

(COM 261) COM 370-03: INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATIONS

(Topics in Communication Studies)

Credit Hours 3

TCNJ – Fall 2020 SYLLABUS\*

Instructor: M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA  
Phone: 856-767-7730 Home Office  
Email: [litwinassignment@gmail.com](mailto:litwinassignment@gmail.com)  
Assignment email: [litwinassignment@gmail.com](mailto:litwinassignment@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.larrylitwin.com](http://www.larrylitwin.com)  
Office Hours online: By appointment – at your convenience.  
Class Day and Time: Tuesday 12:30 a.m.-3:20 p.m.  
Location: Online

**BOOKS WEBSITE for REQUIRED MATERIALS** [Including reasonably-priced digital versions. I suggest you buy book from [www.authorhouse.com](http://www.authorhouse.com) – especially the digital versions, because [www.authorhouse.com](http://www.authorhouse.com) has them formatted perfectly.]

***The Public Relations Practitioner's Playbook***  
Fourth Edition [White Cover], AuthorHouse, 2013  
Author – M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

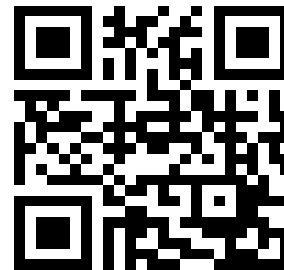
***The ABCs of Strategic Communication***  
Second Edition [Green Cover], AuthorHouse, 2008  
Author – M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

***More ABCs of Strategic Communication***  
First Edition [Orange Cover], AuthorHouse, 2015  
Author – M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

**\*The instructor reserves the right to change this syllabus at any time and for any reason at his discretion.**

**Scan for contact Info:**

**Scan for website:**



**Summary:** Explore the history and role of Public Relations and the entire strategic communication profession in society. Class will cover how the following affect us as professionals: mass and non-mass one to one media, persuasion, publicity, radio, television, special events, crisis management, communication techniques, research and evaluation, other electronic media, and communication law and ethics. (Full description below)

This class will:

- Introduce students to the basic principles of public relations
- Introduce students to the basic strategies, tactics and other tools used for public relations/strategic communication

### Course Description

This course follows the course description for a Strategic Communication or Public Relations Overview course. It is designed to provide an understanding of the public relations/strategic communication function within an organization, the role of the public relations professional and the range of issues handled by a public relations staff. Organizations, companies, institutions and governments understand the importance of communicating the publics they serve. The public relations/strategic communication professional is the liaison and key communicator between these publics and the organization. **This course** introduces students to the basic principles of public relations/strategic communication. Upon completion, students will understand research, how to craft public relations plan and evaluate its results. The course also introduces students to myriad technologies used by today's public relations professionals and strategic counselors: Professor Litwin's class explores the history and role public relations and the entire strategic communication profession play in society. We will cover how the following affect us as professionals: mass and *non*-mass 1-2-1 media, persuasion, publicity, radio, television, special events, crisis management, communication techniques, research and evaluation, and other electronic media, and communication law and ethics. Introductory courses are usually primarily theory. However, your instructor will attempt to make his class as practical as possible – supported by theory. This semester, we will focus on the Presidential Election. **The strategic approaches and outcomes will be discussed where appropriate.** Your professor's personal objective is to prepare students for ***their future*** rather than ***his past***. He is here to **HELP – Hear** what he says so you can be ***Educated to Learn***, which will ***Prepare*** you for your future. You've come to The College of New Jersey to learn. You leave here to serve. It is going to be an exciting time.

### Course Requirements

Students are expected to read assigned chapters before class and be well prepared before attending class. Students are encouraged to take initiative to broaden their knowledge by reading additional materials.

In addition, your participation is instrumental for moving the class discussion forward and also contributing to your final grade. Just being present does not mean participation. Here are some tips to improve your participation:

- Read the contents of this link. If we practice this approach – “Teaching Naked” and the “flipped classroom” – this will be an enjoyable class. It leads to more engagement and a more *edutaining* class.  
[http://www.larrylitwin.com/documents/TeachingNaked\\_NationalSchoolPublicRelationsAssociation.pdf](http://www.larrylitwin.com/documents/TeachingNaked_NationalSchoolPublicRelationsAssociation.pdf)
- Have your book(s) accessible for every class, as it (they) will be referenced during class. (If they are too cumbersome, have *The PR Playbook* and *More ABCs* handy.)
- If you need clarification or want additional explanation, feel free to ask a question. In fact, I encourage it. Asking questions is a sign of strength – not weakness.

