

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

**REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF A COURSE IN THE
GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM:
EDUCATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY**

DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL: ENGLISH COLLEGE: ARTS AND SCIENCES
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1. Subject Code, Number, and Title: JRNL 408 Case Studies in Public Relations

2. Credit Hours 3

3. Course Description

Solving problems and managing controversy in the day-to-day pursuit of public relations; legal considerations; crisis communication; professionalism and public responsibility in public relations.

4. This course is (check one):

- an existing course with no revisions (need not go through the input system)
 an existing course with revisions (attach this form to Request for Course Revision form)
 a new course (attach this form to Request for New Course form)

5. Check the General Education requirement this course is intended to meet. If the course is to be proposed for more than one requirement, submit a separate form for each one.

- Effective Communication**
 Quantitative Reasoning (*QR designation*)
 Writing Intensive (*WI designation*)
 Perspectives on a Diverse World
 Global Awareness
 U.S. Diversity
 Knowledge of the Disciplines
 Arts Humanities
 Science Social Science
 Learning Beyond the Classroom (*LBC designation*)

- Self and Well Being
- Community Service, Citizenship, and Leadership
- Cultural and Academic Activities and Events
- Career and Professional Development
- International and Multicultural Experience
- Undergraduate Research

6. Rationale. Provide a concise, clear, jargon-free explanation of why this is a General Education course and how it fits into this specific area of the program. (The rationale should explain to students why they are taking the course. It should address both why it is part of the General Education program and why it fits into the particular category.) This rationale should appear on the general course syllabus provided here and should be included in specific course syllabi given to students.

JRNL 408 – Case Studies in Public Relations — warrants a General Education Writing Intensive designation because it helps students explore and understand the impact effective public relations communication has on businesses, organizations and peoples globally. This “capstone” course in the interdisciplinary program in Public Relations requires students to conduct in-depth studies of significant cases in the public and private sectors of public relations. Students then use this extensive, case-specific research to illustrate, through written texts and oral presentations, the role of public relations in management philosophies, public policy formation and successful promotional campaigns. Emphasis is placed on both written and oral presentation skills and the ability to create appropriate strategies and tactics, and to design and execute programs that will solve the immediate public relations challenges raised by the case study research while contributing to the long-time advancement of the organization studied.

Throughout the course of the semester, students must also demonstrate their understanding of public relations management by selecting and working with a local non-profit/human services agency. This major academic service-learning project requires students to research and help the agency identify a public relations problem/opportunity and create written materials for a public relations program to address it. In doing so, students study and practice problem-solving and issues management, study and research real-life public relations situations, and develop agility in applying effective public relations theories, principles and practices.

7. Clearly and concisely explain how this course meets each of the General Education outcomes for the requirement checked in number five (all outcomes should be addressed). To do this, (a) list the General Education outcomes for the requirement and explain how the course meets each outcome; and (b) explain, in general terms, the method(s) of evaluation to be used in the course and how these methods assess the degree to which students have met the General Education outcomes for this requirement.

Develop and employ successful, flexible writing and reading strategies that support sustained inquiry in a discipline.

Students enrolled in JRNL 408 research current, as well as classic, case studies of businesses and organizations in all industries throughout the semester. This course requirement ensures students regularly read major daily newspapers, respected national magazines, professional and trade publications, and academic journals.

Students also conduct research, mostly qualitative, in a number of ways. They most frequently engage in interviews with managers, employees, and clients; conduct literature searches, conduct communication audits, create and administer questionnaires; conduct best-practice searches, etc.

Students use the information gained to write case studies for their classmates to study. Students also use the information gained to assist their academic service-learning partners by writing pieces such as newsletters, news releases, media lists, program proposals and much more. The writing students create and the strategies they employ is dependent upon the needs of clients. For example, if a student is planning a special event, he/she is guided to determine what pieces will be most effective in the promotional efforts by conducting the research listed above. After doing so, students then find the "news" in the event before crafting a news release, for example, or a backgrounder, or a flyer, or a poster, or a media advisory, etc. The drafting of many of these pieces is taught in an earlier course. However, the instructor works closely with students to review and/or teach the writing of many pieces as needed.

Use writing strategies that achieve the purpose(s) for writing and address the expectations of audience(s) within a disciplinary context.

