COMX 351 PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Spring 2015 Syllabus

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

An individual interested in a public relations career must cultivate a great number of communication skills, including competence in interpersonal communication, mass communication, organizational communication and small group communication. In many ways, this course will pull together theories, practices and research from a number of communication courses you may have taken previously and will present them in light of managing internal and external communications for an organization. Our focus will be understanding the role of the public relations practitioner and practicing the skills necessary for success in the field. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Understand different models of public relations
- Explain the history of public relations
- Understand various communication responsibilities inherent in public relations
- Understand key theories underlying the practice of public relations
- Prepare a proposal addressing a public relations problem and/or opportunity.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Texts:

Guth, D. W., and Marsh, C. (2011). *Public relations: A values-driven approach* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Associated Press (2011). *The Associated Press stylebook and briefing on media law 2011* (45th ed.). New York: Basic Books.

COURSE FORMAT

The course objectives are met entirely over the Internet. By removing many constraints of time and location, this course has the potential to fit your unique needs in a way many traditional courses are not equipped to. Over the course of this class, students will read the text, interpret and analyze the text through forum questions, visit websites, write papers, observe interactions and more.

Taking an online course may be new for you; it may take a while to get used to the format beyond the time you might usually spend on a class. I am committed to the endeavor of teaching, whether online or in a classroom. I believe I can meet my goals for teaching this course and you can meet your goals in taking this course, even though this will not occur in a traditional classroom setting. The more contact students make (both with their peers and with their instructor), the more successful they are in the course. Thus, my goal is to encourage you to interact and engage as fully as possible.

While we will not meet face to face and I also work full-time in addition to my teaching responsibilities, **your questions, comments, and feedback are never viewed as a distraction**. I aim to be accessible to my students, no matter the format. I check my email daily at 7 p.m., so if you have a pressing question, be sure to email me by 7 p.m. for same-day service. Please do not feel uncomfortable calling me, either. I would not include my personal number if I did not want students to call when they had questions. There is one exception: **I will not answer my phone or check my email on Sundays**.

POLICIES

Deadlines: Although many of the constraints of time have been released for you in this course, deadlines are still inevitable. Assignments may always be completed earlier than the deadline, but any assignment not uploaded to the website by 11:55 p.m. (Mountain Standard Time) on the due date will not be accepted. I intend for this class to prepare you for an entry-level position in PR, and if you missed a deadline as an entry-level public relations practitioner, you would be fired. I do not wish to debate our various time orientations; for this class 11:55 p.m. is a firm deadline, and 11:56 p.m. is considered late. Communicate with me immediately if you foresee any difficulties in meeting a deadline. You'll find I can be flexible and understanding if you inform me of difficulties meeting deadlines *before* assignments are due; difficulties in meeting deadlines *after* assignments are due are excuses, and I don't accept those (or late work!).

Ethics: Many courses in higher education just leave ethics as a footnote, and assume the topic is self-explanatory. Having practiced PR in the field, I believe it is not a footnote, but a core thread running through everything we do. I will not merely focus on the subject for a week; we will put ethical principles into practice in every subject we discuss, in every assignment you submit. That being said, I expect you to display integrity in your academic pursuits and submit original work.

Academic Integrity: All students taking this course must adhere to the University of Montana's academic dishonesty policy as presented in the Student Conduct Code (SCC). You are responsible for reading and understanding this code. If you have any questions, please contact me or the department chair. The SCC can be viewed at www.umt.edu/studentaffaris/sccAcademicConduct.htm#9. I have an excellent reputation for busting cheaters; if you engage in any act of academic misconduct, you will be caught and punished. The first time I catch you, you will receive a zero for the assignment. If I catch you again, you will fail the class – no questions asked – and steps will be taken to initiate university sanctions, as provided for in the SCC.

Original Work: I expect all the work you do in this class to be completely original. No work that has been done by classmates (current or previous) may be used by you, in whole or in part, for your work in this class. **Nothing you have written previously (for any other course, in this course if you have taken it previously, or anything you have written for other jobs or organizations) may be submitted to fulfill the assignments in this class**. Finally, absolutely no plagiarism (from the web, from organizations, from any other source) will be tolerated. Be sure everything you write in this class is completely your own creation. You are expected to use outside sources for your assignments. Regardless of whether you paraphrase or use passages verbatim, you MUST cite your sources using APA format. There are two notable exceptions to this rule; anything falling outside of these exceptions MUST be completely original or properly cited:

- You may use the mission statement for your organization verbatim without attribution.
- You may use facts – dates, times, locations, directions, contact information – without attribution.

