

# Entertainment Public Relations

STRM 4232 M50

Spring 2025

Online Asynchronous

## Prof. Taylor Ackerman, APR, MA

She/Her

**Office:** Meeman 332

**Office hours:** Tuesday, 10am - 12pm

Tuesday, 2:30 pm - 3 pm

Wednesday, 10:30 am - 2 pm

If you'd like to meet for the office hours listed, please reach out via text or email prior to dropping by so I can make sure I'm in my office and not in another meeting.

I'm also available via Teams outside of the listed office hours upon request.

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

**Phone:** 731-225-7656 (Text only please)

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog description

Explores strategies for creating and executing publicity campaigns in all areas of entertainment including artists and events in the music industry, TV, film and sports.

### Prerequisites

None

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Ames, C. (2016). *Entertainment Public Relations: Communicating with Audiences*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

ISBN 978-1-4331-3054-0 (also available in eBook - 978-1-4539-1775-6)

### Classroom format

This course is delivered online in an asynchronous format. In other words, there is no required scheduled meeting time for this course. 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. There will be some weeks with heavier workload and assignments than others - it is up to you to plan accordingly. In some weeks you'll be able to work ahead, if you choose, while other times you'll need to complete certain items/feedback before moving forward.

Because this course is centered on entertainment, there will at times be “unconventional” assignment types that require you to watch videos or listen to media, interact with different types of entertainment or reach out to a professional in an entertainment field. These more unusual types of assignments will allow you to think out of the box about the field, be creative about promotion/communication and get a deeper level of understanding. These assignments will also require a bit more planning time, so be sure to read course modules carefully and reach out to your professor with any questions. At times, there will also be recorded video/audio that you will need to listen to and complete a reflection on. Make sure that you leave yourself time to complete these types of activities.

You will be the most successful in this course if you read all Canvas materials, presentations and required textbook chapters. While at times I will post extra, additional reading materials or resources, they will always be marked and anything part of the regular course module should be consumed.

Because of the nature of the course, talking with your classmates to bounce ideas off one another, get new perspectives and discuss course concepts will be both helpful and required. A mix of discussions and the occasional rare group assignment will work to accomplish this. In terms of the discussion questions, you'll be expected to create your own original post and then reply **thoughtfully** to at least two classmates. Key word being thoughtfully - not a two sentence “I agree because” bull crap, ‘cause nobody wants to read that. Something that actually furthers the conversation, offers an alternative point of view or an example/idea. You will be graded on both your original post and your replies.

In terms of the rare group assignment: Don't panic. Yes, I realize this course is online which can make things more complicated and no, you won't have to track your classmates down or worry about them tanking your grade. It will simply be for the experience of working with a “team”, like you would in entertainment PR, and you'll be graded based on a combination of the work that is turned in as well as a reflection of the experience. It is common for people in entertainment PR to work together from all over the world to collaborate on projects and rely on a team, and I would be doing you a disservice if I didn't at least give you a small taste of this. I'll be very reasonable about my expectations and the project, as long as you remain reasonable and mature.

As in any professional setting, all course discussions should remain respectful and professional as well as show respect to all people regardless of background, sex, race, gender or any other factor. Hate speech will not be tolerated in any form and could result in a zero on an assignment or dropped from the class for misconduct.

You must have internet access. Any word/writing assignments should be turned in as a .doc or .docx file. Any presentation or design projects should be turned in as a .pdf or .pptx project. Videos should be turned in as either a public link to YouTube or a .MP4 file. I'll allow you to also share a Canva file with me as long as you have the settings to “view by anyone with link” and you keep access open through the duration of the semester. Failure to turn in assignments in the proper format will result in only one warning for the semester, and then a zero on subsequent assignments.

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page: <http://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. Click on the link for STRM 4232 to enter our course

**Quality of Work**

All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar, and language. A large part of public relations and advertising 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 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.

**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. When in doubt, ask. If I catch work that seems eerily similar to something from a previous class and you have not discussed it with me, it will be an automatic zero. 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).

**Chat GPT/AI**

You must obtain permission from the instructor before using ChatGPT or other AI tools to assist with assignments in this course. Once permission is granted, AI may only be used as directed. Assignment submissions may run through AI detection software. Unauthorized use may result in a failing grade or a request to resubmit an assignment. Be prepared to submit any prompts you used for assistance with your assignment as well as the original ChatGPT output and to be able to explain/show how you fact-checked and improved upon the AI's work.

