

California State University, Sacramento  
CSUS College of Arts and Letters  
Department of Communication Studies  
Professional Studies of the Public Relations Concentration  
COMS187 (1). Issue Management and Case Studies in Public Relations - Seminar  
Summer - I, 2018 [9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Noon, Tuesday & Thursday] MND Hall, 1028

Instructor: Timothy Lent Howard  
Office: Mendocino Hall 5039  
Office Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. and/or 12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m., T/TH,  
and/or by appointment  
Phone: (916) 278-6854 Office (No VM)  
E-mail: [howard@csus.edu](mailto:howard@csus.edu) (Put COMS187-01 in your subject line on all e-mails).

### **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**

#### **COMS187. Issue Management and Case Studies in Public Relations.**

Examines the management of issues in the public and private sectors including knowledge and skills in the communication activities and thinking processes that affect an issue's development. Uses case studies of organizations--governmental agencies, businesses, and not-for-profit entities to assess issue development and management by examining the fundamental questions confronting organizations: What should the particular organization do and how should it do it? Examines criteria for selecting among alternative options, and the relation of the organization to its environment. Explores the broader social, legal, and ethical implications of the organization's activities. **Prerequisite:** COMS 118; completion of 12 units of upper division COMS courses. 3 units.

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to Issue Management and Case Studies in 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 a foundation for academic and professional success as a competent, or more hopefully, accomplished practitioner. Course cases and assignments focus attention on practical application, critical thinking skills, sound writing techniques and promote academic and professional excellence.

We will continue to grow as professionals and learn to express ourselves effectively through writing, so most of our class time and homework 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 experiences (war stories) and techniques for handling such circumstances. You will be expected to read a lot during this semester to best contribute in class, so come prepared to participate. 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. In our classroom exercises we'll produce cases, which we will discuss and critique among ourselves, to help us to best understand Issue Management and Case Studies in Public Relations.

### **Course Objectives**

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

- 1.) Examine and be familiar with Issue Management and Case Studies in 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.
- 6.) Demonstrate skills necessary to function proficiently as public relations professional(s) including leadership, professionalism, time-management, planning, obtaining resources, technology application, and communicating effectively.
- 7.) Relate Public Relations Society of America values and ethics for both academic and professional integrity.

### **Required Textbook(s)**

Mathew W. Ragas & Ron Culp, *Business Essentials for Strategic Communicators: Creating Shared Value for the Organization and Its Stakeholders*, and

Carol M. Howard & Wilma K. Mathews, Fifth Edition, *On Deadline: Managing Media Relations*

A link from PRSA.org, which the instructor will provide during the first part of the semester.

### **Recommended Textbook(s)**

*The Associated Press Stylebook*, (In print and or application)

Public relations practitioners are eager media seekers, so each of you are strongly encouraged to become avid media consumers to keep apprised of current events and issue trends. Suggested publications include, but are not limited to: *The Wall Street Journal*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The LA Times*, *The Sacramento Bee*, *Orange County Register*, and *BusinessWeek*. For convenience, it may be prudent to subscribe to at least one of the above news publications.

Our principal resources will be both *Business Essentials for Strategic Communicators: Creating Shared Value for the Organization and Its Stakeholders* and *On Deadline: Managing Media Relations* and some supplemental readings and/or input from outside speakers will be melded in to enrich and expand on the understanding of Issue Management and Case Studies in Public Relations.

### **Course Content**

While we learn by writing about Issue Management and Case Studies in Public Relations, we also will be learning through 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 critical thinking and discussion, as it will relate to Issue Management and Case Studies in Public Relations. Students are expected to actively participate in class by completing assigned readings and contributing productively with all activities and discussions. Diagnostic quizzes and exams will be utilized to ensure student understanding and development.

Knowledge of current events is crucial to the PR professional. No client or corporation will pay a practitioner big bucks if he or she does not know how the client will be affected by world, national and local events.

If a client is Exxon Mobil or BP, for example, you would have to know how environmental legislation, public sentiment about high gas prices, the situation in the Middle East, the war in Iraq, Afghanistan, saber rattling toward Syria, Iran, and Korea, renewable energy sources, interest rates and other current events affect your client in order to plan effective strategies to meet your client's ever-changing needs. The art of practicing public relations is a living instrument. As such, get into the habit of staying abreast of current events.

This class will spend much of its time engaged in discussion and writing analysis. The Instructor will do some lecturing, but much of class time will be devoted to talking about Public Relations Issue Management and Case Studies within the frameworks found in the class textbook(s) and introduced in lecture, supplemental readings and from invited guest speakers. COMS187 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(s) and a wide assortment of cases drawn from other sources – including cases you may write and introduce to the class – to spark our thinking.

