COM 178 Introduction to Public Relations

# *School of Communication*

*Illinois State University*

*Spring 2024, Section 001  
5-6:15 p.m.  
State Farm Hall of Business 353*

**Professor:** Elena Roth ’18, M.S. ‘20

Office: Alumni Center 109L  
E-mail: ecroth@ilstu.edu

*E-mail is my preferred mode of communication.*

**Office Hours:** By appointment only, just ask! I am also very happy to do Zoom rather than in-person.

**Graduate Teaching Assistant:** Taylor Murray: tdmurr1@ilstu.edu

*Communicate with the teaching assistant via email, before/after class, or by appointment.*

*Office Hours: Monday and Friday 12-1 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday 4-5 p.m. (subject to*

*change)*

**Catalog Course Description**

Examines functions of public relations in society and surveys concepts, theories, ethics, and principles of effective public relations.

**Additional Description**

This course is an introduction to the professional practice of public relations, a diverse and growing career globally. Taken as either an elective or as the first course toward being a public relations major within the School of Communication, the course will explore contemporary PR from its foundational knowledge to its current professional application.

**Course Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Define public relations as a field of study and as a professional practice
2. Understand the processes of public relations
3. Demonstrate knowledge of relevant public relations concepts
4. Apply knowledge of media, public relations concepts, and business processes toward analyzing PR problems.

#### Texts & Readings

### Book (new, used, or digital, it's all good): *Discovering Public Relations\**

### Author: Karen Freberg Publisher: SAGE ISBN: 9781544355375 \*We will start using this the second week of class, so get it by the January 23!

1. Readings available through the modules page on Canvas. In addition to book chapters (see schedule below), there will be additional industry readings in each week’s lesson tab on Canvas. There will be more industry readings than are listed here in the syllabus, and if is in the folder for the listed week, it is an assigned/required reading.
2. *PR Daily* <https://www.prdaily.com/> and *PR News* <https://www.prnewsonline.com/>

Start following these outlets on Instagram, and visit occasionally. Daily course content will be pulled from them.

**Assignments & Assessments**

1. **In-class assignments/Split weeks**

There will be four graded in-class assignments throughout the semester, done during “Split weeks” – weeks where only half the class shows up on Tuesday, and then the other half on Thursday (by last name). This is to allow better small group interaction and discussion between the instructors and students. You will be expected to be *super-prepared* for these days as we will be packing two days of content into one. Note, on these days, if you show up for the “wrong” day (not your alphabetically assigned day) without prior permission, you will only receive half credit for your work. Work on these days can only be made up with an excused absence and cannot be turned in late otherwise\*

*\*if you are sick, do not come to class! You can do it at home.*

1. **PR industry jobs search assignment**   
   You will be conducting a job search and applying some of our earlier content to the jobs we find. A 2-3 page document will be turned in in late March.
2. **Exams**  
   There will be two exams over the course of the semester. Each is worth 150 points. These exams will be multiple choice and true/false, and may have a short answer or two.
3. **Extra credit**

There will be a couple of in-class opportunities for extra credit and then there’s the research option at the end of this syllabus.

**Grading**

Final grades are assigned on the basis of accumulation of points compared to the total possible points that may be earned for the semester (see the scale below). I do not “curve” grades on any assignment or exam, nor do I “curve” final course grades. To calculate your grade, keep track of your points and then divide by the number possible.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Assignments | **Available**  **Points** | EarnedPoints |
| In-class assignments (4, 30 points each) | 120 |  |
| PR industry jobs paper | 50 |  |
| Exam 1 | 150 |  |
| Exam 2 | 150 |  |
| ***TOTAL*** | **470** |  |
| **Extra credit opportunities:** |  |  |
| In-class extra credit (variable) | (variable) |  |
| Research Pool (see end of syllabus) | 10 |  |

Assignment grades will be posted on Canvas, please keep track of them there. If you disagree with my evaluation of your work, or it is clear that we have mis-graded something, please request an appointment with me or see me after class *within one week* after I have returned your work. I will not discuss grades at any other time.

*\*see late policy under Course Policies*

*Grading scale*

A=89.5%-100% B=79.5%-89.49% C=69.5%-79.49% D=59.5%-69.49% F=0-59.49%

**Extra Credit**

There will be a few unannounced extra credit opportunities in class, and then there is one extra credit assignment. These cannot be made up unless you have an excused absence. You may also participate in the School of Communication Research Pool, for which details are at the end of this document. No extra credit opportunities will be given to individual students.

