PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Dr. Sweetser, APR+M
Office: PSFA 337-A, phone 619-594-6714
Office hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 3-4 p.m., or by appointment
Email: ksweetser@sdsu.edu
Class: Tuesdays, 4-6:40 p.m. in HH-150

Prerequisite: JMS 481 and JMS 581 with grades of C or better.

The syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the professor may be necessary. Class lectures are the property of the professor.

> COURSE DESCRIPTION
Cases in public relations management. Theory and practice of issues management, integration of the public relations function in strategic management in a variety of corporate, governmental, nonprofit, social and cultural organizations. (Formerly numbered Communication 585.)

> TEXTS
Required:

Recommended:
- Online resources for class: http://delicious.com/kaye.sweetser/JMS585
- San Diego Union Tribune

> MATERIALS
Each student must have the following (there will be no exceptions!):
- **SDSU computer account** with **SDSU email** access (check it often)
- Use of a **printer**, as all products, unless otherwise noted, are required to be typed, printed and stapled
- **Access to Blackboard** for grades – reconcile all bonus and incorrect grades by April 19

> OVERVIEW
This course is meant to be a capstone for seniors. This is your final check before you graduate and head out into the real world. As such, it is your final chance to put together all that has been learned and prove your worth as a practitioner. The major components of this class include creating case study reports and working as team to fully plan and fully execute a four-step PR plan for the assigned client. This class calls on you to provide strategic counsel, assemble and execute best practices, showcase ethical and legal acts all the while applying PR theory.

> LEARNING OUTCOMES
- √ Assess and distinguish different functions of public relations practice
- √ Apply theories and principles to the analysis of real-life public relations problems
- √ Ability to present analysis results to and counsel a management team
- √ Ability to work with a mock public relations team effectively
- √ Ability to produce a case study report
ACEJMC'S 11 COMPETENCIES

1. Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.

2. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.

3. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.

4. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.

5. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.

6. Think critically, creatively and independently.

7. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

8. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

9. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

10. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.

11. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

> STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at 619-594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

> ACADEMIC HONESTY

All academic work must meet the Standards for Student Conduct explained in 41301 Title 5 California Code of Regulations. Students are responsible to inform themselves about SDSU standards before performing any academic work. Students who break the university's honor code, are found to be cheating or fraudulently use another student's ideas/work will fail this course. Find out more about student responsibilities at SDSU at http://studentaffairs.sdsu.edu/SRR/academics1.html. Students who are uncertain as to what constitutes academic dishonesty should consult the University's Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr).

All work must be original. Any form of plagiarism, including plagiarizing one's self, will not be tolerated.

The best way to avoid academic honesty violations is to maintain integrity when preparing work to be turned in for the class and properly citing ideas and passages when appropriate. The fine for plagiarism in this course is, at minimum, a zero on the assignment at hand. The school or the university may determine the bigger-picture fine for additional repercussions. Just say no.

> ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students should arrive to class on time, prepared and ready to participate or work as required. Similar to the fast-paced professional world, there will be unannounced events in class that result in production. Students who miss class – for whatever reason – forfeit the right to make up graded elements that occur during class time. Students who are planning on missing class do not need to inform the professor.

> LATE WORK OR MAKEUPS

Students are not permitted to make up (either before or after) missed in-class graded assignments, exams or quizzes. All quizzes and exams are held via Blackboard. Online quizzes or exams must be completed and submitted prior to that graded element closing in Blackboard. Blackboard-administered quizzes and exams will be available from 6 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. on the day scheduled. Students arriving when a homework assignment is being turned in will not be able to participate in that graded element. Late assignments or work turned in any place other than when assignments are collected/due are never accepted. Ever. In the real world, late work can mean a missed public relations opportunity.

> GRADE

This class employs multiple forms of evaluation to maximize the learning and evaluation experience while allowing for differences among learning types for students. There is an emphasis on real-world professionalism. All work will be evaluated based on the ability to meet the
assignment objectives, clarity, professionalism, technical skill and quality. The following breakdown explains how the grade is to be computed (note this class uses a weighed formula to compute the grade, not raw points):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graded Item</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>% Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case studies (infographic and video)</td>
<td>March 15, April 12</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational interview experience</td>
<td>By April 19</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR campaign (book and execution)</td>
<td>April 26, May 3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR campaign presentation</td>
<td>April 26, May 3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class contribution and peer evaluation</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes on textbook content</td>
<td>Ongoing weekly</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All grades on assignments, projects and quizzes are based on the following +/- grading scale:

95 - 100% = A  
86 - 90% = B+  
76 - 80% = B   66 - 70% = C+  below 59.9% = F
90 - 94% = A-  
83 - 85% = B   73 - 75% = C   63 - 65% = D
80 - 82% = B-  
70 - 72% = C-  60 - 62% = D-

The professor does not round up (not even 0.1 point). Graded items will not be dropped or weighted. Grades are based on the final product and the student's ability to meet the requirements set by the professor.

