

Public Relations Theory (Seminar)
 COMM 518-01 (20420)
 Wednesdays, 4 – 6:45 p.m.
 College Park 128



Dr. Doug Swanson

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Due to committee obligations, my office hours alternate between Mondays and Wednesdays (1 – 3 p.m. in Fullerton). See the announcement on my door to know what day I'll be in the office each week. On Thursdays, I'm in the office at Irvine from 1 – 2 p.m. Office hours always available by appointment as needed.

Course description

This graduate seminar explores current communication and organizational theories and vital emerging issues influencing the field of public relations. Special focus will be on contemporary public relations models and practitioner roles.

Learning outcomes

Through completion of COMM 518, students should meet the following learning outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate mastery level knowledge of contemporary public relations communication and organizational theories.
- Students will apply theoretical concepts to explain public relations situations that commonly occur in academic and professional settings.
- Students will use their knowledge of theory and practice to analyze public relations problems and opportunities and subsequently propose appropriate strategic responses.
- Students will be able to use social media to creatively communicate relevant applications of theory-based strategy, tactics, and tools in public relations practice.
- Students will demonstrate ability to explore a significant public relations question and develop an in-depth proposal for future research inquiry.
- Students will develop a greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by public relations educators, so as to be more prepared for future graduate study and/ or a career working in higher education.

Syllabus as agreement for learning

This syllabus is a contract between you and me. I will follow the syllabus to eliminate surprises in terms of what's expected of you in this course. I will adhere to the guidelines of the syllabus to make sure the course is as fair as possible to all students. Please do not ask for special consideration that is contrary to the syllabus; it is unfair for me to give one student an advantage that is not offered to everyone. *Receipt of this syllabus constitutes agreement on your part to all the terms contained within the syllabus.*

The course will be managed in part through TITANium, CSUF's online classroom management software, linked on your portal. Please visit the site immediately and, if you feel it's necessary, take the tutorial to become familiar with the system.

Required text

Hoover, K., & Donovan, T. (2011). *The elements of social scientific thinking* (10th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth.

Other articles / chapters will be required reading and will be provided in PDF form on TITANium. Items are shown in a supplemental readings list at the end of this syllabus. Although some items shown are books, you will not be assigned any single supplemental item that's longer than one chapter.

Attendance

Attendance in class is a university expectation, as noted in the university catalog. You may miss up to 20% of the total (three class sessions) for any reason *with no penalty*. No notes or absence excuses are required. However, at four absences, the highest final grade you may earn is a B, regardless of academic performance. There are no exceptions. Attendance is verified through a roll sheet passed around in class. You must sign the sheet to verify attendance.

Late assignments

Late assignments are not welcomed in this class. The first late assignment will be penalized 30%; beyond that, no further assignments will be accepted late.

Classroom management issues

- ***Disruptive behavior is unacceptable.*** Class will begin on time, and you will arrive on time. If you repeatedly show up late, we will need to have an unpleasant discussion.
- ***One person speaks at a time.*** I enjoy a healthy discussion. I have the floor, and will surrender it one person at a time. When somebody speaks, everybody else listens.
- ***No cell phone use in class.*** No rings, no calls, no text, no Twitter, no exceptions.
- ***Follow the university's policies regarding food and drink.*** Enjoy your meal before you come to class, please. There is a posted policy about food and drink, and we will adhere to it.

Assignments and related policies

There are 1,000 points possible in this class, as follows. For due dates, see the course calendar.

- **Discussion and interaction** (100 points)
We will have an online discussion question each week to frame our subsequent discussion in class. Your posted response is expected, along with engagement in the class discussion. As a result of this interaction, the instructor will award a point score at the end of the class. The point score earned is at the instructor's discretion and will reflect your involvement in the discussion.
- **Application papers** (8 @ 50 points each)
Select a current 'real-world' PR situation and assess it using a theory from the *Tollefson Theories Handout*. Follow this guideline in the construction of your paper:
 - Summarize the theory you've selected; briefly describe its history, development, etc.
 - Identify and briefly describe the PR situation you've chosen.
 - Why is your chosen theory relevant to explain, understand, and predict?
 - Why is this theory more appropriate than others you could have chosen?
 - Support your work with three sources (theory) and at least one source (situation).
 - List your sources with in-text references and an ending reference list (APA format).
 - The application paper should be typed (line spacing 1.5); 5 pages maximum.