### **Course Purpose and Learning Goals**

- Students will understand the basic body of knowledge underlying the public relations/strategic communication profession.
- Students will understand how public relations functions in society and makes its contributions.
- Students will apply PR/Strategic Communication theories to actual public relations problems and challenges.
- Students will visit and interview a practicing public relations professional.
- Students will interact with professor/practitioners and share their experiences.

### **Learning Goals**

The learning goals of Introduction to Public Relations relate to the overall mission of Communication Studies by preparing students to be engaged and active leaders within their educational, personal, and work-related contexts. Specifically, students in this course will learn about the following:

**1) Earned News: Build Awareness of How Public Relations Functions in Society and Makes its Contributions:** At one level, public relations outcomes are “earned news,” representing something a person or organization has done that merits legitimate news coverage. These outcomes are different from advertising and marketing, which distribute “paid” material and are expected to be one-sided. The “earned news” concept expects that public relations practitioners can convince journalists to regard their press releases or contributions as of general interest, reaching beyond the specific interests of a particular corporation, organization, or individual. Some people may not appreciate that the public relations practitioner/journalist connection is symbiotic (mutually beneficial). Journalists need help weeding out the multiple events that happen every day to focus on a few of the most important ones, and public relations practitioners, aware of that occupational imperative, find ways to assist journalists.

**2) Public Interaction: Learn a Modern, Two-way Communication Perspective on Public Relations.** Students are exposed to strategic and tactical perspectives helping them understand that the most successful public relations campaigns are based on an “alignment” of public and private interests. If public opinion is monitored and taken seriously by organizations

conducting public relations campaigns, and if the same organizations modify their campaigns to align their own goals and objectives with converging public attitudes, then opportunities exist for “win-win” outcomes (See Grunig Model – **The PR Playbook – Play 1-8**). This perspective is quite different from corporations viewing public relations professionals as “firefighters, ordered to draft news releases to put the best face on a mistake or disaster that has already happened. The “alignment” perspective expects that public relations professionals will be brought into executive decision-making in advance as “planners” not as “cleanup” workers. (Ask about Number One-Number Two person.)

**3) Create a Positive “Climate of Opinion” about an Organization or Issue.** Professional public relations is not simply a matter of reacting to events. It involves pro-active, anticipatory strategic planning and organization. It requires carefully marshalling incremental installments or investments in positive news contributions to build a scaffold of positive public opinion or respect. The resulting positive “climate” of public opinion represents a repository of good will to be drawn upon in times of “crisis communication.” For example, J&J’s positive reputation helped it weather a Tylenol poisoning scare several years ago (**Play 14-4**).

**4) Comprehensive Channel and Platform Use.** Modern public relations professionals employ a wide range of face-to-face, media, and digital tools both to learn about public opinion/preferences, and to inform various publics and target audiences. Those channels and platforms include traditional print and television, but also a variety of internet tools such as email, bulletin boards, websites, electronic newsletters, podcasting, etc.

**5) Concrete Applications:** Students will apply public relations/strategic communication theories to actual public relations problems and challenges. They will also visit and interview a practicing public relations professional. Students will interact with professors/practitioners and share their experiences. Overall, in addition to learning about a wide range of public relations tools, students will practice using a variety of those tools, including a field interview, a press/news release, a cover letter for pitching interest in a client, a telephone call pitch, and even an “elevator speech” pitching one’s own public relations capabilities. Students will be introduced to the basic principles of public relations, preparing them for advanced work in the field, for internships, and ultimately, for occupational positions.

### **Student assessment**

Within the course, students receive feedback in a systematic way as the projects grow in complexity and formality. Some assessments are designed to have students demonstrate the ability to *interpret* readings in accurate ways, others are structured to have them showcase their ability to *apply* readings in accurate ways: interpret them accurately and apply them to both hypothetical

and realistic situations. Students receive frequent individual feedback on their assignment progress.

