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Myers, Cayce. *The Rules of Public Relations: Legal and Ethical Issues in Contemporary Practice*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2024, 328 pp. \$38.00 (Paperback) ISBN: 978-1-5381-8605-3 Reviewed by Sonya DiPalma, University of North Carolina at Asheville ([sdipalma@unca.edu](mailto:sdipalma@unca.edu))

In many respects, this reviewer, who began working as a public relations practitioner in the 1980s, has been waiting for *The Rules of Public Relations: Legal and Ethical Issues in Contemporary Practice* by Cayce Myers, especially as the proliferation of social media platforms has led to more students majoring in public relations due to social media's influence on communication. Whether large or small, most businesses need a social media presence to reach their demographic, which calls for someone well-versed in public relations strategy.

The author is a known media scholar with several books on public relations history, legal frameworks, and ethical considerations. You may be acquainted with Myers's other books, such as *Public Relations History: Theory, Practice and Profession* (2020), *Money and Politics: Campaign Fundraising in the 2020 Presidential Election* (2022), and *Mass Communication Law in Virginia* (2022). If so, then you know to expect a well-written, researched body of work. Myers's latest book does not disappoint.

Myers sets out to connect public relations to legal issues in a way that differs from other media law textbooks, which focus primarily on journalists. Instead, Myers provides a comprehensive approach to public relations practitioners' legal issues grounded in the present rather than case law and engages in how to navigate these emerging challenges. Myers divides content into eight chapters over 246 pages organized by contemporary themes of public

relations practice: legal requirements and ethical expectations, definitional issues, balancing perspectives, transparency, reputation management in a digital world, privacy, intellectual property, and the future of public relations practice in the age of artificial intelligence.

Most chapters are meaty in content and examination of thought, but not so much that students will have difficulty finding the book interesting. Each chapter begins with an overview and learning objectives and concludes with discussion questions and a case scenario. Myers examines social media and influencers in relation to their relevance to public relations. The reader will find the issues and propose resolutions that are timely in the midst of today's challenging public relations problems. Chapter 1, "Legal Requirements and Ethical Expectations," sets the foundation by differentiating between law and ethics, constitutional law, philosophical approaches to case law, statutory law, and administrative law while incorporating public relations codes of ethics from various associations.

Chapter 2, "The Expanding Definition and Legal Implications of Public Relations," is my favorite, mostly because starting in this field in the 20<sup>th</sup> century means you've witnessed the transformation in how public relations is defined. Myers helps the reader understand this transformation by exploring public relations within the context of the First Amendment and how public relations is a component of different types of speech—political, commercial, and corporate. Chapter 8, "The Future of Public

Relations Practice in the Age of Artificial Intelligence,” inspires those in public relations to be ready to lead as massive transformations change how we create content and not to fear that public relations practitioners will be replaced.

Public relations is a profession that often struggles with credibility, and Myers weaves historical underpinnings of media law and history with public relations throughout the book. This reviewer also likes how Myers reinforces public trust because experience teaches us that it’s challenging to talk about public relations without discussing trust, addressing the proverbial spin, or ethical considerations. As Meyers writes, “Perhaps most important is that ethical communication gives organizations (and practitioners) close credibility” (p. 5).

Criticisms are small. An expanded glossary would be welcomed. Ivy Lee is a mere footnote, and Edward Bernays is nowhere in defining public relations. Then again, the book is about contemporary practices, albeit there’s a strong argument for Lee and Bernays's influence on the practice of public relations today and its ethical dilemmas. However, you will find Scott Cutlip and Allen Center referenced in chapter two.

This text could be the option students interested in public relations welcome as an alternative to the general media law course typically required at the junior or senior level. The content design doesn’t lend itself to cherry-picking chapters, so the recommendation is to have this as the primary text, and augment chapters with real-time public relations examples. Given the speed at which artificial intelligence applications are developing, this will be particularly true for chapter eight.

Overall, this book is ideal for anyone interested in public relations—students,

practitioners, or professors. Those interested in marketing and advertising will also gain much. In many respects, this text could be required reading for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.