

Comm. 350-100 | 13753 | Dunbar, 3209 | M/W, 2-3:15 p.m.

**Office Location:** 220 Sprau Tower**Office Telephone:** (269) 387-5369**Office Hours:** M/W, Noon-1:45, and by appt.**E-mail:** [MKent@WMich.Edu](mailto:MKent@WMich.Edu)**Home Page:** <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~mkent/Index.html>**Class Files:** <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~mkent/>**Course Description**

Public relations is a very rewarding profession that involves creativity, strategic planning, writing, interpersonal communication, group communication, public speaking skills, and networking skills. Contrary to popular belief, however, public relations is not just a profession for people who like to talk. The best public relations practitioners never appear in front of cameras defending their organizations. The best public relations practitioners *counsel* their organizations about how to avoid crises and behave ethically so that potentially damaging situations never even occur.

Modern public relations is based on communication theory, research skills, principles of scientific persuasion, knowledge of business and marketing, desktop publishing skills, models of past practice, and writing skills. Introduction to Public Relations (Com 350) will expose you to all of these areas as well as the basic theories and history of the field.

**Objectives**

- To learn about the history of the profession and the direction the field is heading.
- To learn about the basic theories and assumptions guiding public relations.
- To learn about the RACE formula and other useful heuristics.
- To learn the importance of research in public relations.
- To learn about persuasion theory and the importance of persuasion in message production.
- To learn about the role of new communication technologies in public relations.
- To learn about Associated Press style.
- To teach students how to write news releases and pitch letters.
- To teach students about portfolio development.
- To teach students the basics of message design and how to create more compelling documents.

**Catalog Description** (*not mine*): Introduction to Public Relations will examine the role of public relations and public information in a variety of organizations with a communication theory perspective. Introduction to Public Relations is designed to prepare individuals for positions in public relations and public information, or for other positions in organizations concerned with the flow of information across organization boundaries.

**Miscellaneous**

- All readings and reading questions are due on the date indicated.
- Missed exams cannot be made up for any reason.
- Exams may only be taken early with prior permission.
- *Having even one spelling error will result in a zero for an assignment.*
- Late assignments will be discounted 10% per *calendar day*.
- If you do not have an assignment ready to turn in, don't skip class. Come to class anyway. There is no value in skipping class.
- Come see me in office hours with questions or for feedback before assignments are due. Office hours are there for you; you pay for them so use them.
- Familiarize yourself with my handout on APA style and follow it for all assignments.
- ***Come up with a method to help me remember your name.***

## Required Texts

Diggs-Brown, B., & Glou, J. L. (2006). *The pr styleguide: Formats for public relations practice (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning. ISBN: 0495006432.

Goldstein, N. (Ed.) (2006). *The Associated Press stylebook and libel manual and briefing on media law with internet guide and glossary*. New York: Associated Press. ISBN: 0917360508.

Heath, R., & Coombs, W. T. (2006). *Today's Public Relations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN: 1412926351.

## Class Policies

### Formatting and Writing Expectations

Public relations is characterized by effective writing. As a result, professional writing standards are expected on all assignments. Professional standards include: correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and careful proofreading. No spelling errors are allowed. *Having even one spelling error will result in a zero for the assignment.* Except when otherwise noted, all assignments should be double-spaced (27 lines-per-page), have one-inch margins all around, and be written in Bookman or Bookman Old Style 11 pt. **Never use** Arial, Helvetica, Times or Times New Roman, for any assignment in my class. I will not accept it and your assignment will be late when I send you back to fix it.

### Attendance Policy

In the business world, attendance is an important aspect of professionalism. Indeed, “just showing up” is sometimes the most important aspect of job performance and can mean the difference between a promotion or a layoff. Additionally, attribution theory tells us that even the best employees/professors/students in the world will be perceived as slackers if they do not come to class. Getting all As on tests/assignments is necessary but not sufficient. Attendance is also a required aspect of my class just like doing the reading and taking tests.