Specifically, the combination of print and electronic media that gather and distribute news and information, generally referred to as "The Media," is one of the most potent forces in American society.

"The Media" inform, educate, entertain and, to a large extent, form the basis of what most people know about matters of consequence outside their personal experience or knowledge. As important, it conditions their thinking about these matters. "The Media" make and break reputations, anoint heroes, expose bad guys, and "protect the public interest" against greed, corruption, and threats to health and safety.

Managing the interface with this force is one of the most important and challenging responsibilities of public relations professionals...mandatory for publicly held enterprises and essential for all other organizations that depend on public understanding, trust and support.

The objective of the media relations component of this course is to introduce students to the principles of successfully managing this interface and to the techniques employed by experienced professionals in the pursuit thereof as an important step in preparing for careers in public relations or in management positions in organizations that depend on public understanding, trust and support.

This course also will cover basic fundamentals to establish a solid foundation for you to use in achieving your goals when dealing with media professionals – the correct mindset, how to prepare, telling the "good news," what not to say, how to remember important points and express them clearly and memorably, how to always be in control – everything you need to be poised and confident.

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.

## **The Game**

In this course we're going to be playing "The Game."

We're going to:

- 1.) Examine some of the classic cases that have helped define and demonstrate what public relations is and how it should be conducted,
- 2.) Study what the players did,
- 3.) Examine why they did what they did,
- 4.) And evaluate what resulted there from.

We're going to look over their shoulders, critique the cases, and offer our own ideas on how the situation was, or should have been, handled – based on the principles and techniques we've studied. You will be expected to research a theory, define it, explain its relevance to the case being discussed, and fold it into your analysis.

Don't be lulled by the "game" imagery. In a sense, when we play with ideas in public relations, it is a game – a highly challenging intellectual and creative game. And you should have fun playing it. But it is a deadly serious game, as well. The stakes are often quite high. There are winners and losers. An advanced level of professionalism and personal abilities is required to play it successfully. And dilettantes don't last very long.

As the course unfolds, you're going to become real-time players yourselves. You're going to develop and run a public relations program simulation, you're going to analyze and solve real public relations problems in real-time, and you're going to research and critique a current major public relations case, among other things.

Specifically:

- 1.) You will draft a proposal for a major special event (i.e. a 50<sup>th</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup>, 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of a company).
  - A.) You will fully research one major, original, PR event as a group, chosen by your team and approved by the instructor, to be formally presented in class. This will be a major case study, fully researched and written. You will present a copy of the fully developed proposal to me to be kept on file.

- B.) Additionally, you'll prepare an abstract (150 words) to be distributed to all members of the class at the time of your presentation. Professional presentation is expected. Do not forget to include a Theory!
- C.) Your subject will be selected and based from high-profile pr cases.
- D.) Do a professional job on the research. This is something you will keep in your career files.
- E.) Complete a major special event of the handling of the public relations, using a variety of resources.
- F.) Present orally, using creativity and a variety of visuals.
- G.) The Major Special Event will count for 20% of your semester grade.

2.) You will work a series of assigned issues & problems.

- A.) The various issues contain problems with questions to address. You'll be required to produce solutions to various problems as assigned. You will lead the class with discussion. This will be conducted as a group task to practice your presentation skills before the class. Challenges may be presented to make student's think and to be resourceful without any resources.
- B.) The cases and issues & problems written solutions and presentations will account for 20% of your grade.

3.) You will do real-time "In The News" Case Briefs.

- A.) You'll work on a series of written briefs on cases currently in the news. Take them from matters getting attention in major print media like the *The Wall Street Journal* or *BusinessWeek* or from coverage in other daily newspapers like *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The LA Times*, or *The Sacramento Bee*.

Clip article(s) about your case and attach it (them) to your brief. They must illustrate solid PR relevance.

Use the following outline to structure your "In-The-News" outlines:

- 1.) Introduction.
- 2.) Facts.
- 3.) Issue involved.
- 4.) Resolution of the issue or status of the issue if not resolved.
- 5.) Your solution(s) or recommendation(s).
- 6.) The theory or principle(s) of public relations involved.
- 7.) Summary.

- B.) The "In The News" Case Briefs will account for 20% of your grade.

4.) And you will form an Agency (the same team as your Major Special Event) and service a Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario (special event –launch of a new product; charity fundraiser/situation - scandal/incident – loss of property or life) team project. These are scenarios to help you prepare for strategic communication when employed (role-playing activities to learn from today). Sign-ups for teams will be completed during the second day of instruction.

