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ALEC/ADPR 207: Communicating to Public Audiences—A Peer Review of Teaching Project Inquiry Portfolio

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ALEC/ADPR 207: Communicating to Public Audiences

A Peer Review of Teaching Project Inquiry Portfolio

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2016

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Portfolio Abstract and Objective

A significant amount of research in teaching and learning is conducted exploring large enrollment courses. Often it seems as if we believe that the panacea is smaller class sizes. However, challenges exist in smaller enrollment courses as well. This inquiry portfolio explores an introductory, sophomore level course in strategic communication with an enrollment of 20 students. Despite the smaller number of students in the course, significant challenges exist and over the five spring semesters I've taught the class, one consistent challenge remains – how to bridge the wide range of student ability, knowledge, and experience of students in the course.

The objective of this portfolio was to investigate how to "bridge the gap" of students' abilities in this course, which has appeared as a challenge semester over semester. Essentially, within the confines and parameters that exist, how do I as the course instructor adjust my teaching practices, methods, and materials to improve the experience for all students in the course? What changes, if any, should be made to the course itself, to prerequisites or restrictions on course enrollment, or to other aspects of the course?

Keywords: Strategic communication, public relations, teams, reflection, project-based learning

Introduction to the Course and Course Description

In looking at other inquiry portfolios as examples, I noticed that many previous Advanced PRT Project participants used for their inquiry the same course explored in their benchmark portfolios. I chose instead to explore a different course than the one I used for my benchmark, mainly because of the continued challenges I face in teaching this strategic communication course each spring. In my view, an in-depth exploration of the course and the specific planning and attention that goes into the PRT project could help crystalize the challenges and potential solutions for me, and hopefully lead to some clear next steps and outcomes for permanent changes to the course.

The course I explored in this inquiry portfolio is ALEC/ADPR 207 – Communicating to Public Audiences. The undergraduate bulletin course description is shown in **Figure 1**. For many students, this course is the first exposure to concepts in strategic communication and public relations. It is a foundational course required for students in the Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Communication (AESC) major where students earn a Bachelor of Science degree, and, since it is cross-listed with ADPR, students in the ADPR sequence (in the College of Journalism and Mass Communication – CJMC) are able to take the course as an elective counting toward their Bachelor of Journalism in Advertising and Public Relations. In the AESC major, the course is intended as one of the "contact points" for students in their second year of the program; our curricular goal has been to have at least one course each year in the major where we interact with students in our major. Previously, no such intentionality had been built into the curriculum, so faculty in the program might go without having students in the major in their classes anywhere from three to five semesters, therefore losing some contact and connection with students, which in turn possibly affected student retention.

Despite the role of this course as a foundational component of the AESC program, there are no restrictions on course enrollment. This creates a significant challenge each spring to make sure there are enough seats for AESC students, since UNL uses a priority registration system where students with more credits to register for classes earlier, reducing the amount of available seats in the class for lower division students. A solution that may be seen as potentially "easy" would be to add restrictions on enrollment and limit the course to AESC students and ADPR students. However, the course is consistently taken as a general elective by students in other majors, who often comment in course evaluations that they wish they had known about the course earlier in their programs and that they would have taken it then as it would have helped them do better in other classes. As part of the goal of the AESC program is to grow enrollment, not only in the major but in a newly created (effective fall 2016) minor, and in AESC classes generally, such a restriction may not be a prudent idea.

Figure 1. UNL's Undergraduate Bulletin course description.

As the instructor, I view the class as an opportunity to get students "hooked" on the idea of communicating strategically, on behalf of an organization. While it's not set up as an opportunity to recruit students into the major, the course has potential to be used that way. I genuinely enjoy teaching this course for a number of reasons, the primary of which is that it's a chance to get students engaged and excited about something that they may either have a negative view of or know nothing at all about (the field public relations), and expose them to ideas and concepts related to the focus of the program I'm a faculty member in – agriculture and environmental sciences communication. Students also get an in-depth, project-based learning experience based on a real-world organization, which students in previous semesters have noted as one of the highlights of their time in the course.

A copy of the course syllabus can be found in **Appendix A**.

