

JOUR 398B: Public Relations Practicum

Wednesdays 5 to 6:50 p.m., Manzanita Hall 362

Professor: Lori Baker-Schena

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Prerequisites: C or better in JOUR 340 and in JOUR 341

Textbooks

- *Building Teams, Building People: Expanding the Fifth Resource*, Second Edition, by Thomas R. Harvey and Bonita Drolet
- *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, by Marshall B. Rosenberg

Overview

According to the Institute of Public Relations, “Public relations practice is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.” In this capstone course, you will put that definition into action as you apply skills acquired in your previous journalism classes to helping a nonprofit organization.

The Public Relations Practicum is structured to resemble a public relations agency. Consequently, teamwork is strongly emphasized, and in each class you will learn strategies that will help you work effectively as part of a team. These include norm setting, conflict management and interpersonal communication skills. At the beginning of the semester, students form three- or four-person teams, select a nonprofit organization as their client, and throughout the ensuing months serve as the organization’s consultant. Teams hold regular meetings with their clients and create a comprehensive public relations strategy that includes a press kit/portfolio and a media relations component.

In addition, to help the class better understand media relations strategies, each student will deliver an oral “clip report” based on a *Los Angeles Times* article that originated with a press release.

How the Course is Structured

The first hour of class begins with a 10-minute team conference to meet and discuss client activities, after which team members present oral reports on those activities. Written group reports and public relations “deliverables” (weekly written assignments) are due at this time. Oral “clip report” poster boards are then presented.

The second hour begins with a discussion of teamwork skills. The rest of the session is devoted to a lecture and discussion about different public relations writing tools, including strategic public relations plans, biographies, backgrounders, media releases, pitch letters, brochures, newsletters, web content and fact sheets.

Preparation

You are expected to be FULLY prepared for each class. You may be called upon at any time during the class period to answer questions regarding client activities, the lecture and current events. You also must turn in your weekly assignments on time. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS ARE ACCEPTED.**

Attendance

Attendance is taken at the start of every class. You are expected to attend every class and arrive on time, a professional courtesy to both fellow students and the professor. If you cannot make it to class, you **MUST** call or email me prior to the start of class to obtain an “excused absence.” Any unexcused absences will negatively impact your participation grade, as will excessive excused absences. You also **MUST** inform your team members if you will be late or absent. All written work must be turned in by a team member at the assigned time to receive full credit.

Evaluation

You will be graded on six class components for a possible total of 600 points:

1. **Final Press Kit/Portfolio** – This assignment is designed to serve as a culmination of the knowledge gained in class. You are required to create a press kit/portfolio throughout the entire semester, handing in each component on a weekly basis. I will critique these assignments and return them to each team the following week. It is the team’s responsibility to make the necessary corrections and edits. This edited version will then become part of the final press kit/portfolio. This assignment is worth 275 points.
2. **Weekly Progress Reports** – Each team is responsible for writing an activity report of at least one page reflecting its previous week’s activities and strategies for the upcoming week. Each report is worth 5 points, and 10 reports are due throughout the course of the semester for a possible total of 50 points.
3. **Oral “Clip Report” Poster Board Presentation** – This component is worth 25 points and involves identifying a *Los Angeles Times* article that originated with a media release. You are required to clip out the article, locate the media release and use these two elements to create a graphically creative poster board. You will base your oral presentation on a series of questions distributed to the class early in the semester.
4. **Participation in Groups** – Working in teams can be challenging. Each team member is expected to pull his or her own weight. You will complete a confidential report at the end of the semester describing how well your group worked as a team and each team member’s role. These reports will be factored into determining how well you participated in the group. This class component is worth 50 points.
5. **Textbook Chapter Quizzes and Cumulative Test** – I will give seven quizzes on the assigned readings from *Building Teams*, *Building People: Expanding the Fifth Resource*, each worth 10 points, for a total of 70 points. On the day of the

assigned final, I will give a cumulative test on *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, worth 30 points.

6. **Class Attendance and Participation** – This component is worth 100 points and is based on class participation, knowledge of current events in public relations, attendance and punctuality.

