

California State University, Sacramento
CSUS College of Arts and Letters
Department of Communication Studies
COMS123(1) and JOUR123(1) Writing For Public Information
Summer, 2018 [6:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m., Tuesday & Thursday]
Mendocino Hall (MND), Room 2009 (We may change rooms)

Instructor: Timothy Lent Howard
Office: Mendocino Hall 5039
Office Hours: 5:25 p.m. – 6:25 p.m., Tuesday & Thursday, or by
appointment.
Phone: (916) 278-6854 Office (No Voicemail Available)
E-mail: howard@csus.edu (Put COMS123(1) or JOUR123(1), in your subject line on all emails).
Website: www.prssasacstate.com for student resources

Mission of the College of Arts and Letters

The programs within the College of Arts and Letters include a diverse array of disciplines, from Art and Music to History and Communication Studies, yet they share a common mission of preparing graduates to become effective citizens and enlightened community members, one which includes a commitment to:

- enhancing students' awareness and aesthetic sensitivity through the study of literary and/or symbolic texts and through an appreciation of the fine and applied arts;
- using literature and the arts in order to promote understanding of a given genre, culture or historical movement; and
- fostering critical thinking and effective oral and written communication skills.

The College includes the Departments of Art, Communication Studies, Design, English, Foreign Languages, History, Humanities and Religious Studies, Music, Philosophy, Theatre and Dance, as well as the Graduate Liberal Arts and Learning Skills programs. The departments and programs within the College of Arts and Letters collectively offer 16 baccalaureate degrees, 20 minors, and 9 master's degrees and one joint doctorate.

Students in the College of Arts and Letters are expected to develop skills in reasoning, problem solving, finding information, communicating in both oral and written form, and developing a sensitivity to and understanding of creative accomplishment in many cultures, past and present. Students also have access to a variety of opportunities to perfect their skills outside of the classroom, including classroom service connections to the community; internships; participating on a nationally-acclaimed debate team or the State Hornet newspaper staff; producing or performing in plays, concerts, and recitals; and exhibiting their art and design works on and off campus.

Arts and Letters contributes many courses to the University's General Education program. Additionally, of the nine approved single-subject pre-credential preparation programs on campus for students interested in the teaching profession, six are offered in disciplines in the College of Arts and Letters: Art, English, French, German, Spanish, and Music.

Faculty in the College are dedicated to creating a learning environment that is student-centered and that encourages inquiry into the development of concepts and the exploration of ideas. Many of the faculty in the College are nationally known scholars and researchers, offering students opportunities to co-author and co-present papers and projects to a national audience.

The programs within the College are of exceptional merit offering advanced curriculum, excellent facilities, and highly qualified faculty with a commitment to teaching. The following are a few examples:

Mission Statement of the Department of Communication Studies

The faculty of Communication Studies and Journalism is a community of professionals, educated and experienced in a diverse range of specialty areas, and united by a common body of information related to the creation, application, and understanding of messages. The department exists to provide quality instruction that assists students in becoming intellectually aware citizens who are ethical, competent communicators. Further, the department seeks to maintain and develop the body of scholarly knowledge that unites the field.

Course Description

COMS123. Writing For Public Information. Organization and operation of communication media; practice in publicity and public relations techniques. Emphasis on clear writing and correct public relations formats such as releases, PSAs, articles and speeches. **Prerequisite:** JOUR 030 with a grade of "C-" or better, passing score on the WPE. Cross-listed as JOUR 123; only one may be counted for credit. 3 units.

This course is about the *how* and *why* of writing for public relations. It is designed principally for people who are serious about wanting to become public relations professionals. Its concentration is on equipping aspiring professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to qualify as competent, or more hopefully, accomplished, in the forms and uses of this most fundamental of all tools needed for a successful career.