Course History and Development

This course has history and context that contribute to the challenges I've experienced in teaching it. I've been fortunate to be able to teach the class every spring since I arrived at UNL (in December 2011), and it was the first course I taught in my academic career as an assistant professor. It's possible that because of this last fact I may have a special affinity for the course, but I also see it as a keystone/pillar of the AESC program and preparing students to be professional, effective communicators for agriculture and environmental sciences.

In teaching the course the first time in spring 2012, I essentially used the material handed to me by the previous instructor and tried my best to construct my version of the course using a

semester-long project to engage students and help them make connections between course material and real-world situations. As is likely the case for most new faculty members and instructors, it was a challenge. However, each spring the course has gotten better, with tweaks and adjustments here and there based on course evaluations, student grades, feedback, and my experiences as an instructor. Although I've made changes to the class, there are a few fundamental elements that have remained the same:

- The semester-long Client Project, where students "represent" (though not through actual contact with an organization, due to the wide range of ability, experience, and skills of students in the course, and initially due to my unfamiliarity with the local landscape of potential organizations to work with) an organization and create strategic communications materials for that organization.
- Course content focused on the fundamental concepts in strategic communication and public relations, including:
  o A history of public relations and its role today in integrated marketing communications
  o Communication theories, including those related to mass communication, social and digital media, and public relations
  o Audience and stakeholder identification
  o Communication tactics, such as collateral materials, news releases, organization analyses, fact sheets, etc.

A layer of complexity appears when considering the course's cross-listing with Advertising/Public Relations in CJMC. While the course is fundamental to the AESC major, it's role as an ADPR elective means that students in that major looking for additional courses to complete their degrees often choose it to fill out their schedules. These students bring a great deal of diversity in experience and interest to the course and, in my view as the instructor, are a great asset to the classroom discussion and experience for all students. The challenge arises when considering the foundational and elective courses required of ADPR students (some of which, over time, have also been made requirements for AESC students to provide them more depth in ADPR concepts). Currently, foundational courses required for all ADPR students include (as of the 2016-2017 bulletin year):

- ADPR 151 – Introduction to Advertising and Public Relations
- ADPR 221 – Strategic Writing for Advertising and Public Relations
- ADPR 283 – Strategy Development for Advertising and Public Relations

Since 2012, the ADPR sequence has undergone several changes, including the addition and modification of these three main courses. As these courses listed above are administered by the ADPR sequence of the CJMC, and ALEC 207 is administered by the AESC program in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) a challenge (though not insurmountable) exists in aligning the content of ALEC 207 so that it does not overlap or duplicate content unnecessarily.

In addition, and to a degree in response to the changes in the ADPR sequence, changes have been made to the AESC curriculum. All AESC students must take ADPR 151 – Introduction to Advertising and Public Relations. AESC students must choose one of three options in the major.

Option 2 - Strategic Communications - includes an additional ADPR course requirement, ADPR 283 – Strategy and Development for Advertising and Public Relations. Option 2 in the AESC major also requires students to select an additional 9 credits of communication coursework where ADPR courses can count.

Finally, as ALEC 207 has no restrictions on enrollment, each semester there are a handful of students from majors in CASNR and across UNL who enroll in the course. These vary, but frequently include students in agricultural business and agricultural economics majors, agricultural education majors, and majors in the College of Arts & Sciences and the College of Business Administration. Students in these non-AESC, non-ADPR, non-CJMC majors are typically upper division students looking for an elective course. Skills and abilities vary among students, as do quality of writing and interest in the subject – all elements that contribute to student performance in the course.

From this information it is clear that the AESC program and the ADPR sequence are linked, especially through this course. Fortunately, the programs have benefitted from positive relationships and free flow of information, so changes in both curricula are fairly well received by faculty and advisors in each program. Where things become a bit muddy is with helping students to understand and apply the changes and information made year over year, which I suspect will be an ongoing challenge we will face together.

In the five spring semesters that I've taught this course, I have consistently struggled with student comments and course evaluations that, while predominantly positive, include statements indicating student dissatisfaction with the course. Some students feel the material is beneath them and "too basic", while others report covering the same or similar content in 400 level public relations courses in ADPR. I have struggled over the years with grading assignments, especially given that students have varying levels of experience with strategic communication concepts, and experience in college in general. Some students are more advanced and mature, others struggle with basics such as turning assignments in on time and coming to class. Overall, the challenge I've seen is students struggling to connect class material to course assignments – fundamentally, they do not make the connections on their own. Providing effective and helpful feedback on assignments to help students improve has been a challenge – how do I effectively manage my grading time and effort to help students all along the spectrum (very knowledgeable/experienced in communication principles versus not at all) by providing useful comments for improvement and still manage to not spend all of my preparation/work time on this one course? In short, how do I do better with this class with a wide range of abilities?

