

# Intro to Public Relations

PBRL 3400-M50

Fall 2021 - Half Term (2nd)

Online

Prof. Taylor Nicole Ackerman

Preferred Pronouns: She/Her

**Office:** Meeman Journalism Building Room 332

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 9:30 am - 11am  
Wednesdays, 10am - 12pm  
Thursdays, 10:00am - 11:30 am

If you'd like to meet for my office hours listed or at any other time, please reach out via email or text prior to dropping by so I can make sure I'm in my office. I'm also available via Zoom, and by appointment.

**Email:** [tckerman@memphis.edu](mailto:tckerman@memphis.edu)

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog description

Development, scope, and modern role of public relations; emphasis on problem solving, lectures, and application of major public relations tools and practices.

### Prerequisites

None

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Kim, C. M. (2019). *Public Relations: Competencies and Practice (1st edition)*. New York: Routledge.

### Recommended Text

*The Associated Press Stylebook online.*

### Classroom Format

This course is delivered online in an asynchronous format. In other words, there is no required scheduled meeting time for this course. This can be convenient for students juggling several responsibilities, but it also means you must be organized and motivated. Students are able to work at their own pace throughout the week, however work will be due on a weekly basis and it is imperative to stay on track with the course schedule to complete all deadlines on time.

This is a half-term course, which means we will have about eight weeks of class time. Due to the shorter time period, there will be weeks where we have a heavier reading requirement and assignment load than we would if the class were full term. We will often be covering two chapters a week, with at least

two assignments due (and sometimes more.) Please be prepared to dedicate an adequate amount of time to getting your coursework and readings done each week. If at any point you find yourself falling behind, please reach out to me as soon as possible so we can get you back on track. I'm confident we'll be able to cover all the needed material in their short period, and you will come out with a strong foundation and understanding of the field of public relations.

All course discussions should remain respectful and professional, and show respect to all people regardless of background, sex, race, or any other factor. Hate speech will not be tolerated in any form and could result in being dropped from the class for misconduct. Remember: Public relations is all about creating and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships and our virtual classroom should be no different.

This class is meant to serve as an introduction to public relations and the fundamentals that PR is built on. Our course content will include the pillars of public relations and the future of the field, as well as public relations processes. There will be an emphasis on social media, content creation, stewardship, stakeholder relationships, and leadership. We will also discuss different areas of public relations and application to other fields.

Students will upload all required assignments to eCourseware, and feedback will be given to encourage student improvement. Access to a computer or an electronic device will be required. Please be sure to read the instructions for each assignment carefully, as requirements for each assignment will vary. Assignments being turned into Dropbox will all need to be submitted as a .doc file unless otherwise noted. Reach out via email if anything is unclear to you. All assignments will be due Sunday nights at 11:59 p.m. central time unless otherwise noted. To allow time for response and clarification, please reach out with any assignment questions at least 48 hours prior to the deadline.

In order to succeed in this course, it's imperative to stay engaged in all coursework. If at any point you are concerned about your grade or struggling to grasp course concepts, I encourage you to make an appointment for a Zoom call during my office hours so we can work to find a good solution. Remember that in order for me to help you, communication is key.

**Meeman Lab Availability:** Open labs 9:30-4:30 Monday-Friday. Masks and social distancing required. In addition to Meeman, labs are available in the Tech Hub and the Library.

For students that may not have access to a computer, the McWherter Library has laptops on loan. Please visit the Checkout desk in the library or visit:

<https://www.memphis.edu/libraries/technology/laptop.php>

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis eLearn home page: <http://elearn.memphis.edu>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JRSM 3400 – M50 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

### Students with disabilities & accommodations

If you will need accommodations through [Disability Resources](#) to meet any of the requirements of this course, please let me know as soon as possible. I'm happy to work with you to make sure

you are able to be successful in this course. Remember, this is not a reflection on your ability nor is it giving special treatment, but rather making sure you are equipped to do your best in this course.

If at any point in the semester you are struggling with the course load or a specific assignment, please reach out to me for a meeting so we can work to get you back on track. I'm happy to help in any way I'm able, but you must be an advocate for yourself. It's impossible for me to help if I don't know there's a problem.

### **Trauma & Emotional Needs**

I understand that outside of this course, you have many things going on that could add stress or take away attention from your school work. This course should be taken seriously, but I am happy to work with you to make sure that you stay healthy, well, and in the right mindset to do your best work. I've been a student also, and understand the challenges of balancing academics with work, family, and life. Please let me know if completing a requirement for the course is challenging or if something comes up throughout the semester that is hindering your success with this course. I care about what is going on with you and I'm happy to help where I can. My door (and Zoom room) is always open to you.