**See the end of the syllabus for other course policies.**

**Course Schedule *(Subject to change! I frequently integrate current events that necessitate changes)***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | **Topic & Assignments** | **Reading/Assignment Due** *Note: The readings are expected to be completed BEFORE class on the day they are listed. Additional readings will be added as interesting industry publications, news articles, and blogs show up, so please just reference the Canvas folder for that week or day.* |
| Tue., Jan. 16 | **University closure** |  |
| Thu., Jan. 18 | Intro to the Class – Syllabus, PR Overview (yes, actual content!), Understanding PR and its place in marketing and communication, PESO model | Syllabus, Readings on Canvas for the week |
| Tue., Jan. 23 | History of PR and models of practice | Chapters 1+ 2 |
| Thu., Jan. 25 | Examples and other areas of business related to PR | Chapter 11 |
| Tue., Jan. 30 | FIRST SPLIT WEEK, Only last names A-J show up (other half of the class does **not** need to come)  Understanding PR in-class assignment | Freberg Chapter 1 & readings on Canvas  You will need *both* of these for the in-class assignment |
| Thu., Feb. 1 | FIRST SPLIT WEEK, Only last names K-Z show up (other half of the class does **not** need to come)  Understanding PR in-class assignment | Freberg Chapter 1 & readings on Canvas  You will need *both* of these for the in-class assignment |
| Tue., Feb. 6 | Audiences and Research in PR | Chapter 5; Readings on Canvas |
| Thu., Feb. 8 | Audiences and Research in PR | Chapter 9; Readings on Canvas |
| Tue., Feb. 13 | NO CLASS! |  |
| Thu., Feb. 15 | Second Split Week EVERYONE attend Thursday | Readings on Canvas will be available by Feb. 12 – assignment will depend on them |
| Tue., Feb. 20 | Jobs and Jobs Searching in PR  *PR Jobs paper assigned* | Chapter 13; Readings on Canvas |
| Thu., Feb. 22 | Branding | Chapter 6; Readings on Canvas |
| Tue., Feb. 27 | Reputation and Reputation Management | Chapter 14; Readings on Canvas |
| Thu., Feb. 29 | Ethics in PR | Chapter 3; Readings on Canvas |
| Tue., Mar. 5 | Catch up and review |  |
| Thu., Mar. 7 | FIRST EXAM | FIRST EXAM |
| Tue., Mar. 12 | SPRING BREAK |  |
| Thu., Mar. 14 | SPRING BREAK |  |
| Tue., Mar. 19 | PR Campaigns | Chapter 8 |
| Thu., Mar. 21 | PR Campaigns & Tactics/Strategies | Chapter 8; Readings on Canvas PR Jobs Paper Due |
| Tue., Mar. 26 | PR Writing | Chapter 7 |
| Thu., Mar. 28 | Creative Content in PR | Chapter 10 |
| Tue., Apr. 2 | Social engagement & influencers | Readings on Canvas |
| Thu., Apr. 4 | Media Relations | Readings on Canvas |
| Tue., Apr. 9 | Third Split Week last names A-J ONLY attend Tuesday | Readings on Canvas – assignment will depend on them |
| Thu., Apr 11 | Third Split Week last names K-Z ONLY attend Thursday | Readings on Canvas – assignment will depend on them |
| Tue., Apr. 16 | Crisis Communication | Revisit Chapter 14 on Crisis Com |
| Thu., Apr. 18 | Crisis Communication | Readings on Canvas – assignment will depend on them |
| Tue., Apr. 23 | Fourth split week A-J on Tuesday – this might change based on class interests | Readings on Canvas – assignment will depend on them |
| Thu., Apr. 25 | Fourth split week K-Z Thursday-this might change based on class interests | Readings on Canvas – assignment will depend on them |
| Tue., Apr. 30 | Final exam review |  |
| Thu., May 2 | Final exam review |  |
| Week of May 6 | Final exam TBA (registrar schedules that!) |  |

***NOTE:*** The content of this syllabus is subject to change as the course progresses – if opportunities for cool guest speakers come up, I will take them. You are responsible for noting any such changes, which will be announced in class and/or posted on Canvas.

**Course Policies**

You also are expected to be familiar with [ISU’s Code of Student Conduct](https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/).