Today, ALEC 207 has no prerequisites listed and is open to all students at UNL. Given changes in both the ADPR curriculum and the advent of an AESC minor, which includes ALEC 207 as a required course, it seems as if alterations to the course and its prerequisites are in order. Changes such as listing prerequisites and restricting enrollment require a good deal of strategic thought and preparation (not only to prepare documents for curriculum committee approvals, but also in relationship management with our ADPR "sister program" and other programs in

CASNR) and should be made carefully, with a great deal of forethought and an eye to doing what is the best for students.

All of the changes and challenges described above, and several that are not described (otherwise this document would be twice as long), contribute to a kind of "identity crisis" for ALEC 207.

Questions abound:
- Who does the class serve?
- How well does it serve them?
- Who *should* it serve?
- Who is required to take the course?
- Who *should* take the course?
- When in their academic career should students take the course?
- Does the course serve the needs of ADPR students adequately?
- Does the course serve the needs of AESC students adequately?

Objectives of the Portfolio

Given the above, the purpose of this portfolio was to examine some of the questions that have led to ALEC 207's "identity crisis" and make changes that will contribute to improving the course. I say this rather than asserting that the changes detailed in this portfolio will alleviate the challenges or address all (or even most) of them because it's important to recognize that not all can or should be addressed at one time.

My intention with this inquiry investigation was to delve into improving the course experience for all students (learning, outcomes, experience, skill and knowledge building) regardless of their prior knowledge or experience of the topics covered in the course. I aimed to document the changes I made during the spring 2016 semester and gather data to illustrate whether the changes were worthwhile, and decide whether they should be kept and used again. Finally, and ultimately, I wanted to know what future changes or adaptations might be adopted for the course to better meet the needs of students in the AESC program and students in the ADPR sequence in CJMC.

In looking at ways to bridge the gap of knowledge among students ranging from first year (freshman) to "super-seniors" or fifth year/seniors, my first thought was creating teams that worked together all semester might be a way to leverage the experience and knowledge of more senior students to the benefit of more junior students.

Research Question:
Can implementation of semester-long teams help students connect course material and assignments and bridge the wide range of student ability in the class?

Teaching Methods and Materials

I chose to make several significant changes to the course this year, however, it wasn't possible to make changes to course prerequisites, enrollment procedures, or course structure. Changes like these – such as adding lab and/or recitation sections in addition to the lecture portion of the course, restricting enrollment, adding prerequisite courses or majors – all require a significant lead time and approval at several administrative levels. Additionally, making such changes is not a "nimble" adjustment; what if they didn't work or weren't appropriate? So I considered other less cumbersome strategies to address the same end. Instead, I focused my changes on teaching methods and materials – things within my short-term control.

Changes made to the course for spring 2016 included adoption of a new primary textbook, an adjustment to the use of the secondary textbook and creation of a new assignment, a series of planned "edited" teaching strategies, and most importantly, the addition of semester-long project ideation teams for students.

Adoption of a New Primary Textbook – Smith's Public Relations Basics
In previous semesters, I selected course textbooks that were introductory public relations texts. After my first semester of teaching the course and having selected a text that did not include any additional teaching materials (study guides, quiz and test questions, presentation decks, etc.), I pledged to only use textbooks that included those ancillary materials after that term. My view was that texts including additional material would cut down on what I would have to develop on my own for the course. However, while these texts and additional materials were useful to a degree – they included a number of contemporary examples that were useful – there was a significant amount of content in the books that I wasn't able to use in the course, mainly due to time and the course's focus being more general than a typical introduction to public relations course. Students in several of the previous semesters also reported not liking the books, citing cost as part of the reason – why do we have to pay so much for a textbook that we don't use all of? While the books had contemporary examples of PR cases that were sometimes useful, and included what I thought were important additional teaching materials, something about using a standard textbook didn't work well with the course's structure.