Grade Range

600-540 points = A

539-480 points = B

479-420 points = C

419-360 points = D

Below 360 points = Fail

The + and – grading system will be used.

Cultural Diversity

To ensure that your work reflects the diversity of the community, you are strongly encouraged to broaden your public relations experiences by focusing your assignments on ethnic, racial and religious minorities; the elderly, disabled and poor; gay men and lesbians; and other similar groups.

Plagiarism/Cheating

The CSUN Journalism Department is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and integrity. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated, and anyone caught cheating will be reported to the University for possible further action. For a further explanation of the behavior defined as academic dishonesty, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, consult pages 587-588 of the 2008-2010 CSUN catalog. Remember, too, that passing off information taken from the Internet as your own is plagiarism and carries the penalties outlined above.

Communicating with the Professor

Please feel encouraged to call or email me to discuss any aspects of this class. You will receive the quickest response via email: bscomm@ca.rr.com.

CLASS SCHEDULE

(pending approval of furlough days for faculty)

August 26:

Class Introduction, Clip Sign-Up and Team Formation

Lecture/Discussion: Welcome to the Real World of Public Relations

September 2:

Oral/Written Assignment: Group Activity Report #1

Reading Assignment: “Roles Commonly Found in Groups” (handout)

Lecture/Discussion: Meeting with a Client, Setting Meeting Schedules

September 9:

Oral/Written Assignment: Group Activity Report #2

Reading Assignment: *Building Teams*, chapter 1– Quiz #1

Two Clip Reports Due

Lecture/Discussion: Writing a Public Relations Plan

September 16: **FURLOUGH DAY**, No Class

September 23:

Oral/Written Assignment: Group Activity Report #3

Writing Assignment: Public Relations Plans Due

Reading Assignment: *Building Teams*, chapter 2 – Quiz #2

Two Clip Reports Due

Lecture/Discussion: Writing Media Releases

September 30:

Oral/Written Assignment: Group Activity Report #4

Writing Assignment: Media Releases Due

Reading Assignment: *Building Teams*, chapter 3 – Quiz #3

Two Clip Reports Due

Lecture/Discussion: Writing Pitch Letters

October 7:

Oral/Written Assignment: Group Activity Report #5

Writing Assignment: Pitch Letters Due

Reading Assignment: *Building Teams*, chapter 4 – Quiz #4

Two Clip Reports Due

Lecture/Discussion: Writing Fact Sheets

October 14:

Oral/Written Assignment: Group Activity Report #6

Writing Assignment: Fact Sheets Due

Reading Assignment: *Building Teams*, chapter 5 – Quiz #5

Two Clip Reports Due

Lecture/Discussion: Writing Backgrounders

October 21:

Oral/Written Assignment: Group Activity Report #7

Writing Assignment: Backgrounders Due

Reading Assignment: *Building Teams*, chapter 6 – Quiz #6

Two Clip Reports Due

Lecture/Discussion: Writing Biographies

October 28: **FURLOUGH DAY**, No Class

November 4:

Oral/Written Assignment: Group Activity Report #8

Writing Assignment: Biographies Due

Reading Assignment: *Building Teams*, chapter 7 – Quiz #7

Two Clip Reports Due

Lecture/Discussion: Writing Brochures

November 11: **VETERANS DAY**, No Class

November 18:

Oral/Written Assignment: Group Activity Report #9

Writing Assignment: Brochures Due

Reading Assignment: *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, chapters 1-4

Two Clip Reports Due

Lecture/Discussion: Writing Web Copy/Writing Newsletter Copy

November 25: **FURLOUGH DAY**, No Class

December 2: **FURLOUGH DAY**, No Class

December 9:

Oral/Written Assignment: Group Activity Report #10

Writing Assignment: Web Copy or Newsletter Copy Due

Reading Assignment: *Nonviolent Communication*, chapters 5-13

Two Clip Reports Due

Lecture/Discussion: Nonviolent Communication

December 16:

Final Portfolio Due

Writing Assignment: Group Participation Reports

Test: *Nonviolent Communication*

Lecture/Discussion: Following Up With Clients, Resume Writing, Job Interviewing