**Cell phones, laptops, voice recorders, text messaging, etc.**

I encourage you to use a laptop or tablet, but please use it only for class-related content. If you find something useful, please share it with the class. Mute or silence all devices before class begins. No headphones allowed.

If you know you are going to be watching videos or online shopping, just don’t come to class. It is distracting to everyone, and you aren’t getting anything from class anyway.

Extensive texting and other use of your phone or laptop for non-class reasons (if we notice, it’s extensive) will be noted, warned, and then penalized. The graduate assistant is paying attention from the back of the room. Both laptop and phone abuse will incur a *5-point penalty for each occurrence.*

**I do not give you permission to video record me**. If you need to audio record for note taking purposes, please talk to me about it. See full statement at the end of this.

**Attendance**

I don’t take attendance. However, there is *a lot* of content delivered only in class, and you’ll miss it. If an assignment is due, you are accountable to the due date and method of submission unless prior arrangements have been made with me.

If you miss class or are late, you are responsible for obtaining all assignments, notes, and any other information that is given in class. I will not “reteach” material for you (unless a significant illness or life event is preventing attendance and you’re excused), although I’d be glad to answer specific questions. Don’t send me or the graduate assistant an e-mail asking if anything important was covered. It was. Ask a classmate for their notes.

If you have to miss class due to an extended illness (3 or more consecutive class days) or a bereavement, the Dean of Students Office can help. This goes for COVID – please don’t come to class if you think you have it, or are waiting on test results. Let me know and we’ll figure it out.

**Online Communication**

I use e-mail and Canvas course announcements to communicate directly to you as an individual and as a class. Clean out and check your ISU e-mail account frequently for notes or announcements from me, your fellow students, the department, and the college. *Not checking your e-mail or Canvas is not grounds for any excuse for not doing or not doing well on any assignment.* *It’s your responsibility to (1) keep your e-mail accounts open and up-to-date and (2) monitor your e-mail and Canvas class news frequently.*

**Online Course Material**

I use Canvas extensively to organize the material for this course and make announcements about our class. If you have problems with Canvas, let me know *and* call the Help Desk at 309-438-4357.

The Canvas site for this class contains additional, required reading material for this course. This material used in connection with the course may be subject to copyright protection. Your viewing of the material posted on Canvas does not imply any right to reproduce, to retransmit or to redisplay it other than for your own personal or educational use. Links to other sites are provided for the convenience of the site user (staff or student) or visitor and do not imply any affiliation or endorsement of the other site owner nor a guarantee of the quality or veracity of information contained on the linked site.

Many files are PDFs and should open easily with Adobe Acrobat Reader to view and print them. If you don't have this free software, go to <http://www.adobe.com> to download that software.

**Academic Dishonesty**

Plagiarism and any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating (taking exams together) and plagiarism (presenting someone else’s work as your own or without proper acknowledgment) or any other type of academic dishonesty (including use of ChatGPT and other AI bots) will be considered justification for failure for that particular assignment or the entire course, depending on severity. Although you may discuss with each other any assignment and course material, bounce ideas off each other, and share the University's resources available to you (e.g., media guides), you cannot share actual work you do with others. All work must be that of the student (or students involved in a group assignment) and developed during the current semester for *this* course. Sources must receive credit using APA or MLA style. For information regarding academic integrity and procedures for academic misconduct, see Illinois State’s [Code of Student Conduct, Section VI.A.1.](https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/) You will be reported for academic misconduct if you engage in it.

Assignments will be posted on Canvas and discussed in class. See the course schedule for details about all coursework. Please visit with me if you have any questions about any assignment or if you’d like some feedback about your work in progress.

*Late work and missed work*  
All assignments are due no later than the time stated on the assignment. If in class, that means within the first five minutes of class. Anything received after the due time will be penalized 30% for each 24 hours it is late, starting after submission (so 30% off for an hour late, 60% off for 25 hours late). All assignments will be collected electronically (via Canvas Assignments) and you will be given the specific due-time for those. You can totally turn work in early—especially if you are going to be absent the day something is due.

If an exam is missed it cannot be made up or done late without documentation of an emergency, illness, or advance permission.

If an assignment is missed for an excusable reason, the same or a make-up assignment of observably greater difficulty may be required. Documentation for absences or late arrivals on days when assignments are due will also be required.

