Course Syllabus

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COM 181, Sec. 01 Public Relations Ethics

School of Communication   --   Illinois State University   --   Spring 2026

Class Meetings: Online (asynchronous)
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1.0 Catalog Course Description

This course addresses the history, nature, and importance of ethics and law in the public relations profession. Prerequisite: COM 111, COM 178. 1 sem. hr.

2.0 Course's Specific Focus

This course, which is required as a matter of our public relations program's accreditation through the Public Relations Society of America, focuses on the ethical practice of public relations professionals regardless of industry and prepares students for the ethical issues that also will be covered in other PR courses. The course examines ethical facets of the history and reputation of public relations, and it reveals vital matters of contemporary professionals upholding and applying ethical principles in all that they do and say. Because of ethics' interrelationship with law, this course also treats dimensions of law that factor into decision-making, and, very importantly, this course includes attention on diversity, inclusion, equity, and access as well as media framing as matters of ethics. The role of counselor to organizational leaders is especially covered in addition to instructing and modeling good ethical judgement for public relations staff members at all levels. Assignments synthesize lessons across the units and measure student learning using specific rubrics. Please read *My Philosophy of Teaching and Learning (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6899760?wrap=1)* ↓ *(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6899760/download?download_frd=1)* 🔗*https://docreader.readspeaker.com/docreader/? cid=14039&lang=en_us&url=https%3A%2F%2Finst-fs-pdx-prod.inscloudgate.net%2Ffiles%2F235efce0-4518-43b8-93db-2998d85182ed%2FMy%2520Teaching%2520Philosophy%252011-2021.pdf%3Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMiJ9.eyJpYXQiOjE3NjgyOTAyNDUsInVzZXJfaWQiOm51bGwsInJlc291cmNlIjoiL2ZpbGVzLzIzNWVmY2 XGwrYYu1XUCi7lZp09CjhKaZ-iory4dICvUO1TsgSeuvI-Ts7cYQBSahQ)* for details about my approach to my work as an educator.

🔊 **E:** In this syllabus, any reference to "in class" refers to and must be understood within the modality context for this class--*online asynchronous*. There will be no physical meetings. Nevertheless, this class' modality does not change students' responsibility and expectations for being enrolled in this class.

3.0 Learning Objectives

This course relies on mindful and hands-on learning about salient matters of ethics in public relations. Accordingly, the course is designed around one "transformational objective," which means that, by taking this course, you will become a knowledgeable and ethical practitioner of public relations. This transformational objective is actualized by assignments that advance your learning as follows:

1. Learn ethics and legal principles and practices that are core to PR for effective decision-making.
2. Discover your own abilities to think, feel, and act ethically and legally, as good, practicing PR professionals must.
3. Analyze how ethical and legal decision-making works for any project or program meant to fulfill objectives.
4. Practice decision-making for ethical and legal public relations in the context of real-world examples.
5. Hone skills in recognizing ethics' and the law's role and taking appropriate, decisive, and ethical action that are essential to competent PR professionals.

4.0 Continued Enrollment

Your enrollment in this class constitutes agreement with all aspects of this syllabus and any additions or alterations that may be made to it during the course of the semester. Additions and alterations include announcements I email to the class, post for the class in Canvas, or announce for the class. Such additions and alterations include information about the course, policies, assignments, and so on. These announcements and e-mail are equally important when it comes to evaluating your work, because announcements may contain clarifications or other help that fit within assignments' requirements.

5.0 Required Textbook

- Gower, K. K. (2018). *Legal and ethical considerations for public relations* (3rd). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press. [The publisher's website lists e-book providers: **https://www.waveland.com/browse.php?t=220&r=s|Legal%20and%20ethical%20considerations%20for%20public%20relations** ↪ **(https://www.waveland.com/browse.php?t=220&r=s|Legal%20and%20ethical%20considerations%20for%20public%20relations)** .]

6.0 Required Readings (with required assignments)

- Bowen, S. A. (2008). Public relations ethics. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of communication* (pp. 3997-4000). Wiley Blackwell.