**Questions about Grades**

If you would like to ask about a grade, let's set up a Teams or office meeting so we can talk about it with clarity. I will not discuss grades or disputes via email - this must be done in a scheduled meeting or phone call setting where we can have a conversation.

Additionally, you are responsible for tracking your assignments 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. In the communications/public relations/advertising/entertainment space, strong communication with clients, teammates and related field contacts is imperative and this course is no different. Going MIA without any notice or explanation, or waiting until the end of the semester to try to complete assignments will not result in success. This is a college level, upper division course and I expect your work and professionalism to reflect that.

**Course & Campus Resources**

**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.

**Support:** 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 by communicating with me and making me aware of any problems. It's impossible for me to help if I don't know there's a problem.

I am happy to meet with you outside of class, hop on a Teams call, or provide support over email. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you find yourself falling behind, feeling overwhelmed, or struggling.

With that being said, the earlier you let me know there's an issue, the more likely I am to be able to help. Unfortunately, if you wait until week 11 or later to let me know there's been a problem throughout the semester, it's likely going to be too late for me to extend grace or alternative arrangements.

**Meeman Lab Availability:** Open labs 9:30-4:30 Monday-Friday. In addition to Meeman, labs are available in the Tech Hub and the Library. We also have equipment rental available. Check your university email for details.

**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+](#)

**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, the letter scale will be adjusted.

**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

## Assignments

Discussions	150 points
Reflections	125 points
Assignments	250 points
Quizzes	175 points
Projects	300 points

**Total: 1,000 points**

## 6232 Component

If you are taking this class as a graduate student, you will need to fulfill an additional requirement for the course. The specific assignment must be approved with the instructor by the end of the fifth week of class, and you will have until the end of week 13 of class to complete it. Specific expectations and details for each option will be provided upon approval of the project. You can send a proposal to me via email or meet with me via Teams/in person to make your assignment pitch. It is the sole responsibility of you, the student, to get the assignment approved and completed by the stated points in this syllabus. If you do not complete the graduate component and are enrolled in section 6232, you will not receive credit for the course.

Here are a few proposed options for the graduate component. I am willing to hear alternative ideas if you have them:

1. Preparation of an original entertainment case study than goes in depth regarding the promoting and marketing of an entertainment product/project
2. Preparation of a guide for working in entertainment PR for a specific niche (sports, movies, travel, etc.) that includes at least two original interviews you have with people actively working in that field
3. Preparation of a full promotion plan for an entertainment product/project that includes ideas for experiential marketing as well as mock ups/examples of pitches, social media content and/or advertisements

## Miscellaneous Policies

**Late Work:** In strategic media deadlines are imperative. In the field, we are often creating work for clients or pitch meetings with hard deadlines. As such, try to turn everything in on time. I do recognize life happens, and as such if you have to turn something in late, the following late policy will apply with the exception of quizzes and discussions, which will not be accepted late.

<24 hours late: 5% off

<48 hours late: 10% off

<One week late: 20% off

One to three weeks late: 30% off

Over three weeks late: No credit

**Communication & Student Responsibility:** Because we are completely online, the need to reach out with any potential questions, concerns and clarifications is much higher. If there is anything you are uncertain about or that gives you pause, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via one of the many communication channels provided to get clarification. I'm always happy to help, but I can't do this if I don't know there's an issue. Using "I was confused" as an excuse to not perform well will not be accepted in this class, nor would it be in your career. Please advocate for yourself, ask questions and communicate.

Additionally, remember that you will get out of this class what you put into it. Cutting corners on assignments, procrastinating work until the last possible second or skipping assigned readings or media is going to hurt you, not me. I don't believe in busy work, and the content in this course is not assigned to simply fill time. Each thing shared was considered and chosen with the intention of providing a learning opportunity. Many of you have mentioned to me that sports, art, music, entertainment, book promotion and/or travel promotion interests you as a potential career field, and if this is the case for you, I encourage you to dive deep into the subject matter to see if it's something you want to explore further.