So for spring 2016, I chose Ron Smith's *PR Basics* book. A brief description of the book on Amazon notes:

> Public Relations: The Basics is a highly readable introduction to one of the most exciting and fast-paced media industries. Both the practice and profession of public relations are explored and the focus is on those issues which will be most relevant to those new to the field:
> * The four key phases of public relations campaigns: research, strategy, tactics and evaluation.
> * History and evolution of public relations.
> * Basic concepts of the profession: ethics, professionalism and theoretical underpinnings.
> Contemporary international case studies are woven throughout the text ensuring that the book is relevant to a global audience. It also features a glossary and an appendix on first steps towards a career in public relations making this the book the ideal starting point for anyone new to the study of public relations.

In evaluating the book, I found that the elements I considered essential for the course were included, and little "fluff" was present. While the book doesn't include the most contemporary of examples, which can be found in the newest editions of big publishers' textbooks, I found Smith's book to be readable and written in a way that I thought students might appreciate. It included the following topics, which I used in the course (as well as some that are not listed, which weren't used):

- A first look at Public Relations – including lengthy descriptions of what PR is and is not, benefits of PR, publics, how organizations use PR, discussion of role of PR in image and reputation, and ethics and professionalism in PR.
- Public Relations in Society – history of PR (with references to PR as far back as ancient Greece and Rome, which previous texts did not include), modern history of PR and its role in the U.S. between 1950 and the 1990s, and discussion of PR today.
- Types of PR – including strategic counseling, consumer relations, employee relations, community relations, relations with special publics, investor/donor relations, public affairs and government relations, special events and promotion, media relations and crisis communication.
- Chapters 5 – 8 include information about PR planning; the main portions of this section used in class were chapters 5 – Research, and chapter 7 – Tactics (chapter 6 – Strategy and chapter 8 – Evaluation, weren't used due to the advanced nature of the material not being appropriate for a 200-level course).
    - Research – Essentially, I believe understanding how research is conducted can help all students, not just those interested in PR careers; for students interested in any kind of communication career, understanding research is a must.
    - Tactics – Because of the nature of the assignments for the course, tactics are a key element for students to understand and have a chance to create. While I absolutely believe that to be effective, tactics must be a part of a planned PR strategy, the course just doesn't lend itself to the in-depth discussion and understanding (higher level work – beyond the scope of what students can/should be asked to do in a 200 level course).

In essence, Smith's book provided information that supported the course outcomes and assignments, and didn't include information or material students would have to pay for but not use in class.

Changes to Use of the Supercommunicator (secondary) Textbook and Assignment
In spring 2015, I adopted Pietrucha's Supercommunicator book as a secondary text. I came across the book during a shopping trip at a professional conference at Powell's bookstore in Portland, Oregon. I was struck by the conversational tone of the writing and pleased at the way the author deftly demonstrated how important it is for today's communicators to use all the tools available to them to communicate their ideas, focusing on multimedia. When I used the book the first time, I wasn't sure how to integrate it into the course, so I asked students to read sections of the book and write four reflections, hoping that those experiences would spark conversations when given time in class. Unfortunately, while students reported liking the book in course evaluations, little discussion occurred in class. I knew my efforts to incorporate the book into the class needed to be more intentional the next time around.

So, this year, in addition to changing the main textbook, I kept the Supercommunicator book, but made it a dedicated part of the course. Since the Smith book didn't have a plethora of content, and hardly addressed multimedia communications at all, I chose to have the Supercommunicator book be the third "unit" of the course and focus on helping students use the ideas and principles from it to augment and amplify what they learned from the Smith book. I also have begun to believe that in any of my communication courses, students need to have experiences and complete assignments not just communicating their ideas in writing, but also through speaking/oral presentations. While that may seem obvious (it certainly is to me in hindsight), I've often been distracted by my focus on course material and outcomes and have neglected to remember that presenting information to an audience doesn't have to manifest as the dreaded group presentation I experienced in college (and that I hear many students still struggling with today).