Types of Plagiarism: The advent of the Internet has made plagiarizing simpler. However, **keep in mind that if you can find something on the Internet, I can, too**. Generally, plagiarism occurs in three forms:

1. *Incremental*: Failing to properly attribute source material (e.g., using a quote or statistic and failing to attribute it to the author)
2. *Patchwork*: Copying and pasting material from one or more sources with very little modification (e.g., visiting three web sites and cutting and pasting snippets from each)
3. *Global*: Taking the full text of another source and passing it off as your own work

Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitations Act of 1973 states if you have a disability which may impact your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a coordinator in the Office of Disability Affairs so accommodations can be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, **please contact me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations**.

Technology: A known fact of technology is it sometimes fails. Since the Internet is your only link to the class, your guiding principles should be to think ahead and be prepared. Save your work often and in several places. Leave yourself time before assignments are due to allow for connection errors and familiarize yourself with computing resources in your area in case you need to use them as a back-up to complete your assignments.

The only acceptable technology-related excuse for not meeting the requirements of this course is a documented failure of the UM Moodle system. If you find the system is not working, email me immediately to inform me when you believe the system (not your computer or connection) was at fault. You should then contact the help desk (406-243-4357, helpdesk@umontana.edu) and continue attempting to access the system; any failures in the system are usually resolved within an hour. If documented failures of the system occurred when an assignment was due, you will not be penalized, but I expect you to try to get an assignment in as soon as the system is up again.

Consideration: Help foster an atmosphere where a priority for education and a respect for all students is valued by engaging in comments that relate to course content and show tolerance for opinions different from your own. Please understand that whether it is a face-to-face or online environment, harassment of any kind is both inappropriate and intolerable, and disciplinary action will be taken should it occur.

ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins on all sides of each page. **Failure to follow this guideline will result in a 10 percent grade reduction**. All assignments MUST be spell- and grammar-checked, and are due by 11:55 p.m. MST on the assigned date. Unless there is an acceptable (to me, offered in advance of the deadline) explanation for a late assignment, it will not be accepted. Specific directions for each assignment will be posted on our course website.

Syllabus Quiz	10 points	500-485 points=A+	399-385 points=C+
AP Style Quiz	15 points	484-475 points=A	384-375 points=C
Properly Citing Sources	50 points	474-450 points=A-	374-350 points=C-
First Project Essay	50 points	449-435 points=B+	349-335 points=D+
Article Review #1	50 points	434-425 points=B	334-325 points=D
Second Project Essay	50 points	424-400 points=B-	324-300 points=D-
Article Review #2	50 points		<300 points=F
Third Project Essay	50 points		
Final Project	100 points		
Forum Postings (6@5)	30 points		
Forum Responses (6@5)	30 points		
Total Points:	**500 points**		

Syllabus Quiz: I'm a stickler for rules. To encourage you to carefully read the syllabus and to ensure you understand the rules and consequences, I have designed a short quiz (10 questions). By the time you've completed it, the parameters for this class should be crystal clear.

AP Style Quiz: I've designed this course to prepare you for an entry-level PR position. It's very writing intensive, and I hold you to the standards of the profession. One of those standards is following Associated Press (AP) style. Reporters, editors and others use the *AP Stylebook* as a guide for grammar, punctuation and principles and practices of reporting. Although some publications use a different style guide, the *AP Stylebook* is considered a newspaper industry standard and is also used by broadcasters, magazines and public relations firms. It includes an A-to-Z guide to capitalization, abbreviation, spelling, numerals and usage. I expect you to follow AP style, so this quiz is designed to familiarize you with the types of information requiring AP style and orient you with how to use the *AP Stylebook*.

Properly Citing Sources: You MUST cite any resources you consult for the creation of your coursework. I expect every piece you submit to include proper in-text APA references, and I expect to see a references page for each and every assignment. To make sure we're all on the same page for how I expect you to reference your sources and to clarify what I consider plagiarism, your first assignment will familiarize you with resources to help you make proper citations and references pages.

Article Reviews: It's important to become familiar with trends and industry publications. You will find an article using a scholarly database, summarize the article, identify its implications for the practice of PR, and critique the article.

Project Essays/Final Project: You will choose an organization with an issue that could be solved with communication; **you will not actually make contact with your chosen organization**. You will complete three essays on your chosen organization: the first discussing target audiences, the second discussing research results on your organization, and the third discussing goals, objectives, strategies and tactics. The three essays will culminate in a basic public relations plan. Specific instructions for each essay are posted on Moodle. You will have an opportunity to revise and improve each essay before you submit your final project the last week of class.