- Bruner, B. R., & Hickerson, C. A. (2019). Ethical frameworks and professional codes. In B. R. Brunner & C. A. Hickerson, *Cases in public relations: Translating ethics into action* (pp. 9-17). Oxford University Press.
- Marfousi, K. (2024, October 31). *How AI will change PR (and what that means for you).* Prezly Academy. Available: **https://www.prezly.com/academy/ai-in-pr** ▷ **(https://www.prezly.com/academy/ai-in-pr)**
- Mundy, D. (n.d.). *Media framing and ethics*. The Arthur W. Page Center. Available: **https://www.pagecentertraining.psu.edu/public-relations-ethics/media-framing-and-ethics/introduction** ▷ **(https://www.pagecentertraining.psu.edu/public-relations-ethics/media-framing-and-ethics/introduction)**
- Neal, K. (2025, February). Silent partner: Make AI your writing ally without losing your human touch. *Strategies & Tactics*. Available: **https://www.prsa.org/article/make-ai-your-writing-ally-without-losing-your-human-touch-ST-Feb25** ▷ **(https://www.prsa.org/article/make-ai-your-writing-ally-without-losing-your-human-touch-ST-Feb25)**
- Public Relations Society of America. (n.d.). *Ethics*. Available: **https://www.prsa.org/about/ethics** ▷ **(https://www.prsa.org/about/ethics)**
- Public Relations Society of America (2023). *Promise & pitfalls: The ethical use of AI for public relations practitioners*. Available: **https://www.prsa.org/docs/default-source/about/ethics/ethicaluseofai.pdf?sfvrsn=5d02139f_2** ▷ **(https://www.prsa.org/docs/default-source/about/ethics/ethicaluseofai.pdf?sfvrsn=5d02139f_2)**
- Public Relations Society of America (2025). *AI prompting 101: A "start here" guide for professional communicators*. Available: **https://www.prsa.org/professional-development/prsa-resources/ethics#resources** ▷ **(https://www.prsa.org/professional-development/prsa-resources/ethics#resources)**
- Raupp, J. (2017). Public relations: Media effects. In P. Rössler, C.A. Hoffner and L. Zoonen (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of media effects*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell. **https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0132** ▷ **(https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118783764.wbieme0132)**
- Tisdale, (2025, March). Embracing AI as a PR teammate. *Strategies & Tactics*. Available: **https://www.prsa.org/article/embracing-ai-as-a-pr-teammate-ST-March25** ▷ **(https://www.prsa.org/article/embracing-ai-as-a-pr-teammate-ST-March25)**

7.0 Learning Assessments

Assessment of students' learning against the course's objectives shall be done through a combination of learning assessments, which are explained in the subsections below.

7.1 *Informal/Ungraded Assessments*

I can measure how well you are learning *in process* by observing, listening to and talking with you. These data reveal your personal processes, attitudes, and other matters that are part of how and how well you learn. Examples include chatting about course material with me, the quality of questions and discussion, learning ownership, and attitude.

7.2 *Formal/Graded Assessments*

I can measure how well you can apply your learning by evaluating the *work you produce* in response to specific assignments. This work is what is graded and used to determine your final, overall level of mastery of the course's material by course's end. All assignments are listed in the "Course Grading Policy" section.

- One reflection assignment and four brief ethics case analyses will be in the form of short-essays, and the writing must conform to AP style and be free from grammatical, style, punctuation, spelling, and other errors. The assignments and the evaluation rubric are accessible in Canvas' assignments area. *All five assignments will be available only during the weeks for which they are assigned and are due by noon on the Friday of the weeks they are assigned in the schedule. You must complete your work in Canvas in the "Ethics Case Analysis" assignment that is due.*
- Two online units (two lessons each; a total of four lessons) through Penn State University are required, and the assessments of your learning from those units (two assessments at 10 questions each, requiring at least 80% correct answers; you can retake the assessments) will be used in the calculation of your final grade in this course. The two units are about diversity, equity, and inclusion and about media framing, both of which are not covered in our ethics textbooks but are essential in the application of ethics and law in PR. *The online units—shown as separate assignments in Canvas—will be available only during the weeks for which they are assigned and are due by noon on the Friday of the weeks they are assigned in the schedule. You must email me the actual PDF file of your certificate of completion for each module for the week each is due.*

7.3 *Class Citizenship*

I will keep track of your performance in the class based on how well you participate in it. This idea means you come to all class meetings (early is on time; on time is late); you come to class meetings having read, thought about, and taken notes about a day's planned material; you attend assignment meetings with drafts and self-analyses of them; you engage with course material with relevant, respectful, coherent, and helpful comments and questions; you make (and share) connections between what we cover and what you learned in other courses or what is going on in the world that bears on this class; you follow instructions/directions for assignments and ask good questions about your work in progress; and you turn in your finished work before or by the day and time it is due. In short: You are prepared for the class like you must in your career after graduation.