I also recommend taking advantage of the free counseling services offered by the University of Memphis. Please see below for links that could be helpful for you.

**Campus and Community Resources:** <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/>

### **Resources specific to physical health and wellness:**

Mental health Services

UofM Student Health Center

Sexual, domestic, and intimate partner violence resources

### **If you are affected financially because of COVID-19:**

There are many resources available through the Dean of Students including:

Dr. Rosie Phillips Bingham Student Emergency Fund

Emergency Food Resources, which includes Tiger Pantry

### **Academic Services:**

Writing Center

Tutoring

### **Communities & Inclusion:**

Multicultural Affairs

LGBTQ+

### **Course and Assignment Expectations**

Course work will be accomplished every week, including readings, discussion posts, and quizzes to check your learning and comprehension. Each assignment must be completed by its due date and time (Central Time), which may vary by assignment, so make sure to check each individual due date and time to ensure that you post by the deadline.

### **Quality of Work**

All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar, and language. A large part of public relations is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. This includes all class work and presentations. Problems in these or other areas will result in the deduction of points.

I expect your work to be good and to be original, meaning it's yours. If you quote anything or get information from any other source, it should be fully cited. If you need help with writing and citing sources, please see me for resources. In addition, Purdue University's Online Writing Lab is an excellent resource, and can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>. Additionally, there are some instructional materials located in eCourseware under the "resources" tab.

### **Repetition of Courses and Coursework**

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the resume and logo).

### **Questions about Grades**

If you would like to ask about a grade, please make an appointment to meet with me outside of class time, as I will not discuss grades via email or in online discussions.

Additionally, you are responsible for tracking your grade online and meeting with me early in the semester if you are concerned about your overall grade. Meeting early and often can help both parties involved find ways to improve student-instructor understanding and quality of work.

### **Plagiarism policy**

*First offense:* Redo for 50%, plus meet with Taylor

*Second offense:* Automatic 0, no redo

*Third offense:* Automatic class fail

*Final assignment, regardless of which offense:* Automatic 0 on assignment

**\*\*Any instances of plagiarism may result in a note being added to your department file.**

### **Late work**

<24 hours late: -10% (perfect = 90% A)

24-48 hours late: -20% (perfect = 80% B)

1 Week late: -30% (perfect = 70% C)

Final call: Up to 50% credit (perfect = 50% F)

### **Grading**

There are 1,000 possible points in this class. At the end of the semester, your class points will be calculated and rounded up to the nearest whole number. Letter grades will be determined according to the scale below. If additional points are added or subtracted from this possible point total, students will be provided with an updated point to letter grade scale.

**A+** = 967 – 1,000 points, **A** = 934 – 966, **A-** = 900 – 933 points  
**B+** = 867 – 899 points, **B** = 834 – 866 points, **B-** = 800 – 833 points  
**C+** = 767 – 799 points, **C** = 734 – 766 points, **C-** = 700 – 733 points  
**D** = 667 – 600 points  
**F** = 600 and fewer points

**Grading Philosophy.** A=Professional quality work that could be use with little or no modification  
B=Good to excellent work and exceeds requirement, but would require revision to be used professionally  
C=Satisfactory work and adequately meets requirement, but would need significant revision  
D=Barely satisfies minimum requirement and below average quality  
F=Unsatisfactory work and does not meet minimum requirements

#### **Individual Assignments**

Weekly Assignments (Total of 5; 70 points each)	<b>350 points</b>
Surveys (Total of 2; 25 points each)	<b>50 points</b>
Discussion Grades (Total of 6; 40 points each)	<b>240 points</b>
Quizzes (Total of 4; 50 points each)	<b>200 points</b>
Special Interest PR Presentation	<b>100 points</b>
Personal Essay	<b>60 points</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,000 points</b>

#### **Assignment Breakdown**

More in-depth guidelines posted to eCourseware.

**Weekly Assignments:** Weekly assignments will vary in nature and be used to build on the concepts we are learning each week in class, as well as gauge your progress in the course. There will be a total of five weekly assignments, 70 points each for a total of 350 points.

