



**Department of Journalism, Media Studies and Public Relations  
Master of Arts in Public Relations**

## **MEDIA, MESSENGERS AND MESSAGES**

**PR 272 (CRN 94576)**

**Fall 2016**

**Saturdays 9:00 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.**

**Class will meet Sep. 10 and 24; Oct. 8 and 29; Nov. 5 and 19; Dec. 3**

**Lawrence Herbert SOC, Room 117**

**Professor Jeff Morosoff**

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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30 p.m.; Wednesdays, 1:15-2:15 p.m.; Thursdays, 2:00-3:30 p.m. For other availability, please email me for an appointment.

**Course Description:**

This course provides students with a comprehensive understanding of the strategies, tools and techniques for developing successful media relationships, as well as creating original content for storytelling in the new media world. While focusing on both traditional and online media, the curriculum will explore media relations as a fundamental approach in an overall communication strategy. The class will focus on media literacy: what is news; how it is processed and mediated; and how it is disseminated through various media operations, regulations and ownership. Learning how to effectively and proactively work with the media through various tools including news conferences, media interviews and press releases, this course will show how public relations professionals must mix traditional with new media outlets to most effectively promote their clients, causes and services. This course also explores the public relations practitioner's increasing role as an author of content for social media and other online platforms. Students will review and practice the fundamentals of good storytelling, using words and images to influence and inform target audiences.

**Departmental Goals and Objectives:**

- Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically, creatively and independently.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for scholarly research as well as the communication professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to gather and critically evaluate in-depth information from diverse sources.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to produce news stories, public relations materials or media analyses that are clear, accurate, thorough, cogent and fair.

- Student papers and stories will show evidence of critical analysis and creative thought.
- Students will examine the role of the public relations practitioner within the news making process.
- Students will demonstrate proficiency in English grammar and mechanics.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to write cogent, clear and concise prose.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to write in forms and styles appropriate to the topic, audience and outlet.
- Students will improve their professional writing style.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to gather and evaluate in-depth information from diverse, field-appropriate books, journals, databases and Internet sources.

**Required Texts:**

*Media Now: Understanding Media, Culture and Technology*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition. Joseph Strabhaar, Robert LaRose, Lucinda Davenport; Cengage, ISBN13: 978-1305080355

*The Power of Visual Storytelling*, Ekaterina Walter (2014), ISBN: 978-0-07-182400-2

Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual; a good dictionary and thesaurus

Students are expected to read related articles found in current media. These may include but are not limited to: *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Newsday*, *Tactics*, *Crain's Business*, *Columbia Journalism Review* *Huffington Post*, *Tech Crunch*, *PR 2.0*, *PR Squared*, *Media Bistro*

**Bibliography:**

Argenti, Paul A. and Barnes, Courtney M; *Digital Strategies for Powerful Corporate Communications*, McGraw Hill (2009)

Kerpen, Dave; *Likable Social Media*, McGraw Hill (2015)

Li, Charlene; *Open Leadership: How Social Technology Can Transform the Way You Lead*, Jossey-Bass (2010)

Luntz, Frank; *Words That Work*, Hyperion (2007)

Mathison, David; *Be the Media: How to Create and Accelerate Your Message Your Way*; natural E creative (2009)

McChesney. Robert; *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*, The New Press (2015 edition)

Scott, David Meerman; *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*, John Wiley & Sons (2015)

Shirky, Clay; *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*, Penguin (2008)

Solis, Brian and Breakenridge, Deirdre; *Putting the Public Back in Public Relations: How Social Media is Reinventing the Aging Business of PR*, Pearson, Education (2009)

**PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE:** This class meets only seven times so it is imperative that you attend and be on time for every class. Please avoid absences and lateness. Please contact me in advance in the event of any absence or lateness; absence and lateness will impact your success and grade in this class. Oral participation and a demonstrated understanding of writing skills learned will help determine final grades.

**READING:** Because of this class's unique schedule, textbook, supplemental readings and research are essential to prepare you for the successful completion of assigned projects. Please read the textbook chapters as assigned.

**PERSONAL MEDIA:** Please be advised that I consider the use of personal electronic devices (cell phones, digital players, etc.) during class time to be inconsiderate of your classmates and me. If you must use your cellphone, please leave the classroom and then return. Laptops and notepads may be used for taking notes and research only.