- **Social media project** (1 @ 200 points)

Working in a team of two or three students, develop a social media project that creatively explains the relevant application of theory-based strategy, tactics, and tools in public relations practice. You may create a website, podcast, or YouTube video. (I'm open to other suggestions, as well.) Proceed as if you would use this social media creation to explain public relations basics to an undergraduate COMM 101 class. The elements of your creation might include:

- A brief definition/ explanation of PR and its relevance and application in the marketplace.
- Describe and offer examples of PR strategy, tactics, and tools.
- Discuss how theory is relevant to PR practice, and offer an example or two of common theories.
- Direct your audience members to additional resources where for learning more about PR.

Create a work that's engaging, accurate, relevant, and creative. It's ok to include other people from outside the class in your production. If you choose to do a podcast or YouTube video, limit your work to 8-12 minutes. See me to discuss your options.

- **Case study research proposal** (1 @ 200 points)

You will write a paper that allows you to propose a question for research inquiry. In so doing, you will expand in greater detail on one of the major theories used in public relations practice. You might want to use this paper later as the seed for the literature review of your thesis, or as the draft of a paper for journal submission or conference presentation:

- Identify a public relations situation that you could reasonably investigate through case study research using a theory from the Tollefson Theories Handout, or a theory from a different source. (Introduction).
- Complete a relatively exhaustive literature review describing your chosen theory and its relevance to the situation at hand (Literature Review).
- Describe how you would go about gathering and presenting data on the topic (Methodology).
- Explain how your research, if undertaken, would benefit PR practitioners and scholars (Rationale).
- Include at least 20 references; ideally, a mix of scholarly and professional sources (References).
- The application paper should be typed (line spacing 1.5). The body of the paper should be no more than 10 pages. The paper will also include Title, Abstract, and Reference pages.
- Assignment includes a ten-minute informal presentation of your work in class on the night scheduled for our final exam.

- **Weebly electronic portfolio** (1 @ 100 points)

You will create an electronic portfolio on Weebly where you will display the work completed for this class, and any other academic or professional work that you think is relevant to 'tell your story' as a future academic/ professional communicator. The portfolio will be structured in such a way that you could use it to showcase your talent for potential employers. The portfolio should include a one-page resume as well as some reflection that addresses some or all of the questions below in a thoughtful way. (More details on this assignment will be forthcoming).

- What have you learned from COMM 518 in specific or graduate study in general?
- How is what you're learning helping you to achieve academic and professional goals?
- What have you discovered about yourself since beginning graduate study?
- If you could have a 'do over' in life, what would you do differently and why?

How points earned translate to the final letter grade:

	Percentage of total points (approx.)	Total points earned	Final letter grade	(GPA)
Superior attainment of course objectives	Greater than 93%	930 to 1,000	A	4.0
Superior attainment of course objectives	90 – 92.9%	900 to 929	A-	3.7
Good attainment of course objectives	87 – 89.9%	870 to 899	B+	3.3
Good attainment of course objectives	83 – 86.9%	830 to 869	B	3.0
Good attainment of course objectives	80 – 82.9%	800 to 829	B-	2.7
Good attainment of course objectives	77 – 79.9%	770 to 799	C+	2.3
Good attainment of course objectives	73 – 76.9%	730 to 769	C	2.0
Acceptable attainment of course objectives	70 – 72.9%	700 to 729	C-	1.7
If you're in danger of a final grade lower than C-, I'll recommend you drop the class.				

Grades are kept in TITANium, and this method has proven to be very reliable. However, in the event of a discrepancy, it is important for you to have accurate records. Save a copy of everything you submit for this class. Please save a copy of all graded papers I return to you. On the last class day before the final exam, the assignment grades entered for you in the grade book will be considered to be correct unless you notify me at that point.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations prohibit me from discussing your academic performance or grades with others, or in a class forum. I cannot legally return your graded papers to a third party. To discuss specific issues about your work, contact me via e-mail.

Accommodations

CSU-Fullerton is committed to providing equal access to university programs and services for all students. Under university policies and federal and state law, students with documented disabilities are entitled to “reasonable accommodations” to ensure an equal opportunity for class performance. If you have a disability, or think you may have one, please contact the Office of Disabled Student Services <http://www.fullerton.edu/DSS/>. I will work with you on accommodations, but you must first register with DSS. No retroactive accommodations will be made. In other words, if you wait till mid-semester to register with DSS, you cannot go back and retroactively get accommodations on work already completed.

