JOUR 4460: Public Relations Communications, Fall 2014
Tuesday 12:30—3:20 p.m. GAB 204

The Twitter hashtag for this course is #untj4460

Instructor: Samra Jones Bufkins, MJ, APR
Office: GAB 113  Office phone: 940-565-2167
Cell phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX (text any time, include name & class, call if an emergency.)
Office hours: Mondays 2:00—3:00 p.m.; Tuesdays 12:30—1:30 and 5:00—6:00 p.m. or by appointment
E-mail: Samra.Bufkins@unt.edu  Twitter: @samjb
A note on accessibility: I try to be available to students but if you text/tweet/email me on a weekend or late at night, don’t panic if I don’t respond right away. If you need immediate response, call.

Teaching Assistant: Sherry Long
Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX
E-mail: SLong@my.unt.edu
Twitter @SherryLong

Course Description and prerequisites:
This capstone course in public relations places heavy emphasis on writing and planning for selected PR channels, and students are held to a very high professional standard.
(Prerequisite(s): JOUR major status; JOUR 3420; or consent of the school).

In this course, you will:
- Learn the elements of strategic communications planning and apply them to assignments for actual clients.
- Write a measurable objective and evaluate its effectiveness in a strategic communications plan.
- Develop and utilize strategic planning skills in an ethical, client-focused manner.
- Apply professional writing and visual communications techniques to specific contexts in public relations.
- Learn to manage time independently and in teams to meet regular assigned deadlines.
- Engage with actual clients in analytical and creative problem solving communications.
- Create a professional public relations campaign for an actual client.
- Complete a professional portfolio (hard copy or online) suitable for job interviews and networking.
- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications profession.

Class Format
- Lecture, discussion and deadline-dependent assignments involving actual clients
- Intensive writing, planning and social media
- Weekly blogs, daily tweeting and regular Tweetchats completed without prompting from the instructor
- Reading assigned and supplemental material and sharing via social media
- Independent research into current events and industry trends via local and national media

DEADLINES: As demanded in a professional environment, deadlines and formats are strictly observed
Required Texts:
4. Supplemental readings as assigned.

Additional Required Resources:
- UNT class Blackboard LEARN (LEARN.UNT.EDU)
- UNT email (Required by university & FERPA policy)
- Twitter account with unprotected tweets (see instructions in Blackboard)
- Personal blog and LinkedIn profile (see instructions in Blackboard)
- Your client from Journalism 3420 with a new signed letter of agreement
- Regular reading of The Dallas Morning News, The New York Times, and listening to NPR Morning Edition and All Things Considered. (Most of the radio content is available online after broadcast).
- A stapler (*I will not accept any multi-page assignments that are not stapled.*)

Evaluation

Assignments (6 total, point values vary) 200 points
Exams (2 total, 100 points each) 200 points
Blogs (15 total, 10 points each) 150 points
Portfolio 50 points
Campaign (group project) 300 points
Class participation*, pop quizzes, social media interaction 100 points
Total Points possible 1,000 points
*Includes Twitter Profile

Grading System—Based on a percentage of 1,000 possible points
92% and above = A (920 points and higher)
82% -- 81.9% = B (820--919 points)
72% -- 79.9% = C (720--819 points)
62% -- 71.9% = D (620--719 points)

Blackboard Gradebook: Grades posted in the Blackboard gradebook are nothing more than points accrued for each project recorded, or each exam. Not all individual project grades are recorded in the Blackboard gradebook. Weighting of assignments, quizzes, attendance, and class participation are not included. Total points accrued in Blackboard may not be a true reflection of your potential or actual grade in this course. Because of the large number of students I have in all my classes, I will not do individual grade calculations on demand. You are responsible for keeping track of your graded assignments and track your progress in this course.