We learn to write by writing, so most of our class time will be devoted to doing that. We'll talk about techniques and strategies and when to use what form and why and from time to time we'll bring in practicing experts to share some of their techniques – but mostly we'll be writing. So come prepared to write. In our classroom exercises we'll produce drafts, which we will discuss and critique among ourselves, to help us understand how to craft the various forms, and how to use them, and when and why. Sometimes you'll be asked to produce finished copy from the in-class drafts as homework assignments and sometimes you'll be given assignments to produce finished copy without the benefit of an in-class practice. We'll do some role playing and run a simulation or two to get a feel for how things actually work, and test our creativity in making otherwise mundane topics interesting and otherwise complex subjects understandable.

This writing course will teach students entry-level public relations writing skills. It also will focus on technical proficiency (correct grammar, punctuation, word usage, syntax, and AP style).

Course Objectives

This course has five learning goals and objectives. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1.) Examine and be familiar with the basic forms of writing for public relations and be able to demonstrate and apply these learned skills.
- 2.) Apply the basic rules of grammar and spelling to ensure your writing is clean, interesting and effective.
- 3.) Examine and be familiar with current issues and trends in public relations.
- 4.) To give students hands-on experience by helping them to identify relevant topics associated with everyday decisions a public relations professional encounters.
- 5.) Communicate in an effective writing manner on issues and developments related to public relations.

Required Textbook(s)

Rhody, R., & Hackley, C.A., (2010). *WORDSMITHING: The Art & Craft of Writing for Public Relations*. Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Suggested Textbook(s), of course, current copy and or AP Application... i.e.:

Arnold, G. (2007). *Media Writer's Handbook: A guide to common writing & Editing problems*. New York, NY: McGraw – Hill.

Goldstein, N. (Ed.). *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on media law*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

Strunk, W. Jr. & White, E.B. *The Elements of Style*. Needham Heights, MA: Pearson Publishing

The Instructional Textbook we'll use is *WORDSMITHING: The Art & Craft of Writing for Public Relations*. The text is available at the new Sacramento State Hornet Bookstore.

Our principal resources will be *WORDSMITHING*. In general, we'll take *WORDSMITHING* chapter by chapter in the order in which the topics appear in the book. Supplemental readings and/or input from outside speakers will be melded in to enrich and expand on these tools and techniques.

Course Content

While we learn to write by writing, we also learn to write by reading...a lot. There will be various reading assignments, as well, directed to selections from books and from current journals, newspapers, magazines, and web pieces. The outside reading is intended to stimulate thinking and discussion as it will relate to Writing For Public Information. Students are expected to participate in class by completing assigned readings and contributing productively with all activities and discussions.

This class will spend much of its time engaged in lecture, discussion and writing application (lab). The Instructor will do some lecturing, but much of class time will be devoted to talking about public relations writing and practices within the frameworks found in the class textbook and introduced in lecture and supplemental readings. The COMS123/JOUR123 course is designed to use an “in the trenches,” case-method approach to introduce and engage students with “real life” scenarios of professional practices and challenges. We will use the cases presented in the textbook and a wide assortment of cases drawn from other sources – including cases you may write and introduce to the class – to spark our thinking.

The ethical content of this course is not intended to be prescriptive nor to be viewed in isolation. Instead, it is intended to stimulate thinking and discussion in the area of ethics as it relates to public relations' and media practitioners.

Student Responsibilities

Attendance/Class Participation: Attendance at every class session is mandatory, since this is a professional course. If a student is going to be absent for any reason (sick and or vacation), he or she will need to notify the Instructor prior to class. Should you miss class you are expected to have another COMS123/JOUR123 student that is able to take notes for you and from whom you can get class assignments. Any student with excessive unexcused and/or consistent tardiness will be evaluated as not fulfilling the course requirements and will be graded accordingly (10% [ten percentage points] deduction from your final earned grade in this course for each unexcused absence). Again, be sure you understand the emphasis on attendance, as this is your introduction to the professional work world, where you are expected to be punctual and reliable – two qualities essential to your success. (Do not use assignments for this class as an excuse for missing another Professor's summer class. And, likewise, assignments or projects for other courses will not be considered good excuses for missing this class.)

