PR Strategies

Course Syllabus
The course “PR Strategies” is designed in accordance with the MGIMO Educational Standard for the Bachelor’s Program in International Relations (program track “Government and International Relations”).

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Director, MGIMO Library ________________ Marina Reshetnikova
Director, School of Government
and International Affairs ________________ Mikhail Troitskiy
1.1 General information

- Full course title: PR Strategies
- Type of course: Elective
- Level of course: B.A.
- Year of study: 3rd
- Number of ECTS credits allocated: 2
- Name of lecturer(s) and office hours:
  Anton Gumenskiy  
  Department of Public Relations  
  Office hours: [Tuesday, Wednesday, 2PM-5PM], office [4129]  
  E-mail: Anton.Gumenskiy@gmail.com

1.2 Course aims and learning outcomes

The PR Strategies course aims to provide students with foundational knowledge of essence, effects and consequences of Public Relations phenomena for individuals and societies. An emphasis is put on problematization of PR as a professional field and an element that is present in any and every act of public policy, mass media, corporate governance, and professional communication, and on correlation between PR activities and transformations of basic individual and social realities.

The basic concept of the course is a fundamental interconnectivity and consistency of social and technological processes. Classes aim to promote independent thinking, critical analysis, self-reflection, and cooperative and responsible communication culture. Teaching methods include lectures, seminars, case studies, presentations and discussions.

The course is intended to give students an essential comprehension of systematic and holistic nature of the public communication sphere, understanding of main laws and principles of media, and broad knowledge of various genres, formats, patterns, and other phenomena, which constitute political, corporate, and personal professional communication. The course is designed to develop critical and system thinking skills, capability of information analysis and synthesis, adaptability to the constantly changing communication environment, ability to self-reflection, self-dependent problem setting and considered decision making, so to let students use media as needed, and not to get used by them.

Course objectives:
1. To introduce students to the main methodological approaches to analysis of PR phenomena.
2. To orient students to the key issues and paradoxes of the contemporary public sphere, and media and communication studies.
3. To provide students with essential approaches and methods for critical thinking and further in-depth research within PR, media business, corporate communications, public policy, and other relevant fields.

Learning outcomes:

After the course, the student should have essential media literacy, vital for any professional in political and social communications. By the end of the course students should be able to:
1. conduct an independent, problem-oriented, and methodologically correct critical research within the public, the corporate, and the personal professional communications;
2. evaluate opportunities and risks of communication technologies;
3. control own communication behaviour, effectively adapt to diverse information environments.
1.3 Course requirements and grading plan

Course requirements
Students are required to attend not less than 75% of classes and be prepared for class discussions. Thorough reading of the assigned materials is essential.

Grading plan
- Class participation – 40%.
- Essay in-class presentation – 40%.
  During the course each student is encouraged to write an essay (minimum 3000 characters, up to 5000 characters, Times New Roman font, size 14, 1.5 interval) on the topic directly related to the PR field and present it in the class (up to 15 minutes). The essay should demonstrate the level of student’s understanding of the subject. Class feedback will help to evaluate knowledge of all students involved into discussion.
- Oral exam – 20%.

PART 2. COURSE CONTENT

2.1 Types of work

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of work</th>
<th>Academic hours</th>
<th>ECTS credits</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total for lectures, seminar</td>
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<td>Seminars</td>
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<td>Reading assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing an essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation for final test</td>
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<td>and exam</td>
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2.2. Course content and readings by topic

Topic 1. PR as a Problem.

Lecture 1.1 PR, Ideology, and Public Good.
Summary: Phenomenon and functions of PR. Basic terms and definitions. The Paradox of PR: to act in the interests of the society and in favour of those, who use the society in their own interests. PR’s impossibility and inevitability. PR and Media: media non-neutrality principle.
Keywords: public good, stakeholder, non-neutrality, ideology.

Lecture 1.2 A Feast in Time of Plague.
Summary: Crisis Communication: to fight the fire or to explain that no fire has ever taken place? PR as a paradigm and a worldview: reflection and projection of the reality, unintended consequences, self-fulfilling prophecies, immorality of the professional ethics.
Keywords: crisis, moral dilemma, professional ethics, conflict of interests.
Topic 2. Theory and Evolution of PR.

Lecture 2.1. Show Business from Freud to Facebook.
Summary: Sources of the profession, social, cultural, technological, and scientific contexts. Tradition, Modernity, Postmodernity. Social networks: PR is dead, long live PR.
Keywords: context, mass-culture, unconscious, evolution.