Get Out of Jail Free: I give each student an opportunity to miss one deadline with no penalty each semester. If you miss a deadline, I'll still accept your work but you'll forfeit the extra credit points; if you never use your Get Out of Jail Free card, it's worth 10 extra credit points at the semester's end. The caveat is you must submit your assignment within one week of the deadline. Please email me if you want to use your Get Out of Jail Free Card so I can grant you an extension in Moodle.

Redo Assignment: I self-identify as a tough grader. I believe society has high expectations from those who are college educated, and ignoring those expectations does you no service when you enter the work world. The first few assignments, students are usually a bit surprised with just how tough I grade. I understand it takes a few tries to learn what is expected of you, so I offer you the opportunity to redo any assignment of your choosing the second to last week of class. It can be an assignment you did poorly on, did not turn in, or even one you just want to improve for personal edification. There is one exception: if you are caught plagiarizing and subsequently earned an F on an assignment, you may not redo it (it's supposed to be a punishment and though this is an opportunity for redemption, cheaters never prosper in this course).

Forum Postings: On weeks you do not have a project essay or article review due, you will have the opportunity to participate on the forum section of the course website. Forums are a way to demonstrate your comprehension of the course material by integrating the textbook and course notes to explain your opinions, and apply what we're learning in class to what you're experiencing and observing in the real world. **Forum Postings are available until 11:55 p.m. on the day they are due**. Each post is worth a maximum of 5 points; you are expected to post your own response to the question **AND** respond to at least one peer's post each week, for a total of 10 points per forum. The following table represents the ways in which students earn grades for their weekly forum postings:

"A" Posting (5 points):	"A" Response (5 points):
▪ The posting provides very detailed answering of the question, and comprises roughly 250-300 words. ▪ The post includes proper APA citation (author, date, p.) of the course textbook or outside materials. ▪ The post indicates a great understanding of the concept, and the response is well thought-out and intriguing. ▪ The response is free of any technical writing errors.	▪ The response provides a very detailed reply, is approximately 250-300 words, raising issues and/or concerns with the original post, or illuminating your agreement with the post and the rationale behind your stance. ▪ The post includes proper APA citation (author, date, p.) of the course textbook or outside materials. ▪ The response indicates a great understanding of your classmates' posting, and your response is well thought-out and intriguing. ▪ The response is free of any technical writing errors.
"B" Posting (4 points):	"B" Response (4 points):
▪ The posting provides a detailed answering of the question, and comprises 200-250 words. ▪ The post includes proper APA citation (author, date, p.) of the course textbook or outside materials. ▪ The post indicates an acceptable understanding of the concept, but could be more nuanced. ▪ Technical writing errors are minimal.	▪ The response provides a moderately detailed reply, is approximately 200-250 words, raising issues and/or concerns with the original post, or illuminating your agreement with the post and the rationale behind your stance. ▪ The post includes proper APA citation (author, date, p.) of the course textbook or outside materials. ▪ The response is well thought-out and intriguing. ▪ Technical writing errors are minimal.
"C" Posting (3 points):	"C" Response (3 points):
▪ The posting provides a hasty answer to the question, comprising between 100-200 words. ▪ The post includes citation of the course textbook or outside materials, but it is not in APA format or does not contain the full citation (author, date, p.). ▪ The post indicates vague understanding of the concept. ▪ Technical writing errors are minimal.	▪ The response lacks detail, is approximately 100-200 words, only vaguely raising issues and/or concerns with the original post, or illuminating your agreement with the post and the rationale behind your stance. ▪ The post includes citation of the course textbook or outside materials, but it is not in APA format or does not contain the full citation (author, date, p.). ▪ Technical writing errors are minimal.
"D" Posting (2 points):	"D" Response (2 points):
▪ The posting provides a hasty answer to the question, comprising between 75-100 words. ▪ The post includes no citations. ▪ The post indicates vague understanding of the concept. ▪ Technical writing errors are very distracting.	▪ The response is hasty and lacks detail, is approximately 75-100 words, and does not include specific reasons for your agreement or rebuttal of your classmates' stance. ▪ The post includes no citations. ▪ Technical writing errors are very distracting.
"F" Posting (1 point):	"F" Response (1 point):
▪ The posting provides little to no answer to the question, comprising less than 75 words. ▪ The post includes no citations. ▪ Technical writing errors are egregious to the point of being unreadable.	▪ The response provides little information and is less than 75 words. ▪ The post includes no citations. ▪ Technical writing errors are egregious to the point of being unreadable.

GRADING

This course will be graded with traditional letter grades. All of your grades will be posted within two weeks of the due date, so you will always have a real-time view of your course standing. One of my pet peeves is when students email or call towards the end of the class begging me to add more points or round their grade up. The answer is always "no." I'm of the school of thought that I don't give grades, you earn them. I am always willing to look over your assignments for edits or suggestions before they are due to improve your grade and provide some feedback. If you would like me to look over your assignment, please send it to me at least 48 hours before it is due. **I will never curve grades, round up, or add in extra points you have not earned**. Don't even ask.