Class Activities and Assignments: Students will be expected to complete all class activities and assignments. Their contributions to class discussions should be both *frequent* and *meaningful*. Assignments may include, but are not limited to, reading, writing, team work, Internet and library research, and oral presentations. All homework assignments will be due at the beginning of class. *No late assignments will be accepted.* Polish your work, before you turn it in, just as you would for your boss in your career. Students who do not meet the deadline will receive Zero points on the assignment. Problems or conflicts must be discussed with the Instructor in advance of the due date. If students encounter a legitimate emergency, please contact the Instructor immediately.

For finished drafts and homework assignments use your computer to give your instructor a printed copy, double spaced, on regular 8 ½ x 11-inch paper. Instructor's copy will be kept on file.

The Hackley rule will apply to all copy submitted for grade; that is, misspellings and errors in fact will result in an automatic F/ZERO POINTS. There will be a little more leeway on punctuation and grammar, but not much. If such an assignment is not accepted because of excessive errors in spelling, grammar, or organization, at the Instructor's discretion, the assignment may be returned to the student for revision and resubmission. Remember, it is the goal of each student to produce a finished assignment in a form and manner that you would be proud to submit to a future employer or client.

You may rewrite assignments up till the instructor deems necessary for a higher grade. Rewrites are due no later than the next class period after the initial assignment was handed back to you. The grade you received on the rewrite will be averaged with the initial grade to arrive at the grade that will be recorded for that assignment. This rewrite option does not apply to quizzes, the midterm, final and or any group projects.

Grading: There will be two exams consisting of open-ended, multiple choice, and/or true/false questions during the semester. Each will be comprehensive and will be based on assigned reading, information from guest speakers, and material covered verbally in class. These exams will count as 50% (25% midterm and 25% final) of your final grade.

Writing assignments, class discussions, attendance and surprise quizzes will count for 50% of your grade. You might also be asked to lead the class with discussion from select chapters of *WORDSMITHING: The Art & Craft of Writing for Public Relations*. This request will most likely be conducted as a group assignment to practice each of your presentation skills before the class.

Grade Expectations: COMS123/JOUR123. Writing For Public Information will be evaluated based on a 100% scale (50% for the two examinations, and 50% for the writing assignments, discussions, attendance and quizzes, and a “Media Kit” assignment), according to the following:

- A Outstanding Work (A = 95-100%, A- = 90-94%):** Superior writing that is well-organized with complete facts, accurate answers, correct grammar and style. Additionally, it is writing that is clear, clean, easy-to-read, adheres to public relations standards, and follows proper format. Answers to test questions are outstanding to completely accurate.
- B Good Work (B+ = 87-89%, B = 84-86%, B- = 80-83%):** Writing that is well-organized with complete facts and only minor grammatical and stylistic corrections. This work also follows proper format for the particular assignment. Answers to test questions are above average.
- C Average Work (C+ = 77-79%, C = 74-76%, C- = 70-73%):** Writing meets minimum requirements of complete and correct facts but requires editing to correct organization, grammar and style. Some minor problems in format may need correction, and work may be needed to heighten the impact of the piece. Answers to test questions are average and below this we do not want to contemplate.

- D Below-average Work (D+ = 67-69%, D = 64-66%, D- = 60-63%):** Writing contains incomplete information and numerous style and grammatical errors, and is poorly organized. Answers to test questions are incorrect and below average.
- F Unacceptable Work (F = 59% and below):** Writing is poorly organized and contains style and grammatical errors, factual mistakes, and misspelled proper nouns. Answers to test questions are completely incorrect.

Rules for professional conduct and classroom Etiquette - Required:

Everyone is deserving of your respect and attention. Therefore, **please**, no ball caps (unless utilized for medical reasons); no gum; no pagers or cellular phones (except in emergencies, turned to silent or vibration mode); check e-mail and websites before or after class NOT DURING CLASS. You may be asked to leave class – and thereby forfeit any assignments, quizzes or exams done during that class – if you are using the computer for any other reason than the completing of an in-class assignment. I will expect each member of this semester’s class to respectfully enforce this rule.

