

Course: PRAD 562 • Section 201 • Winter 2016

Media Relations

Class Time: Wed. 5:45 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Classroom: 14 E. Jackson (Daley building), Room 1129

Professor: Matt Ragas, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 3:00 - 5:30 p.m. and by appointment

Course Description:

The Media Relations graduate seminar is designed to facilitate a detailed understanding of the theory and practice of media relations, a core function of the public relations profession. Through a mix of readings and discussions, assignments, guest speakers, and a team final report/presentation, students will gain a strong foundation in the fundamentals of media relations. More specifically, students will gain practical experience articulating media goals and objectives; conducting an analysis of media coverage using Crimson Hexagon social media monitoring software to familiarize themselves with the client; identifying and/or developing a newsworthy idea to anchor a campaign around; developing a media list (and justifying the influencers targeted) using the Gorkana media contact database; and building influencer dossiers and a Q&A guide using social media tools and a media database. The final project entails building a media relations briefing, including a pitch list and influencer dossiers with key message points, personalized pitch e-mails for influencers, recommendations related to the implementation of the campaign idea(s)/focus and relevant evaluation metrics.

This class was developed with generous feedback and support from various industry professionals and organizations. The professor especially wishes to thank the Chicago office of Hill + Knowlton Strategies, the New York office of Gorkana Group, Joe Poulos of Edelman corporate affairs, and Crimson Hexagon.

Course Objectives:

- To provide an overview of the theory and research behind the practice of modern media relations.
- To gain an understanding that the practice of modern media relations is strategic, purposive, and research-driven. The pitch and the interview remain essential, but are just one part of a larger process.
- To examine how the practice of media relations is changing with the growth of social media, citizen journalism, shrinking newsrooms, and fragmented audiences through interaction with guest speakers.
- To practice developing and applying media relations strategies and tactics by completing assignments towards developing a media relations briefing based on a real-world situation and client.
- To enhance presentation and writing skills in communicating persuasively, clearly, and successfully.

Required Reading Materials:

There is no required textbook for the course. Due to the dynamic and changing nature of the practice of media relations, arguably no one book is comprehensive and current enough to be worth the investment for this course.

Instead, this course is based on a selection of weekly readings drawn from industry and academic sources. All readings are available in PDF form or via the Web through the course's section on Desire2Learn (D2L).

Additional readings may be posted as we progress through the quarter. **It is your responsibility to read the assigned readings and come prepared to discuss them in class on the evening they have been assigned.**

Course Evaluation:

The evaluation of the coursework will be based on the student's performance in eight areas, each which constitute a portion of the final grade. These areas include: 1) individual blog assignment (post to the class blog related to media relations and making a brief presentation), 2) class attendance and participation, 3) weekly #PRAD562 tweet about media relations, 4) media goal and objectives memo, 5) media coverage analysis assignment, 6) media list builder assignment, 7) journalist dossier and Q&A guide assignment, and 8) the media relations plan briefing presentation and associated slide deck due the final week of class (team-based).

The following provides a point allocation for each of these areas:

1) Blog Post and Mini-Presentation (<i>Individual Work</i>)	(outline below)	20
2) Attendance/Participation (<i>Individual Work</i>)	(outline below)	30
3) Tweeting Media Relations (<i>Individual Work</i>)	(outline below)	20
4) Media Goals and Objectives Memo (<i>Individual Work</i>)	(outline below)	20
5) Media Coverage Analysis Assignment (<i>Team Based</i>)	(outline below)	20
6) Media List Builder Assignment (<i>Team Based</i>)	(outline below)	20
7) Journalist Dossier/Q&A Guide Assignment (<i>Team Based</i>)	(outline below)	20
8) Media Relations Briefing Book and Final Presentation (<i>Team Based</i>)	(outline below)	50

TOTAL

200 possible points

Course Grading Scale:

A: 93-100%
A-: 90-92%
B+: 87-89%
B: 83-86%
B-: 80-82%

C+: 77-79%
C: 73-76%
C-: 70-72%
D: 60-69%
F: 0-59%

Note: I round up partial points .5 or higher to the next whole number. For example, a 92.5 becomes a 93, while a 92.4 remains a 92. No exceptions.

