

Course Syllabus

Class Meeting Time and Place

10:50 a.m.-12:05 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday, Jan. 13 to May 5, 2009

Loftin Student Center (LSC) 207, second floor, Journalism-Photography Department

Instructor

Ms. Susan A. Merkner, M.A.

Office hours: Monday: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Tuesday: 12:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Wednesday: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Friday: 11 a.m. to noon

and by appointment

Office location: Loftin Student Center 212-B (inside The Ranger newsroom)

Phone and voice mail: 733-2874 (office direct line) or 733-2870 (department)

Fax: 733-2868

E-mail: smerkner@mail.accd.edu

Catalogue Description/Prerequisites

Introduction to Public Relations, COMM 2330 (3-3-0).

Prerequisite: None; completion of English 1301 recommended.

Description: This course explores the history and development of public relations. It includes presentation of the theory behind and the process of public relations, including the planning, implementation and evaluation of PR campaigns. The course will provide instruction and writing practice designed to develop the professional-level writing skills expected of beginning public relations practitioners, emphasizing the different approaches required for particular audiences and media. By the completion of the semester, students will have compiled a personal portfolio of the various types of writing projects commonly used in public relations, such as a campaign proposal, news release for print media, media advisory, public service announcement and pitch letter, using a San Antonio-based nonprofit organization as their client.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend and participate in all class sessions and are responsible for the content of each class. Students are required to arrive on time and attend the complete class to be counted present. The instructor takes roll at the start of each class. Students who arrive late are recorded tardy; two tardies count as one absence. Those who miss more than two weeks of classes (four sessions) will be dropped with a grade of WN.

Texts

Required: *Public Relations Strategies and Tactics* (9th edition) by Dennis L. Wilcox and Glen T. Cameron (Pearson), plus accompanying My Communication Lab Course Compass access code included with purchase of textbook; ISBN: 0205643736. Students MUST buy this edition by ISBN number, and register online for My Communication Lab by Jan. 22 at the latest. Use all capital letters when entering access code. Students also are required to download additional materials from the San Antonio College PALS Web site:

<http://sacportal.accd.edu/cp/home/loginf>.

Optional: *The Associated Press Stylebook*. The instructor will not test specifically on the optional text, but it provides a good reference for the journalistic-style writing used in public relations.

Instruction

Techniques include lecture, video presentations, case studies, Power Point presentations, Web sites, readings, guest speakers, enrichment assignments and group activities.

Course Content

The purpose of this course is to increase the student's understanding of public relations: its history, development, theory and process. Emphasis will be on writing skills, identifying and reaching target audiences, research, organization and career opportunities. Among the topics to be covered are the roles and responsibilities of PR practitioners; writing principals; and writing for select and mass media publics.

Grades

Class assignments and exams carry a value of 100 points. An absence will translate as a zero grade for that day's work. The instructor does not accept late assignments.

Course grades will be determined as follows:

- ✓ 10 percent attendance and participation;
- ✓ 51 percent online chapter exams (17 tests at 3 percent each);
- ✓ 5 percent final exam; and
- ✓ 34 percent media kit for local nonprofit organization to include the following items:
 - ❖ Campaign proposal, 10 percent;
 - ❖ News release for print media, 10 percent;
 - ❖ Radio public service announcement, 5 percent;
 - ❖ Media advisory, 5 percent; and
 - ❖ Pitch letter, 4 percent.

Testing Requirements

Online exams (pre-test, post-test and chapter exam) must be completed for each of the following textbook chapters: 1 through 16 inclusive, plus chapter 20. Chapter exams are timed and must be completed by the deadlines provided by the instructor at the first class meeting. Students must complete the pre-test and post-test for each chapter exam to receive credit for the exam. Pre-tests and post-tests are recorded as completion grades; chapter exams are recorded numerically. Resolution of student technical problems must be accomplished by 5 p.m. on the Monday before a chapter exam is due.

Standards

All work done outside of class must be written on a computer and printed in black ink. Printing enrichment assignments before they are due in class is the responsibility of the student; the instructor will not make printouts for students.

Accuracy is one of the primary goals of a responsible communicator. All assignments for this course will be graded for content, form, word usage, mechanics and spelling. Proofread your work. Get help, if you need it. On ALL assignments, provide a cover sheet with the student's full name, the class day(s) and hour, and the assignment title on separate lines.

No late assignments will be accepted.

Learning Outcomes and Performance Objectives

Learning Outcome 1: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the primary and secondary research methods used in public relations, including planning PR campaigns.

Performance Objectives/Methods of Measurement:

The student will:

1. demonstrate knowledge of internal and external publics by completing written assignments such as campaign proposals, news releases, public service announcements, media advisories, and pitch letters.
2. be able to find facts from a variety of sources by using the Internet, books, periodicals and interviews, and using the information in a variety of written formats such as campaign proposals, and in classroom discussions of case studies.
3. apply techniques of persuasion by analyzing a variety of written materials, such as advertising copy, brochures, position papers, prepared statements for the media and speeches.

