PR 501S 01: Experiential Studies  
Fall 2017

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Office Hours  
M-W-F: 9:30 to 10:15 a.m.  
T-TH: 11 to Noon  
I am also available by appointment.

*Please type PR 501 in the subject line

Course Description:
This course is designed to give you the opportunity to use the knowledge and skills you have gained during the last three years. You will experience the challenges of practicing public relations by with a real-world client. This course will test your ability to apply what you have learned and to work as professional in the field.

Major Outcomes:
To successfully complete a Public Relations major, students will demonstrate the ability to:
1. Write persuasively, in a variety of formats, for a variety of media
2. Use diverse research methods and analyze data to develop and support various PR functions
3. Apply PR strategies and tactics to solve problems creatively
4. Use PR principles and practices to guide management effectively and ethically
5. Use oral communication skills professionally in a variety of situations

Course Objectives
In this course you will…
1. Apply your knowledge of the field of public relations while working with a real-world client
2. Conduct research and analyze the data in order to address a client’s situation/problem
3. Apply PR principles and practices to effectively and ethically advise a client
4. Write public relations objectives and strategies on behalf of a client
5. Write and create public relations tactics on behalf of a client
6. Write messages designed to effectively reach various publics
7. Reflect on the effectiveness of your application of key concepts, principles, and tactics while working with a client
8. Work effectively with others
9. Deliver several professional presentations to a client

Recommended Textbook:

Required readings will be posted on D2L.

Class Structure:
1. It may be helpful to think of this class as an extension of your internship (or a preview of your upcoming one). While you occasionally will be required to read and discuss those readings in class, I will take on more of a supervisor’s role rather than that of a college professor. In other words, there will be few, if any, lectures.
Class Structure (cont.):

2. Additional time will be required to complete research and tasks for your client. Establishing mutually acceptable schedules is part of the experiential process. **Feel free to arrange for additional meetings with me (via phone or skype) if you need advice or would like additional feedback.**

3. For one of your projects, you will find a community client and assist the organization with one or more projects. For the other project, Westminster’s PR major (i.e. Dr. Prestien and I) will be your client.

4. Although I will monitor your progress and offer advice, this is your work and you are ultimately responsible for its success.

5. You will be required to update me on your progress through periodic reports.

6. Even though we are not charging organizations for our services (because they are nonprofits), each team member will be expected to keep track of “billable” hours.

7. You will conclude the semester by presenting your work to your client. The other project will consist of pitching a social media campaign designed to develop an online presence for the major and to engage future and present students, as well as alums. I’ll provide more information regarding this project later in the semester.

Your grade will depend on your ability to strategize, organize, and produce a meaningful project(s) for your client. Establishing work timelines, communicating effectively, and following the RACE model will contribute to your success.

Class Policies:

1. **Professionalism:** You will be working with real-world clients. You are required to conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times. If you behave in a way that is deemed inappropriate or unprofessional, you will lose points. **Dress professionally when meeting with your client and interacting with the community. This means no jeans, sweats, or flip-flops.** If you have any questions about what is appropriate attire, please ask me. I will be asking your client to evaluate you, and one of the things I will be asking about is your professionalism.

2. **Communication:** **The best way to contact me is via email.** However, please be aware that I may not be able to respond immediately to emails sent later in the day (typically after 4 p.m.) or on weekends, but I will get back to you as quickly as I can. It may be helpful for us to chat via skype several times this semester. We can arrange this as needed. You can also reach me via phone or text message at 412-400-7623, but please remember there is a time difference. It may be best to email me to arrange for a call. **During my office hours, I will also be available via D2L chat.** You may also want to try this option for questions/discussions that need a more immediate response.

3. **Reading Assignments:** You are expected to complete all reading assignments posted on D2L. **This is not a lecture-based class, but I will assign readings designed to help you with your projects.** We will discuss these readings in various way.

4. **Written Assignments:** Unless otherwise noted, your work should be typed, doubled-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font. **Sloppy work communicates something about you and your level of professionalism.** Please use paragraphs, introductions, conclusions, and transitions accordingly. **Be sure to proofread your papers for typos and grammatical errors.** If you have questions about the requirements for an assignment, please contact me. The Learning Center located in 212 Thompson-Clark Hall (ext. 6700) is a valuable resource where students can receive additional help with writing and study skills.
5. **Submitting Assignments**: The public relations industry is a fast-paced, deadline driven industry. Remember, we are working with real clients! Failure to complete a project on time will not only earn you a zero for the assignment, it will reflect negatively on your classmates and our PR program. Late work will NOT be accepted. Deadlines will vary (and may be determined by your client) so please pay careful attention to assignment requirements. Be sure to allow enough time to print your papers if a hard copy is required for submission. Some assignments may require you to submit your work online. Do not wait until the last minute to submit assignments online—if you try to upload an assignment at the last minute D2L may not accept them. Assignments that do not adhere to the assignment guidelines given in class may receive a zero. If you have questions about the proper format for an assignment, please feel free to contact me to clarify the assignment or for additional instructions.

6. **Academic Integrity**: In accordance with Westminster College’s policy, violations of academic integrity include cheating, misconduct, plagiarism, and providing false information. Please refer to your student handbook for a detailed description of Westminster’s Academic Integrity Policy. **Work that violates the college’s policy will receive a zero and the assignment or test may be turned over to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for further disciplinary action.** Please remember that violating the Academic Integrity Policy may be grounds for dismissal from the college. If you have questions about properly citing source material or what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me.

