

**COM 4523  
PUBLIC RELATIONS: CASE STUDIES  
FALL 2009**

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**TEXT**

Jerry Hendrix and Darrel Hayes, *Public Relations Cases*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. Thomson Wadsworth Corporation, 2010.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The course brings public relations to life in a way that classroom lectures cannot. Dealing with up-to-date cases is a very effective approach to learn about the applications of public relations theory. The main purpose of this course is to provide students with opportunities to articulate their personal judgment and knowledge. Thus, it is geared to help future practitioners develop agility in the principles and applications of effective two-way communication in a wide variety of situations likely to confront them and their employers. At the end of the course, each student should be able to:

1. Apply public relations concepts and theory to solve problems and improve thinking.
2. Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.
3. Acquire skills in working with others as a member of a team.
4. Develop specific skills, competencies and points of view needed by public relations practitioners.
5. Understand the basics of strategic management communication.
6. Conduct primary and secondary research.

**COURSE FORMAT**

Class meetings will be conducted on a top management/executive employee professional basis. They will be devoted to case studies, oral presentations, reviews, and critiques. Each student will handle four case studies/problems and one major in-depth study of an organization of his/her own choice. Occasional pop quizzes over the readings will be given during the early minutes of the class. They are intended to encourage you to keep up with the readings. Please note that quizzes cannot be made up unless you have a documented illness.

Handouts, notes, and lecture overheads from previous classes are not available from the instructor. Thus, you should exchange phone numbers and e-mail addresses of two classmates so that you can make copies of such materials if necessary. I don't cover any day's lecture twice.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

The four cases/problems will cover a variety of issues such as employer/employee relations, home/community relations, consumer relations, media relations, special interests, minority interests, communication in crises, standards and ethics. In each case, a student will have to prepare a short report (three to four pages). The report should explain the complexity of the case/problem and provide a sound analysis of actions taken. Each report will be worth twenty points. Students will be called to present and discuss their reports.

The major case study will be in-depth study of a business firm, organization, department on campus or a particular public relations effort within a company. The study cannot be done properly in one or two weeks. It will take eight to ten weeks. The appropriate length of the case should be 10-12 pages, plus bibliography. It will require considerable research (several trips to the library) and interviews with those in charge and those affected by the organization. By **September 24<sup>th</sup>**, the organization should be selected. On that date, every student will submit a typed statement indicating the name of the organization he/she plans to study and reasons for that choice. The instructor's approval must be obtained before students begin working on their research. On **October 29<sup>th</sup>**, students will turn in outlines of their progress on the major case projects. The outlines will be discussed in class. Failure to meet the September 24<sup>th</sup> and October 29<sup>th</sup> deadlines will affect the course grade. Detailed guidelines for the major case study are attached.

All assignments must be typed, double-spaced and submitted in hard copies. They will be checked for soundness of research methods, content, style, and grammar. A severe penalty will be imposed on poor grammar, confusing writing, spelling errors, typographical errors, incorrect punctuation, incomplete bibliographic information, missing or out-of-order pages, and hand written sections or corrections. E-mail copies of assignments will not be accepted.

## **POLICIES**

### **Class Attendance**

You will be allowed two excused/unexcused absences during the semester. No matter what the circumstances are, each additional absence will lower the final grade a half-letter grade. Attendance will be taken in the first ten minutes of each class. After that grace period, you will be considered absent. You have to keep track of the dates and number of classes you miss. I can only compare my record with your list of absences if a need arises. Also, you are responsible for any and all information missed during an absence.

### **Cheating and Plagiarism**

Cheating and plagiarism will NOT be tolerated. All work submitted must be the original work of the student, for this course only (no submitting the same assignment in more than one class). Please see the University's *Student Code of Conduct* for information regarding this policy. Any student whom the instructor has sufficient evidence to believe has cheated or plagiarized in the course will receive an automatic "F" (failure) in the entire course.

### **Assigning a Grade of “Incomplete”**

Incompletes will be given only when they meet the *Policy for Incompletes* on file in the Department of Communication office, as well as the University requirements for Incompletes as specified in the *Handbook of Operating Procedures*.

### **Classroom Civility**

We want to build a classroom climate that is comfortable for all. In a communication class, it is especially important that we (1) display respect for all members of the classroom --including the professor and fellow classmates; (2) pay attention to and participate in all class sessions and activities; (3) avoid unnecessary disruption during class time (e.g., having private conversations, reading the newspaper, doing work for another class, etc.); and (4) avoid racist, sexist, homophobic or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus and classroom. This is not an exhaustive list of behaviors; rather, it represents the minimal standards that help make the classroom a productive place for all concerned. Make sure you turn off your pagers and cell phones prior to class. They are strictly prohibited.

If you suspect anyone in the class is cheating or plagiarizing, please report it to me anonymously. Since others who receive higher grades by plagiarizing or cheating may affect your grade, this is an important matter to us all. I am committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct. Falsified medical excuses and presenting another student’s work as your own fall with the guidelines of this academic integrity policy.

### **Academic Withdrawal from the Course**

Please note the final date to withdraw from an individual course. After this date, you may withdraw from the university up to the first day of the last week of classes but may no longer withdraw from an individual course. Academic withdrawal is processed and approved *by the office of the DEAN, not by your professor*, and will only be approved with evidence of extreme and unanticipated circumstances that prevent completion of an individual course.

### **Special Needs**

If you have any condition, such as physical or learning disability, which will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as I have outlined it or which will require special academic accommodations, please see a coordinator at Disability Services (MS 2.03.18) so that accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, meet with me as soon as possible to work out a plan of action.

### **Proper Use of E-mails**

E-mails are not a substitute for meeting with the instructor during office hours. Office hours are the best place to ask questions about the material and to discuss issues relating to the class.

E-mails, on the other hand, can be used to schedule an appointment outside of office hours, or for *short* questions clarifying class assignments. In-depth questions about course readings or entire day’s lecture, as well as questions about grades, are not appropriate for e-mails.

### **Limited Use of Laptops**

The use of laptops is prohibited in class unless it is directly related to that particular day’s lecture, exercise and or assignment. Any other usage may result in a disciplinary action.

## **GRADING**

Your grade will be based on your performance in four areas. Points will be assigned as follows to calculate the course grades:

Four cases/problems	80
Major case study	80
Pop quizzes	30
Class participation	<u>10</u>
Total possible points	200

## **PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING DEADLINES**

September 17	Case report 1
September 24	Major case study proposal
October 1	Case report 2
October 15	Case report 3
October 29	Major case study outlines
November 12	Case report 4
November 19	MAJOR CASE STUDY
November 19 and December 3	Major Case Study Presentations

**The instructor reserves the right to add to or modify class requirements, schedules, and or materials. Any changes will be announced in class.**