Specifically, student achievement is determined based on individual student performance in this course. Namely, students should be able to demonstrate competence in: “defining” public relations (a question often asked by potential employers and rarely answered in a satisfactory way); understanding the basic body of knowledge underlying the public relations/strategic communication profession; comprehending how public relations functions in society and makes its contributions; applying systematic planning to actual public relations problems and challenges; conducting professional interviews; and sharing public relations understandings and experiences with others.

### **Learning activities**

The learning activities align with the Dept. of Communication Studies program’s goal of studying the creation and impact of messages. In this course, message production and interpretation is relationally based, but it can exist within multiple channels such as face-to-face communication, digitally-based communication, and in written form. This course creates specific assignments that not only help with the practice of message production, impact, and perceptions (e.g., reading, interviews, cover letter, quizzes, and two comprehensive examinations), but also with a deeper level understanding of why people interpret, encode, and decode messages in ways that they do. This course aligns with the greater goals of our department by helping students develop into more skilled communicators by practicing and showcasing empathy and strategy as they adjust their communication behaviors with other people’s perspectives in mind.

### **Sequencing and Other Points**

The course will be situated within the major as the entry level course for students interested in strategic communication/public relations, a field many students in the Dept. of Communication Studies enter after graduation. For students who wish to learn more about strategic communication, it is recommended that they enroll in COM 371 Strategic Communication, a more advanced course in the public relations subfield. Courses in public relations/strategic communication are currently located with the Public/Mass and Interpersonal/Organizational specializations in the department. Our specializations are currently in transformation, but going forward, considerable interest has been expressed in public relations/strategic communication becoming a minor with the Dept. of Communication Studies. Student interest in the field is substantial, with a group of students proposing a minor in public relations within the past two years.

The learning benefit to non-majors consists of exposing them to some strategies and tactics of public relations/strategic communication persuasion that can be applied and adjusted to any persuasion or communication campaign in the public or private sectors.

## Assignments and Grading

The course combines theory with practical application to current “real life” through assignments and discussion. With your (student) help, this will be an interactive, engaging and enjoyable class. Students are encouraged to participate. **This is a special semester in that campaigning for the 2020 Presidential Election has been underway for more than two years, already. Much of this course’s theory will tie into that election.** Please note: this course is listed as a Discussion/Lecture. That said: if you as a student – and your classmates – stay current on political and other public relations issues, the “flipped classroom” will encourage spirited discussion and debate rather than a lecture with only Professor Litwin talking.

**Examinations: (25% of grade)** There will be two comprehensive examinations plus quizzes (grades will be included under assignments). **Questions may be taken from any class lectures or discussion.** Big Test **ONE** will be a **mid-term**. The **final examination** will be all inclusive from day one. Students may be asked questions that public relations practitioners and strategic counselors are expected to answer.

**Assignments: (55% of grade)** Assignments correspond to the practical aspects of the curriculum (subject to change).

- Define Public Relations – **See below** for two related assignments
- Applicant Statement/Elevator Speech
- 3-Minute Drill
- Ethics/Skills
- Key Communicator/Material Event
- Multiple Choice Questions
- Field Interview (**20%** of [total] final grade – see below)
- Public Relations department-generated news stories. (Each student will be expected to identify two print [online] articles and explain why he/she [student] believes each article originated from either a public relations practitioner or office, or was enterprised by a reporter.)
- Craft a cover letter
- Ad evaluation – Is your ad effective? Can it achieve its goal?
- **Four** quizzes (Could change as semester progresses)

**Field Interview: (20% of grade)** Each student will be required to identify a **public relations practitioner/strategic communicator**, interview that person and write a three- to four-page (750-1,000 words) report of the experience. You may interview a public relations/strategic counselor or an advertising, promotions, sales or marketing practitioner. **This assignment is absolutely due on Tuesday, Nov. 17. (It may be turned in early.)** Students must fill in the attached form (last page of this syllabus) identifying the person to be interviewed (**for approval**). Upon approval, you (the student) may conduct the interview. **When the final paper is turned in, student (you) must attach to the approval sheet, the interviewee’s business card and a copy of your (student’s) thank you note to the interviewee.** (We will figure this out for online purposes.)

**Type, (double-space) and correctly label** all assignments and reports. Since writing is a key skill in the public relations profession, make certain that your grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, syntax and accuracy are perfect. For each written assignment, content and writing will count separately and equally. Just to make it clear, **FIVE** points will be deducted for every spelling, grammatical and typographical error.