But the main reason I changed the assignment for the Supercommunicator book was because I struggled a great deal in 2015 to find ways to present and discuss the material in class and make it interesting and engaging. I'd used the idea of having students present content from readings in previous semesters, but it was a fairly impromptu decision and while it worked, it could have been planned better and produced even better results. I wanted to keep the students in teams. I also wanted to leverage the brainpower of 20 minds that could see examples and provide connections that I might never think of as the "sage on the stage" who presumes to know all. In short, I wanted to see what they would come up with to use as examples – if nothing else, it would certainly be more entertaining (as I learned from the previous experience of having students present course material)! The Supercommunicator Book Discussion assignments can be found in **Appendix B**.

"Edited" Teaching Strategies and Assignments
Since my overall approach for this class was to focus on helping students make connections between course material and assignments, I made a purposive effort to "edit" my teaching for the semester. One of the primary ways I did this was to not only cut down on the amount of material I tried to cover in the semester, but to alter the presentation of lecture material so that it aligned more closely with the course assignments. I went through all of my lecture slides and course notes from previous semesters and charted out the content in a course outline in Microsoft Excel. My goal was to have an activity of some kind, something in addition to lecture where students had a chance to apply the concepts covered that day, in each class period. Previously, I left this kind of demonstration of learning to the work they did on their course assignments, which I learned was not effective.

I also worked diligently to supplement the new Smith textbook with additional information not included in the book. As an example, I've found that students have a hard time understanding and determining what kind of organization they're representing – is it a for profit company, a non-profit trade association, a state or federal government agency, or something else? They struggle with identifying the sector an organization fits into, which in turn can tell them a great deal about what kind of public relations strategy and tactics might work well for their

organization. So this semester, I spent a portion of a lecture discussing different sectors, using information gathered from online sources and other texts. Immediately after this part of the lecture, I asked students to spend five minutes thinking about what sector they believed their organization fit into and why, then split them into their teams and had them explain their thinking to their teammates. The teammates then had an opportunity to ask questions of one another that helped some students readjust their thinking about their organization's sector, and in more than one team, lengthy (positive) conversations ensued. Success!

Another major "edited" teaching strategy I employed was eliminating objective assessment measures from the course. In the past, using quizzes and tests created a number of challenges for me, only one of which was creating assessments that I thought were appropriate reflections of what students should have learned! With the renewed focus on project-based experiential learning, and with the diverse student abilities in the course, I questioned whether objective assessments allowed me to truly measure what students were learning during the semester. With the momentum of other changes, I had the courage to toss out the midterm and final exams and quizzes I used previously. Instead, I replaced the quizzes with class activities and informal reflections, and the midterm and final exams with reflection papers (see **Appendix C** and **Appendix D** for assignment sheets for the Midterm and Final Reflection Papers).

Kolb, a leader in experiential learning theory, noted reflection is a key element of the experiential learning process, which is grounded in one's personal experience. Kolb (1984) stated "knowledge results from the combination of grasping experience and transforming it" through reflection; in the case of this course, through reflective writing (p. 41). For my part, I wanted to know more than what students learned throughout the semester, I wanted to know what they thought about what they learned, and reflective papers gave them an outlet to provide that information.

Semester-long Project Ideation Teams
Without question, the biggest and most significant change to the course was the adoption of semester-long Project Ideation Teams. A large body of research about using teams in higher education classrooms makes it challenging to find strong recommendations to incorporate into one's teaching practices. However, the benefits are clearly documented and easily discovered.

Hansen (2006) noted "obvious benefits accrue in using teams, but so do numerous problems. One of the main issues is that many… faculty often place students in teams with little or no guidance on how teams properly function" (p. 11). In a study by Crawford, Lang, Fin, Dalton, and Fielitz (2011) for the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities the researchers determined that team skills were among the most important soft skills new employees need to be successful in their positions in the eyes of faculty, students themselves, alumni, and potential employers.

Oakley, Felder, Brent and Elhajj (2004) made several recommendations about forming and implementing teams and how to do so effectively for the college classroom. They suggested the following, which I adopted for my class:

- Instructors should form teams rather than allowing students to choose teams.
- Form teams whose members are diverse in ability levels
- Use a "get to know you" assignment at the beginning of class to learn about students
- Set clear guidelines for team functioning and have members formulate a common set of expectations of one another
- Have members agree on a team name

Taking these recommendations into account, I planned the creation, development, and use of teams for the semester. Following are descriptions of the elements incorporated into the class that contributed to the use of teams during the semester.