8.0 Course Grading Policy

Final grades are awarded on the basis of accumulation of points compared to the set scale below, not percentages. I do not "curve" grades on any assignment or exam, nor do I "curve" final course grades. I evaluate the end products of your work, not effort. You are encouraged to keep track of the points you have accumulated, and your grades will be posted on Canvas so you can monitor your performance, which I encourage you to do frequently. If I make an error in grading, I'll always apologize and make things right. Here is a breakdown of the point values for the assignments in this course:

Assignment	Available Points
Quiz #1	20
Quiz #2	20
Ethics case analysis #1	50
Ethics case analysis #2	50
Ethics case analysis #3	50
Ethics case analysis #4	50
Ethics case analysis #5	50
Media Framing & Ethics (2 parts+assessments)	100
TOTAL	**390**
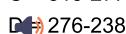
I will reveal scores in the Canvas grade book only after I return the graded assignments. If you have questions about my evaluation of your work, please see me during office hours within one week after I returned your work. I will not discuss grades at any other time thereafter.

I do not "round up" or "round down" points toward final course grades, except in cases for fractions of points, and at that rate I use conventional rounding procedures (e.g., 339.5 could be rounded to 340, but 339.3 would be rounded to 339). The following scale will be used to determine final grades:

A = 390-355
B = 354-316
C = 315-277
D = 276-238
F = 237-0

For this scale note that the lowest "A" was calculated at 91% of the total possible points and rounded up, the lowest "B" at 81% and rounded up, and so on. I reserve the right to revise all or part of this grading scale, and any revisions would be announced for the class. You are responsible for obtaining such revisions.

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 successfully completed at least approximately two-thirds (66%) of the course's assignments.

9.0 Student Access & 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 **Student Access and Accommodation Services (https://studentaccess.illinoisstate.edu/) (https://studentaccess.illinoisstate.edu/ (https://studentaccess.illinoisstate.edu/))**. If you are having trouble in other ways, particularly concerning mental or emotional health, visit **Redbirds Keep Thriving (https://studentaffairs.illinoisstate.edu/keepthriving/)** on ISU's website.

10.0 Course Schedule

Week	Topics	
1 (1/12- 1/16)	Introduction to PR ethics.	**Bowen (2008) (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6375163?wrap=1)** ↓ **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6: 4de5d6fd73b2%2FBowen_2008Public_Relations_Ethics_IntnlEncyclopedia.pdf%3Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMiJ9.eyJpY** ⬚ **(https://www.prsa.org/about/ethics)** (all drop-down windows)
2 (1/19- 1/23)	Doing the right thing in PR	Gower, Ch. 1. **Brunner & Hickerson (2019). (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6375178?wrap=1)** ↓ **(https://canvas.illinois Frameworks%252BCodes.pdf%3Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMiJ9.eyJpYXQiOjE3NjgzMTA1OTAsInVzZXJfaWQiOm51bGw**

