

Strategies of Public Relations, COM 371-01
Fall 2026
Thursdays, 5:30 to 8:20 p.m.
Kendall Hall Room 233
Course Syllabus

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Course Description

Strategies of Public Relations blends the study of public relations cases and public relations campaign development. Students study public relations cases and create communication campaigns for real world clients. In the process, students engage in audience analysis, message development, channel selection, budget preparation, and development of a strategic plan for corporate, nonprofit, association, and/or government clients.

Course Purpose & Learning Goals

Students completing this course should be able to:

- Understand the processes in professional public relations work: research, planning, communication, and evaluation.
- Develop a strategic public relations plan to deal with real world opportunities and challenges.
- Develop an understanding of public relations principles and how to apply them to opportunities and challenges in the work, community, and social environments.
- Develop the ability to comprehend, analyze and critically assess successful and poorly executed strategic public relations campaigns.

Course Materials

Center, A., Jackson, P., Smith, S., & Stansberry, F. (2014). *Public relations practices: Managerial case studies and problems* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
ISBN: 978-0-13-297193-5

Litwin, M. L. (2013). *The public relations practitioner's playbook for all strategic communicators: A synergized approach to effective two-way communication*. (4th ed.). Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse.
ISBN: 978-1-4918-0454-4

Recommended Textbook: The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual

Course Schedule by Week

Week 1	Aug. 27	Welcome and Introductions Assign Working Groups Public Relations Planning <i>(PR Practices</i> Chapt. 1 & 2, <i>Playbook</i> Chapt. 3, 7 & 8)
Week 2	Sept. 3	Public Relations Research <i>(Playbook</i> Chapt. 4) Meet with Working Groups
Week 3	Sept. 10	Skill Builder: News Writing & News Releases <i>(Playbook</i> Chapt. 5) Meet with Working Groups (Client Interviews) PR Plan Client Proposals Due
Week 4	Sept. 17	Public Relations Evaluation, Public Opinion and Persuasion <i>(Playbook</i> Chapt. 2 & 6) Skill Builder: Fact Sheets & Backgrounders <i>(Playbook</i> Chapt. 5)
Week 5	Sept. 24	Skill Builder: Public Speaking, Presentations <i>(Playbook</i> Chapt. 13) Meet with Working Groups (Audience Research)
Week 6	Oct. 1	Crisis Communications Management <i>(Playbook</i> Chapt. 14, <i>PR Practices</i> Chapt. 6) Skill Builder: Media Kits & Media Relations <i>(Playbook</i> Chapt. 9)
Week 7	Oct. 8	Meet with Working Groups (Case Studies Prep and/or Audience Research Findings & PR Plan Outline)
Week 8	Oct. 15	PR Case Studies Presentations
Week 9	Oct. 22	Meet with Working Groups (Audience Research Findings & PR Plan Outline)
Week 10	Oct. 29	Meet with Working Groups (PR Plan Guidance)
Week 11	Nov. 5	Meet with Working Groups (Review Draft PR Plans)
Week 12	Nov. 12	Skill Builder: Preparing PSAs & Media Advisories Skill Builder: Communication Technology <i>(Playbook</i> Chapt. 10) All PR Plans Due at 5:30 p.m.

Week 13	Nov. 19	Skill Builder: Getting the PR Job You Want (<i>Playbook</i> Chapt. 17)
Week 14	Nov. 26	Thanksgiving Break – No Class
Week 15	Dec. 3	Final Presentations All Media Kits Due at 5:30 p.m.
Week 16	Dec. 10	Final Exam Period

Grading

Case Study Presentation (15%): Scheduled for the October 15th class. Each working group will choose a case from the *Public Relations Practices* text and give a presentation to the class. The presentation is to be no more than 30 minutes in length and should address the following:

- An overview of the case, which includes the issues that your team would address;
- The research your team would conduct and why;
- The audiences involved in the case;
- The prominent objectives, strategies and tactics used in the case; and
- The ways the case's success was measured and what additional or different methods your group would have recommended for evaluation.