Western Michigan’s attendance policy reads as follows: “Students are responsible directly to their instructors for class and laboratory attendance, and for petitions to excuse absences” (Catalog, 2003–2005, p. 29). In light of this, and because of the importance of attendance noted above, my attendance policy is as follows: *Students may miss the equivalent of one week of classes without penalty (on a two day a week schedule). If three classes are missed, your final grade will be reduced by 5%; if four classes are missed, your final grade will be reduced by 10%. Missing more than four classes will result in a failing grade for the course.*

**Note: There are no excused absences.** Being sick, in an automobile accident, going on a job interview, attending a conference or funeral, getting arrested, visiting a friend in the hospital, etc., will not be excused. Coming late or leaving early 3 times equals an absence. Arriving “very late” or leaving “very early” (my judgment) will count as two “lates” or an absence.

† **NB:** If you plan to miss a day because of a religious holiday, you need to tell me early in the semester what day you will miss. The day *before* a religious holiday is unacceptable. All religions know the dates of religious holidays several months in advance.

The only other activity that I will excuse besides religious holidays is jury duty, and only if you are on a jury—you report for jury duty early and are assigned or excused in plenty of time to make my class.

For all other reasons that you might miss class, be sure that you have not used your allotted absences so that you can afford to miss a class with no penalty when you need one.

## Plagiarism Policy

**Plagiarism** is the unauthorized or inappropriate use of the words or ideas of others. Plagiarism occurs when written or spoken material is borrowed (even from oneself), in whole or in part, and passed off as original by a writer or speaker. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, presenting someone else's ideas, speech, presentation, essay, book review, or news release as original. Plagiarism also includes failing to document or cite the source of word-for-word or paraphrased material in oral presentations or written assignments. *It is my policy to pursue plagiarism vigorously, to fail students who plagiarize for the entire class, and to report cases of plagiarism to the university administration.*

The University is an academic community of scholars. Academic dishonesty is a very serious offense against the integrity of this community and will not be tolerated. All academic work submitted by you is assumed to be your own *original work* and to contain your own thought, research, and self-expression. Work that borrows the ideas, organization, or wording, from others must be properly acknowledged. Similarly, work that was conducted for another class should not be passed off as original.

*Additionally*, anytime a student or professional attempts to deceive another by pretending to do work, or take credit for work that s/he did not actually complete, including changing the font size or style, triple spacing, claiming to have submitted an assignment on time that the professor must have "lost" etc., s/he is engaging in academic dishonesty or "cheating." What you are attempting to do is no different from copying from someone else's test. The consequences of this will be just as serious as plagiarism.

**NB:** Many students are caught each semester and failed for plagiarism. If even one student in one hundred cheats, the number is too high. In a typical semester, a couple hundred students are caught cheating at a school this size. For students planning to graduate, plagiarizing an assignment is quite possibly the stupidest thing they could do. Do not engage in plagiarism in any form. If you are ever unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, ask me or someone else in the department. At the very least, send an e-mail out to me at two in the morning with your question to CYA and explain what you will do to try to be accurate with your citations. When you enter the business world, plagiarism will not only get you fired, but also may ruin your career and land you in jail depending upon what ideas/content you steal.

There is a very simple rule to follow in order to avoid plagiarism and never get in trouble.

**Cite everything** that is not your own words or idea. If you know that someone else said it, wrote it, or thought it, anywhere, even some guy at a party, cite the source. Do this and you will never get in trouble for plagiarism. Always cite *source, year and page numbers* in text.

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## Calculating Grades

To calculate your overall grade throughout the semester, you simply multiply the points you earned on a particular assignment by the points the assignment was worth, add all of the points up for each assignment, and then divide by the total. For example, say you received 75% on your presentation, which is worth 10% of the course total, so you earned 7.5 points ( $.75 \times 10 = 7.5$ ). Similarly, if you received an 85% on your first exam, worth 15% of the total, you have 12.75 more points ( $.85 \times 15 = 12.75$ ). Finally, if you earned a 90% on a research paper you'd have 18 more points ( $.90 \times 20 = 18$ ). Finally, if you add all of the points that you have earned, and divide by the possible points for the assignments completed ( $7.5 + 12.5 + 18 = 38.25$ )/45=85% overall. Here are several samples of how to calculate your current grade:

80% (10 pts.)	$.80 \times 10 =$	8.0 pts
85% (15 pts.)	$.85 \times 15 =$	12.75 pts
88% (20 pts.)	$.88 \times 20 =$	17.6 pts

