



## **PR 351B: Strategic Public Relations Media and Content**

**4 credit hours**

**Fall 2016 – Thursdays – 12-3:20 p.m.**

**Location:** ANN 413

**Section:** 21201D

syllabus v. 1, updated 8/18/2016

**Instructor:** Daren C. Brabham, Ph.D.

**Office:** ANN 310K

**Office Hours:** Appointments are best. Generally available Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:30-11:30 a.m. Available online.

**Contact Info:** Brabham@usc.edu | 213-740-2007 office | Google Chat: daren.brabham

### **I. Course Description**

In this class, we will examine “controlled media,” those items over which the PR practitioner has control of the final product, the message and the distribution. This course is designed to teach students about the array of public relations tools available to them, with particular emphasis on writing, public speaking and production of communications “collateral.” Students will be exposed to feature writing, brochure development, audience segmentation, newsletter preparation, basic principles of publication design, writing for the ear, making oral presentations, proofreading and brainstorming. Case histories will illuminate the use of these tools and examples of materials will be used extensively throughout the course. This is a lab course; a great deal of hands-on activities such as writing, graphic design and video production will be assigned.

### **II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment**

This course is intended to help students:

- Research, write, and edit professional-quality newsletters, web materials, and video;
- Execute basic design and layout and know when to hire and guide professional designers;
- Organize and manage large-scale deadline-driven projects; and
- Identify and communicate with an array of audiences.

Mastery of course content will be assessed through a variety of activities, including class discussion and interactive/experiential exercises; interaction with guest lecturers; supplemental learning through readings/multimedia presentations beyond the texts; and, most importantly, written/video/web assignments.

### **III. Assignments**

#### **a. Description of Assignments**

This course is divided into three components: advanced writing, basic graphic design/layout, and video production. Unlike J 351A, the work you will be doing in 351B isn’t focused on media relations or “earned” media; rather, it is focused on “controlled” media—those materials over which we have control of the final production and distribution. These range from traditional company publications—whether printed or online—to websites, Facebook pages, marketing materials, and, of course, videos.

You will be learning Adobe InDesign, the industry standard for desktop publishing, and will need to ensure that you are registered with the Adobe Creative Cloud well in advance of the scheduled design tutorial.

The video component of this course will be shot on your smart phone and edited using advanced software in the Media Center. Again, please ensure that you bring your phone to the video shooting session.

**Final Project: Newsletter/e-Bulletin/Infographic (250 points)**

For your term project, you may choose to produce either a newsletter, an e-bulletin, or TWO infographics. You may elect to prepare your piece in electronic rather than printed format or submit both. The purpose of the project is for you to have the experience of producing bona fide public relations materials that can be powerful additions to your online job portfolios! Regardless of which item you select, you will be expected to:

- Identify a company or an organization to be the subject of your project;
- Research and write all copy;
- Design and produce a mock copy of your chosen project;
- Include at least one *original* graphic (photo, table, graph, chart); and
- Present your project to the class.

You will be producing a publication from scratch. This means you will select a topic and a theme; gather information about the chosen organization or company; write all copy; select graphic elements (photos, charts, logo, graphs, illustrations); create at least one of those graphic elements yourself; determine where all of the copy and graphics will go in the final piece; and, prepare a 3-5 minute presentation in which you discuss the overall project, the challenges you faced, and any recommendations you might have for your classmates.

**Minimum requirements:** 4-page newsletter/bulletin; 400 words of copy minimum (if you choose infographic, you must be prepared to create **two** to achieve the word-count minimum). Your project may be e-only, print-only, or a combo.

There are checkpoints indicated on your syllabus to help you stay on track.

Helpful Hints:

1. Identify your organization and acquire materials early in the semester.
2. Don't wait until the last minute to design/format/produce your project.
3. Don't go to Kinko's or another printer the day before your project is due.
4. If you choose to post your e-version on your personal blog, be prepared to show it on the big screen in class.
5. Don't forget that our writing standards apply: typos or grammatical errors will adversely affect your grade.
6. Plan ahead!