Practice active listening. A huge part of getting along with people is listening to them. This is especially true for PR practitioners whose success is so heavily based on their relationships with others. To this end, make eye contact with whomever is speaking, take notes, nod your understanding and remain engaged at all times. Acting bored, sleeping, feigning sleep and other immature and rude behavior is a poor way to build relationships.

As discussed, it will be important to be both present and mindful in class. A great deal of information is covered in lectures and in discussions immediately prior to class assignments. Please pay attention and stay alert. Often I give suggestions prior to an assignment that I must later repeat several times during the course of the assignment. This is frustrating to me and highly inefficient for you.

There are an infinite number of things you could be doing rather than attending this class – sleeping in, surfing in Hawaii, hiking in Big Trees National Park, starting a business, to name a few. But if you are here, you have made a choice to be here, so be fully here. Again, DO NOT CHECK E-MAIL, FACEBOOK, LINKED-IN, TEXT, OR USE OF ANY SOCIAL MEDIA MULTI-TASK TOOL DURING CLASS, unless asked by the instructor as part of an assignment or exercise.

Please dress professionally for all guest speaker presentations (the instructor will announce those dates in advance of each visit). This means skirt, dress pants, dress, or suit for women; dress slacks or khakis plus shirt and tie (with jacket, if possible) for men. No bare midriffs, sweats, jeans jackets, shorts, etc. Address speakers as: Mr., Mrs., Dr. or Ms., etc. (unless they specify that you should use their first name). Remember, you want to make a good first impression to potential future contacts and/or employers for your own professional development.

Discussion: If at any time you have any questions or need clarification on any of the matters discussed in class or covered in the syllabus, readings, or class in general, don't hesitate to let me know. One of the surest ways to learn is to ask questions.

I realize that not all of you intend to pursue a career in public relations and or journalism. That is fine. I wish you complete success in whatever field you choose. For the purposes of this class, though, I'm going to approach everyone as if he or she is a potential professional and expect a level of effort, attention, and participation consistent with achieving that goal. We have a great deal of ground to cover in this class, so it will be a good idea to be present and on time. There will not be any provision for making up assignments or missed classes short of major family or personal emergencies.

Again, LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. If you were working for an agency or a corporation's PR department, you would be expected to meet deadlines and could face dismissal if you missed them.

Classes will start on time. Please don't be late.

Schedule/Course Plan:

The following is an outline of the order in which we plan to take up – in classroom exercises, discussions, and home work – the various subjects covered in *WORDSMITHING: The Art & Craft of Writing for Public Relations*.

Additional reading in other sources will be assigned as appropriate to the general subject being studied. Guest speakers also will make presentations from time to time to enrich the subjects and give students the opportunity to trade ideas with practicing professionals. The course outline is presented as a “map” to give us direction... when a “side road” is appropriate or necessary, we will change paths.

Thus, consider this a guide, subject to adjustment. In other words, the outline is subject to change, depending on the speed with which we cover the material.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic(s) – Reading/Assignment(s)</u>
Week 1	<p>Introduction to course syllabus, ground rules, explanations and class requirements (Introductions all around, the scope of the course, approach to the subject matter and Instructor’s expectations). Note: Almost every week we will be having an assignment and/or quiz that will relate to the chapters being discussed to date.</p> <p>From <i>WORDSMITHING</i> (Rhody & Hackley), please read the Foreword: Author’s Note and Chapter 1 – A Short Overview of the Public Relations Function & Writing’s Role Therein, plus Jargon, from Unit 4.</p> <p>What is PR? Overview: Tools and forms of public relations writing; plus Jargon, from Unit 4. Chpt. 2 (Rhody & Hackley) – Write It Right: A Short Primer on Grammar & Spelling. “Hammer the Grammar!” “Write It Right!” Quiz (Assessment). Practitioners of Public Relations both Past and Present; Historical origins video by Bill Moyer, and the importance of communication audio if available for viewing/listening</p> <p>Chpt. 3 (Rhody & Hackley) – The Professional’s Code of Conduct: A Matter of Ethics. PRSA and SPJ Code of Ethics – legal and ethical considerations. PRSA.org, SPJ.org.</p> <p>Chpt. 4 (Rhody & Hackley) – The Five Ws & The FWSH: Formulas for Writing Effective Copy.</p> <p>Assign teams for “Media Kit” assignment by Week 2.</p>
Week 2	<p>Chpt. 5 & 6 (Rhody & Hackley) – What Makes a Good Story? And Getting the Information You Need. Team updates on media kits (written memo submitted by each respective team on Thursday).</p> <p>Chpt. 7 (Rhody & Hackley) – The Five Types of Releases & How to Write Four of Them.</p>