- A.) You'll be required to develop and run a simulated comprehensive public relations program (situation/incident) for an account from the attached list. This exercise will be like a pro-bono (literally “in the public good”), which is work undertaken as a public service, and therefore, not for compensation. Again, it will only be a simulation exercise. A communication action plan, complete media kit and a news conference will be part of the exercise.
- B.) Like the Major Case study, your subject is to be taken from the suggested list on this syllabus. Select three subjects and prioritize them in order of your team's preference. Submit your list to me, in memo form on 4<sup>th</sup> day of class instruction. If you have a suggestion for a subject other than one of those on the list, include it. From the list you've submitted, I'll select and assign the subject. This will be a simulated and dynamic crisis management scenario. This will be a group project where a solution and formal presentation will be required (written materials must be your original work).
- C.) Along with a team of your colleagues from the class, you'll form a public relations agency for this purpose. You'll name the agency, design a business package (including logo, letterhead, business cards) and write a two-paragraph statement describing your business and the benefits it offers that could be used as the opening grafts for a brochure or letter presenting your agency to prospective clients. You will submit the above collateral and statement describing your business in a professional letter format by the 6<sup>th</sup> day of class as well.
- D.) As part of the agency exercise, each member of the agency will maintain a log of billable hours (hours you put into this project). On final due-date, submit a portfolio of work accomplished, along with an accounting of billable hours for each member of the team, and an individual evaluation of the project in a sealed envelope. Failing to submit your billable hours and sealed evaluations for each team member will result in an automatic 20% reduction to your crisis scenario grade. Please remember to complete all aspects of the assignment to avoid a loss in percentage points, which could negatively impact your assignment and overall course grade.

- E.) Your team will review its agency’s strategy and action plan for the client with me at the beginning of the work and report monthly on progress and preparation against that plan. This is your team’s time to draft a crisis communication plan from conception to completion. This will be submitted to me along with a comprehensive media kit at the conclusion of your team’s exercise. The media kit should include most of the types of writing that a PR Counselor will be expected to do in his or her career (refer back to your prerequisite/earlier work in COMS118, COMS123 and COMS158).
  - F.) At the end of the semester your agency team will make an oral/visual and written response/presentation to the class on the project (situation/incident) scenario and its accomplishments. This crisis may be executed at any given moment. As such, you will need to be on-call just like a professional ready to respond in that critical first hour of a crisis. There may be simulated media involved. This will be a fun exercise for all involved.
  - G.) The Simulated Account - Crisis Scenario (situation/incident) news conference and written material supporting your program will be worth 20% of your grade.
- 5.) Tests, Quizzes, Chapter Presentations of the texts by your teams and Reputation Management.
- A.) This will be worth 20% of your grade.

To recap: There are five principal grading elements:

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|--|--------------|
| 1.) Major Special Event Proposal                 | 20% of grade |
| 2.) Issues & Problems                            | 20% of grade |
| 3.) “In The News” Briefs                         | 20% of grade |
| 4.) Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario          | 20% of grade |
| 5.) Tests, Quizzes, Presentations and Reput. Mgt | 20% of grade |

Your grade will be on the result of your performance on the five major grading elements (above). Each area of grading elements noted above must be completed to pass this course.

**The Rules**

- 1.) All requirements, assignments, projects, etc., must be completed on time to pass this course.
- 2.) No make-up work or rewrites are permitted. This is a “real-world” class. In the real-world, deadlines are met; “do-overs” don’t exist.

- 3.) Attendance is mandatory, except for excused absences, which require advance notification. If there are extreme extenuating circumstances, we'll discuss it relative to a mark-off on grade, but the provisions listed in the points above and below don't change. Be sure you do understand my 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.
- 4.) You are expected to be on time at class, just as you would be expected to be on time in a professional working situation.
- 5.) Do your own work. Cases and problems are to be individual efforts.
- 6.) The Hackley Rule regarding misspelled proper nouns and incorrect facts will apply.
- 7.) Public relations is not a science, it is an art. There are no rights or wrong ways to develop a complete campaign.
- 8.) Respect you classmates/colleagues and clients. PR is a team effort that cannot be accomplished if the teams cannot respect its members, which makes it impossible for them to cooperate (work together). Respect that is shared is respect that is earned.

### **Tests and Quizzes**

There will be surprise diagnostic quizzes, and two major tests sometime during the semester. Your grade will be the result of both your performance and class participation on the five major grading elements (above), and attendance, or lack thereof during the semester.