Academic honesty

It is unacceptable for students to turn in work which appears to me to be copied, either all or in part, from another original source. Because plagiarism is a serious concern in academe, I do electronic searches to verify the originality of content and the accuracy of reported sources. Do not plagiarize. If in doubt about sourcing, ask. Plagiarized papers do not earn credit in this class and may require filing of a report of academic dishonesty with the university. Let's not go there.

Course calendar

On occasion, I may cancel the 'in person' class meeting and we'll conduct our business via TITANium and e-mail. I will give you at least a week's notice of any such occurrence.

Date	Topic	Readings/ chapters or articles	Assignment due
8/28	Class introduction	Tollefson Theories Handout	
9/4	What does it mean to be an educated, critical thinker?	H&D, Preface Keeling	
9/11	What is the value of scholarly inquiry?	H&D, Chapters 1, 2 Babbie	Application paper #1
9/18	What are the realities of our 'scholarly tribe'?	Becher Tagg	Application paper #2
9/25	What are the realities of our profession?	H&D, Chapters 3, 4 Briones & Toth Sykes	Application paper #3
10/2	How do we make theory relevant?	H&D, Chapters 4, 5	Application paper #4
10/9	What's the value of an organizational framework?	Bolman & Deal	
10/16	Theories of organizations	Hays & Swanson Coombs	Application paper #5 (10/16)
10/23			
10/30	Theories of relationships	Crawford, Fudge, Hubbard, & Filak Gudykunst & Shapiro Swanson	Application paper #6 (10/30)
11/6			
11/13	Theories of media	Readings TBD	Application paper #7 (11/13)
11/20			
12/4	How do we merge theory and practice?	H&D, Chapter 6	Social media project Application paper #8
12/11	How do we work with integrity?	H&D, Appendix A Todd	
12/18	Case study presentations		Case study proposal Weebly portfolio

Above, H&D represents the class text:

Hoover, K., & Donovan, T. (2011). *The elements of social scientific thinking* (10th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth.

List of supplemental readings

Babbie, E. R. (1990). *Survey research methods* (2nd ed.) Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Becher, T. (1989). *Academic tribes and territories*. Bristol, PA: Open University Press.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1984). *Modern approaches to understanding and managing organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Briones, R. L., & Toth, E. L. (2013). The state of PR graduate curriculum as we know it: A longitudinal analysis. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 68(2), 119-133.

Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 10(3), 163-176.

Crawford, E. C., Fudge, J., Hubbard, G. T., & Filak, V. F. (2013). The mass comm type: Student personality traits, motivations, and the choice between news and strategic communication majors. *Journalism & Mass Communication Editor*, 68(2), 104-118.

Gudykunst, W., & Shapiro, R. B. (1996). Communication in everyday interpersonal and intergroup encounters. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 20(1), 19-45.

Hays, B., & Swanson, D. J. (2011, Fall). Prevalence and success of reverse mentoring in public relations. *Public Relations Journal*, 5, 4. Available at:
<http://www.prsa.org/Intelligence/PRJournal/Documents/2011HaysSwanson.pdf>

Jiang, H., & Shen, H. (2013). Toward a theory of public relations practitioners' own conflict: Work versus life. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 25(3), 259-279.

Keeling, R. P. (Ed.) (2006). *Learning reconsidered 2: Implementing a campus-wide focus on the student experience*. American College Personnel Association. Retrieved from:
<http://www.myacpa.org/pub/documents/LearningReconsidered2.pdf>

Severin, W. J. & Tankard, J. W. (2001). *Communication theories: Origins, methods, and uses in the mass media* (5th ed.). New York: Longman.

Sykes, C. J. (1988). *Profscam: Professors and the demise of higher education*. New York: St. Martin's.

Swanson, D. J. (2006). Academic advising of undergraduates in communication: Structural models and service challenges identified by faculty. *Ohio Communication Journal*, 44, 99-108. Available from:
<http://works.bepress.com/dswanson/47>

Tagg, J. (2003). *The learning paradigm college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Todd, V. (2009). PRSSA faculty and professional advisors' perceptions of public relations curriculum, assessment of students' learning, and faculty performance. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 64(1), 71-90.

Wheatley, M. with Frieze, D. (2010). *Leadership in the age of complexity: From hero to host*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/Leadership-in-Age-of-Complexity.pdf>