Groups may select one case from the PR Practices text to present, some examples include:

- The Pepsi Syringe Case (*PR Practices* Case 7-3)
- The Tobacco War (*PR Practices* Case 8-2)
- Guns (*PR Practices* Case 8-3)
- Trouble in the Pews (*PR Practices* Case 9-1)
- British Petroleum (*PR Practices* Case 9-4)
- Hurricane Katrina (*PR Practices* Case 9-5)
- Penn State (*PR Practices* Case 10-2)

Two Group Projects (25% each): Each group will complete two projects:

Public Relations Plan, Due November 12, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

For the first project, each group must submit a business proposal to a client, soliciting work.

Media Kit, Due December 3, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

For the second project, each group must create a complete media kit based on the group's PR Plan, suitable for use by your client.

Two copies of each project are due:

- One copy is submitted via Canvas and reviewed, graded and returned to the student group.
- A second revised copy is due to your client on date of final presentation. PR plan should include all revisions suggested by the professor.

Each project for the professor must also include a signed work log that verifies the amount of work each group member completed. Because effective public relations is built on meeting deadlines, I will not accept late projects.

Failure to participate with your group in completing either project will result in an “F” grade for your individual project grade(s).

Final Presentations (25%): Each group will give a detailed, 20 to 30 minute presentation about its public relations plan. These presentations will take place during our examination period. Guidelines for the presentations will be distributed in class. These presentations are to be professional, with visuals and other supporting materials for the audience. In addition, each student will dress professionally. Also, you are to invite a representative from your client's business to our class to attend your presentation. Your group will have to arrange all accommodations, such as driving directions, parking and refreshments.

Participation (10%): Because this course involves a significant amount of in-class participation, group work, and skill builders, your class attendance and participation are expected, evaluated and assigned a grade. I expect you to attend every class on time.

Grading Scale:

A = 94 to 100	C = 73 to 76
A- = 90 to 93	C- = 70 to 72
B+ = 87 to 89	D+ = 67 to 69
B = 83 to 86	D = 63 to 66
B- = 80 to 82	D- = 60 to 62
C+ = 77 to 79	F = 0 to 59

Course Expectations

The topics and activities for each class date on the syllabus are a tentative outline. We may change the topic schedule based on our progression and/or guest speaker availability.

Come to class having read, studied and prepared to discuss the assigned material.

If, for any reason, you have questions from a previous class or wish to discuss an assignment, please let me know. Please make appointments with me to talk about any aspect of the course, in particular the group projects. I will schedule appointments with groups on an as needed basis. I've listed my office and cell phone numbers. If you get my voicemail, PLEASE leave a message and I will get back to you within 24 hours, guaranteed. Or, send e-mail to farbman@tcnj.edu.

If any student is facing challenges that may impact their class performance, such as securing food, housing, transportation, and/or mental and emotional well-being, I urge you to notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable him to assist you in meeting your needs and performing to the best of your ability in this class. This professor is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, respectful learning environment as part of TCNJ's culture of care for our students, while at the same time ensuring students have what they need to grow and thrive.

Commitment to Inclusion, Access, and Belonging

The TCNJ community is composed of people with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, and the college is committed to inclusion, access and belonging. The college's Campus Diversity Statement can be viewed here: <https://diversity.tcnj.edu/campus-diversity-statement/>.

Classroom Environment and Commitment to Student Success, Safety, and Well-being

The TCNJ community is dedicated to the success, safety and well-being of each student. TCNJ strictly follows key policies that govern all TCNJ community members rights and responsibilities in and out of the classroom. In addition, TCNJ has established several student support offices that can provide the support and resources to help students achieve their personal and professional goals and to promote health and well-being. You can find more information about these policies and resources at the "TCNJ Student Support Resources and Classroom Policies" webpage here: <https://academicaffairs.tcnj.edu/tcnj-syllabus-resources/>.

Students who anticipate and/or experience barriers in this course are encouraged to contact the instructor as early in the semester as possible. The Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) is available to facilitate the removal of barriers and to ensure reasonable accommodations. For more information about ARC, please visit: <https://arc.tcnj.edu/>.

Health and Safety Protocols

TCNJ is a mask-friendly institution. Face masks are optional in this course, but required if you are coming to class as you are recovering from COVID-19 infection. Please follow all TCNJ and CDC guidelines to keep us all safe throughout the semester.

If you are not feeling well during a scheduled class period, please do not come to class in person. The professor will make arrangements with you so you can access the course content remotely.