### **Major Case Study and Account Categories**

- Charities
- Banks/Financial Institutions
- Pharmaceuticals
- Media
- Celebrities/Entertainment Industry
- United Nations
- City, County, State, or National Government
- U.S. Military
- Big Business
- Small Business
- Sports
- Travel Industry
- Insurance Industry
- Health Care
- Medical
- Internet/ High Tech
- Associations and Trade or professional Organizations

- Political Candidates, elected Officials
- Natural Disasters
- Man Made Disasters

### **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, he or she will need to notify the Instructor prior to class. Should you miss class you are expected to have another COMS187 student that is able to take notes for you and from whom you can get class assignments.

Any student with excessive unexcused absences (3) and/or consistent tardiness (3) during the semester will be evaluated as not fulfilling the course requirements and will be graded accordingly (10% ten percentage points for absences and 5% five percentage points for tardiness) deduction from your final earned grade in this course for each. Any unexcused absences and/or tardiness that exceeds (3) will result in an F grade for the semester. 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 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 readings, activities and assignments. Their contributions to class discussions should be both *frequent* and *meaningful*. Assignments may include, but are not limited to, reading, writing, teamwork, Internet and library research, and oral presentations. All homework assignments will be due at the beginning of class. Assignments are to be completed and submitted by the assigned times. Assignments not turned in on time are considered late. Late assignments will be accepted only for 48-hours after the due date; after which time the assignment will not be accepted. Only up to one assignment may be turned in late during the duration of the class. Late assignment scores will incur an automatic reduction of 20% of the point value. 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. Note that time at both the beginning and end of class will be dedicated to design and produce the presentations. This will allow your team some quality time to meet and coordinate all presentation activities. 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.

### **Grading:**

To recap: There are five principal grading elements:

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| 1.) Major Special Event Proposal                 | 20% of grade |
| 2.) Issues & Problems                            | 20% of grade |
| 3.) "In The News" Briefs                         | 20% of grade |
| 4.) Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario          | 20% of grade |
| 5.) Tests, Quizzes, Presentations and Reput. Mgt | 20% of grade |

Furthermore, there will be surprise diagnostic quizzes, two examinations and chapter presentations during the semester. Your grade will be on the result of both your performance and class participation on the five major grading elements as specified (above), and attendance, or lack thereof during the semester. Each area of grading elements noted above must be completed to pass this course.

Grade Expectations: COMS187. Issue Management and Case Studies in Public Relations will be evaluated based on a 100% scale 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:

Everyone is deserving of your respect and attention. **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, 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, TEXT, SNAPCHAT, TWITTER, INSTAGRAM, LINKEDIN, FACEBOOK, YOU TUBE or OTHER... DURING CLASS**. Of course, when we are working on our campaign(s), or related materials that warrant social media use for class that will be acceptable.

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. Classes will start on time. Please don't be late. 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 homework – the various subjects intended to be covered – the PRSA.org link, and any assigned textbook readings.

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. These are valuable learning opportunities.

**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.

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Topic(s) – Reading/Assignment(s)/Tentative* Outline</u></b>
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). Discuss both the Major Special Event Proposal and Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario group assignment and review subject matter options. Simple team sign-ups for both will be on day two. Discuss Chapter Presentations, Issues &amp; Problems, In The News, Quizzes and Examinations - Tests (suggested dates and times for the semester). Class activities. Pick teams between week 1 and 2. Start reading from your class resources: <i>Business Essentials</i>, <i>On Deadline</i> and the APR Study Guide Online Resource Link.</p> <p>Schedule Team Presentations of Chapters from <i>Business Essentials and On Deadline</i></p> <p>Schedule Issues &amp; Problems and In The News assignments</p> <p>Discuss expectations for Major Special Event and Crisis Scenarios</p> <p>Memos (1 per Team) for the Major Event and Crisis Scenario, which will identify Team preferences for themes. The two memos are due on 4<sup>th</sup> day of instruction (don’t forget, because this will be your only reminder).</p> <p>Major Special Event (team) and Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario (team) are assigned. Major Special Event and Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario (team) meetings. Submit sample draft business cards and biography – a one-page bio for each team member also will be due (professional letter format for all collateral) on the 4th day. You also will want to always be prepared to expand on each issue if called upon for a small group exercise. This will apply for all issues from this point forward from our reading.</p> <p>Chapters from <i>Business Essentials and On Deadline</i></p>

Issues & Problems and In The News

Week 2 Verbal report to instructor on both Major Special Event (team) and Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario (team) progress.

Chapters from *Business Essentials and On Deadline*

Issues & Problems and In The News

Second verbal report to instructor on Major Special Event (team) and Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario (team) progress.

Chapters from *Business Essentials and On Deadline*

Issues & Problems and In The News

Time for teams to strategically plan out their group projects.

