

## COM 353: Problems in Public Relations

### Instructor Information

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M-11-12; T & Th 3-4

**INTRODUCTION:** The primary objective of this course is to provide you with "hands-on" experience of working with "REAL" clients in the "REAL" world. It is run much like a real PR firm as the situation permits. This course can be one of the most exciting and useful of your undergraduate career, depending upon how much you are willing to invest into it and learn from it. I am looking forward to an exciting and productive semester!

**COURSE PHILOSOPHY:** This course is driven by the fundamental principle of learning through engagement. Scholars in communication are beginning to recognize the practical role that communication can play in providing solutions to the problems faced by our neighborhoods, communities, and nations, and public relations is at the forefront of this revolution. The knowledge gained by you in communication classrooms can be best imbibed when embodied in action. By working with a non-profit organization and sharing your expertise with them, not only do you gain valuable public relations experience, but you contribute to the growth of the community that has nurtured and nourished you. So take your jobs SERIOUSLY and treat your assignments with respect.

**PREREQUISITES:** Comm. 253

**TEXTS:** Kendall, Robert (1992). Public relations campaign strategies. New York: Harper Collins.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION:** The assignments and their weights are below.

Activities (10X2 In-class)	20 pts.
Final (Take-home)	25 pts.
In-class Quiz (5X6)	30 pts.
Journal and Participation	25 pts.
Group Grade	
Proposal	30 pts.
Contract	10 pts.
Final Report	30 pts.
Group Performance	30 pts.

**Grading:** There are 200 points available in the class. A grade is determined by reaching the cut-off point. A=175 (87.5%) B=160 (80%) C=140 (70%) D=120 (60%).

**Deductions:** As you know, PR work is all about deadlines – no newspaper will hold up its press run for a late press release -- so lateness is just not something that the profession tolerates. Therefore, 1) assignments are due at the beginning of class and late assignments will be graded down **twenty percent (20%)** for each regular school day, or portion of a day, they are late. As you also know, much of what we write in PR actually gets published, so 2) grading standards for spelling, grammar, and general production quality in this class are those of your chosen profession – which means very high.

Individual Performance evaluates each person's individual contribution. The grade is determined mostly by reading your journal and those of the other members of your group, but also includes observation of how each member works in the group. The grade is based on: a) how well the assigned group role is carried out, b) responsibility and cooperation, c) press release packet assignment, d) journal reports, how insightful and substantive these are, and e) individual reports. Note that in extreme cases of poor group participation, substantiated by journal reports and oral discussions with the instructor, **a group may "fire" one of its members**. That member may either, a) continue doing a complete project on their own with full credit available, or b) stop working on a project and lose the remaining points. Finally, **you are responsible** for everything covered in class – **or in your group** – while you are absent. This means, for example, that if you are absent from a group meeting and your group has to create a new deadline because of a crisis **you** are responsible for finding out about it and meeting the deadline.

Class Participation Assignments: You will be assigned ten (10) participation assignments throughout the semester. Each of these assignments can earn you a maximum of 2 points for a complete answer, 1 point for a partial answer and 0 for not turning in the assignment. Class discussions will often build on these assignments. Class participation assignments can't be made up and will not be repeated if you are late to class.

Final (Take-home): This take-home final will test your ability to compare, analyze, synthesize and apply the content discussed in class.

Quiz: During the semester, there will be six UNANNOUNCED quizzes. **Quizzes will deal with the reading material listed on the syllabus for the given week in which the quiz is taken—plus the class material that has been covered during the TWO CLASS SESSIONS prior to the quiz.** Each quiz will consist of FIVE (5) multiple-choice questions. The quizzes cannot be made up and will not be repeated if you are late to class.

Group Performance evaluates the total public relations campaign. It is based on: a) the overall content of your project, including writing, creativity, neatness, accuracy, and the like, b) the overall process of the group, including efficiency, skill and professionalism shown towards the client, instructor, and group members, c) oral presentations of proposal, and d) final report.