Each product is graded against the same criteria and the student's ability to show mastery of the objective. All graded materials must meet specific standards for professionalism and quality. Effort does not equal an “A.” Only those who show mastery of the graded material will earn such a grade for that item. No one is given grades; one earns the grade based on the quality of the product.

Students are to keep track of their own grades and progress in the course. Monitor Blackboard to compute your grade.

Any student wishing to dispute a grade must have the graded material when pleading the case. Students have the right to dispute a grade within one week of the material being returned; after one week all grades are final.

The deadline to reconcile grades in Blackboard grades is April 28. Adjustments will not be made after this date so keep on top of your grade (i.e., monitor frequently).

Grades will not be discussed via email or the telephone. If a student has a question about a grade and would like to discuss it, then the student must meet with the professor in person. This policy protects the student.

> **GRADED PRODUCTS**

All out-of-class work must be typed and printed, unless otherwise specified. Use Times New Roman font in size 12, 1-inch margins and double-space. Staple papers longer than one page. All work must employ AP Style, proper grammar and punctuation. Failure to follow these directions enacts the 2:2:2:2 rubric deduction. Unless otherwise specified, work is due the first 10 minutes of class and must be turned in during class.

**RUBRIC**: All written assignments are graded according to a grading rubric for technical skill, in addition to the style and content considerations. Students can rely on the following rubric throughout the semester:

- AP Style error – five points each time
- Incorrect grammar – five points each time
- Misspelled name – 10 points each time
- Fact error – 10 points each time
- Misspelled word – five points each time
- Failure to follow directions – 15 points for assignment

**CASE STUDY**: Students must work in small groups (no more than five students) to create two current (within past 12 months) case studies. The case studies will apply public relations theory, related history of events and best practices. One case study is presented via YouTube video and the other as an infographic. An assignment handout will be distributed with more information on this graded element. Teams members receive same grade. Peer evaluation will be solicited.

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CLIENT**: Each student will be assigned to a client team. The team will work together to create a full strategic PR plan. Students are expected to write the full four-step PR plan focusing on the RPIE model and work with the client to provide strategic guidance. As a group, students will write a problem statement, set goals and objectives and write messaging for target audiences and implement the client’s major event as a key tactic of the plan. Components of the plan will include: situation analysis identifying internal
and external factors (use secondary and primary research), current media environment regarding situation at hand, identify target audience, message themes and talking points, response to query question answer sets, overall strategy to be informed by theory, specific tactics (including media relations) and a complete measurement of the success of the plan. Students must be prepared to verbally present their plan to the client using an extemporaneous speaking style. Students will log their time working on this project to simulate agency life. Peer evaluation will be solicited.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE: Each student is expected to conduct at least one informational interview and follow-up job shadow experience during the semester. Students may not conduct/job shadow within an organization they currently or previously worked. Students may propose their own practitioner and make the arrangements, or request assistance in finding a practitioner from the professor. If the latter is chosen, students must request help in finding a practitioner no later than Feb. 9. After the information interview and job shadow experience, the student must write a thank you note to the main practitioner and any other person with which he or she worked. Students must write a two-page paper to describe their experience (heavily using the language of public relations in describing it), any theory that was touched on and what was learned overall. All informational interview experiences (work center and practitioner) must be approved by the professor in advance in order to be eligible. Students are warned to manage the timing of this assignment closely in order to avoid a potential issue in not having an interview and job shadow experience conducted in time.

QUIZZES: Every week through March 22 a quiz will be administered via Blackboard. The quiz covers that week’s readings. Quizzes are to be individual efforts. Late quizzes submitted after the quiz closes (11:59 p.m. on the day administered) will not be accepted. Quiz reminders may not occur during class; students must check Blackboard every Tuesday to see if there is a quiz.

> COURSE POLICIES

BE PRESENT. Students are required to attend class on any presentation or guest lecture days. Students arriving late on presentation/guest lecture days, regardless of whether presenting, will not be able to join class. Entering class during a presentation is completely unacceptable and will greatly deplete participation points.

BE NICE. Disrespect in any form in the classroom is not permitted. If a student is deemed disrespectful by the professor, then the student may be asked to leave. Disrespect is conveyed in many forms, both face to face and online. None will be tolerated. Respect your class members’ privacy and do not post comments, photos or other information online without permission.