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$(8 + 12.75 + 17.6 = 38.35) / 45 =$  **85.2%**

83% (10 pts.)	$.83 \times 10 =$	8.3 pts
65% (15 pts.)	$.84 \times 15 =$	9.75 pts
80% (20 pts.)	$.80 \times 20 =$	16.0 pts

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$(8.3 + 9.75 + 16 = 34.05) / 45 =$  **75.7%**

86% (10 pts.)	$.86 \times 10 =$	8.6 pts
88% (15 pts.)	$.88 \times 15 =$	13.2 pts
95% (20 pts.)	$.95 \times 20 =$	19.0 pts

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$(8.6 + 13.2 + 19 = 40.8) / 45 =$  **91.7%**

## Grading Scale

<b>A</b>	94–100	<b>BA</b>	88–93	<b>CB</b>	76–81	<b>DC</b>	65–69
		<b>B</b>	82–87	<b>C</b>	70–75	<b>D</b>	60–64
						<b>F</b>	0–59

<b>Assignments</b>
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<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Points</b>
<b>Reading Questions:</b> (prepare a list of questions, for all class readings)	† 20%
<b>List of A.P. definitions:</b> (create definitions list of all of the A.P. terms from the handout)	5%
<b>Exam I:</b> (AP terms. Be able to describe all rules and use in public relations examples)	10%
<b>Exam II:</b> (Mystical choice, T/F, identification, short answer, and Essay format, etc.)	15%
<b>Exam II:</b> (Mystical choice, T/F, identification, short answer, and Essay format, etc.)	15%
<b>Public Relations Documents</b>	
<b>News Release:</b> (5+ ¶s, details to be provided)	10%
<b>Fact sheet:</b> (500+ words, creative layout, 5 thumbnails, 5 graphics, details to be provided)	10%
<b>Pitch Letter:</b> (750+ words, 2 copies: one single and one double spaced, details to be provided)	10%
<b>Portfolio:</b> (Submitted in three-ring binder w/ page protectors & resume [As per <i>my</i> handouts, not what you made for someone else], details to be provided)	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

† For each class' readings, you will submit a list of several discussion questions. You should have a minimum of 25 lines worth of questions—not counting your header information and citation. Format your questions like the samples provided. I am not looking for “test” questions that you know the answer to, nor am I looking for “what are the three features of X?” questions. If the answer is in the chapter/article, then it is not something for which you have a question. Pose questions about issues that interest you or for which you want clarification. For example, “I am unclear of the role played by women in international public relations . . .” or, “The author argues that intercultural issues are becoming more important, but what about if I do not want to work for a multinational organization?” or, “How important is it to understand how new technology like Web sites is being used . . .?” Questions submitted late will receive partial credit. All questions must be submitted within one week of their due date to receive any credit at all.