Throughout the semester, students engage in thorough research, peer editing and collaborative writing. Associated Press style guidelines are also stressed throughout the semester, as journalists are often the recipient of public relations writing and have expectations about organization, language and form. Extensive instruction and discussions focus on the four keys to effective writing: audience, tone, style and message.

Formulate research questions and employ strategies for researching and responding to those questions.

Studying business and organizational cases, as well as working with an academic service-learning partner, requires students to formulate research questions and employ strategies for responding to those questions. When studying cases, students must often "Monday morning quarterback" the decisions business leaders make while dealing with a situation – and play the "what if" game to determine if more positive or negative results would have followed alternate decisions. To do this effectively, students often find it necessary to research other companies that had found themselves in a similar situation previously, assess their actions, and compare the results of the two, or three, or four businesses/organizations in question.

Students find it necessary to constantly form research questions and employ communication and marketing strategies while working with an academic service-learning partner. To successfully complete the project, students thoroughly research the organization, the organization's competitors, as well as "best practices" for benchmarking and informational purposes. Various research methods are utilized, including interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and other unobtrusive techniques. After the data has been collected, students must then create a public relations program to address the organization's needs, problems, and/or opportunities.

Use discipline-specific genres to communicate information.

Public relations students use a variety of genres to communicate information. These include the mass media (newspapers, magazines, televisions, radio stations), word of mouth, trade shows, internal/external newsletters, and more. Not all students communicate via all of these genres throughout the semester – only those that are necessary to effectively plan and/or implement the public relations program created for the student's community partner. For example, one student may communicate mainly with reporters because the media may be a crucial part of that student's public relations plan, while another student may communicate more through newsletters, or the Internet, or brochures.

Understand conventions for communicating, disseminating, and interpreting information within a discipline.

Public relations students understand the importance of communicating, disseminating, and interpreting information for their client/employer/partner and evaluating its effectiveness. In the classroom, as well as with their academic service-learning partner, students assess the need for information to be communicated to publics and the best way of delivering that information. If the information is best communicated verbally, students then determine what channels are best: one-on-one interviews, small meetings, or press conferences. If the information needs to be written, then students determine which pieces are to be most effective: news releases, media alerts, backgrounders, Q & A's, newsletters, brochures, flyers, etc. Students are taught that all information communicated to the media – news releases, guest editorials, media alerts, backgrounders, etc. —should be written according to the rules of AP style, as that is commonplace (and expected) in the industry. Students also learn the importance of sharing all information with others internally BEFORE dissemination/communication to determine how the message will be received/interpreted by publics/recipients.

Evaluation

To assess the degree to which students have met the General Education outcomes for this course, fair and effective evaluation of student efforts are measured both internally and externally. Academic service learning partners complete an evaluation of student efforts – as does the professor. As a project requirement, students keep a journal (reflection) as part of the assignment, as well as a portfolio (copies of all work created). To assess the project, the journal, portfolio, community partner evaluation and instructor evaluation are all considered. Students also complete a self-assessment of their work on the project.

Student interviews with a professional in the field are evaluated based upon the quality of questions asked – and number/quality of follow up questions asked when necessary. The writing criteria for all pieces created during the course include the following, but are not limited to the following -- and is evaluated accordingly. Although these criteria may seem somewhat vague, it is important to remember that in public relations, each piece is designed to communicate to a different audience and is written as such.

1. Writing must address a specific opportunity/problem
2. Writing must meet the specific needs of community partner
3. Writing must be focused, purposeful, clear and appropriate for business/professional use/audiences
4. Writing must adhere to the standards and format of medium

More specifically, the following methods will be used to evaluate the above stated outcomes:

Outcome: Develop and employ successful, flexible writing and reading strategies that support sustained inquiry in a discipline.

Evaluation: Analysis of case studies students research and prepare for class mates; analysis of questions students prepare for practicing professional, including the number and quality of base questions and follow-up questions; analysis of whether the students' writing is clear, focused, purposeful, and discipline appropriate; analysis of research students conduct to prepare client proposals for academic service-learning projects.

Outcome: Use writing strategies that achieve the purpose(s) for writing and address the expectations of audience(s) within a disciplinary context.

Evaluation: Analysis of student portfolios by professor, external academic service-learning client and student, analysis of student journals

Approval

Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies and Curriculum

Date