COMMUNICATE PROFESSIONALLY. As this is a respected legacy school in public relations, the ability to communicate in a professional and courteous manner via email is important. Students are expected to display their top-level PR communication skills each time they send an email to the professor. Students who fail to use a professional greeting, sign one’s full name or use proper AP Style in an email will have one point deducted from the final (overall grade) for the course for each infraction. Ask the professor for examples of proper and improper email communication so as to not make this mistake.

KNOW WHEN YOU NEED HELP. The college experience is stressful. If a student feels the need for professional services to assist in coping with stress related to school or other life’s events, please contact the University’s Counseling and Psychological Services (www.sa.sdsu.edu/cps/index.html). The center is located at Room 4401 in the Calpulli Center, open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Students who need assistance beyond their business hours should call the San Diego Access and Crisis 24-hour Hotline at 1-800-479-3339. Other campus emergency services include the Student Health Services Nurse Advisory Line at 1-888-594-5281 or University Police at 619-594-1991.

INCOMPLETES UNAVAILABLE. Incompletes will rarely, if ever, be given for this class. Only students who are already operating at a satisfactory level prior to a medical or other serious circumstance beyond one’s control will even be considered for an incomplete. Incompletes are not a way to skirt responsibility and work around lost opportunities in major course assignments.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION. Assuming you have been an active part of the class and visited the professor during office hours, the professor is willing to consider signing a positive letter of recommendation about you. Any requests for letters of recommendation should be made at least two weeks prior to the letter deadline. Students requesting the letter of recommendation should write the text of the letter as if the professor were not going to add anything to it (though 99 percent of the time she will!) and submit that as a final suggested draft to the professor. As a professional courtesy, students should discuss the request to write a letter of recommendation in person, preferably during office hours. The professor reserves the right to refuse to write a letter or will advise students of potentially adverse material that would be discussed in such a letter prior to agreeing to submit such a letter.

GRADE THE PROFESSOR. The professor worked hard on this syllabus and thinks it is perfect. It probably isn't. Being perfect is really important to her. If a student finds an AP Style error in this document, the student should kindly notify the professor immediately. The first student to report that specific error will be rewarded with one bonus point on top of the student’s final grade. These syllabus error bonus
points are awarded one point per error on a first-reported basis. Multiple bonus points can be earned by a single student if that student is able to find multiple errors and report them before others discover them. Errors must be reported by the deadline to reconcile Blackboard and students are limited to 10 bonus syllabus-error bonus points. This bonus opportunity is only extended to the syllabus, not other handouts in the semester.
## TENTATIVE READING ASSIGNMENTS AND SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change at professor’s discretion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Items Due and Class Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 26</td>
<td>Intro to the course</td>
<td>chapters 1-2</td>
<td>Complete readings, watch video before class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Client meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students absent first day of class will be dropped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Task: Issue statement and goals (SP4C), (after client meeting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 2</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td>chapter 4, 7</td>
<td>Research proposal with instruments (SP4C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>due by Feb. 4 via email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Due: Signed travel waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Due: Connect with Dr. Sweetser on LinkedIn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 9</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td>chapter 9</td>
<td>Situation analysis draft due to peer group (SP4C): background, history, competitors,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SWOT, problem statement, objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 16</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td>chapter 3</td>
<td>Due: edited situation analysis to Sweetser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Messaging draft due (SP4C) to peer group (SP4C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Task: complete research collection, analysis (SP4C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 23</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td>chapter 5</td>
<td>Due: edited messaging (SP4C) to Sweetser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Formative research report due to peer group (SP4C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Task: complete tactics (SP4C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td>chapter 6</td>
<td>Due: edited research reports (SP4C) to Sweetser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 8</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td>chapter 8</td>
<td>Begin evaluation (SP4C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>Case study presentations</td>
<td>chapter 10</td>
<td>Due: infographic case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 22</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Draft book due (SP4C) to peer group by March 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 29</td>
<td>Spring break, no class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 5</td>
<td>Staff meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Due: draft book to Sweetser (printed, formatted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12</td>
<td>Case study presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Due: video case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 19</td>
<td>Practice presentation (SP4C)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Informational interview papers due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>Final presentation (SP4C) for</td>
<td></td>
<td>Final PDF of SRS book due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SRS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deadline to take JMS program assessment (counts as an assignment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 3</td>
<td>Final presentation (SP4C) for</td>
<td></td>
<td>Final PDF of CTL book due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CTL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>