Strategic Sports Communication
COM 320
Fall 2018

Section 1 - Professor/Class Information

Keith Corso, Ph.D.

Course Number & Section: COM 320 01
Term: Fall 2018
Location: OM 211
Class Days: TR
Class Time: 9:20-10:50

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Section 2 - Course Description

This course is primarily designed to address certain media communication skills and information that pertains to those in the Sports Management major or minor. However, the contents of this course will also be valuable to others as well especially those in jobs where interaction with media will be key.

This course has a primary focus on media and how sports managers can utilize and cultivate relationships with media and the audiences they reach through media.

Section 3 - Course Outcomes

At the end of the course students will be able to:

1) Demonstrate an understanding of the basic skills necessary to effectively carry out day-to-day responsibilities in sports communications and sports information professions

(2) Demonstrate ability to generate content, including effective writing, from a sports perspective
(3) Demonstrate ability to effectively integrate communications strategies with a sports organization’s goals

(4) Distinguish between sports communication perspectives and sports journalism

(5) Distinguish in and among sports communication operations, issues and challenges in professional, intercollegiate and Olympic sports

(6) Demonstrate understanding and skill strategies in handling negative publicity and communications crises in sports organizations

(7) Demonstrate skill for assisting athletes, coaches, sports executives and owners to effectively handle media interviews

(8) Demonstrate ability to manage use of social media by the organization, staff members and athletes

Section 4 - Assignments

Twitter Sports Coverage (10%). We will set up a class Twitter account. The purpose of which will be to bring exposure to Westminster sports teams and their activity during the fall semester. This will include more than just Football. Members of this class will be dispatched to soccer matches, cross country meets, practices, kickoff of the basketball season practices...whatever we can think of. We will get photos and raw video and post these to the Twitter account. We will work to set up an assignment calendar for this activity. Students will need to compile their activity by taking screen shots of their tweets (off the desktop computer, not phone) and placing them in a file to document their activity.

Player Profile(s) (20%). Our goal here is to try to generate athlete profiles that might appear in an official media guide. These profile give background of the athletes and some of their notable accomplishments on the field. We will look at examples of professional profiles to set the criteria for what makes these profiles really stand out.

Press Releases (25%). For this assignment you will need to write three press releases during the semester. Here is what you will need to write (the assignment times will be announced.

1) A pre-game or pre-match press release that highlights what will be coming up
2) A post-game release. You’ll get a hold of the stats, attend the match or game, and within an hour after it completes, submit a press release about the game or match.
3) Retirement press release. In this scenario you put yourself in the position of writing a press release for a current professional athlete as if they were about to retire.
Social Media Research Project (20%). In this project we read a journal article that spells out how sports organizations (namely teams) can generate engagement on their social media accounts. We then conduct a content analysis of professional sports teams to see how well they are doing. Then we apply what we learned to the evaluation of a minor league sports franchise. This assignment can be conducted in pairs or individually. The specifics of the assignment stay the same no matter how many people are working on it.

Community Responsibility Plan (25%). Corporate responsibility to their local communities is essential for sports organizations to build a positive image in the community. One can also argue that this is just the right thing to do. Groups of students will work together to propose a community responsibility plan. These plans will be presented toward the end of the semester.

Final Grade Calculation
At the end of the semester when all of the points are totaled an average number of points is calculated. That average number, or percentage, is converted into a letter grade as detailed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-76</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-66</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89.5-89.99</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-73</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-63</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89.49</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or below</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final grades are not necessarily rounded up. Final determination is made by the course instructor.

Section 5 - Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this class. Materials that you will need will be provided to you on D2L (this could be video and reading materials).

Section 6 - Course Policies

ATTENDANCE
Attendance and polices regarding it are often sticking points for college classes. Being in class is important for a number of reasons.

- Not all material is covered in course readings and the time in class provides this additional material
- Assignments are discussed in detail in class and this information is essential to succeeding on assignments and in the class.
• This is an opportunity to have questions answered and get some help on understanding content and often another student’s questions can help you.
• Developing attendance at your college level classes develops the habits of attendance that your eventual job will require.

The policy in this class is simple. You are required to be here. I do understand that at times you can’t make it due to an illness or something similar. Just like an actual job allows a few days for sickness or other personal reasons, I build in some of these to this class. Here is the way it works.

You are allowed two (2) unexcused absences for this class the entire semester. The following are examples of UNEXCUSED ABSENCES.
• You are sick and can’t make it to your class (just remember that even if you go to the health center and they give a slip, it’s NOT EXCUSED).
• You don’t feel like going to class.
• You made arrangements for a doctor’s appointment at home for the class time (please schedule Dr. appointments around classes)
• You make arrangements to go home for a break and need to leave early.
• You are in a friend’s wedding and need to get home for the rehearsal.
• Your family schedules a vacation during classes (yes this has happened).

These are just a few that have come up in the past. If you aren’t sure if something is excused or not, ask.

After the two (2) excuses absences, the final grade in the class is reduced one step for EACH unexcused absence. For example, you have six unexcused absences for the semester. Three are freebies which leaves three over the limit. Your final grade in the class was a B+ but you lose one step in grade for each of the three, the final grade becomes a C+.