**b. Research and Citations**

On occasion, you may be asked to prepare materials on topics with which you have little knowledge. Many online resources are available to assist you, and thorough secondary research is encouraged. Please note, however, that the largely subjective nature of "wikis" makes them unacceptable resources for this course. Additionally, all public relations writers must learn to create original work, and inappropriate use of existing resources/materials – including failure to provide proper citation, verbatim usage of other materials, presenting existing material as one's original work, lack of proper citation, and/or similar practices – may be construed as an act of plagiarism, and subject to the School's or university's disciplinary policy on acts of academic dishonesty and plagiarism (see below). You may use any acceptable mainstream citation style – in-text parentheticals, footnotes, endnotes, APA, MLA, Chicago, etc. – so long as your style is consistent, you adhere to the rules of a particular style, and all citations are complete. Use of photos, illustrations, etc. from other sources also requires attribution in a caption.

## IV. Grading

### a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points Possible
In-class Assignments, At-home Assignments, and Required Readings	250
Midterm Exam	250
Group Video Project	150
Term Project	250
Class Attendance/Participation	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,000</b>

### b. Grading Scale

Final course grades are calculated as the total of points earned as a percentage of total points possible. Grades follow a typical pattern: A = 93-100%, A- = 90-92%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B- = 80-82%, and so on. Performance below 60% receives a failing grade ("F").

### c. Grading Standards

Please consult the grading guidelines available in the USC Office of Academic Records and Registrar: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/grades/index.html>. Grades are earned, not given, and "A" grades are reserved for truly "excellent" performance. Work that meets the minimum requirements of an assignment or demonstrates a basic command of course concepts will likely earn a "good" grade in the "B" range, give or take with regards to other factors, such as writing quality. Work in the "A" range not only checks all the basic boxes of an assignment and is error-free but also demonstrates deeper, more sophisticated understanding of course concepts; incorporates additional research or perspective beyond what was discussed in class; and/or is somehow provocative or creative or interesting. In other words, to earn top marks in the course, students will need to go above and beyond in some way. Note that a claim of "hard work" or expending considerable time on an assignment is not relevant to how the resulting product will be graded.

A separate rubric has been developed for the *video* project and will be handed out at the time it is assigned.

Detailed descriptions of grading standards for *written* work are as follows:

**"A" projects** have writing near professional quality; one or no mistakes; clearly proofread and edited material. All required elements included (catchy headline, solid lead, varied vocabulary; supporting facts/figures; quotes as required). Excellent organization and flow; original thinking. Showed creativity in packaging/distribution method. High end of scale: publishable today as is.

**"B" projects** have two to five spelling, grammar, or AP Style mistakes. One or more required elements missing or poorly displayed (i.e., boring headline; confusing lead). Shows potential as a good writer. Adhered to inverted pyramid. High end of scale will have at least one extraordinary element such as astonishing lead or little-known facts or pithy quote. Some creativity shown. Publishable with some editing.

**"C" projects** have more than five errors (spelling, grammar, AP style). Poorly edited and/or proofread. May have adhered to inverted pyramid but strayed at beginning or end. Hackneyed elements such as trite headline or uninteresting lead. Little or no facts/figures included. Passive rather than active verbs become the norm. Little or no creativity shown. Publishable with major editing.

**"D" projects** have more than 10 errors (spelling, grammar, AP style). Needs to be completely rewritten. Poorly organized with little or no understanding of journalistic style/standards. Needs to work with writing coach.

**“F” projects** are not rewritable, late, or not turned in.

#### **d. Late Work Policy**

Work is considered late when it is not turned in by the start of class on the day it is due (or by another specific time as stated in the assignment/syllabus). See submission policy below. All late work receives a failing grade right from the start. That is, an assignment that is late receives an automatic 40% deduction. If the assignment is not turned in within 24 hours of the due date and time, the grade drops another 20% from the original points possible. After another 24 hours, it drops another 20%. Assignments will not be accepted after 48 hours of being late. Some assignments may also be noted as being never accepted late. You are strongly cautioned to allow plenty of time before an assignment is due to account for spotty Internet connections, computer glitches, traffic jams, and other impediments beyond your control. Do not put turning in an assignment off until the last minute. You are also strongly encouraged to save your work frequently and to periodically back up your files onto flash drives or remote backup servers. If you manage your time well, you should have enough of a cushion to account for pretty much all possible hindrances. For all other major impediments known in advance of a due date, such as family emergencies, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor to discuss possible deadline adjustments (note: instructor reserves the right not to honor a deadline extension request or to see documentation of emergency).

#### **V. Assignment Submission Policy**

This is a paperless course. All of your work will be turned in electronically via Blackboard unless otherwise stated on a specific assignment.

