have used one of your free absences.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES REGARDING ACADEMIC CLASSES

The university has policies that apply to all students within the classroom. A brief summary of each of these policies is below. Detailed information may be found at <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

1. Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences, both in and out of the classroom. [Also see my statement on academic dishonesty in this syllabus.] The University subscribes to – and I use -- **Turnitin**, the worldwide standard in online plagiarism prevention.
2. Students with Disabilities: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs, nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center.
3. Observance of Religious Holy Days: Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work.
4. Visitors in the Classroom: Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.
5. Classroom Decorum [Classroom Rules of Conduct]: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. Students are to turn off all cell phones while in the classroom. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination. Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

## NOTES ON INTERVIEWING A PROFESSIONAL

IMPORTANT: YOU MAY **NOT** INTERVIEW ANYONE (1) WHO WORKS FOR THIS UNIVERSITY, (2) WHO IS A STUDENT -- FULL OR PART TIME, (3) WHO GRADUATED FROM THIS UNIVERSITY LESS THAN 6 YEARS AGO, OR (4) WHO IS A RELATIVE.

YOU *MUST* GET PERMISSION FOR YOUR INTERVIEW -- PERMISSION WILL BE BASED ON THE PERSON'S JOB. ONLY ONE STUDENT MAY INTERVIEW THE SAME PERSON. FIRST TO ASK RECEIVES PERMISSION.

**APPLY FOR PERMISSION IN WRITING – tell me who and why  
(no permission = -30)**

Your interview report should run about four pages, double spaced, Times 12-point type. In order to receive credit, you must include the interviewee's business card with a telephone number and a signature verifying that you conducted the interview. If you are interviewing someone too far away to meet face-to-face, ask the person to send an e-mail showing his or her title and e-mail address and verifying that you talked with him/her. No documentation = no credit.

Your report should start by describing your interviewee's job but should primarily focus on what this person can tell you about (1) practicing public relations, (2) preparing for a career in public relations, and (3) preparation to move ahead in the field. Your paper will be better if you read about the interviewee's field to prepare for the interview. Your paper must be a narrative -- do not turn in a question/answer type format.

You will want to select a public relations professional who can discuss his/her job with you. Select someone who has an interesting job, so you can learn something as well as complete the assignment. If you have decided which area of public relations interests you, I recommend that you find someone in **that** field and interview him or her. Much of your interview will grow from some pre-research you do on the company/field. Prepare as you would for a feature news interview. Some general questions that might spark some conversation:

- How did this person get into his/her position? Into the field of public relations?
- What does his/her organization do?
- How does the job market look for this type of public relations?
- What special skills are needed in that particular job and field -- especially what skills are unique to that field?
  - What makes up a typical day for this person?
  - What is this person's role in the organization: Part of management? Reporting to management? Technical skills person? Media liaison? Etc.
  - What makes this public relations job unique? Interesting?

You might also want to ask some questions about the organization your interviewee works for: for example, the type of organization, it's public relations needs, etc.



Writing the Paper:

Use subsections -

Subsections (identified with subheads) for your paper should include:

1. Who is this person – his/her background, job title, etc.
2. Company – what does this organization do? what is the field? I expect some material with citations
3. Describe this person’s primary duties and responsibilities in public relations – how does s/he know that he/she has done a good job?
4. Describe a “typical” day at work for this person
5. Describe this person’s career path/training in public relations. What professional memberships does s/he have? How does he/she keep current in the field?
6. Your interviewee’s feelings about the job market in his/her field//what training does s/he wish she had now? when s/he entered the field?
7. Your own original questions

## NOTES ON CASE RESEARCH

When you are asked to present a case, you should use library resources to find material about the organization. You will want to identify and discuss your organization, and use the standards for researching clients as presented by Hendrix in his *Public Relations Cases* textbook (6th edition), pp 13-14:

For a business, you need to be “familiar with its products and services” (p. 13), you should be able to explain what the organization does; where it does it; how it does it; to whom and from whom. Meaning: How does it make its money? How much money does it make? Where is the home office? Where are the other offices? How does it distribute its products? Who are the major customers? How large is the workforce?

For a nonprofit, you must be “acquainted with the services provided and the organization’s clientele, including major donors” (p. 13).

Financial information is available. For public companies you can locate annual reports; they are required to report relevant financial information. Nonprofits must also report their financial status. There are sites that provide financial information about nonprofits.

Regardless of the type of organization, you need to research the lead personnel and the organization’s reputation. “Personnel” information can be obtained from biographical dictionaries and other sources. The organization’s “reputation” can be researched through business journals and newspapers - try LexisNexis business. Don’t discount *The Wall Street Journal*. While the organization’s website should be helpful, it will present only the organization’s point of view -- check the website but it’s not enough. LexisNexis should be one source you will use.

We have scheduled time for a library visit to learn about resources to research your case. At a minimum, you will want four sections:

- the organizational information,
  - background of the case,
  - how the organization approached the problem [research, program, evaluation],
- and
- the resolution of the case.

As you prepare, if there is additional material, add another section.