Contesting Grades: I am willing to review any assignment with you to discuss your concerns. This is more difficult online than in person, so we'll have to work with what we've got. Please wait 24 hours after receiving an assignment before you contact me. When you do contact me, please write down your specific concerns and your backing for these concerns, and I will research your situation. We'll take it from there should further discussion need to occur.

EXTRA CREDIT

I am opposed to extra credit. More often than not, it is completed at the eleventh hour when students realize they will otherwise not pass the class, and it creates more work for me towards the end of the semester. My belief is you should keep up with your work and complete each assignment with diligence and integrity throughout the semester, not just at the last minute.

SUBMITTING WORK

Please save all work in a Microsoft Word file, if at all possible. If you do not have access to Microsoft Word, you must save the file in rich text format (.rtf). You are responsible for making sure the assignment you send is correctly uploaded and readable to me, before the due date. This requires some double-checking on your part, but it is necessary. If I can't open your assignment, I can't grade it, and if I can't grade it, you will not receive credit and will not be able to re-submit it. Your assignment files should be named in the following format, so it's clear to me what you are sending in:

<div align="center">

last _first_assignment_name
EXAMPLE:
holbrook_megan_article_review_1

</div>

Please note:
- Use underscore instead of spaces
- Use ONLY lowercase letters

Do not email me your assignments; if you email me an assignment, you will receive a zero. Moodle is the ONLY place I will accept assignments. ∎

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK	TOPIC/READING	ASSIGNMENTS	DUE
1	**What is Public Relations?/Jobs in Public Relations** ❑ Chapter 1—What is Public Relations? ❑ What is Public Relations? Notes ❑ Chapter 2—Jobs in Public Relations ❑ Jobs in Public Relations Notes	❑ Syllabus Quiz ❑ AP style Quiz	1/30
2	**Research and Evaluation** ❑ Chapter 7—Research and Evaluation ❑ Research and Evaluation Notes	❑ Properly Citing Sources	2/6
3	**The Publics in Public Relations** ❑ Chapter 4—The Publics in Public Relations ❑ The Publics in Public Relations Notes	❑ Respond to Forum Question	2/13
4	**Planning: The Strategies of Public Relations** ❑ Chapter 8—Planning: The Strategies of Public Relations ❑ Planning: The Strategies of Public Relations Notes	❑ First Project Essay	2/20
5	**A Brief History of Public Relations** ❑ Chapter 3—A Brief History of Public Relations ❑ A Brief History of Public Relations Notes	❑ Respond to Forum Question	2/27
6	**Communication Theory and Public Opinion** ❑ Chapter 5—Communication Theory and Public Opinion ❑ Communication Theory and Public Opinion Notes	❑ Article Review 1	3/6
7	**Ethics and Social Responsibility in Public Relations** ❑ Chapter 6—Ethics and Social Responsibility in Public Relations ❑ Ethics and Social Responsibility in Public Relations Notes	❑ Respond to Forum Question	3/13
8	**Multimedia Message Development** ❑ Chapter 10—Multimedia Message Development ❑ Multimedia Message Development Notes	❑ Second Project Essay	3/20
9	**Cyber-Relations in the Digital Age** ❑ Chapter 11—Cyber-Relations in the Digital Age ❑ Cyber-Relations in the Digital Age Notes	❑ Respond to Forum Question	3/27
**SPRING BREAK MARCH 30-APRIL 3—NO CLASS**		
10	**Crisis Communications** ❑ Chapter 12—Crisis Communications ❑ Crisis Communications Notes	❑ Article Review 2	4/10
11	**Public Relations and Marketing** ❑ Chapter 13—Public Relations and Marketing ❑ Public Relations and Marketing Notes	❑ Respond to Forum Question	4/17

12	**Communication: The Tactics of Public Relations** ❑ Chapter 9—Communication: The Tactics of Public Relations ❑ Communication: The Tactics of Public Relations Notes	❑ Third Project Essay	4/24
13	**Cross-Cultural Communication** ❑ Chapter 14—Cross-Cultural Communication ❑ Cross-Cultural Communication Notes	❑ Respond to Forum Question	5/1
14	**Public Relations and the Law** ❑ Chapter 15—Public Relations and the Law ❑ Public Relations and the Law Notes	❑ Redo Assignment (OPTIONAL)	5/8
15	**Your Future in Public Relations** ❑ Chapter 16—Your Future in Public Relations ❑ Your Future in Public Relations Notes	❑ Final Project	5/15