3 (1/26-1/30)	Defining public relations speech	Gower, Ch. 2
4 (2/2-2/6)	Regulating public relations speech	Gower, Ch. 3
5 (2/9-2/13)	Harming others	Gower, Ch. 4
6 (2/16-2/20)	Protecting creative property	Gower, Ch. 5
7 (2/23-2/27)	AI & PR Ethics	• **AI in PR.** (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6375145?wrap=1) ⤓ (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/637 Marfousi2024.pdf%3Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMiJ9.eyJpYXQiOjE3NjgzMTU4MzgsInVzZXJfaWQiOm51bGwsInJlc291 • **Ethical Use of AI.** (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6616869?wrap=1) ⤓ (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/4740 Oct2025.pdf%3Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMiJ9.eyJpYXQiOjE3NjgyOTk3NzksInVzZXJfaWQiOm51bGwsInJlc291cmNl • **AI-prompting101.pdf** (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6616851?wrap=1) ⤓ (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/4 prompting101.pdf%3Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMiJ9.eyJpYXQiOjE3NjgzMDA4ODAsInVzZXJfaWQiOm51bGwsInJlc291cmNl% • **Neal-2025.** (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6375159?wrap=1) ⤓ (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6 S%252BT.pdf%3Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMiJ9.eyJpYXQiOjE3NjgyOTk4MDEsInVzZXJfaWQiOm51bGwsInJlc291cm • **Tisdale-2025** (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6375160?wrap=1) ⤓ (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files S%252BT.pdf%3Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMiJ9.eyJpYXQiOjE3NjgzMjA1NjQsInVzZXJfaWQiOm51bGwsInJlc291cmNl
8 (3/2-3/6)	Media framing & ethics	**Raupp (2017)** (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/6375146?wrap=1) ⤓ (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/files/63 Public%2520Relations%2520%2520Media%2520Effects.pdf%3Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMiJ9.eyJpYXQiOjE3NjgzMjMyM

<mark>* Assignments are due by **12:00.00 p.m.** on the days of the week they are due. See the announcement in Canvas for additional details that must be followed.</mark>

NOTE: We may alter the course schedule and other aspects of this syllabus as the course progresses. You are responsible for noting any such changes, which will be announced for the class and/or posted on Canvas.

Course Policies

In all my courses I challenge students to *strive for perfection* (or at least near perfection) in their work. Why? The answer is that your bosses, peers and, especially, clients will expect that from you throughout your career. So this course, like the others you've taken, is designed to extend your knowledge, strengthen your analytical skills, and refine your work habits. This course, then, challenges you to think, work and produce discourse that would approximate that of full-time professionals. To manage matters in this course, there are several policy areas given below.

11.0 Class Civility

The following 11 points are habits that, should you choose to employ them, can help you become successful in this course and contribute to a great learning environment for all of us. You also are expected to be familiar with **ISU's Code of Student Conduct** (https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/) . The 12 points below are not individually or collectively any kind of guarantee about grades you may earn for the course. They make up a prescription for you to effectively manage your work and learn the material in this course.

1. Read, take notes on, develop comments and questions about, and seriously think about the assigned readings before coming to class.
2. Complete assignments/activities to prepare for class.
3. Arrive early and attend all class meetings and required meetings with the professor.
4. Offer helpful comments during discussions and activities and encourage comments from your fellow classmates.
5. Treat everyone with respect.
6. Participate in course activities with genuine enthusiasm and interest. Attitude is key.
7. Be attentive while others are talking or presenting.

8. Only engage in class activities during class.
9. Ensure all electronic devices are turned off during class, except for those allowed.
10. Take good notes during class meetings.
11. Visit with me, work with each other, and seek help from students who've taken the class before to learn the material outside of class.

12.0 Cell Phones, Laptops, and other Electronic Devices

Very recent research shows that taking notes by hand with pen and paper results in far better learning than when taking notes on a digital devise. (See me for the sources.) Even so, you may bring and use a laptop or tablet computer with wireless connectivity during class, but please use it only to help you in your learning this class' content and not surf the Web, chat with people, or do any other nonclass-related stuff. If you find something useful that pertains to the course's content, please share it with the class. Turn off your device's volume. No earphones or headphones are allowed. Video and audio recording and downloading is prohibited.

13.0 Class Format

In this course I like to connect the dots between theory and practice because they inform and rely on each other. Also, in the design of this course, I apply many of the practices and demands of "real world" so you can become prepared for how you will be managed in your jobs after graduation. We all are students, so our class meetings will be "seminar style," where we examine, discuss, and work with course material.

Because this class bridges theory and practice, it relies heavily on discussion and your participation. I will track how well (i.e., quality and quantity) everyone contributes to class discussion (see the file in Canvas' assignments list). Topics and appropriate readings are planned for each meeting, and we may pursue other avenues in our investigation of public relations. Lessons and skills in writing, critical thinking, and communication from other classes will be important. *You are expected to read and think critically about the material for each class, which will be important to succeeding in the assignments.*

14.0 Attendance

I expect you to engage in the class every day, just like you would for your post-graduation, for example for preparing and attend meetings for a job you would hold. Canvas will show me your engagement in the class. My main objective with my attendance policy is to inspire you to take responsibility for "reporting to work" and, if you cannot, take responsibility for telling me why and having *bona* fide documentation whenever possible. This objective and policy are based on industry practices. "Blowing off" class/work is bad and unacceptable behavior.