ATTENDANCE, PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION POLICY
You are expected to attend and participate in each class meeting, complete all assignments on time in the proper format and participate in all online and social media activities as assigned. I frequently give quizzes covering the week’s readings, Daily Writing Tips, class discussions and current events (and the syllabus)—these usually occur in the first 10 minutes of class with no opportunity to make up a missed quiz. Show up. There may also be in-class writing exercises. *This class meets once a week, so missing one class means you’ve missed an entire week of class.*
- Journalism instructors reserve the right to drop any student who does not attend the first class day of the semester.
- You have one absence without penalty. Beginning with the second absence, 10 points will be deducted for each subsequent absence.
• After the third absence I reserve the right to drop you from the class if I do not see sufficient evidence that you are taking the class seriously and making an effort to complete all work.
• Instances of your illness or a death in the immediate family (persons residing in your household) must be documented in writing.
• Absence from class due to internship conflicts may be excused only if I am contacted well in advance, in writing and by telephone, by your internship supervisor, and only then for extraordinary circumstances.
• If you need to leave the classroom for any reason during an exam you will not be re-admitted to the classroom, and your exam will be graded based on work completed.
• Failure to meet with your project group during class periods set aside for that purpose will result in an absence for the day.

Classroom Protocols:
Laptops and smartphones are allowed in the classroom if they are being used for the purposes of taking notes, live tweeting of lectures or researching discussion materials. Bring your laptop to class for in-class writing assignments. I retain my nonnegotiable right to evaluate everyone’s in-class performance and ask anyone to leave if they are disruptive or their inattention is disruptive. This includes sleeping in class, playing on Facebook, working on assignments for other classes, surfing the Internet, doing crossword puzzles and sudoku, texting each other, muttering and talking in class, talking back, and disrespectful and/or inappropriate comments to the instructor or classmates. Food and drinks are acceptable as long as you clean up your area and don’t stink up the classroom

Communication between students and instructor is primarily via email and Twitter. I will email you from the class Blackboard page and am required to contact you via your official university email account.

• Communicating with students using the UNT student email account is part of the university’s contract with students.
• Email and Twitter communication will be professional and utilize correct grammar, spelling and punctuation, as in all business communication. Text language is not an acceptable business communication method for anything but texting (and even then I’d be conscious of the audience).
• I will not discuss grades via Twitter or text messages. Email me or see me in my office.

Evaluation and Assignments

Class participation (including social media interaction), pop quizzes, etc. Be sure you’ve read the assigned chapters and any supplemental readings I send out via email or Twitter before coming to class, as well as the Daily Writing Tips. Public Relations practitioners are expected to know what’s going on in the world, especially the business world. Get in the habit of reading the Dallas Morning News and New York Times and try listening to NPR Morning Edition. Read the NT Daily in print and online (follow @NTDaily on Twitter and “Like” the Facebook page.) Anything in the news is fair game. Follow the same breaking news sites I follow on Twitter. I may also spring a writing assignment on you with little or no notice, to be done in class on tight deadline. This is to prepare you for those kinds of days in your job in PR.

Twitter profile Complete a Twitter profile and the assignment in the handout posted to Blackboard by the second class meeting. Post this link in the discussion section, and follow your classmates. Tweet at least one course-related tweet per day using the class hashtag #untj4460. This is a major portion of your class participation grade.

Blog Write a short, (approximately 300-500 words) engaging weekly blog about the concepts you’re learning in this class or a critical analysis of something you’ve read about PR/media/communications from other sources. Please, no celebrity fluff or personal ranting—stick to some serious, legitimate PR/communications/media issues. Provide hyperlinks and SEO tags and include at least one graphic or photo—be sure to include the source. Your blog site must have your own name prominently displayed and be searchable, a photo, completed profile and comments must be enabled. There is no anonymous or pseudonymous blogging allowed in this class. Sign your name to comments you make on other blogs as well. You are encouraged to read and comment on your classmates’ blogs—that will factor into your class participation grade.

• You will write 15 original blog posts with the first one due This Thursday, August 28.
• Upload your blog post via Turnitin (through Blackboard) first as a Microsoft Word document containing the link to your blog, your name, a headline, and which blog it is (Blog #1).
• Submit your blog via Turnitin BEFORE you post it live online—this should keep Turnitin from showing it as copied from the Internet.
• Tweet about your update, (include the link and class hashtag) read your classmates’ blogs and comment on them.
• **IMPORTANT NOTE:** You will receive a graded copy of your blog, most likely online. Go back into your blog and make any noted corrections to grammar, spelling and punctuation as soon as possible. This is because your blogs are live and employers are searching for your work online. We will check periodically to see that this is done, and you may get points docked if you don’t make online corrections.