**Surveys:** There will be a total of two surveys in this course, one in the first week of the course and one in the last week. These surveys are meant to help improve the course as well as give the professor an understanding of where each student is in their studies. Please complete these surveys honestly and fully - full credit will be given as long as the survey is filled out in its entirety. The surveys will be 25 points each for a total of 50 points.

**Discussions:** There will be a total of six discussion boards at 40 points each for a total of 240 points. Discussions will take place on eCourseware. Students will be expected to make an original post that is responding to the prompt given that week, and then follow up by responding to at least two classmates. The original post should be at least 150 words, and the responses should be at least 75 words each.

Responses must be thoughtful and build on what was said, not simply saying you agree or disagree. You must back up your rationale.

Discussions are not “busy work”; rather discussing course concepts helps further increase your understanding.. Being able to clearly and concisely explain your thoughts on public relations fundamentals will be a key skill to succeed in our field. These discussions are worth a large part of your grade, and are meant to show your critical thinking skills and understanding of the topic. Failure to properly engage in the discussion boards will negatively affect your grade.

**Quizzes:** A total of four quizzes will be given throughout the semester to test your understanding of course concepts. Quizzes will be given on eCourseware with a time limit of 30 minutes. You will have two attempts for each quiz with the highest grade taken. You are welcome to use your notes or book to help assist you on the quiz, but working with another student is prohibited.

**Special Interest PR Presentation:** Due to the shorter nature of this course, we won’t be able to cover every sector PR has to offer. In order to explore these specialized sectors, each student will create a presentation on the sector of their choosing to share with the class. More details will be covered in eCourseware. This presentation will be worth 100 points. Make sure the presentation is quality and one you can be proud of: They will be shared with the class in order to complete a later assignment.

**Personal Essay:** At the end of the semester, a personal essay will be written to explore your personal knowledge and interest in public relations. See eCourseware for assignment details. This essay will be worth 60 points.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a basic weekly schedule for topics and major assignments over the course of the semester. Although every effort will be made to stick with this schedule, please understand that changes to the schedule may occur. All changes will be announced as soon as possible. All assignments are due on Sunday at 11:59 p.m. C.T. unless otherwise noted.

### *Week 1, October 13 - 17: Introduction and Fundamentals of Public Relations*

Readings: Chapter 1

Assignments: Start of Semester Survey Due

Discussion Board 1 (Introductions)

### *Week 2, October 18 - 24: Business Literacy & Stewardship*

Readings: Chapters 6 & 11

Assignments: Assignment 1

Discussion Board 2

Quiz 1

### *Week 3, October 25 - 31: Ethics & Crisis Management*

Readings: Chapters 5 & 10

Assignments: Assignment 2

Discussion Board 3

University Deadline: Last day to drop a course without a “W” on transcript is October 26th.

*Week 4, November 1 - 7: Social Media & Content Creation*

Readings: Chapters 7 & 12

Assignments: Assignment 3

Discussion 4

Quiz 2

University Deadline: November 6 is the last day to drop with a “W”.

*Week 5, November 8 - 14: Diversity, Inclusion & PR Across Cultures*

Readings: Chapters 3 & 4

Assignments: Assignment 4

Presentation Due

*Week 6, November 15 - 21: Media Relations & Legal Considerations*

Readings: Chapter 22 & 8

Assignments: Assignment 5

Discussion 5

Quiz 3

*Week 7, November 22 - 28: Internal Communications*

Readings: Chapter 14

Assignments: Personal Essay Due

Discussion 6

*Week 8, November 29 - December 1*

Complete Quiz 4 by 11:59 PM December 1

Complete Final Survey by 11:59 PM December 1

Have a great Winter Break!!!

## JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

### Portfolio requirement

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student’s work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix or Squarespace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they must keep the portfolio active for six months

following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files and writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

## Email

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the University.

## Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

## Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a "job" in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

## Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade ("C-") in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon

discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor, and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

### **Academic integrity**

In addition to University-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or students receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on their own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, as this is a journalism and strategic media class, students are expected to comply with copyright law and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. (*Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018*)

### Online SETEs

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIDs and email passwords; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

### Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

### AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

### Disability and accommodations

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### Diversity and inclusivity

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Media reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

### Weather policy

Always check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the University is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day’s work.

### Student support

Student who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting with campus or community support.

## COVID-19 protocols for this course

### Student Health

Students who have a positive COVID-19 test should contact the Dean of Students at [deanofstudents@memphis.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@memphis.edu) or 901.678.2187.

### Student Resources

Students who need additional resources can visit the Dean of Students Office website at <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php>.