14.1 *Excused and Unexcused Absences*

For an absence to be considered "excused" you must inform me prior to class, if at all possible. Excused absences include participation in a university-sanctioned event, the death of a family member (see **University Policy and Procedures 2.1.27 Student Bereavement Policy (http://policy.illinoisstate.edu/students/2-1-27.shtml)** online), incapacitating illness, and natural disaster. Other absences (e.g., cold/flu, weddings, babies, car trouble, house/apartment problem, etc.) will be considered individually, and documentation will be necessary. For any absence to be excused I require written verification of the reason for missing class. If your absence will be extensive, contact the Dean of Students Office immediately.

Absences because of personal/vacation travel I typically will not excuse because the university calendar has been available, and everyone should have used it when planning such travel so that it doesn't interfere with school. (This is equivalent to when companies don't let employees take vacations when business needs are particularly high.) I may grant exceptions when travel had to have been booked significantly in advance and there is documentation to that effect.

Two-weeks' worth of unexcused absences will result in one full letter-grade reduction for your final grade for the course. Continued absences will be reported to the Dean of Students Office and all evaluation of any work you turn in will cease. You must attend and participate in class meetings (see the "Class Civility" section) to obtain my evaluation of your work.

14.2 *Late Arrival to Class and Attendance Implications*

Late arrival to class (i.e., less than 30 minutes after class begins) will not be penalized under the attendance policy, although I may note you were late on the attendance sheet. Late arrival after 30 minutes of class qualifies as an unexcused absence. Remember to sign in! If an assignment is due and you are late, the penalty for late work will be enforced. (See the "Assignments Expectations" section of this syllabus.) If you drive to campus, always give yourself time—at least twice the amount of time you think you need—to find a parking spot and get to class. And that should be the rule whether you drive to campus from town or from some other area of the state or country.

14.3 *Your Responsibility for Course Material*

If you miss class or are late, you are responsible for turning in all assignments and obtaining all assignments, notes, and any other information that is given in class, including any alterations to this syllabus. I will not "reteach" material for you, although I'd be glad to answer specific questions. Again, excused absences and late arrivals (less than 30 minutes after class begins) will not count against you.

15.0 Online Communication

I use e-mail 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.*

You must get used to the fact that good language use is necessary in every written document you prepare. This includes e-mail. I will only open and respond to your e-mail me within 24 hours when:

1. A clear and simple subject line is given that, within 10 words or less, says exactly which class you're in and what topic(s) you're writing about. Don't be lazy and leave an old subject line from a previous e-mail I sent that has nothing to do with your e-mail's content. I will not reply to e-mail that recycles old subject lines that are not directly related to your e-mail content.
2. Your e-mail text is written effectively and concisely, and it should be as free of errors as possible.

By the way, I will apply these rules when I send e-mail to you. Follow my example for e-mail I send you.

16.0 Online Course Material

I use Canvas extensively to organize the material for this course and make announcements about our class. You can access Canvas through My.IllinoisState.edu. 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, and helpful 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** ⤷ **(http://www.adobe.com)** to download that software.

17.0 Academic Dishonesty

You are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the **Code of Student Conduct (https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/)** and any additional syllabus language. All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Unauthorized and unacknowledged collaboration on any work, or the presentation of someone else's work, is plagiarism. Content generated by an Artificial Intelligence third-party service or site (AI-generated content) without proper attribution or authorization would also be a form of plagiarism. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss it as soon as possible. Any allegation of a violation of this section may be referred to **Student Conduct and Community Responsibilities (https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/resolution/)** , a unit of the Dean of Students Office for possible sanctioning. In addition, a grade penalty can also be applied.

18.0 Assignments Expectations

All your study of public relations should pay off in this class, which is a capstone course for the PR major. If you go into the field of public relations or other field of communication for a career, you will be paid to be your organization's best communicators in all forms—written and oral, physical and virtual, interpersonal and public. I designed this course around this premise, and I try to approximate "real world" problems, pressures and planning that you will need to both enter and succeed in PR.