## Communication 350: Introduction to Public Relations

## Tentative Course Calendar

Date	Day	Activity/Reading	Assignment Due
Jan. 8	1	<b>Read:</b> Heath & Coombs, Chapter 1, Overview. ....	<i>Begin Studying AP Terms</i>
Jan. 10†	2	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 2, History of Public Relationships	
<b>Jan. 15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>MLK Day (not mine), No Classes</b>	
Jan. 17	4	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 3, managing relationships.	
<b>Jan. 22</b>	5	<b>Read:</b> News Releases, in Kent, Chapter 10, online; Review NR handouts, online. Writing News Releases   NR Assignment	
Jan. 24	6	<b>Read:</b> Kent (my Web site), Chapter 7, Theories.	
<b>Jan. 29</b>	7	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 4. Research. ....	<b>AP Definitions List Due</b>
Jan. 31	8	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 5, Planning.	
<b>Feb. 5</b>	9	.....	<b>Exam I (AP Terms)</b>
Feb. 7	10	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 6, Strategic Messaging.	
<b>Feb. 12</b>	11	<b>Read:</b> Kent (Web site), “Google Scholar...”.....	<b>News Rel. Draft I (bring 3 copies to class)</b>
Feb. 14	12	<b>Writing Activity</b> <sup>∞</sup> : Computer Lab .....	<b>News Release Draft II Due</b>
<b>Feb. 19</b>	13	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 7, Evaluation.	
Feb. 21	14	<b>Writing Activity</b> <sup>∞</sup> : News Release—Audience adaptation	
<b>Feb. 26</b>	15	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 8, Theory.....	<b>News Release Draft III Due</b>
Feb. 28	16	.....	<b>Exam II (chapters 1–8, lecture, NR)</b>
<b>Mar. 5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Spring Break, No Classes</b>	
<b>Mar. 7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>Spring Break, No Classes</b>	
<b>Mar. 12</b>	19	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 9, Ethics. ....	<b>Fact Sheet Draft I Due (bring 3 copies to class)</b>
Mar. 14	20	<b>Writing Activity</b> <sup>∞</sup> : Fact Sheets—Make Facts Interesting.	<b>Fact Sheet Draft II Due</b>
<b>Mar. 19</b>	21	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 10, Environmental Scanning.	
Mar. 21	22	<b>Writing Activity</b> <sup>∞</sup> : Pitching—Letters of Application	
<b>Mar. 26</b>	23	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 11, Media/Tech.....	<b>Pitch Letter Draft I Due (bring 3 copies)</b>
Mar. 28	24	<b>Writing Activity:</b> Writing a Memo.....	<b>Pitch Letter Draft II Due</b>
<b>Apr. 2</b>	25	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 12, Promotion. ....	<b>Fact Sheet Draft III Due</b>
Apr. 4††	26	<b>Read/Activity:</b> TBA	
<b>Apr. 9</b>	27	<b>Read:</b> Chapter 13, Collaborative Decision Making.	
Apr. 11†††	28	<b>Read/Activity:</b> TBA .....	<b>Pitch Letter Draft II Due</b>
<b>Apr. 16</b>	29	<b>Read:</b> Chapters 14 & 15, Building a Career and The Future.	
Apr. 18	30	Class Evaluations .....	<b>Portfolios, Resumes, Written Doc. Due</b>
<b>Apr. 23</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Final Exam day 2:45–4:45</b> .....	<b>Exam III (chapters 9–15)</b>

† X/C 1: Due, January 17: Prepare a one-page (single-spaced) fact sheet on a key figure in public relations. Make copies for everyone in the class and distribute. You must get permission from me ahead of time regarding whom to use. (0–5%)

†† X/C 2: Due, April 4: Write a two to three page (single-spaced) memo (in memo form) reporting on your academic progress—assume I am the one paying your tuition and to continue you need to give me periodic updates. Be thorough and compelling. For full credit, you need to convince me my money is well spent. (0–5%)

††† X/C 3: Due, April 11: May only be written with my permission. In general, if you are doing poorly, I will not approve this for you. This is an opportunity for exceptional students to expand on what they are learning, not to help slackers. Extend one of your past weekly questions into a position paper with at least 4 scholarly sources (*not* the Internet, newspapers, magazines, etc.). Length: 4-5 pp. (double-spaced). (0–5%)

The following items are worth 1% each provided they are “complete,” up-to-date, etc.: Media/information kits, annual reports (good ones), fact sheets (good ones), professional newsletters (not school related), training videos.

∞ **NB:** “Writing Activities” will take place in the Mac Computer Lab in Dunbar.

# Get Out of Jail Free

This coupon entitles the bearer to one of the following (check box):

- Eliminate or reduce a late penalty on one written assignment (depending upon the severity of the infraction).
- Eliminate or reduce a time penalty on one speech/presentation (depending upon the severity of the infraction).
- Rewrite one assignment (not already an A- or above) within one week of it being returned.
- Make one "deal" with the instructor.**



**Request (be Specific)**

**This card *may not* be used to:**

- Change the date or time of an exam.
- Obtain a makeup exam.
- Obtain additional absences.
- Eliminate an attendance penalty.
- Eliminate a late-to/early-from class penalty.
- Receive credit for work done in another class.

**This offer is subject to change without notice. Coupons must be redeemed at the time of use. This offer is non-transferable and carries no cash value. This offer does not apply to class penalties not listed in this document. The professor reserves the right to revoke this coupon at any time. Void where prohibited by law.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name (print)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**