**PRSSA:** You are urged to participate in meetings and join the Hofstra chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). The organization will be hosting a **professional networking dinner on Thursday, November 3** and you are expected to attend.

**PRSSA, PRSA, PRPLI AND RELATED EVENTS:** Meetings and professional development programs are held by the PRSSA twice a month during common hour (Wednesdays at 11:15 a.m.), and are also staged by PRSA's New York City Chapter, the Public Relations Professionals of Long Island (PRPLI.org), and other related organizations. You'll be informed whenever there are opportunities to attend these professional development programs.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS NATION:** You are required to subscribe to and comment weekly on my blog "Public Relations Nation" at <http://jmorosoff.wordpress.com> (published every Sunday morning; comments due the following Tuesday). You will lose a half-point from your final average for each missed blog comment.

**ASSIGNMENT POLICIES:** There will be assignments which will account for 50 percent of your final grade (see the list in the "Assignments" section). A midterm and a final project will be worth 20 points each.

- Assignments must be submitted on the due date and in class or WILL NOT be accepted. All assignments are due in the class following the assignment. Do not email your assignment to me.
- All assignments must be typed, double-spaced and stapled. Please put your name on the first page and number each page. Save your work until at least the end of the semester.
- In the public relations profession and in this class, correct grammar, punctuation and spelling are essential. Take steps to spell check, proofread and make your work as professional as possible.
- Sources, when required, should be noted in APA style. Here are sites for easy reference:  
[http://www.vanguard.edu/faculty/ddegelman/index.aspx?doc\\_id=796](http://www.vanguard.edu/faculty/ddegelman/index.aspx?doc_id=796)  
<http://www.crk.umn.edu/library/links/apa5th.htm>

**GRADES:** You are entitled to fairness, consistency and clarity. You're far more likely to earn an A or A- when your work exceeds expectations. Work meeting basic competencies and expectations will most often receive grades in the B+ to B- range. Work that is either below par, omits some of the requirements or is late will usually earn a C+, C or C-. Students poorly executing and/or missing assignments may receive a D or F.

Please keep a folder of all your work as a means to track and ensure accuracy on grading throughout the semester. You should also record your own attendance and lateness; both are part of the calculation of your final grade. I suggest that you schedule at least one office meeting with me to discuss your progress in this course.

While the final grade chart below reflects the possible letter grades you may earn, please note that I will often omit the use of minuses (-) when grading your class work.

### **NUMBER/LETTER GRADE EQUIVALENTS:**

100-94 = A  
93-90 = A-  
89-85 = B+  
84-81 = B  
80-79 = B-  
78-75 = C+  
74-71 = C  
70-69 = C-  
68-65 = D  
0-64 = F

**Incomplete Policy:** Hofstra's policies regarding Incomplete grades, default grades, and associated deadlines can be found in the Undergraduate and Graduate Studies Bulletins (<http://bulletin.hofstra.edu/>).

ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION, BLOG:	<b>10%</b>
ASSIGNMENTS:	<b>50%</b>
MIDTERM:	<b>20%</b>
FINAL PROJECT:	<b>20%</b>

### **Assignments 1-5**

1. Prepare a 250- to 400-word press release on a news event (as provided by the instructor). The release should a) capture the news items and main messages and generate media interest and inspire coverage (5 points)

2. Prepare a written analysis (3-4 pages) of a significant, recent feature story you have selected from a business, lifestyle or daily publication, website or broadcast. You will suggest the media relations technique(s) and storytelling angle likely used to get coverage, and determine who the client/company is behind the story. You will discuss whether the story is a success and explain your opinion. (10 points)

3. Watch and evaluate three different cable news networks (ex. CNN, FOX, MSNBC, others) and prepare to analyze their coverage of the first presidential debate. You will show your understanding of how these networks present the facts alongside their own political perspectives, and how statistics, analysis and human stories are sometimes used to substantiate a specific point of view. You will include your own thoughtful reaction to how these various approaches may affect public opinion, and what ethical dilemmas such potentially biased news coverage presents. (5-8 pages). (10 points)