🔊
The assignments are designed with ambiguity built in, which should inspire you to think analytically about what you know and what you're learning so you can create the best product. So I expect you to have questions about the assignments, because in the "real world" you do not get precise recipes for everything you need to do—you'll have a college degree, probably one or more internships, and a job where you'll be paid to figure things out, so build this skillset now. (See "My Philosophy of Teaching and Learning.")

18.1 *Turning in Your Work*

A vital part of evaluating and returning **your** work is being able to manage and retain **your** files that you turn in for all assignments. There is far too much variation in the way everyone names their files and turns them in.

So to ensure that I have and use the files correctly for everyone in class, the rules for turning in your work given below must be followed. *In fact, these rules are so important that I will impose a **five-point penalty** on any assignment for anyone who does not follow any of these rules. Any assignments turned in after the first one that breaks any of these rules will not be evaluated and will be scored **zero (0) points**.*

1. Use only the file templates I provide for assignments when I provide such template files for assignments. Use only Microsoft Office products to prepare your work. If you use another product, it must be saved in the format I can open *and* (Another product may be used only with my permission or only as a last resort, if and only if I have that software.) If your file does not match what I assigned and expect, particularly when I provide a template, your work will be evaluated accordingly (i.e., negatively).
2. Name your files with your last name (team members' last names for group projects) then with the assignment in abbreviated form (e.g., Smudde TS1; Smudde Job Memo; Smudde-Lippert-Hunt SPP).
3. Put your name (names for group work) on the top if the first page of each assignment. Add the date and assignment name, if you wish.
4. Use only Microsoft Office products, particularly those for which templates are provided for assignments. See all assignments for directions about what is expected. Do not turn in handwritten work (including photos of such work) as responses to assignments, including extra-credit work, *if given*.
5. Email your actual file as an attachment—*NOT A LINK TO A FILE*—directly to me at my ISU email account. Do not upload to Canvas; whereas, doing so will result in no evaluation of your work and a score of zero (0) for the assignment. Your work must be turned in before/by the assignment's deadline given in the "Course Schedule" and in accord with Section 18.2. I will use your e-mail's time-date stamp to determine whether your work is late or not. You may choose to turn in work in advance of the due date—especially if you are going to be absent the day an assignment is due.

I will critique all work that is submitted properly; however, if a paper is not remotely close to the assignment as given, I reserve the right to withhold all points and score the work as zero (0). Documentation supporting an excused absence or late arrival to class would be considered to forgive the penalty for late

work. Also see the "Learning Assessments" and "Course Grading Policy" sections in this syllabus.

18.2 *Late Work Policy*

All assignments are due no later than the official starting time for class on the dates indicated in the "Course Schedule" in the syllabus (or a different day and time any assignment is due that is communicated to all). **I will not accept late work, even work that is one (1) second late—late work will receive a score of zero (0) points.** In public relations (actually in all professions) deadlines must be upheld, and if you work for an agency, you can endanger the business of the firm by missing deadlines. If you are having trouble completing your work for this class, contact me and the Dean of Students Office immediately. Also see Section 8.0.

18.3 *Technology and Late Work*

For your own protection, as you work on any computer to complete your assignments, remember to:

- Frequently save your work.
- Always backup your work on another medium.
- Always protect your files and computer from viruses and malware.
- Always make sure your device, any of its peripheral technologies, and your software applications operate flawlessly in every way, including with online applications, for you to complete and turn in your work.
- Always make sure your work, if it is to be emailed, is submitted with enough time before a deadline (day and time) for the system to process the sending of your work.

I will not accept work turned in late because you had technology problems and did not follow these cardinal rules for technology use or couldn't find a computer to use. Documentation supporting an actual, bonafide communications carrier system outage (e.g., ISU, Comcast, Mediacom, etc.) or genuine system-related communications errors or crashes with your device or location's system (e.g., home/apartment internet or wireless connection) *may* be applied to forgive this penalty.

18.4 *Extenuating Circumstances & Turning in Work*

If a student has an extenuating circumstance (e.g., illness, family emergency) that requires the student to miss class on the due date of any assignment, the student must, according to Section 14.1, provide documentation of the reason for the absence that also will be used to *consider* a possible extension for turning in the assigned work. Importantly, however, is the fact that assignments in the class have been available and addressed in class since the beginning of the semester. In this way, therefore, any student ought to have developed any assignment progressively to be ready to turn it in on or before the due date.