Chpt. 8 (Rhody & Hackley) – A Step-by-Step Template for Constructing a Release from the Lead to Clearances and distribution. Chpt. 9 (Rhody & Hackley) – Targeting: Getting to the Right People with the Right Message. Team updates on media kits.

Week 3

Chpt. 10 (Rhody & Hackley) – Op-Ed Pieces, Signed Articles & Letters as a Tactical Tool.

Chpt. 11 (Rhody & Hackley) - Conventional Letters, Newsletters & Brochures. Content, Style and Formats... Importance of Letters, Magazines, Journals, Brochures. Team updates on media kits.

Chpt. 12 (Rhody & Hackley) – Media Kits & Fact Sheets. What is NEWS? Cooperation is the key. Adrenaline Filled Media Relations – the relations between PR practitioners and Journalists.

Chpt. 13 (Rhody & Hackley) – Writing for radio & TV: News, Features & PSAs. Team updates on media kits.

Chpt. 14 & 15 (Rhody & Hackley) – Position Papers & Formal Statements; and Briefing Papers & Q&As.

Week 4

Chpt. 16 (Rhody & Hackley) – Pitches & Précis: Selling Story Ideas. Review for Midterm Examination (TBA). Midterm Examination (TBA).

Week 5

Chpt. 17 (Rhody & Hackley) – Writing for the Internet. Team updates on media kits. Work on media kits.

Chpt. 18 (Rhody & Hackley) – Writing for Crisis Management & Damage Control Situations. What is a crisis? The fundamentals of Crisis Management workshop.

Chapter 19 (Rhody & Hackley) - Writing Speeches. A presentation of individual student's favorite Speeches? Why is it significant? Chpt. 20 (Rhody & Hackley) – Writing for the Internal Constituency. Computer Writing and The Internet. Review for final examination.

The media kits (final copies) are due on (TBA) at the beginning of class. Any media kits not turned in by this time will receive a zero score. Begin media kit presentations by assigned teams.

Week 6 Continue media kit presentations.

Final Examination TBA

Additional Student Learning Assessment

The national accrediting agency for journalism education has established a requirement that all accredited journalism schools assess student mastery of 11 core values and competencies that any graduate of a journalism and mass communication program should possess. According to the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, all graduates, irrespective of their particular specialization, should be able to:

- 1.) Understand and apply First Amendment principles and the law appropriate to professional practice.
- 2.) Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- 3.) Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.
- 4.) Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
- 5.) Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- 6.) Think critically, creatively and independently.
- 7.) Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professionals in which they work.
- 8.) Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- 9.) Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- 10.) Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- 11.) Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications Professions in which they work.

Addendum to Course Syllabus: Policies on Grading, Conduct of Classes, Drops, Absences, Cheating, and General Announcements

Grading: The grading policies and practices in this class are explained elsewhere in the syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to read them and to seek clarification if necessary. The student should be fully aware of what is required for success in the course, such as group participation, writing, speaking, completing assigned. Special Notes:

- 1.) Disagreements over grades should be initiated with me on the day the grade is given by making an appointment to see me.
- 2.) As mentioned above, make a copy of each item before turning it in. If your assignment is lost, you will be expected to have a copy of it.
- 3.) Keep this for your records.
- 4.) Only those in attendance earn class participation credit.