1) Class Attendance and Participation (30 points)

As this is a learner-centered course, your attendance and active participation in class is essential. You are expected to always arrive for class on time (arriving late or leaving early is the same as being absent). Attendance will be taken each class by passing around a sign-in sheet. **Email me (mrugas@depaul.edu) in advance if you plan to miss a class for a work, family, or health reason and I will most likely count this as an *excused absence*.** If I don't hear from you in advance, I will record your absence as an *unexcused absence*.

You only have the potential to earn an “A” on the class attendance and participation part of your grade if you miss one class or less AND you *consistently* contribute to discussion *throughout the quarter*.

Participation is based on the quality and quantity of your contributions. **IMPORTANT:** It is your responsibility to sign in. If your signature isn't on the sign-in sheet, you'll be marked as absent. I'll always try to remind you.

Leaving after the break without a valid excuse/notice for your absence and/or arriving to the start of class more than a few minutes late where it becomes a habit counts as an unexcused absence!

2) Blog Post and Mini-Presentation (20 points)

You will help maintain the class Tumblr blog (<http://www.DePaulMediaRelations.com>) which will feature summaries and critiques submitted by you and your classmates about (1) news stories relevant to media relations or (2) resources (blogs, books, websites, research reports, and online tools) that are helpful and valuable for media relations professionals. **If you choose to review an online tool, website, blog, service, etc., you must demo it during your presentation.** This is a great opportunity to share knowledge and information about media relations through crowd sourcing among your classmates and learning from each other. By the assigned date, you will have made your post to the class Tumblr and will make a short presentation (~5-7 minutes, timed) about what you have chosen to cover and share with the class. **Regardless of what you select, you must provide specific and meaningful implications for the practice of media relations (i.e., I want to see/hear your opinion/analysis NOT just a summary).** Part of your grade will be based on class participation and involvement so several discussion prompts should be prepared. No PowerPoint, but you will have access to the classroom computer to show visual aids, such as pulling up a website, social media pages, a short video clip, etc. Class interaction is expected. An assignment sheet will be provided.

3) Tweeting Media Relations (20 points – 2 pts. per week)

Starting with week two, each week you will be responsible for tweeting about media relations using the hashtag #PRAD562. You must use this exact hashtag on Twitter to receive credit for your tweet. You may tweet about any one of the following three topics: (1) share a headline/link to a story in the news that week directly related to media relations, (2) respond to a #PRAD562 tweet posted by one of your classmates with a thoughtful comment that helps advance class discussion or (3) respond/comment/tweet a question about one of the assigned weekly readings. I will select one or more tweets each week as a “top tweet.” A top tweet will earn double points for that week, meaning you can take off from submitting questions in a future week. You will receive credit in week one simply for signing up for this assignment. Tweets will be submitted and grade for nine weeks during the quarter. **Please note: A student cannot earn more than a max of 20 points.**

4) Media Goals and Objectives Memo (20 points)

In this initial individual assignment, you will write a short memo (maximum of 2 pages) where you briefly outline what resources (i.e., review company website, scan media coverage via web visits/searches, watch presentation by client representatives, read client brief, etc.) you used to familiarize yourself with the client. You will then briefly share your assessment of the opportunities and challenges facing the client and how media relations can play a lead role in addressing one of these identified opportunities and challenges. Finally, you will wrap your memo by writing a Goal and several related Objectives for your proposed media relations plan. Your goal and objectives will follow best practices for goal and objective writing (see the readings and lectures). Guidelines for goal and objective writing and an assignment sheet will be provided.

5) Media Coverage Analysis Assignment (20 points)

In this team assignment, your team will conduct an analysis of recent media coverage of your client using the Crimson Hexagon media monitoring platform. Through completing this assignment, you will gain greater familiarity with how traditional and social media has been covering your client. You will identify the volume,

tone and contents of coverage in traditional and social media surrounding your client, and identify and share relevant insights from this media analysis. In the final section of this assignment, you will highlight potential newsworthy ideas (resulting from this media research and the previous secondary research you have conducted) that a campaign could be built around. An assignment sheet will be provided.