Lecture 2.2. Political Economy of PR.
Summary: PR market, politics, business, and other professional spheres. Actors and resources, from target audiences to responsible users. PR and Power: the tyranny of image, auto communication, ideology and the myth of realpolitik.
Keywords: divide et impera, power, production, exchange.

Topic 3. PR and Technology.

Lecture 3.1 PR as Technocracy.
Summary: The methods of PR and socio-technological context: conveyor, hypermarket, television, social networks, big data, and the dream of “the next big thing”. Media enchantment. Society as a mechanism and the organism. PR as the perfect approach to the social governance.
Keywords: methods, tools, craftsmanship, technopoly.

Lecture 3.2. Research Technologies in PR.
Summary: Target audiences, evolution of concepts from mass-market to niches, from hierarchy of demands to lifestyles. Audience research methods from polls and focus groups to modelling and anthropology. PR efficiency obsessive-compulsive disorder.
Keywords: audience, targeting, research, efficiency.

Compulsory readings:
The SAGE Handbook of Public Relations, SAGE Publications, Inc; 2 edition (July 29, 2010)

Further readings:

Compulsory readings:
The SAGE Handbook of Public Relations, SAGE Publications, Inc; 2 edition (July 29, 2010)

Further readings:
The SAGE Handbook of Public Relations, SAGE Publications, Inc; 2 edition (July 29, 2010)

- Further readings:

Topic 4. PR, Public Policy, and Social Development.

Lecture 4.1 PR and Civil Society.
Summary: New Media, Grassroots, Astroturfing, and Civil Society in the Digital Era. Social Networks phenomena and effects, interest groups, communities and crowds. Propaganda and counter-propaganda. Trolls, bots, drones, zombies and other digital things. The Digital as the new framework and ideology.
Keywords: new media, activism and slacktivism, crowdsourcing, vox populi vox dei.

Lecture 4.2. PR in the Global Village.
Summary: Cross-cultural communications; corporate cultures in the era of the great Barbarian Invasions. Globalization and Localization, McDonaldization, Eat local, cultural imperialism, cosmopolitism and patriotism. Moral choice and the conflict of identities of PR-professional.
Keywords: glocalization, migrations, corporate culture, identity.

- Compulsory readings:

- Further readings:

2.3. Essay topics

1. Virtual Communities and Crowds as New Social Actors
2. Influence of Mass-culture Narratives on Political Ideologies
3. Missing and Overlapping Contexts in Digital Communications
4. Technological Progress and Ethical Issues
5. Digital (Generation, Gender, Cultural, etc.) Gaps in Public Relations
6. PR & Mass Media: partnership and rivalry
7. Leadership Communications in a Digital Tribe
8. Information Overload as a Factor in Decision Making
9. Tools of Social Activism in the Digital Era
10. Social Media Images of PR-professionals

Exam Questions

1. PR Audience: Crowdsourcing, Empowerment, etc.
2. PR Theories and Research Methods
3. PR & Culture: Political, Corporate, Ethnic Cultures, Subcultures, etc.
4. PR & Environment: Ecology, Economy, Urbanism, Greenwashing, etc.
5. Professional Ethics & Morality
7. PR & Ideologies, Discourses, Paradigms and Narratives
8. PR & Social Order; Consensus, Conflict, Change, and Social Organization
9. Identity issues and Conflict of Interests of a PR-professional
10. Political Economy of PR

2.4. Exam timing
• Spring semester oral exam – last week of May.

2.5. Consolidated reading list (in alphabetic order)

• Compulsory readings:

• Further readings:

- Films list
  1. All the President's Men, 1976. imdb.com/title/tt0074119
  4. Death of a President, 2006. imdb.com/title/tt0853096
  5. House of Cards, 2013 -. imdb.com/title/tt1856010
  6. The Ides of March, 2011. imdb.com/title/tt1124035

- Case Study List
  1. Louise Delage on Instagram: http://mashable.com/2016/10/06/france-instagram-louise-delage-alcohol/?utm_cid=mash-com-fb-main-link#5kQRa08mwwqp;
  2. Brangelina Is Dead; Long Live Angelina: https://www.buzzfeed.com/annehelenpetersen/brangelina-is-dead-long-live-angelina
PART 3. FINAL REMARKS

- Plagiarism is considered a severe violation of academic rules and a breach of ethics. Plagiarism is unacceptable. Proved plagiarism results in F-mark for the course regardless of the fulfillment of all other requirements.
- Assignments are to be handed in on the due date. Late submissions result in lowering of the grade by 1/5 of a grade for each day of delay.
- Students are asked to keep a copy of all work submitted for evaluation.