• **EVEN MORE IMPORTANT NOTE:** Every semester students earn B’s and C’s in this class because they do not turn in enough blog assignments. These are often people who did A work on their major assignments and exams, and either “couldn’t remember” or “didn’t feel like writing” a blog that week. Just because it’s due on Friday night doesn’t mean you can’t submit it early. The little things add up, in life, and in class. Don’t blow this off and wreck your grade. Professionals manage their time and meet regular deadlines without being reminded, and those deadlines are rarely at their convenience. Schedule a regular time to do your blog, and stick to it.

Exams – Exams are comprehensive and cover principles covered in class lectures and readings. They are not easy. Take them seriously, even though they’re a small percentage of the final grade. Little things add up.

Writing assignments—listed in detail below.

You will have seven writing assignments this semester. Each will be graded according to content/key messages, style and grammar, design and format, and how well you execute the assignment based on my instructions. Keep in mind, however, that well-executed assignments riddled with GSP errors and AP Style errors will receive a low grade and I will stop grading anything that’s unreadable.

A word about Spell Check. Spell Check is a great tool, and I couldn’t live without it, but IT IS NOT A PROOFREADING PROGRAM. If you’ve misspelled a word in such a way that it simply becomes another, correctly spelled word, it’s wrong, it will affect the meaning of your document, and it will affect your grade. **YOU MUST GET INTO THE HABIT OF MANUALLY PROOFREADING YOUR WORK.**

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSIONS

• Late assignments are not accepted.
• Submit assignments via Turnitin through Blackboard and bring hard copy to class.
• Multiple page documents not stapled together will not be accepted.
• Unless instructed otherwise, all assignments must be word-processed in 12-point font with margins no wider than 1”, unless the assignment involves graphic design. You will have freedom of choice for font and layout; however, be aware that you will be graded according to the style you choose, and its appropriateness for the project. Well-executed assignments riddled with typos, GSP errors and formatting errors will receive a low grade and I reserve the right to stop reading and grading anything that’s unreadable.
• Assignments must be submitted as a Word document or .pdf via Turnitin at the time on the syllabus. Turnitin will lock you out if you are late. Don’t assume the clock on your computer is correct.
• Assignments not submitted on time via Turnitin will receive a grade of ZERO. No exceptions. Know what time it is and don’t wait until the last minute.
• “I had problems with Turnitin” and “Turnitin will not accept my work” is not a valid excuse unless you submit a trouble ticket and provide me with a copy. Make a screen shot of the error message that prevented you from uploading on time. Always keep your submission confirmations until the end of the semester.
• I cannot help you with Blackboard or Turnitin technical problems. If you have an issue, call the Help Desk (940-369-7394 or 940-565-2324 after hours), and create a screen shot of your error messages. Your screen shot and emailed confirmation of your trouble ticket will be your “Get out of Jail” card if the technical issue impedes submission of an assignment.
• Waiting until the last minute to submit work invites disasters. Be professional and complete your work early. You’ll sleep better, too. You can submit drafts early to Turnitin to check originality.
• References and sources are required and must be cited properly and completely.
• Failing to prepare a hard copy or attach a reference list will cost you half credit for that assignment.
• Email submission of assignments is not allowed.
• **All sources must be cited within the text and at the end of the assignment.** Sources must be cited in their entirety, whether a website, blog, book, magazine or journal article, or any other scholarly source, including the date of publication, or an interview. Citation of online sources must follow the format from the Purdue Online Writing Lab, [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10/) and must be complete. **Raw links like the**
one above will not be accepted as citations or bibliography entries. Any omission of these citations will result in a lowered grade and possible investigation for plagiarism. When in doubt, cite. Don’t press your luck.