The EXCEPTION to the policy would be what I call college RELEASE TIME. This means you are missing class because of a scheduled college activity such as travel for a college athletic event or a field trip for another class. In these cases, you are excused.

If you miss class? Remember the following:
• Whatever assignments (big or small) that were assigned, you are responsible for.
• Check with someone you know you can count on who attended the class. Get any notes, information or assignments from them.
• Never ask if you missed anything important.
• Please don’t expect me to go over material covered in class with you on an individual basis. Time is at a premium and I won’t be able to teach a class twice for an absence.

TECHNOLOGY USE AND CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE
As a social media person, I am very aware at how helpful media is to our daily activities and the manner that it can saturate our lives. Additionally, I believe it is a powerful way to enhance
learning and build the learning community environment. Throughout the course I may encourage use of technology including social media, Google, texting and other platforms of use. However, this belief in the value and support of technology should not be confused with a condoning of inappropriate use.

As a faculty member who wants to ensure the highest level of learning, as well as professional who expects you to interact at a professional level, it is necessary to spell out certain behaviors that are not appropriate within the classroom (or really, any setting designed to have strategic face-to-face community and interaction such as business meetings, interviews, office settings, etc.).

**CELL PHONE USAGE**
Simply put, cell phones are not allowed to be used or even out once class begins. Once class starts, silence or power down your phone and then stow it away in a book bag or back pack. Students who are viewed using a phone or other device will **be counted as absent for the class.** You may also be reproved during class time. So why this draconian policy?

Simply put, unless we are engaging in a classroom activity that requires a phone or similar technology, these devices are a distraction to you, others, and me. Use of these devices during class is not allowed. A classroom is in many ways a preparation for a career and job and in these cases using a phone while in a meeting or other similar activity is rude and disrespectful.

**LAPTOP OR TABLET USAGE FOR NOTE TAKING**
These devices ARE NOT allowed for note taking in this class. A recent series of three studies were conducted to see if students did better with class material if they used a laptop for note taking or use and old fashioned pen and paper. The studies showed that students did better with retention and comprehension when they were NOT using a laptop or tablet. Unless you need to use one of these devices because of a disability, then you are not to have one out during class. Bring paper and pen/pencil.

If you would like to read more about the power of handwriting for notetaking and writing in general, please read the following article.  

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**Section 7 - Course Communication**

**EMAIL**
I try to let you know everything you need to know while we are in class. However, sometimes people need reminders and I like to have some things in writing. Any more long-form information I want to transmit outside of class will come in the form of an email. I only use the
Westminster email address on file so don’t ask me to send to another email address. Get in the habit of checking your Westminster email on a daily basis at a minimum. This is important.

**TEXT MESSAGING**

If I have a shorter, text-length piece of information for you I use a service called Remind.com. This allows me to send information to the entire class using an app and it saves my phone from having to store all your phone numbers. It’s a great and reliable service which I have used for a few years now with great results. You will be given the information that you need to sign up on the first day of class.

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**Section 8 - Academic Integrity Statement**

The Westminster College Student Handbook states:

> Central to the purpose and pursuit of any academic community is academic integrity. All members of the Westminster Community, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators, are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity, in keeping with the philosophy and mission of the College.

The most flagrant violation of academic integrity is cheating on an exam or a quiz. Students caught participating in such an activity (either for their own or for another's benefit) will receive a course grade of "F," with no opportunity for the student to receive a "W" or "WF."

**Other forms of scholastic dishonesty** will be dealt with in a like manner. These may include (but are not limited to):

A. Copying/turning in another's work (e.g., a fellow student's, a past student’s, or work from the internet) as one's own.

B. Lending of one's work to another so that he/she may turn it in as his/her own.

C. Stealing class materials from students, the professor, or from the library.

D. Inhibiting another student from using library materials or other resources necessary for the class.

See the complete Student Handbook for more details and specifics about academic integrity.

[https://www.westminster.edu/campus/services/handbook.cfm](https://www.westminster.edu/campus/services/handbook.cfm)
Section 9 - Disability Statement

Westminster College is committed to providing services and support for students with physical, psychological, visual, hearing or learning disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. All students who seek accommodations for diagnosed disabilities should contact the director of the Office of Disability Resources for further information. Signed comprehensive medical documentation and/or test evaluations that indicate the nature of the disability and appropriate professional recommendations is required. Guidelines for the documentation can be obtained from the Office of Disability Resources. The disability resources director will review the documentation, determine if the student is eligible for services, and then coordinate the accommodations, auxiliary aids, academic support, and/or referrals as deemed appropriate, necessary, and within the current resources of the College. You can contact the Office of Disability Resources by calling 724-946-7192.

For information regarding civil rights or grievance procedures, contact the Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students at 724-946-7110

The brochure for disability services can be accessed by using the link below.

http://www.westminster.edu/campus/services/pdf/disabilities.pdf

Section 10 – Tentative Schedule

Coming Soon