Learning Outcome 2: The student will be cognizant of various ethical and legal issues involved in the practice of public relations, including a personal commitment to ethical professional behavior.

Performance Objectives/Methods of Measurement:

The student will:

1. demonstrate knowledge of legal issues impacting the PR industry, such as copyright, libel and plagiarism, through written examinations, classroom discussions and case studies.
2. be cognizant of ethical issues such as fairness, conflict of interest and competition through the study of codes of professional organizations, classroom discussions, case studies and written examinations.
3. be cognizant of issues relating to multiculturalism and diversity as they relate to the practice of public relations.

Learning Outcome 3: The student will demonstrate proficiency in the public relations style of writing and in working cooperatively with mass media.

Performance Objectives/Methods of Measurement:

The student will:

1. demonstrate knowledge of targeting a specific message to a general or specific audience by using clear, concise language in enrichment assignments such as press releases and through written examinations.
2. be cognizant of the specific needs of various media through writing news releases for print and electronic media and developing media kits and pitches.
3. become aware of the creative opportunities available within PR work, such as graphic design concepts, photography and Web site development, through written examinations, guest speakers and case studies.

Learning Outcome 4: The student will gain an understanding of various career opportunities within the public relations field.

Performance Objectives/Methods of Measurement:

The student will:

1. demonstrate knowledge of various careers utilizing PR skills by participating in organized group discussions of techniques such as writing a resume, building a portfolio and preparing for a job interview.
2. demonstrate knowledge of professionals in the public relations field by exposure to speakers from within the department and outside the college, including local PR practitioners and members of the media.
3. be cognizant of higher-level PR functions within organizations, such as crisis communications, internal publications and Web site development, through case studies, classroom discussion, guest speakers and written examinations.

College, Department and Instructor Requirements

College requirements: A written, comprehensive final examination, not to exceed two and one-half hours in length, shall be given at the end of each semester for each course at the regularly scheduled time. Any exceptions to these requirements must be approved by the appropriate dean. Other examinations are given at the discretion of the instructor. A student who must be absent from a final examination should petition that instructor for permission to postpone the examination. A student absent without permission from a final examination is graded "F." Postponed examinations result in a grade of "I." The final exam must be taken within 120 calendar days from the end of the semester or the grade automatically becomes an "F."

Department requirements: A student wishing to withdraw from this class during the semester must process a formal withdrawal through the Office of Admissions and Records. Failure to withdraw formally will result in the assignment of a failing grade (F) for the course. Students may drop the class by obtaining and correctly completing the required paperwork by visiting the Office of Admissions and Records or the administrative office of the Journalism-Photography Department, Room 204-A of Loftin Student Center.

Instructor requirements: Students are expected to read, view and listen to the media outside of class, including the daily newspaper, magazines of the student's choice, and local television and radio newscasts. Students should look for examples of public relations campaigns, crisis communications, and current topics and issues related to the field. Students are expected to complete all assignments on time.

College Policies

A. San Antonio College does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age or disability with respect to access, employment programs or services.

B. Students are urged not to bring children to either a class or a lab. Minors under the age of 12 must not be left unattended on campus.

C. ADA Statement: As per Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, if accommodation is needed, contact the Office of DisABILITY Support Services, CAC 124C, Phone: (210) 733-2347.

D. A Rapid Response Team exists for the purpose of responding to emergencies. If you have a disability that will require assistance in the event of a building evacuation, notify Disability Support Services, Chance Academic Center 124C, Phone: (210) 733-2347.

E. Academic Dishonesty: Students may be subject to disciplinary proceedings resulting in an academic penalty or disciplinary penalty for academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism and collusion. For additional information refer to the "Student Code of Conduct" in the San Antonio College Bulletin.

F. San Antonio College Attendance Policy: Regular and punctual attendance at all classes and laboratories, day and/or evening, is required. A student absent for any reason is responsible for all work missed. Both tardiness and early departure from class are forms of absenteeism. The instructor establishes the policy with regard to each. Absences of each student are recorded without exception. The counting of absences begins on the first day of class. A student absent the equivalent of two weeks of instruction in a 16-week semester may be dropped by the instructor. If a student is dropped from a class for excessive absences, the instructor will record a grade of "WN" (withdrawn for non-attendance). It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the withdrawals have been submitted.

G. ACCD Department of Public Safety emergency phone numbers:

ACCD DPS Emergency Phone: (210) 222-0911

ACCD DPS General Phone: (210) 485-0099

ACCD DPS Weather Phone: (210) 485-0189 (For information on college closures)

H. Students also must abide by the policies, procedures and rules set forth in the "Student Code of Conduct" and all other policies set forth in the San Antonio College Bulletin.

Classroom Behavior/Electronics/Smoking/Food and Drink

All cell phones, pagers, PDAs, music players, laptop computers and other electronic devices must be turned off before class begins and remain off during class. Any student who violates this policy may be dropped from the course. Please refrain from eating or drinking (except water) in the classroom. Excessive trips outside the classroom for visits to the restroom or water fountain or for cell phone use will not be tolerated. San Antonio College is a smoke-free campus.

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