- In the case of inclement weather or other emergency resulting in the closing of the university, any assignments due must still be submitted electronically on the due date, with hard copy to be submitted at the next class meeting. No exceptions (unless there’s a complete power blackout).
- If the university is closed due to inclement weather or other emergency we will engage in an online chat during regular class time. Watch Twitter and email for instructions, and consider setting up a Google + account.

Back up your work in Google Docs, Dropbox or other cloud platform in case your hard drive fails or your flash drive is lost or destroyed. It is your responsibility to ensure your work is completed and accessible at all times. Save all your work until the end of the semester, as you will re-submit clean copies as part of your portfolio.

Professional Expectations and Evaluation Criteria:
I expect students in this class to perform as if they are employees of my public relations agency or department. As such, I hold you to very high professional standards because you are upper-level students with several previous writing classes. Most of you should have internship experience by now, too. This is not a beginning PR class, it is an advanced writing and planning class. You should already know how to write if you’re in this class.

- **Content and message appeals:** Your writing will be evaluated for factual accuracy, organization of thought, strength of message, inclusion of the human element, persuasiveness, originality, and other content issues relevant to each assignment.
- **Format and citations:** Proper format is nearly as important as content and GSP. Adhere to the assigned format. This is important for your professional work, as well, as there are very good reasons for specific formatting requirements.

- **Grammar, style and punctuation:** The Associated Press Stylebook and Daily Writing Tips as well as The Purdue Online Writing Lab (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/) will be your writing guides. Your writing will be graded carefully for mechanical content and construction.
  - General sloppiness or lack of professionalism will result in a lowered grade.
  - I will not accept multiple-page assignments that are not stapled.
- **Originality:** Your work must reflect your original ideas and existing facts. No form of academic dishonesty is tolerated. No matter how well you have done before, one incident of academic dishonesty will have grave consequences on your college career. Clients have a habit of telling students to “get it from the website.” This is a writing class, not a copy and paste class. Lifting huge chunks, even with attribution, from client websites and other sources is also considered academic dishonesty.
- **Always research more than you think you need and use multiple sources** to discover your own ideas and story angle. Do not rely exclusively on Google—try Google Scholar, Dogpile, and that wonderful resource known as the library. Cite all sources completely (on a separate sheet attached to your assignment. Assignments without the citation sheet will receive half credit.

A NOTE ON RESEARCH SOURCES: Wikipedia, Answers.com, Ask Yahoo!, Quora, About.com and all similar, unverified, user-generated sites are generally not acceptable research sources, although they are often good places to start looking for ideas. Don’t be lazy and quote the first one or two things that pop up on Google. Use the library resources available to you—you paid for them—and your research will be more meaningful to you and your clients and will most likely result in a better grade. Do not depend solely on Internet research—the Willis Library has lots of dead tree media and nice librarians who will help you find stuff.

Citation of online sources must follow the format from the Purdue Online Writing Lab, http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10/ and must be complete. Raw links will not be accepted as citations or bibliography entries.
GRADED ASSIGNMENTS (not necessarily in the order in which they are due):

1. **In-Class Assessment Exercise.** Completed in class the first day we meet. (30 points total)

2. **LinkedIn**—Create a personal profile on LinkedIn that casts you as a new PR professional, including a complete work history, career objectives, and suitable photo (see handout in Blackboard for specific requirements and due dates). Post this link in Blackboard along with your social media contact information. (20 points total)

3. **Communications Plan** – Develop a basic but comprehensive communications plan (traditional and social media as appropriate) for your client, incorporating at least three measurable objectives, a minimum of two strategies for each objective and at least two tactics for each strategy. Client contact is required. (50 points)

4. **Interactive News Release** – As assigned and described using the format discussed in class, search engine optimized. (30 points)

5. **Social Media Plan and Editorial Calendar** – Create a detailed social media editorial calendar (including sample content) for your nonprofit organization. (50 points)

6. **Infographic**—Develop and design an infographic about your organization suitable for use in social media or online. (20 points)

**Tweetchats** You must participate in no fewer than four Twitter chats relevant to PR/Journalism and provide screen shots of your posts—see schedule for specific due dates. See Course Documents folder for more information.