Grading Criteria: Writing assignments will be assessed on the basis of whether they:

- exhibit sound news judgment (attentive to the elements of impact, conflict, novelty, prominence, proximity and timeliness, as discussed in the text and in lecture)
- are well-organized
- are tightly written
- contain accurate information that is sufficient for the reader to grasp the main points of the issue
- contain few, if any, grammatical or syntax errors
- contain few, if any, run-on sentences, sentence fragments or awkwardly worded passages

Accuracy is crucial in public relations and is treated very seriously in this class. Anything that appears in quotation marks must be the exact words of the source to whom they are attributed. Check and double-check the spelling of names, figures, chronology, causality and other critical facts. Inaccuracies and misspellings of proper nouns will result in substantial grade reductions (F/Os).

Further grading criteria:

- Opening is accurate, focused and engaging.
- Tone is appropriate tone for the subject.
- Do not use the first-person point of view; they restrict the use of “I” to direct quotes from sources.
- Conclusion provides a true finish for the story – doesn’t trail off. Should be a “call to action.”
- Writing is understandable and clear.
- Writing uses active rather than “be” (passive) verbs.
- Organization is logical and there is a natural flow from paragraph to paragraph.
- Quotes are used to support the points made in the story.
- Attribution of quotes and information is clear to the reader.
- Human sources are identified by profession, school, residence or other affiliation.

- Story follows Associated Press style.
- Avoid pretentious words.
- Avoid clichés.
- Sentences are complete.

Grammar rules:

- Possessives formed incorrectly
- Plurals formed incorrectly
- Contractions formed incorrectly
- Subject and verb out of agreement (a plural subject needs a plural verb)
- Unjustified shift in verb tense (“says” to “said,” for example)
- Capitalization incorrect
- Spelling errors
- Words misused (wrong word)
- Archaic and/or British words used (“amongst” and “oftentimes,” for example)
- Pronoun and the word it modifies are out of agreement (“they” instead of “it” for a singular subject, such as a store, for example)
- Other grammar errors

Punctuation rules:

- Incorrect use of comma within a sentence; comma used to end a sentence
- Incorrect use of semicolon or colon
- Incorrect use of dash or hyphen
- Incorrect use of quotation marks
- Other punctuation errors

Style rules:

- Numbers spelled out or in numerals according to the Associated Press Stylebook
- Abbreviations used or not used according to AP Stylebook
- Other breaches of AP style

The following will result in a significant point deduction or F/O score:

- Misspelled name, place, product or company
- Factual error of any type

We will be spending the first few hours on a review of grammar and punctuation, so you should recognize these errors before turning in your assignments. To avoid AP style errors, consult your AP style guide. To avoid punctuation, grammar and format issues, consult your *WORDSMITHING* text. To avoid word-usage errors, make sure that you are using the words that you mean to use. Consult your online or print dictionary for any questions.

Reading: Please keep up with the reading, as the information in the text will enhance your understanding of the lectures and will assist you with your written assignments. Readings will be assigned on a weekly basis. Modifications may be required to accommodate guest speakers, unforeseen circumstances and student comprehension.

Team Members: During the first few week of the semester we will pick teams (by week 2). At that time, you are to exchange phone numbers and e-mail addresses with all of your team members (provide a copy of this document in memo format to the instructor [one memo per group]). Not only are team members to work together on the semester project (media kit), but, they are to help individuals within the team with class assignments. No e-mailed assignments will be accepted (individual or group), unless either requested and or authorized by the instructor.

Make a determination early on as to the dedication and efforts of your team members. If members are not pulling their weight, you have the option to vote them off your team (Instructor approval is required prior to any action). These banished-from-the-team students will then have to submit media kits on their own without the assistance of their team members.

Remember that this is to be your own work (media kit) and your own words. If plagiarism is found, everyone in your group will receive an “F” for the media kit, thereby almost assuring an “F” in the class.