**Welcome** to public relations and strategic counseling. Participate as fully as you can in all discussions. The more you – as students engage and participate – the less lecturing Professor Litwin will do. Even if you do not expect to pursue the public relations profession, the knowledge and skills you acquire will definitely help you in your career. Best wishes for an enjoyable and successful semester!

**Email all assignments to:**

**litwinassignment@gmail.com**

**For FIRST class on Tuesday, Aug. 25, send in advance of class (typed) YOUR personal definition of public relations. For our SECOND class on Tuesday, Sept. 1, ask five people of varying demographics to define public relations. The assignment should be typed listing each person you asked with their definition, gender, age and occupation. This, too, will be emailed to Professor Litwin in advance of class. We do NOT have class on Sept. 8. You will have your Monday class.**

## **ATTENDANCE**

Class attendance is strongly encouraged and linked to your performance grade on the grade sheet. You cannot participate as well if you are not in class. Research shows that those in attendance generally earn better grades. Communication is learned by communicating and observing others. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class.

**No make-up exams or other assignments** will be rescheduled unless arrangements are made with the instructor in advance or in emergencies where advance arrangement is not possible. Approved make-up work is due the first class meeting after the student returns.

## **CELL PHONES**

### **Use of cell phones, laptops, devices [tablets] etc.:**

In this class, we will maintain a professional level. Use the same courtesy in class as you would in the workplace concerning the use of these devices (ringers on silent, vibrate, no calls, etc.). If you must take a call, please go out into the hallway. Alert Professor Litwin if you are expecting a call. You may take electronic notes. If your laptop is open, it must relate to this class. Once again, mention it to Professor Litwin – who will enforce this policy.

## **ACADEMIC (Integrity Policy) OFFENSES: PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING**

Plagiarism is the act of presenting the words and ideas of others as if they were the ideas of the student and without acknowledging their origin. Students are encouraged to use supporting materials in their papers and speeches, but students should make sure

credit is given to the author. Academic dishonesty is any attempt by the student to gain academic advantage through dishonest means, to submit, as his or her own, work which has not been done by him/her or to give improper aid to another student in the completion of an assignment. Such dishonesty would include, but is not limited to: submitting as his/her own a project, paper, report, test, or speech copied from, partially copied, or paraphrased from the work of another (whether the source is printed, under copyright, or in manuscript form). Credit must be given for words quoted or paraphrased. The rules apply to any academic dishonesty, whether the work is graded or ungraded, group or individual, written or oral.

TCNJ's academic integrity policy is available on the web:

<https://academicintegrity.tcnj.edu/>

### **Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act**

The College of New Jersey is committed to ensuring equal opportunity and access to all members of the campus community in accordance with Section 503/504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The College prohibits discrimination against any student, employee, or applicant on the basis of physical or mental disability, or perceived disability. The College will provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations to enable employees and students to participate in the life of the campus community. Individuals with disabilities are responsible for reporting and supplying documentation verifying their disability. Requests for accommodations must be initiated through the Accessibility Resource Center, Roscoe West, (609) 771-3199. The overall responsibility for the College's equal opportunity program has been assigned to the Chief Diversity Officer. The ultimate responsibility for Section: VI.1.2 Title: The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Policy Effective Date: February 19, 2020 Approved By: Board of Trustees Responsible Unit: Accessibility Resource Center (609) 771-3199; arc@tcnj.edu Related Documents: N/A History: Version Date Notes 3.0 February 19, 2020 Minor revisions made by General Counsel 2.0 August 14, 2014 Minor revisions made by General Counsel 1.0 April 22, 1999 New Policy; initial release policies.tcnj.edu 2 accomplishing the College's objectives depends on the understanding, acceptance, support and involvement of all members of The College of New Jersey community.

### **Grading Scale**

**Final Grades will be based on this grading scale:**

<b>93-100</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>90-92</b>	<b>A-</b>
<b>87-89</b>	<b>B+</b>
<b>83-86</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>80-82</b>	<b>B-</b>
<b>77-79</b>	<b>C+</b>
<b>70-76</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>60-69</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>59-Below</b>	<b>F</b>

**Please see next page for WEEKLY SCHEDULE (subject to change)**