For your own protection, you are expected to keep digital copies of all assignments submitted to me. As you work on any computer remember to save your work frequently, always backup your work on another disk or other medium, and always protect your files and computer from viruses. I will not accept work turned in late because you had technology problems–including corrupted files submitted to Canvas. Open them again after submission to make sure they are readable. Tech problems wouldn’t fly in PR and they won’t fly here.

**Incompletes**

Incompletes will be granted only when a documented emergency prevents you from completing the class, you contacted the Dean of Students Office, *and* you have completed at leastapproximately two-thirds (66%)of the course.

**Accommodations**Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 350 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit the website at [StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu](https://studentaccess.illinoisstate.edu/) to receive services and documentation of accommodations needed.

Please let Elena Roth know ASAP about any accommodations relevant to the class.

**Delivery Modality/COVID Plan**

Our modality will be pending the health of our class, me, and the University population as a whole. I will plan to teach in-person unless extenuating circumstances require online/pre-recorded lectures for our class meetings.

*If I get sick*: If I am healthy enough, we’ll just move online for the week. If I am in rough shape, we will either cancel or I will get a guest instructor. Due dates will remain the same.

*If more than a few of us are out for illness:* We’ll probably all move online, temporarily.

*If just a couple of you are out for illness:* I’ll do my best to Zoom or record the class for you.

Basically, we’re going to have to be flexible.

**Research Participation - Extra Credit**

There will be a few extra credit opportunities for research participation. The extra credit points will be added to your final grade and **will not appear in the gradebook immediately upon your completion of the opportunity**–I don’t get the lists until after a study ends. There are no guarantees for extra credit, and it is each student’s responsibility to be aware of and take advantage of such opportunities. You may receive extra credit for participating in any of the studies posted to the School of Communication’s Research Announcement Board. The Research Announcement Board is updated as research studies are opened/closed, and it is your responsibility to access the Board and be aware of available opportunities. The Research Announcement Board can be accessed via:

<https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies>

In general, each 30 minutes of participation in an extra credit study will earn you .5 Research Credits, which translates into 2.5 points in this class. You may earn a total of 10 points participating in research (*so, that means roughly four online surveys, or two bigger things like in-person focus groups or experiments).* Please see the call for participants for the Research Credits associated with each study. Each research project listed on the Research Announcement Board will indicate the specific number of Research Credits associated with the project. The course instructor will get evidence of participation and the time of participation from the researcher(s) who administer the research studies at the conclusion of the semester; however, it is your responsibility to make sure that the researchers have the necessary evidence of your participation at the time of the study. Before participating in a study, please be sure to have your name, ULID (i.e., the part of your email before @ilstu.edu), instructor name, and course and section number ready, as you will need to provide these to receive credit. Research credit can only be applied to one course for each study, unless specified otherwise on the Research Announcement Board. A maximum of 10 points can be earned from extra credit opportunities via the Research Announcement Board unless some special exception is given by Elena Roth. After the last day of class there will be no more opportunities for extra credit, don’t ask.

**Non-Research Extra Credit Opportunities (Instructor Determined)**

There may be some studies for which you are not eligible (e.g., recruiting based on gender or family structure) or in which you do not wish to take part. Reasonable alternatives are available for those not able or wanting to take part in specific studies, to ensure equitable non-research based opportunities.  Throughout the semester, the instructor will announce non-research opportunities for extra credit, which may include attending a colloquium, reading a recent article or research paper, or attending an on-campus event and writing a summary of the connection of the event to course content. The instructor will make these opportunities and specific details available as they arise.

**Full ISU statement on recording:**

### *Permission required to record*

Students must obtain written permission from the instructor if they wish either to photograph classroom lectures or discussions or to record them using audio or video devices. This restriction includes visual materials that accompany the lecture/discussion, such as lecture slides, whiteboard notes/equations, etc. Such recordings are to be used solely for the purposes of individual or group study with other students enrolled in the class in that semester. They may not be reproduced, shared in any way (including electronically or posting in any web environment) with those not in the class in that semester. Students with disabilities who need to record classroom lectures or discussions must contact [Student Access and Accommodation Services](https://studentaccess.illinoisstate.edu/faculty_staff/academic/) to register, request and be approved for an accommodation. Students who violate this policy may be subject to both legal sanctions for violations of copyright law and disciplinary action under the University’s [Code of Student Conduct.](https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/)

**\*I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus after it is posted, but I will always tell you if something major has changed. If is something minor, like an extra reading or something, refer to the folder for that week.**