Please bring up questions about your media kits during the course of the semester. If your team has questions, others teams probably do as well. This is a learning experience, and it should be a fun and positive experience for everyone. Furthermore, each team will make a presentation of its media kit to the class.

Media Kit: This team project (summer semester group assignment) will help you put into practice the public relations principles and strategies you have learned in introductory courses and in this writing course. Your assignment is to prepare and submit a media kit on a business or a special event.

Within the first few weeks of the semester you and your team will select a client or special event for which you will focus your efforts in class. In order to prevent plagiarism and encourage independent creative work, you will either write materials for a business that you would someday like to own, i.e., an as-yet-fictitious business. You also may choose a fictitious special event for an existing company. Your semester project – the media kit – will be written for this client or event.

The presentation is to involve all members of your team. Each member must participate in the presentation. The team will receive an overall grade, and each team member will receive a grade for his or her presentation. These two grades will then be averaged to arrive at each individual's grade for the presentation.

Each team's presentation should be at least 5 minutes long and involve a PowerPoint or other visual aids.

All expected media kit collateral will be discussed throughout the semester, but feel free to consult the text *WORDSMITHING* in advance of lectures on each topic so that your team can get a head start on its work. This is definitely not something that can be thrown together in a week. This is something that you and your team must work on every week during the semester. Though some class time will be spent in team meetings, the majority of the work will be completed out of class.

The following items must be included in your media kit (and in this order):

- a list of team members
- a list of the media-kit contents
- a media-relations plan, including a definition of the situation, measurable or observable objectives, target audience, sample timeline, budget categories and proposed method of evaluation
- a media alert (briefing statement during that critical first hour)
- a media fact sheet
- a media Q & A sheet
- five releases (labeled as to which is which)
 - One release that focuses on a specific person who's involved in some way
 - One directed to a small hometown newspaper
 - One directed to a metropolitan daily newspaper
 - One for general distribution or for use in a trade journal (if applicable) or a niche consumer publication
- a 30- and a 60-second public service announcement or advertisement
- at least three photos with captions
- a tri-fold brochure with text and photos/illustrations that will fit into a #10 envelope
- a short speech by a member of the organization
- an executive letter directed to employees, community leaders, investors or any other target audience you deem appropriate
- other: surprise me with some relevant pr collateral that your team thinks will enhance the media kit. This can be an additional release; op-ed piece that you pretend was published and is now suitable for redistribution...

The media kits are due on (final copies of week TBA) at the beginning of class. Any media kits not turned in by this time will receive a zero score. Begin media kit presentations by assigned teams.

Seat in Class: An enrolled student may lose his/her seat in class if he/she misses the first class meeting without notifying the instructor. At the Instructor's discretion, a student who attends the first class but not subsequent classes also may be dropped from the course.

Writing Center: For free, one-on-one help with writing in any class, visit the University Reading and Writing Center in Calaveras 128. The Writing Center can help you at any stage in your reading and writing processes: coming up with a topic, developing and organizing a draft, understanding difficult texts, or developing strategies to become a better editor. To make an appointment or a series of appointments, visit the Reading and Writing Center in CLV 128 or call 278-6356. We also offer tutoring for one unit of academic credit through ENGL121. For current Writing Center hours and more information, visit the website at www.csus.edu/writingcenter.

Absences from class: Grades in this course may be adversely affected by absences, and students should seek clarification from the Instructor regarding the course absence policy. Special notes:

During each class "hour" a roll sheet will be passed. It is your responsibility to sign the sheet.

- 1.) Again, only those in attendance will earn class participation credit.
- 2.) If you are absent for any reason, you are responsible for the material covered and any announcements made while you are gone.
- 3.) If you are running late, please leave the Instructor a courtesy voicemail and/or email recognizing your challenge to be at class on-time. Remember, this is a professional class and professional practices for tardiness will be expected.

If you anticipate being absent from class as a result of representing CSUS, you must:

- 1.) Notify the Instructor in writing at least one week in advance of which day(s) you will be absent.
- 2.) Turn in all written assignments that are due during the Anticipated absence prior to the day(s) to be missed.