#### **VI. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

There is no book to purchase for this class. All materials required for the course can be found as digital files or links to websites organized on the course Blackboard site.

Students should already own a recent **AP Stylebook** from prerequisite course work. Please bring this with you to every class.

Students are **required** to get access to the Adobe Creative Cloud (specifically InDesign), available through USC Annenberg, well in advance of needing it for in-class or at-home assignments that draw upon these tools. Students are furthermore **strongly encouraged** to engage in extracurricular training on InDesign and other tools through sites like Lynda.com (free to USC students) and by engaging the Digital Lounge in ANN.

#### **VII. Laptop Policy**

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the [Annenberg Virtual Commons](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website.

#### **VIII. Policies and Procedures**

##### **a. Internships**

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the

instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism class.

### **b. A Respectful Class Environment**

You are expected to be well-prepared for each class meeting, provide value to the class discussion, and remain courteous and sensitive to the needs and opinions of your classmates. Please be on time, be awake, put phones away, and stay on task on your computer. Interactions with guest speakers should always be professional and enthusiastic.

When contributing to a discussion, make statements that are respectful to other students in the class and different groups of people. Be careful not to personalize your arguments and be aware that not all of your classmates are as comfortable as you may be in presenting ideas in a classroom setting. Different viewpoints are highly encouraged in class discussion – play devil’s advocate if you want. Do not avoid conflict merely because you feel you will be in the minority in presenting your opinion. You are expected to avoid the use of sexist, racist, homophobic, and other intolerant language in your speech and writing. This is more than an issue of so-called political correctness; this is an issue of professionalism and of excellence in communication, knowing how to be precise and fair and accurate in expression, and understanding that there are diverse stakeholders in any conversation.

### **c. Official Class Communication**

As important announcements will be made via Blackboard and Blackboard’s email communication tool, it is important that you check Blackboard and emails sent from Blackboard (which may be forwarded to an email account of your choosing) regularly. Get in the habit of checking your USC email account as that will be utilized in Blackboard.

## **IX. Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

### **a. Academic Conduct**

#### *Plagiarism*

Presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words - is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/b/11-00-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

#### *USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity*

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

## **b. Support Systems**

### *Equity and Diversity*

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/departments/departments-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community - such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member - can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <https://sarc.usc.edu/> describes reporting options and other resources. The instructor for this course has received specialized training in working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning students and should be considered a “Safe Zone” if you need to talk confidentially about these or other topics.

### *Support with Scholarly Writing*

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

### *The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

[http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. Any students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. The office is located in the Student Union room 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776. Please understand that the professor is not qualified or permitted under university policies to provide any disability-related accommodations without authorization from DSP.

### *Stress Management*

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

### *Emergency Information*

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

## **X. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

***Important note to students:*** Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

### **August 25 – Presentation of syllabus; overview of class projects**

The syllabus will be presented along with the course description and expectations. We will explore what “controlled media” means, how and when it is used, and what forms we will be addressing in class. Overview of final term and video projects.

**Homework assignment:** Find an example of an article you consider to be “well written” and post it to the designated discussion forum on Blackboard. Provide ~100 words explaining why you think this piece of writing is particularly good.

### **September 1 – What constitutes “well written?”**

This class will examine the fundamentals of good writing. Is it an exact science? Do we adhere to the strict “inverted pyramid” format you learned in 209 and 351a? Each student will present her/his selected article from the homework assignment and explain why he/she considers it to be well written. From that discussion, we’ll devise the Tenets of Good Writing for this course.

### **September 8 – Continue with good writing principles**

**In-class writing assignment:** Write a resume cover page convincing me why you are the ideal candidate for my entry-level job opening. Assume that the employer (me) has reviewed your resume and is deciding whether or not to interview you. How will you introduce yourself with the written word? How will your cover page stand out from the stack on my desk?

**Homework:** Find and bring to the next class a persuasive article written for Millennials. Then, find another article from any source of controlled media that is targeted to ANY specific audience except college students. Read Chapter 3 on Persuasion in Newsom and Haynes (posted on Blackboard).