6) Media List Builder Assignment (20 points)

Using Gorkana, a professional media contact database used widely by public relations and corporate communication professionals, your team will develop a media contact list that is appropriate for achieving the media goal and objectives you have outlined. You will restate (and potentially update) your media goal and objectives at the start of this assignment. Leveraging your prior media coverage analysis for your client, you will justify why each influencer/media outlet was selected and why (i.e., why will this influencer/outlet and their audience be interested in your pitch? Why will they care? Do they cover this space? What do you have that's newsworthy for them?) for each selected influencer/outlet. An emphasis will be placed on the strategic rationale underlying the choices made in building your contact list with an eye on how these selections are congruent with and advance your stated media goal and objectives. An assignment sheet will be provided.

7) Journalist Dossier and Q&A Guide Assignment (20 points)

Just as a good journalist does detailed background research on the interviewee, a good media relations person does background research on the interviewer (i.e., the journalist, blogger, or other influencer) to anticipate questions, the likely flow of the interview, and the perspective of the journalist and their media outlet. With this in mind, using publicly available information gleaned through a combination of online news databases (i.e., reviewing journalists' past clips/coverage), websites, and social networking sites (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.), your team will build dossiers for the top two influencers on your media list. Leveraging this background research, you will also create a Q&A briefing guide to go along with the dossiers. This guide will provide your organization (and particularly its spokespeople) with insights in advance of the interview into which questions (think who, what, when, where, why) the individual may ask and the appropriate talking points in response. Again, think in terms of your stated media goal and objectives. An assignment sheet will be provided.

8) Media Relations Briefing (Final Presentation and Slide Deck) (50 points)

In this final assignment, your team will review the individual and team work completed up to this point. This briefing will draw from updating work you have previously submitted, as well as adding some new sections/materials. The final project entails building a presentation slide deck that highlights your work: the pitch list and influencer dossiers with key message points, personalized pitch e-mails for influencers, recommendations related to the implementation of the campaign idea(s)/focus and relevant evaluation metrics. This final assignment will include making a team presentation of this information (~20 minutes) followed by questions on the last day of class. Representatives of the client will attend the final presentations as non-grading judges. These representatives will select a "winning team" and bonus points will be awarded to the winning team. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided. Team member evaluations will factor into your final grade.

Deadlines for Presentations and Reports

Deadlines are real. Late work will be reduced by one letter grade for each 24 hour period it is not turned in or does not follow the stated submission format. Work turned in during the middle or end of class (this includes making blog posts *after* the start of class!) is considered late. This pertains to both team and individual work. As you know, in a professional environment, the consequences of missing deadlines are much worse. You are responsible for meeting all assignment deadlines even if you have an excused absence from class for that week.

IMPORTANT: Assigned individual and team presentation dates *cannot* be made up at a later date. You will receive a zero if you miss a previously assigned presentation deadline so please plan accordingly!

Academic Honesty

Cheating and plagiarism (literary or artistic theft), copying someone else's work, or other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any case of academic dishonesty will be considered grounds for *an automatic failing grade in the course*. Having someone else do your work for you is also considered academic dishonesty. University guidelines will be followed for any offenses. Please don't put yourself in this situation.

Please refer to the Student Handbook for more details: <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html>

Inclusiveness

This class encourages the free exchange of ideas. Every attempt is made to make all course material non-sexist, diverse, and multi-cultural. Should I ever fail to meet this goal, please let me know immediately.

Please be respectful of your classmates. A great way to learn is through class discussions. I love the exchange of ideas. It's fine to disagree, but it's important that everyone stays respectful and civil to differing viewpoints.

Teamwork

As with most fields, the practice of media relations and public relations is quite often a team sport. Even when I work as a solo practitioner, I still ultimately work in a team, as I must successfully collaborate with an organization's communication department, management, other service providers, etc. For each team assignment in this class, you will have the opportunity to evaluate your teammates, thereby providing an added incentive for everyone on the team to carry their load. Contact me if you experience issues collaborating within a team.