**Portfolio**—50 points
Continuing the work you started in Jour 3420, you will complete your portfolio and present it to the class during the final exam period. It is up to you whether you want a digital portfolio, a traditional bound portfolio, or a combination of both (which is recommended by professionals). The portfolio will contain a resume, all the finished products from your 3420 portfolio plus all the finished work from this class organized in a format suitable for presenting in a job interview. (Your typed class notes and other items from the 3420 ToolKit are not included.) You should also include work done for internships, student associations and volunteer activities. Pieces should be error-free and should include a short summary of how it was developed, its intended audience, and your role in creating it.

Complete portfolios may also include correspondence, PR planning, and other documents designed to illustrate to future practitioners your mastery of the material. Awards, letters of recommendation, clips of published works and screen shots of your blogs are also appropriate.

Portfolios should be presented in a professional folder or binder with tabbed dividers and sheet protectors.

**Campaign**—300 points (That’s nearly 1/3 of your grade)
During the last weeks of the semester you will work in small groups to create a PR campaign for an actual client. Each team will produce a unique campaign and effectively designed collateral materials for the same client; therefore, each team will work independently of other teams. This is a fast-track project with very specific requirements based on what might be required in the real world. It will require groups to meet independently with the client, and spend significant time outside of class working on the many elements of this campaign. This is also an opportunity for you to develop material for your portfolio. Team members will complete a peer evaluation questionnaire that will be considered when grading the final project.

This project is extensive (the average submission is 80 pages long, full color, bound) and will require a large amount of teamwork and time management on your part. You cannot complete this project in a marathon session the weekend before it is due. Be prepared to incur some expenses, too, for printing and binding a minimum of 3 color copies of the entire project.

There will be a required progress report (including peer review) midway through the assignment period. Failure to submit a progress report will reduce your project’s final grade by 50 points. Do not try to complete this project without meeting with me as a group in my office at least twice during project development. It is a very complex project and teams that do not meet with me one-on-one are less successful than those that did.
Academic Integrity (Cheating)

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Mayborn School of Journalism Academic Integrity Policy

The codes of ethics from the Society of Professional Journalists, American Advertising Federation and Public Relations Society of America address truth and honesty. The Mayborn School of Journalism embraces these tenets and believes that academic dishonesty of any kind – including plagiarism and fabrication – is incongruent with all areas of journalism. The school’s policy aligns with UNT Policy 18.1.16 and requires reporting any act of academic dishonesty to the Office for Academic Integrity for investigation. If the student has a previous confirmed offense (whether the first offense was in the journalism school or another university department) and the student is found to have committed another offense, the department will request the additional sanction of removing the student from the Mayborn School of Journalism. The student may appeal to the Office for Academic Integrity, which ensures due process and allows the student to remain in class pending the appeal.

When you submit work for this class, that is the same as making a statement that you have produced the work yourself, in its entirety, specifically for this class. Plagiarism, fabrication, copyright infringement and similar uses of other people’s work are unacceptable. You are expected to conform to the university Student Code of Conduct: www.unt.edu/csrr.

My policy on Academic Honesty: Any incidence of academic dishonesty may result in an automatic “F” in the class. Work that has been previously written for personal blogs or other classes (past or present), including blog posts, articles or publications, may not be submitted for credit in this class even if it is your original work. You may refer to these pieces if appropriate, but re-submission will result in a grade of zero and possible investigation for violation of the academic integrity policy. Copying large portions of text from any source, even with attribution, may also be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy. If in doubt, ask me (not another student).

Final Note

I come across as a tough old broad but it’s because I’m trying to prepare you for the intensely competitive career you’ve chosen. I’m here to help you, and I care deeply about all my students. I have 23 years of professional PR experience and many professional contacts in the industry. Come see me in my office any time, about anything, and if I can help, I will. If you can’t meet me in my office, I will meet with you at a mutually convenient time and location. My ultimate goal is to see you succeed in class, in life, and to inspire you to greatness.

Syllabus © 2014 by Samra Jones Bufkins, MJ, APR.