### **September 15 – Persuasion and audience**

The written word is very powerful. It can shape *and change* minds. Persuasive writing can initiate action and change. We will first review some of the examples of persuasive writing that you brought to class and discuss what makes them – and other forms of communication – persuasive. ***\*Come to class prepared to define and discuss your final project idea with the instructor.***

The instructor will unveil who would have been hired from last week’s in-class writing assignment based on how well it was written. Now, before you embark on any assignment, you need to understand with whom you are communicating. We’ll explore how the so-called Gen Xers and Millennials differ from Baby Boomers; how age, ethnicity, gender, geography, sexual orientation, and culture factor into messaging; and, which audiences you will likely encounter in the public relations field.

**In-class assignment:** Working in teams, you’ll examine the nuances of various audience groups and prepare and present ideas for how to reach those audiences.

**In-class assignment:** Write a 500-word feature article on a topic to be assigned.

**Homework assignment:** Polish your feature article. Also, bring an example of a newsletter to class. It can be an e-version or printed. Read Chapters 12 (Controlled Media) and 13 (Newsletters) in Newsom and Haynes (posted on Blackboard).

### **September 22 – Controlled media: newsletters, bulletins, brochures**

Due to technological advances in both production and printing, these hallmarks of communication are thriving. What are they? Why do they work? Who reads them? When don’t they work? How is the Internet changing the style and content of newsletters? We will review the newsletters you brought to class and discuss them as a group. We will discuss the fundamentals of newsletter design, layout and distribution.

**In-class writing assignment:** Write a newsletter article. Audience and topic TBD.

### **September 29 – The bits and bytes of writing online**

We will review the differences between writing for the electronic medium that have become such an important piece of the media mix, and traditional writing. Emphasis will be on the content and overall design, with some very basic review of technical challenges and requirements (no HTML coding required!).

***In-class assignment:*** During this fast-paced, round-robin style workshop, you will be provided with scenarios to convert to bits and bytes.

### **October 6 – Midterm**

Midterm exam in class.

### **October 13 – Principles of layout and design; InDesign tutorial**

You can learn to do desktop publishing by following an online tutorial, but first you need to understand the basics of design and layout. We will learn some of the basic elements of design during this hands-on workshop. You'll learn basic desktop publishing commands, how to import photos/images, how to select and use color.

***In-class workshop*** Prepare a document as shown in the tutorial.

***Homework:*** Review at least three corporate-style videos of your choice and note the messaging and production values.

### **October 20 – Video workshop**

First, you'll create your individual storyboard, then you will meet with your team members to establish a unified storyboard. Each team will devise and shoot two videos.

### **October 27 – InDesign practice; infographic tutorial**

Newly added to our repertoire of communication tools, the infographic has become a standard among savvy PR practitioners.

***In-class assignment:*** Create a Halloween-themed infographic.

***Homework:*** Finish and submit Halloween infographic.

### **November 3 – Video production: shooting**

Professor Matthew Leveque will demonstrate video shooting techniques and present an array of equipment and tools for shooting video with your smart phone!

***In-class assignment:*** Working with your teammates, you will travel around campus shooting your group video (based upon your united storyboard). Return to the classroom by 3:00 p.m. to discuss any additional shooting requirements and to share your experiences.

***\* Be prepared to share layout/content details for your final project during this class session.***



### **November 10 – Video production: editing**

This entire class session is devoted to editing your group video. Matthew will return to cover the basics. In small groups, you will visit the Media Center and learn more advanced editing techniques. Time will be allotted should you discover that you need to shoot additional scenes. The final video MUST include at least one scene shot by each team member.

### **November 17 – Advanced editing; work on final project**

This entire class session will be devoted to one of two projects of your choosing: either your own final project or final edits. Media Center time has been allotted should you need it, but you'll need to make an appointment with Matthew in advance.

### **November 24 – Thanksgiving**

No class.

**Due date for team videos will be determined before Thanksgiving depending upon your editing progress.**

**Please send me your Vimeo link via email**

### **December 1 – Presentation of term project**

We will first screen the group videos then you will unveil your final project.

## **XI. About Your Instructor**

Daren C. Brabham, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at USC Annenberg and the founding editor of *Case Studies in Strategic Communication*. His research expertise is in crowdsourcing, an online, distributed problem solving and production model that leverages the collective intelligence of online communities to serve organizational needs. He is the author of the books *Crowdsourcing* (MIT Press, 2013), which has been translated into Chinese and Korean, and *Crowdsourcing in the Public Sector* (Georgetown University Press, 2015). His professional experience includes marketing and development for nonprofits, user experience design for an IT research firm, and crowdsourcing consulting. He has an M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Utah and a B.A. from Trinity University.