18.5 *Feedback on Work in Progress*

The first draft of any public relations or advertising writing is seldom successful. Most writing goes through numerous drafts and multiple reviews until the writer and the client are satisfied. In this class we do not have the time to simulate this experience, thus we will not rewrite assignments for credit. Instead of rewrites, I encourage you to seek my feedback while you work on your assignments. By this I mean you prepare draft material in advance of the deadlines and visit with me to review your work "in progress" and ask questions. This way you get feedback about your writing—to see if you are on "the right track."

*Note that my giving feedback is not "pregrading": I will **not** look for everything that is good/bad or right/wrong, but I will point out aspects or patterns of your writing that work or are problematic. I also will not do proofreading—that is your job.* Time permitting, you may ask for my feedback after class meetings, but it's usually best during office hours or appointments. *Only two drafts are allowed per assignment, and I will not accept drafts to review after 12 p.m. <u>three</u> days before an assignment is due because I need time to review it for you and, most important, you need time to work with my feedback.*

19.0 Evaluations of Assignments

After you submit your finished work for an assignment, I will probably give my most focused comments on the first page or two of your papers because after that the errors/problems very likely will be repetitive. I may note other things in later pages, but a lack of comments is not necessarily an indication of correctness or effectiveness. I also won't find absolutely everything because time is of the essence, and getting you your evaluated work sooner than later serves you and me well. I firmly believe that my detailed comments and corrections in the first couple pages and elsewhere that I note are enough to indicate to you what I see, and you should learn from and look for those things elsewhere in the paper. Of course, if you want more detailed help, visit with me.

20.0 Returned Work

I will make every effort to return work to you promptly. Most short assignments will be returned at the next class. Longer assignments may take one or two weeks. I will only return assignments to their authors. If you are not in class when an assignment is returned, please pick it up during your professor's office hours or after class.

21.0 Keep Your Work for Job Hunting

If you plan to pursue a career in public relations or other field, having a set of solid examples of your work in a "professional portfolio" will be important for you to get an internship and/or your first full-time job. You will be required in COM 378 to create a professional portfolio. So make sure you keep very clean copies of the work you do in this and all your PR classes. Remember: no matter what score you received on any assignment, look for ways to make your examples even better, if not "perfect." Outside of your coursework you may ask for some help from us in the PR faculty while you make your portfolio.

NOTE: We may alter aspects of these policies, the course schedule, and other topics in this syllabus as the course progresses. You are responsible for noting any such changes, which will be announced for the class, emailed, and/or posted on Canvas.

* * *

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Tue Jan 13, 2026	📝 **Week 0: Getting familiar with the course** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/708018)**	due by 11:59pm
Fri Jan 16, 2026	📝 **Week 1 Quiz** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/696397)**	due by 12pm
	📝 **Week 1: Introduction to PR Ethics** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/696398)**	due by 12pm
Fri Jan 23, 2026	📝 **Week 2 Quiz** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/696399)**	due by 12pm
	📝 **Week 2: Doing the right thing in PR** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/696400)**	due by 12pm
Fri Jan 30, 2026	📝 **Ethics case analysis #1** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/708042)**	due by 12pm
	📝 **Week 3: Defining PR speech** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/696401)**	due by 12pm
Fri Feb 6, 2026	📝 **Ethics case analysis #2** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/737491)**	due by 12pm
	📝 **Week 4: Regulating PR speech** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/696402)**	due by 12pm
Fri Feb 13, 2026	📝 **Ethics case analysis #3** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/737500)**	due by 12pm
	📝 **Week 5: Harming others** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/696403)**	due by 12pm
Fri Feb 20, 2026	📝 **Ethics case analysis #4** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/737527)**	due by 12pm
	📝 **Week 6: Protecting creative property** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/696404)**	due by 12pm
Fri Feb 27, 2026	📝 **Ethics case analysis #5** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/737528)**	due by 12pm
	📝 **Week 7: AI & PR Ethics** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/696405)**	due by 12pm
Fri Mar 6, 2026	📝 **Week 8: Media framing & ethics** **(https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/47408/assignments/696406)**	due by 12pm