4. Select three organizations (businesses, nonprofits, institutions) and examine how each tell stories on Facebook, Twitter and a third social media platform of your choice. Answer the following for each

organization: How do they use each platform similarly or differently to provide interesting content to their audiences? Are they effectively engaging their target publics? How might they enhance their use of social media? (write 2-3 pages on each organization). (10 points)

5. You will develop a human interest story for a client and pitch it to a reporter (fellow students will take on the reporter's role). You will first develop the story's focus and content for maximum audience impact. You will then write a pitch letter, convert it to a telephone pitch, and then pitch your story during class. You will be graded based on the pitch's conciseness, brevity, effective use of key words, and ability to convey a compelling story in a convincing and cohesive manner. (15 points)

### **Midterm (20%)**

You will research, develop and present a media relations strategy for a company/ or nonprofit selected by the professor. The plan must include all components covered in class including a research, target audiences, messages, objectives, strategies, actions, and evaluation. The target media can be a combination of print, broadcast and online media and the selection should support the organization's business objectives. (20 points)

### **Final Presentation (20%)**

You will work in teams to create a mock press conference. Students will create the story they wish to tell, formulate talking points for the conference's introductory statement, prepare responses to potential questions, and then conduct the press conference with non-team members serving as reporters. You'll be graded on the conciseness and transparency of your messages, effective use of language and images to tell your story, and ability to convey information with a convincing and straightforward approach. (20 points)

### **Academic Honesty:**

Hofstra University Honor Code: "As a member of the Hofstra community I pledge to demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in all aspects of my life, both inside and out of the classroom. I understand that I am accountable for everything I say and write. I will not misrepresent my academic work, nor will I give or receive unauthorized assistance for academic work. I agree to respect the rights of all members of the Hofstra community. I will be guided by the values expressed in the P.R.I.D.E Principles. I accept the responsibility to follow this Honor Code at all times."

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious ethical and professional infractions. For information regarding Hofstra's statement of principles with respect to academic honesty, examples of violations, procedures for handling violations, as well as a student's right to appeal a charge, see Faculty Policy Series #11 for undergraduate students ([http://www.hofstra.edu/pdf/Faculty/Senate/senate\\_FPS\\_11.pdf](http://www.hofstra.edu/pdf/Faculty/Senate/senate_FPS_11.pdf)) and Faculty Policy Series #11G for graduate students ([http://www.hofstra.edu/pdf/Faculty/Senate/senate\\_FPS\\_11G.pdf](http://www.hofstra.edu/pdf/Faculty/Senate/senate_FPS_11G.pdf)).

### **Student Access Services (SAS):**

If you believe you need accommodations for a disability, please contact for Student Access Services (SAS). In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, qualified individuals with disabilities will not be discriminated against in any programs, or services available at Hofstra University.

Individuals with disabilities are entitled to accommodations designed to facilitate full access to all programs and services. SAS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will provide students with documented disabilities accommodation letters, as appropriate.

Please note that accommodations may require early planning and are not retroactive; please contact SSD as soon as possible. All students are responsible for providing accommodation letters to each instructor and for discussing with him or her the specific accommodations needed and how they can be best implemented in each course. For more information on services provided by the university and for submission of documentation, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities, 107 Student Center, 516-463-7075

### **Student Policy Prohibiting Discriminatory Harassment, Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct**

Hofstra prohibits sexual and other discriminatory harassment, stalking, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault and other sexual misconduct (collectively, “Gender Based Offenses”). If you or someone you know believes they have been subjected to any of these Gender Based Offenses, help is available. To make a report, or for more information about Hofstra’s Student Policy Prohibiting Discriminatory Harassment, Relationship Violence, and Sexual Misconduct (available at <http://hofstra.edu/sexualmisconduct>), please contact the Title IX Coordinator at (516) 463-5841 or [TitleIXCoordinator@hofstra.edu](mailto:TitleIXCoordinator@hofstra.edu), or Public Safety at (516) 463-6606. Confidential resources and support are also available from clinicians in Student Counseling Services (516-463-6791), medical professionals at the Health and Wellness Center (516-463-6745), and clergy in the Interfaith Center.