Cheating/Plagiarism/Fabrication Policy: CSUS takes issue of academic dishonesty very seriously. If you use any deceptive or dishonest method to complete an assignment, take an exam, or gain credit in a course in any other way, or if you help someone else to do so, you are guilty of cheating. Making something up constitutes fabrication. If you use someone else's ideas or work and represent it as your own without giving credit to the source, you are guilty of plagiarism. This does not apply if the ideas are recognized as common knowledge, or if you can show that you honestly developed the ideas through your own work.

Any instructor can show you the correct ways of citing your sources, and you should use quotation marks, footnotes or endnotes and bibliographic references to give credit to your sources according to the format recommended by your Instructor. Instances of cheating, plagiarism and/or fabrication may result in your immediate removal from class with a failing grade, removal from the College of Arts & Letters and possible expulsion from the university.

Responses, Penalties and Student Rights: Students should consult the appropriate sections of the catalog for examples of cheating, fabrication and plagiarism, and instructor and/or CSUS response options in such circumstances. The catalog also outlines student rights. Any instance of academic dishonesty can result in a student's immediate expulsion from the class with a grade of "F" and may lead to the student and/or students being dropped from the Department of Communication Studies and/or other sanctions as the Instructor deems appropriate. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive an F for the course. University plagiarism policies are strictly enforced.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: "If you have a disability and require accommodations, you need to provide disability documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, and (916) 278-6955. Please discuss your accommodation needs with me after class or during my office hours early in the semester."

Thanks!

Writing a thank-you note says you care. The implied message is that the sender took the time necessary to compose, write, and send a note that is only for the recipient. In this age of uniformity and mass production, your note—in your unique handwriting—is like no one else's. And since only 4% of job applicants send thank-you notes (Doyle, 2012), your extra effort could put you among the top contenders for an open position. "Most people personally dislike the act of writing thank you notes," states Fletcher (2012), "so when they get one, they appreciate the time [and] dedication you took" on their behalf.

In contrast to a thank-you email or e-card, either of which can be easily discarded without opening, the handwritten thank-you will be opened and read—if only for the sheer novelty of it. Be sure to handwrite both your and the recipient's addresses (Fletcher, 2012); otherwise, your note may be trashed as junk mail.

Though the recipient may not remember how you looked or what you said during the meeting/interview, the note prompts him or her to think positively about you nonetheless. Someone who takes the time and effort to write a thank-you must be courteous, attentive, thoughtful, and mindful of details—in short, the type of person most of us would welcome as an employee, contractor, or supplier.

Sample note...

Preparing for this class has proven to be a personal test of stamina, determination and humility. Quite fulfilling is the feeling of being able to contribute to many students' academic experience. This class has put me in communication with many people and underscored the importance of building relationships. This is my time to say "thank you."

Specifically, I want to thank my family. Their patience and understanding as I read and prepared for this course were greatly appreciated. Thank you for the direction and many invaluable suggestions to both write this syllabus and teach this class – Public Relations...

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the distinguished faculty and students of this fine institution for making this both an enjoyable and memorable teaching experience.

Gratefully,

Signature

In closing, thank you notes are a vital part of a successful public relationship building process. Let's be sure to practice writing them as often as we can. The above is an example of how simple they are to conceive. Trust me; they will enhance both your personal as well as professional endeavors in life.

This I have learned:

“The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.” - Sydney J. Harris

“I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” - Confucius

“One must learn by doing the thing, for though you think you know it, you have no certainty until you try.” - Socrates

“The great difficulty of education is to get experience out of ideas.” - Spanish poet-philosopher George Santayana

Certainly the reverse is true, as many ideas have issued from experience, but the only Professional Study of the Public Relations Concentration is focused on learning by doing.

With that all being said, now shall we begin by learning about the *how* and *why* of writing for Public Relations as it relates to practitioners of this growing field...

*Note: This syllabus is subject to change as announced during class meetings.

###