7. **Accessibility**: Westminster College actively strives for the full inclusion of all our students. Students with disabilities who may require additional accommodations for environmental or curricular barriers should contact the Director of Disability Resources in 209 Thompson-Clark Hall, ext. 7192.

8. The information contained in this syllabus is subject to change. Please check your email regularly to make sure that there have been no additions/subtractions to the coursework.

**Assignments/Evaluations:**

**Late work will NOT be accepted.** Please remember that assignment deadlines will vary. More detailed assignment information and guidelines will be provided for you during the semester. Because we are working with real clients, assignments will directly related to their needs. Tentatively, there will be 200 points distributed across various assignments/activities. Several assignments will be required regardless of client needs (ex. creating and pitching a public relations campaign and tracking billable hours).

1. **Professionalism** (Objective #1, Objective #3, Objective #7). The points associated with this category stem from a variety of activities. You will be required to track the work you do for your clients in two ways—in the form of a weekly tally of billable hours. You will also receive points for interacting with clients in a professional manner. Lastly, points will be associated with discussing the readings, provide project updates, etc.

2. **Client Project** (Objective #1, Objective #2, Objective #3, Objective #4, Objective #5, Objective #6, Objective #7, Objective #8, Objective #9). You will be required to follow the RACE process to meet a community client’s needs, help them address a particular situation, etc. It is up to you to find a client and devise a work plan that you complete during the semester. Projects/activities can include just about anything, but must be based on client need, solid research, and a realistic ability for the client to use/implement your ideas. You will present your work according to the deadlines determined by your client.
3. **PR Dept. Project** (Objective #1, Objective #2, Objective #3, Objective #4, Objective #5, Objective #6, Objective #7, Objective #8, Objective #9). Dr. Prestien and I have been trying to develop the PR department’s online and social media presence for a number of years. Your task this semester is to advise us of the best way to do this and create content for a social media campaign that could be implemented starting in the spring. You will submit your ideas at the end of the semester in a formal campaign proposal.

**Tentative Assignment Point Breakdown:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Points Earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Project</td>
<td>75*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Points may increase depending on client needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR Dept. Project</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Available Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>200</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Because the total number of points may change based on client needs, I will provide an adjusted scale if needed. You can track your progress using the gradebook on D2L.*

Feel free to talk to me any time during the semester if you are concerned about your progress. If you have any questions or concerns about this course or a particular assignment, please contact me. I want you to succeed!
Grading Criteria (adapted from NCTE standards):
Letter Grades
A The work is outstanding. The work exceeds the assignment description, demonstrating creativity, detailed understanding of concepts and principles, and overall excellence.
Work at the A level contains high-quality, organized content. The information delivered is such that the reader/listener feels significantly informed, sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph. Papers/presentations are marked by stylistic finesse: the introduction and title are engaging, the transitions artful, the sentence structures varied, the diction tight, fresh, and highly specific, the tone appropriate to author, audience, and purpose alike. Grammatical errors are virtually nonexistent and the work showcases a high level of professionalism. Presentations are virtually free from verbal fillers. Because of its careful organization and development the A quality work fully addresses the problem/subject at hand with unusual clarity, quality, and creativity.

B The work is very good. Papers/presentations in this range demonstrate work that is above average and approach the quality necessary to earn an A. The work shows comprehension of basic concepts and principles. Thought has obviously gone into the work; it is solid but not outstanding. Work is significantly more than competent, mostly free of mechanical errors. It showcases above average professionalism. Its specific points are appropriately arranged, well-developed, and unified around a clear organizing principle which is apparent. Transitions are generally smooth, the sentence structures pleasingly varied. The presenter’s diction is concise and accurate. Presentations may contain some verbal fillers that could be eliminated with more preparation, etc. On the whole, the B work thoroughly addresses the problem/subject at hand but could benefit from a bit more clarity and/or creativity.

C The work is judged to be “average.” It demonstrates enough competency and accomplishment to meet the requirements of the assignment. The work shows some development of a range of knowledge acquired through using thinking skills and abilities. It is generally competent, meeting the assignment guidelines, despite mechanical errors. It does have reasonable organization and development. The information it delivers, however, is thin and commonplace; the ideas expressed are vague which prompt the reader/listener to be confused and/or want to ask various questions. Stylistically, the C paper has additional shortcomings as well: such as lack of originality, rough transitions between ideas, and choppy or monotonous sentence structure/grammar. The presenter’s diction is occasionally marred by unconscious repetition, redundancy, and imprecision. Presentations suffer from frequent verbal fillers. While it gets the job done, the C assignment lacks imagination and intellectual rigor, and hence does not fully address the problem/subject.

D The work is poor. Papers/presentations earning a D do not meet the expectations for the assignment and often lack professionalism, completeness, and critical thought. This work exhibits serious misreading or misunderstandings of concepts or principles. The treatment and development of the subject/problem are only rudimentary. While organization is present, it is neither clear nor effective. Papers/presentations are frequently awkward, ambiguous, and marred by serious grammatical errors. For written assignments, evidence of careful proofreading is scant, perhaps nonexistent. Presentations are sloppily developed and lack professionalism. The work often gives the impression of having been conceived in haste.

F The work is unacceptable. It does not follow the assignment guidelines and/or has major issues regarding professionalism, completeness, and critical thought. At this level, terms/principles are used incorrectly and reflect major misunderstandings of major concepts or principles. Its treatment of the subject/problem is superficial; it lacks discernible organization. Grammar and punctuation errors are frequent. The ideas, organization, and style fall far below what is acceptable at the college or professional level. Presentations earning an F are unprofessional and require serious revision.