The Writing Center

Consider visiting the Writing Center to discuss your written assignments for this course. Writing Center Tutors are specially trained undergraduate and graduate students who can help you at any stage of your writing project. They can help you focus and develop your ideas, review your drafts, and polish your writing, as well as answer questions about grammar, mechanics, style, and citation.

You may schedule appointments on an as-needed or weekly basis. In addition to Face-to-Face appointments, the Writing Center also provides Written Feedback by Email and Online Appointments. Be sure to schedule your appointment with enough time to think about and incorporate the feedback you'll receive. Bring/upload your assignment handout and/or any other relevant materials to your appointment.

How do I make an appointment?

To schedule a Face-to-Face, Written Feedback by Email, or Online Appointment, visit www.depaul.edu/writing. You can also call one of our offices: (312) 362-6726 (Loop Office, 1600 Lewis Center) or (773) 325-4272 (LPC Office, SAC 212). When possible, the Writing Center accepts walk-in requests, but it's always a good idea to schedule your appointment ahead of time. You may schedule tutorials on an as-needed basis or as weekly standing appointments up to 3 hours per week.

All Writing Center services are free to the DePaul community.

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation for disabilities, including LD and AD/HD, should provide me with written documentation from the appropriate university offices regarding the specific disability and

accommodation requested during the first week of class. All discussions will remain confidential. For more information, contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD):

<http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/studentswithdisabilities>, (773) 325-1677. Offices: Rm 370, Student Center (2250 N. Sheffield), Lincoln Park Campus and Rm 1400, Lewis Center (25 E. Jackson), Loop Campus

Final Notes:

- I try to “practice what I preach” about the importance of transparency. I will make every effort to adhere to this class schedule and grading system, but reserve the right to make necessary changes.
- While laptops et al. are welcome for taking notes during class, please DO NOT use them to Facebook, IM, email, read news, etc. during class; it is distracting and disrespectful to your classmates and me.
- Please turn your phones to vibrate when in class unless they are needed for emergency purposes. Visibly texting or checking email during class is again distracting and disrespectful to everyone else in the class.
- This class and the assigned work is challenging, but in the end it is rewarding and helps prepare you with knowledge and skills for the successful practice of media relations. If you notice yourself having trouble, please see me immediately. Also feel free to approach me about any concerns you might have.
- Again, the following dates and topics are a good faith attempt at providing you with a tentative schedule, but please note that they are not etched in stone. We will adapt as needed to circumstances.
- If you cannot meet with me during office hours on Mon. and Wed., please see me after class, generally we can meet then, or find another time that works. *If you do drop by during office hours, if you e-mail me in advance regarding your question(s), you are likely to get a more detailed answer in person.*
- Generally, email is the fastest way to reach me, followed by my office phone. Include “PRAD 562” in the subject heading of your email and make sure to include your full name/contact info in the email. If you have an emergency or need an immediate response, please feel free to try me on my cell phone.
- Media relations is my favorite area of PR and I very much look forward to teaching this class each year!

About Your Professor:

Matt Ragas, Ph.D. is Academic Director of the M.A. in Public Relations and Advertising (PRAD) program and is an Associate Professor in the College of Communication at DePaul University. He teaches and researches in subjects at the intersection of business and communication. Matt earned a Ph.D. in Mass Communication with a focus in public relations from the University of Florida and a M.S. in Management and B.S. in Business Administration (marketing major), both from the University of Central Florida. An award-winning teacher and researcher, Matt has authored three books and more than 50 published or in-press journal articles, book chapters, conference papers, trade articles, and research reports. He is author with colleague Ron Culp of the book *Business Essentials for Strategic Communicators: Creating Shared Value for the Organization and its Stakeholders* (Palgrave Macmillan, December 2014). This book is in use at a dozen universities. He is most proud of serving as a faculty advisor on five winning Arthur W. Page Society case competition entries authored by PRAD graduate students. He also co-authored with two of his former graduate students a forthcoming case study article in a scholarly journal. As it relates to media relations and teaching this class, prior to academia, Matt worked in business communication and business journalism positions where he has both pitched story ideas and been pitched to, as well as served as an expert source quoted by the media. He continues to consult for a range of organizations, and is active in the leadership of several professional and academic associations.