Last but not least, I will always try to be respectful of your time and energy, but that means I would appreciate you also being respectful of mine. Turning in strong work and engaging with the course does that - turning in fluff that is barely a distant relative of the assignment requirements doesn't.

## **ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES**

### **Professional Values and Competencies in STRM 4232**

- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by

methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

### **How professional values and competencies will be met**

#### **Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)**

- Explain an artist's brand and narrative.
- Recognize cultural and industry context in writing about music.
- Understand strategic marketing concepts including direct to fan.
- Understand how strategic marketing concepts integrate into a public relations strategy.

#### **Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)**

- Earn a passing score on written assignments, quizzes and case studies.
- Assess strengths and weaknesses of a public relations strategy.
- Write artist biographies, press releases, and pitches.
- Meaningfully participate in class discussion.
- Develop a comprehensive album release campaign to demonstrate a holistic understanding of public relations for the music industry.

### **How assessment of student learning will be met**

#### **Awareness**

- Recognize the components of an effective music review, biography, and album release.
- Discover music writing and biographies from others to identify course concepts.
- Articulate differences in writing biographies, reviews, and interviews.

#### **Understanding**

- Compare writing samples to determine effectiveness and public relations strategy.
- Observe music events and write clear and interesting reviews.
- Express differences in ideas and other considerations when contributing to class discussion.

#### **Application**

- Write critical reviews of live and recorded music, public relations music case studies, and biographies.
- Develop and deliver a pitch to the class

## **JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES**

### **Portfolio requirement**

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of your work. Portfolios begin in JRSM 3900/3905. The portfolio should contain samples of coursework and/or professional experiences and should develop as you build skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while you are enrolled in your capstone course.

You may use any type of web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system, but you are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or SquareSpace. It is also encouraged to purchase a URL if you plan to

use the portfolio long term. You must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

You should have a professional email address you plan to use throughout your professional life, 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
- Professional social media links (minimum LinkedIn)

You may wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files or writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career you seek after graduation. Your portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

## **Email**

You must have your UofM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have all UofM emails forwarded to that account. Go to the [account management website](#) for information about implementing email forwarding. You are required to check your email daily.

## **Electronic devices**

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

## **AI/Chat GPT**

The use of artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others in Journalism & Strategic Media. Please refer to specific guidelines for this course in the course-specific part of the syllabus.

## **Attendance**

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism & Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual tardiness.

## **Course repetition**

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (C-) in a class required by your program of study in Journalism & Strategic Media after three attempts will be dropped from the program.

You 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. Substantially reworking the



original submission, or working with the same general idea, may be permissible upon discussion and with written approval from the professor of the current course.

### **Academic integrity**

The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly and follow the policies stated in the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. If you need more information about the University policy on academic integrity visit the [Office of Student Accountability's website](#).

In addition to University-wide policies, the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on your own, as acts of cheating and 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, you are expected to comply with copyright and intellectual property laws 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 and to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. All creative work may be checked for policy adherence by the professor. The only exception to this policy is your online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo). 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.

### **Online SETEs**

You are encouraged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. If completed, once the instructor has posted final grades, you can immediately see that grade. To access evaluation forms, log in to MyMemphis; click the "Student Pages" dropdown menu and select "My Resources" and find the SETE evaluation forms; 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 seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and is appreciated.

### **Deadlines**

All deadlines are firm. Because Journalism & Strategic Media is a professional program, students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. 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.

You may be permitted to make up missing work if it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented.

### **AP Style and grammar**

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

### **Disability and accommodations**

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

### **Diversity and inclusivity**

The Department of Journalism & Strategic Media values diversity in all its forms. Some of these forms include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. As such, students are expected to participate in fostering an inclusive environment that respects the differences of others.

Students are expected to approach their work through a diverse lens. Creating messages that resonate with diverse audiences requires an understanding of a variety of perspectives, which are carried out through multiple platforms, such as digital and traditional media outlets.

The department seeks to foster healthy and positive classroom discussions and experiences. As such, faculty and students are expected to remain respectful and professional at all times.

### **Weather policy**

Always check with local media, the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather.

### **Student support**

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, visit the Student Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help:

<https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php> or contact the Dean of Students Office at 901-678-2187, or in person in Suite 359 in the University Center for assistance. You may also talk with course instructors about the challenges you are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting you with campus or community support.