### **Absences for Religious Observance**

Hofstra University recognizes that students and/or faculty may from time to time miss class due to religious observances. Students who anticipate missing class for this reason should notify faculty members in advance. Likewise, faculty members who anticipate missing class for religious observance should notify students in their classes.

As stated in the Faculty Policy Series, "No student shall be expelled or refused admission to Hofstra University because he or she is unable to participate in any examination, study or work requirement because of his or her religious obligations and practices. However, all students are expected to complete all assignments and examinations. It is understood that no adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to any student who avails him or herself of religious observances. The University, faculty, and student shall work together to achieve a reasonable accommodation concerning any conflicts between educational and religious obligations."

## COURSE CALENDAR (subject to change)

### September 9:

**PART 1 -- Media terminology.** Course Orientation: Welcome and overview discussion. Review syllabus, required texts and assignments as well as class policies and procedures. Discussion of common media terms and media culture reference points.

**PART 2 – Who is the media?** Review of ownership, government regulation and the FCC. Students will explore various forms of media content, networks and other delivery systems.

**READINGS:** *Media Now* chapters 1 and 2. Also visit [www.freepress.net](http://www.freepress.net), read and print out two articles relating to media ownership and control. Be prepared to discuss your articles in class on 9/24.

**ASSIGNMENT 1** – News release. (Due 9/24)

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### September 24:

**PART 3 – Traditional vs. online media.** The past, present and future of how the public seeks and consumes information. Students will explore how traditional and online media co-exist in today's media environments.

**PART 4 -- What is news?** How is it developed and who are the key players? Who is a journalist? What is the PR role in the process of delivering news? Students will seek to discover who sets the information agenda. Ethics in reporting and use of images will be reviewed.

**READINGS:** *Media Now*, chapters 4, 9; *Visual Storytelling*, chapter 1

**ASSIGNMENT 2** – News story analysis and media relations technique (Due on 10/8)

**ASSIGNMENT 3**-- Evaluate cable news' post-presidential debate coverage. (Due on 10/29)

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### October 8:

**PART 5 -- Using media.** Students will analyze news and information for tone, perspective and bias. Review of the rise of social media: blogs, citizen journalists, corporate websites, and video.

**PART 6 -- Effective media relations tools.** Students will review how organizations tell stories through their online newsrooms.

**READING:** *Media Now*, Chapter 3; *Visual Storytelling*, chapter 2; article: "Tyranny of the Mob" by Joel Stein, *Time*, 08.29.16

**ASSIGNMENT 4:** Analyze three organizations and three social media platforms (Due on 10/29) (Remember that Assignment 3 is also due on 10/29).

**October 29:**

**PART 7 -- Reaching the right media.** Students will focus on developing goals and strategies for a media relations plan, including developing the message and target media list. Students will review writing effective media advisories and pitch messages, and practice telephone pitching.

**PART 8 – The PR campaign.** There will be a review of the format and strategies needed to create a PR/media campaign proposal.

**READING:** *Media Now*, Chapter 6 and 8;

**MIDTERM PAPER** (Due 11/5)

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**November 5:**

**PART 9 -- The spokesperson.** The class will learn the skills involved in media interviews and press conferences. Students will be interviewed on camera and recorded; recordings will be analyzed for class discussion. Students will learn to control the interview and effectively handle difficult questions.

**PART 10 – Human interest stories.** The class will observe examples of human interest stories and learn to create compelling promotional content based on the human condition.

**READINGS:** *Media Now*, Chapter 7; *Visual Storytelling*, chapters 3,4 and 5

**ASSIGNMENT 5:** Develop a human interest story (Due 11/19).

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**November 19:**

**PART 11 – Storytelling.** Students will analyze situations and learn to mine for potential story ideas. Focus will be on creating various story environments for different media outlets and platforms.

**PART 12 – Spokespeople and press conferences.** Class will review techniques for preparing spokespeople for interviews. Students will create potential questions and answers for their press conferences.

**READINGS:** *Media Now*, Chapter 14;

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**December 3**

**PART 13 – Crisis management.** Students will review the steps involved in preparing for a potential public relations crisis as it relates to communicating with the media. Ethics and transparency will be emphasized.

**PART 14 -- FINAL PRESENTATIONS** (press conference)