Chapters from *Business Essentials and On Deadline*

Issues & Problems and In The News

Week 3 Major Special Event (team) and Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario (team) updates.

Time for teams to strategically plan out their group projects.

Chapters from *Business Essentials and On Deadline*

Issues & Problems and In The News

Review for examination – test (1)

Work on written proposal for Major Special Event (team). Remember to fold relevant communication theories into your respective analysis.

Chapters from *Business Essentials and On Deadline*

Issues & Problems and In The News

Examination - Test (1) Tuesday

Week 4 Final verbal report on Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario (team) project plan and status (Memo to be submitted - Tuesday). Time for teams to strategically plan out and or continue work on their respective campaign proposals and plans. It is advised that all teams be well prepared in the event a situation relating to your account is called into play first. Written Communication Crisis Plans see PRSA.org link for template; and refer back to COMS 118, COMS123 and COMS158 for additional written material should be in place and media kits ready for assembly and distribution at your team’s news conference.

Chapters from *Business Essentials and On Deadline*

Issues & Problems and In The News

Work on Major Event (team) proposals.

Week 5 Time for teams to strategically plan out and or continue work on their respective campaign proposals and plans. Begin Major Special Event class presentations, critiques and lessons learned.

Chapters from *Business Essentials and On Deadline*

Issues & Problems and In The News

Major Event class presentations.

Chapters from *Business Essentials and On Deadline*

Issues & Problems and In The News

Review for examination – test (2)

Final Major Special Event class presentations.

Chapters from *Business Essentials and On Deadline*

Issues & Problems and In The News

Optional review for team’s seeking last minute input and advice prior to execution of crisis simulation weeks.

Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario (team) presentations and exercise call starting at the conclusion of class on Tuesday. Start Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario (team) presentations. A memo from each team will be expected to share the campaign theme and available on-call hours of each team member.

This crisis call may be executed at any given moment. As such, you will need to be on-call just like a professional ready to respond in that critical first hour of a crisis (media advisory statements expected). Submit a portfolio of work accomplished (Crisis Communication Action Plan and Media Kits), along with an accounting of billable hours for each member of the team, and an individual evaluation of the project, you and your teammates suggested score based on effort or lack thereof in a sealed envelope upon completion of your respective team's news conference (late material will not be accepted).

Examination - Test (2) Tuesday

Week 6 Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario (team) presentations. Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario (team) presentation Critiques. Lessons Learned.

Last week of instruction

### **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

To avoid AP style errors, consult your AP Style Guide. To avoid punctuation, grammar and format issues, consult your COMS123 instructional textbook like *WORDSMITHING*. 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 will enhance your understanding of the lectures and will assist you with your written assignments. Readings will be assigned on a weekly/monthly basis. Modifications may be required to accommodate guest speakers, unforeseen circumstances and student comprehension.

**Team Members:** During the first few days of the semester we will pick teams (week 1). At that time, you are to exchange phone numbers and e-mail addresses with all of your team members (if available, provide a copy of this document to your instructor or instructor's Project Managers (PM). Not only are team members to work together on the semester project (Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario), they are to help individuals within the team with class assignments. No e-mailed assignments will be accepted (individual or group).

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 receive an "F" for the assignment. Unless, the instructor of record allows the student an option to submit the project on his or her own, without the assistance of any team members as well as a 20% deduction to the project grade. Please learn to work well together with others, because you will be required to do so during your career. And, it is the right thing to do.

Remember that this is to be your own work (Crisis Communication Action Plan and 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 campaign 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 campaign to the class.

**Simulated Account – Crisis Scenario Campaign:** This team project (semester team assignment) will help you put into practice the public relations principles and strategies you have learned in introductory classes and in this Issue Management and Case Studies in Public Relations course.

Within the first few class periods of the block, you and your team will select a client or special event for which you will focus your efforts in class.

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 include your team's complete assignment (all written material) and involve a PowerPoint or other visual aids.

All expected crisis communication action plan and media kit collateral will be discussed throughout the semester, but feel free to consult the texts 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 are reminders of materials recommended in your media kit (and in this order):

- a list of team members (executives, i.e. media relations contact...)
- 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
- four news 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 (id 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
- an Op-Ed
- 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 during your campaign simulation and is now suitable for redistribution...

**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](http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter).

**Absences from class:** Grades in this course can 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 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...

Dear...

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,

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

“Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement,  
achievement and success have no meaning.”  
- Benjamin Franklin

“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  
experience one has from ideas is thinking about them. And, this 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 issues  
& case studies for Public Relations as it relates to practitioners of this growing field...

**\*Note: This syllabus is subject to change as announced during class meetings  
by your instructor.**

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