Tentative Class Schedule

- Week 1:** 1/6: Course Overview and Introduction
- *Review of syllabus, class blog assignment and weekly Twitter assignment*
 - *Sign-up sheets to select (1) blog assignment dates and (2) Twitter handles*
- Week 2:** 1/13: Review of Media Relations Theory and Research Findings
Best Practices in Strategic Communication Goal and Objective Writing
- **REMINDER: First #PRAD562 tweet due on 1/12 (due each Tues. by 11:59 pm CT)**
 - Guest speakers: *Hill & Knowlton Strategies team members introduce class client*
 - *Review media relations goal and objectives memo (first assignment)*
 - *Schedule posted for class blog assignment (blog post and presentation)*
- Week 3:** 1/20: Newsworthiness, News Values and the Production of News
- **(1) Media goal and objectives memo due (submit to D2L dropbox by 5:45 pm on 1/20)**
 - **Class blog assignment presentations begin (check your assigned date!)**
 - *Review media coverage analysis/idea generation assignment*
 - *Introduction to Crimson Hexagon and distribute login information*
 - *Class time to sign-up/form teams for team assignments the rest of the quarter*
- Week 4:** 1/27: Workshop Day on Using Crimson Hexagon's ForSight for Media Monitoring!
- *Teams should be formed/finalized for team assignments*
 - Guest panel: *professional journalists discuss media relations and public relations*
- Week 5:** 2/3: Source Credibility and the Concept of Third-Party Endorsement
- **(2) Media coverage analysis/idea generation assignment due (submit assignment via D2L dropbox, as well as submit completed team eval form to dropbox)**
 - *King cake party (direct from New Orleans) – Mardi Gras is next week (2/9)!*
 - In-class training: *Using the Gorkana media intelligence database (distribute login info)*
 - *Review media list builder assignment and class exercise with media database*
- Week 6:** 2/10: Conducting Media Intelligence and Preparing for Interviews
- Special PRAD event: *Michele Anderson, M.D. of Ogilvy Public Relations, Chicago office*
 - *Review journalist dossier and Q&A guide assignment*
- Week 7:** 2/17: Perfecting the Media Pitch (and Catch!)
Media Assets and Information Subsides (i.e., Pre-Packaged PR Materials)
- **(3) Media list builder assignment due (submit assignment and eval via D2L dropbox)**
 - *Overview of final assignment (media relations briefing presentation and slide deck)*
 - Guest speaker (via Skype): *Julie Wernau, reporter, The Wall Street Journal (NYC)*
- Week 8:** 2/24: Earned Media and Paid Media – Amplifying Third-Party Coverage (and Native Advertising)
- *Class-time to revisit Crimson Hexagon, Gorkana and update findings*
- Week 9:** 3/2: Media Relations Measurement and Evaluation
- **(4) Journalist dossiers assignment due (submit assignment and evals via D2L dropbox)**
 - *Review and discussion on linking media goal/objectives to evaluation metrics*
 - Check-in visit with client: *Hill & Knowlton on behalf of class client*
- Week 10:** 3/9: Review Day and Pizza Party
- *Class pizza party and class potluck to celebrate the quarter*
 - *One-on-one review time with each team; plus, general class review/question time*
- EXAM WEEK:** 3/16: **(5) Media relations brief deck for final team presentations due**
- *Final presentation slide deck submitted electronically via D2L dropbox*
 - *Reminder: must submit completed team eval to dropbox by class time as well!*
 - Guest judge(s) attending final presentation: *Hill & Knowlton office (Merch Mart)*

Note: Login to the course D2L page and look under the Readings folder for each week to see the assigned readings for the week. Please be prepared to discuss all assigned readings by the class date for which they have been assigned.