Journal. Each class member keeps a journal and turns it in several times. **Journals are absolutely confidential between the student and the instructor.** The journal allows me to help you in two very important ways. First, I can give advice to individual students privately. Second, I can find out if anyone is being perceived as not doing their part in the group before it becomes a major problem, for them or for the group. The journal details: a) your work on the project, including billable hours, b) an analysis of what is going well in the group and what is not. Journals are graded (plus = good job, check = acceptable, minus = not enough thought or substance) on thoroughness, insight, etc.

Billable Hours. All public relations “consulting,” including internal work in many large companies, is charged on a per-hour basis. Sometimes a per-hour + costs basis. Although we are not paid for them in 353, each journal entry should clearly state your billable hours for any work associated with that entry. Your final report to the client also reflects, a) total billable hours for each person in the group, b) aggregate billable hours for the whole project. Discuss billable hours with other group members and be prepared to explain\justify them to each other, to me, and to the client at any time.

Each time you hand in your journal these hours are added up so that you can indicate how many billable hours you have accumulated up to that time. Report this figure clearly in its own box.

One important rule. All work has to be approved by the instructor before it can be submitted to the client. When you arrange a deadline with your client make sure to leave enough time to get it in to me first. I usually need until the next class to get it back to you. If the work needs revision before it can go to the client the revision is due in one week (unless special arrangements are made). The first revision can raise the grade, subsequent revisions cannot raise the grade any further.

Just as you would be watched for leadership or promotion potential in a real workplace, you can help manage this class. Look for opportunities to help make improvements in the class and to make it as enjoyable as possible for everyone. Second, you will have substantial input in evaluating each group member's performance -- but remember that the members of your group, your teacher, and your client, are much like yourself. We all have more than our share of problems and pressures. Third, sometimes things that would be a major problem in a permanent job can be compromised, or even ignored, for a few weeks. Try to overlook minor problems or disagreements. In case you cannot, please talk to me!

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#### CALENDAR

Date	ASSIGNMENTS DUE	READINGS
Aug 26		Intro, Resume, Job Descriptions
28	<u>Hand in Resume, Application Letter</u>	KENDALL, Chapter 1
Sept 02	<u>Job Interviews</u>	
04	<u>Meet Clients</u>	Proposal Writing
Sept 09		KENDALL Chpt. 2
11		How to Write a Contract
Sept 16	<u>Proposals Drafts Due &amp; Present Group Proposals</u>	
18	<u>Contracts due</u>	KENDALL Chpt. 4
Sept 23	<u>Journals Due</u>	KENDALL Chpt. 6
25	<u>News Release Packet Due</u>	KENDALL Chpt. 7
Sept 30		Press Release Writing
Oct 02		Media Kit Generation
Oct 07	<u>Journals Due</u>	KENDALL Chpt 10
09		KENDALL Chpt. 11
Oct 14	October Break No Class	
16		Strategy

Oct	21-23	Final exam handed out	KENDALL Chpt. 12 & 13
Oct	28-30		Strategy
Nov	04-06		Strategy
Nov	11-13	<u>Journals Due</u>	Strategy
Nov	18-20	How to Write Final and Individual Reports	Final Report
Nov	25	<u>Journals Due</u>	KENDALL Chpt. 14
Nov	27	Thanksgiving Break	
Dec	02-04	<u>Final Reports Due; Final Exam Due</u>	
Dec	09-11	<u>Groups Present Final Reports</u> <u>Final Journals Due; Individual Reports Due</u>	

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#### Additional References

- Bivins, T. (1995). Handbook for Public Relations Writing (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). NTC Business Books: Lincolnwood, IL.
- Newsom, D., & Carrell, B. (1995). Public Relations Writing Form & Style (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Wadsworth: Albany.
- Smith, R. (1996). Becoming a Public Relations Writer. HarperCollins: New York.
- Whitaker, W., Ramsey, J., & Smith, R. (2000). Media Writing. Longman: New York.
- Wilcox, D., & Nolte, L. (1997). Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Longman: New York.
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