Student Interest Inventory/Student Introduction Assignment
After my first semester of teaching, I decided there was a lot I didn't know about the students sitting in my classes and began using a "student interest inventory" assignment at the beginning of each term. Adapted a bit depending on the course (sometimes it's a worksheet students complete in class, for other classes I let students determine the method/medium they want to use to provide the information I ask for), I've used the student interest inventory each of the last six semesters and have found it enormously helpful to begin getting to know my students. For ALEC 207, I provide the questions I want students to answer or items I want them to address, and leave the rest up to them (see **Appendix E** for assignment sheet).

During my planning for the course, I established several in-class activities and exercises for students to get to know their teammates, build trust, and start working together successfully. A summary of the activities and the dates they were used in class are listed below.

Class Activities Related to Teamwork
Establishing and Building Teams:
- 1/26 Class brainstorm and discussion about teams – what are elements of good teams? What do good teams do or exhibit?
  - Individual written reflection – what concerns do you have about working in teams?
- 1/28 Team assignments given in class – introduction and get to know you time in class, client organization discussion – describe org, share why you were interested in it, one challenge you see in representing it; create team charters

Class Activities:
- 2/9 Team activity connected to Client Project – use Google News to find out about organizations individually, then moved into teams and discussed which org had the most coverage and why they thought that (submitted both individual and group summaries)
- 2/22 Fact sheet exercise – analyze three examples based on what we've discussed; report in class via discussion

- 2/25 Team time – spend 10 minutes individually considering what kind of news release students might write for their organization/client project; then 15 minutes sharing ideas – get and give feedback
- 3/15 Social media – explore top social media/facebook pages of organizations and determine character, tone, language, purpose (based on handout)
- 4/14 Class discussion and brainstorm – providing useful and effective peer feedback, strategies for revision and final submission of client project

Workdays
- 3/1 Client Project workday in teams for fact sheets (completed worksheet)
- 3/10 Client Project work time – for news releases
- 4/21 Client Project Peer Review Workshop (completed peer review worksheets – see **Appendix F**)
- 4/28 Client Project Open Session – not required, but Dr. Cannon available for help

Team Assignment – Supercommunicator Book Discussion (**Appendix B**)
There were four components to this assignment:
1. **Outline of presentation content from your team's assigned readings -** due at the beginning of the class period prior to your assigned discussion date
2. Team-led class **discussion**
3. Individual **reflection** paper - due one week after your Team leads discussion, by 9:30am on Canvas
4. **Peer evaluation -** also due one week after your Team leads discussion, by 9:30am on Canvas

Elements Remaining Constant
As mentioned previously, several elements of the course remained the same. These included the major course assignment, the Client Project/Portfolio and its assignments (**Appendix G**); use of the secondary textbook – Pietrucha's Supercommunicator; and an overall focus of the course content on strategic communication principles (see course content outline in **Appendix H**) with a philosophy that experiential and project-based learning help students learn more effectively than lecture.

An important note about an additional change to the course – participation in the UNL pilot of Canvas LMS
This spring (2016), ALEC 207 was a part of the campus-wide UNL pilot of the new Learning Management System (LMS) Canvas. Students used Canvas for all online course-related actions and materials, just as they use Blackboard for other classes. No major challenges were encountered related to Canvas, and anecdotally students reported liking Canvas much more than the Blackboard system. However, I believe it's an important note to make that this was an additional change in the course between the two semesters. For me as an instructor, this change was significant in that the system seemed much easier for me to use/manipulate and I

was much more communicative with students via the system than I have been in previous semesters.

Given all of the above changes, two additional questions I had about the course this spring were:
- Will the changes in teaching methods and materials contribute to improved student performance in the course?
- Did students perceive work teams as helpful to their learning in connecting classroom and textbook material to class assignment(s)?

Analysis of Student Learning

General Comments
For me as an instructor, this was the most enjoyable and successful class I've had during my (fairly short) career as a college-level teacher. While I believe there were many elements that contributed to the success this semester that were connected to changes I made in this Advanced PRT process, I also wonder what magical combination of students, content, course changes, and my own outlook combined to make this into a class that I truly enjoyed teaching every single day of the semester.

I initially was discouraged at having to eliminate some content/material from my semester plan to devote more class times to activities rather than content, but it seemed that students appreciated and benefitted from the alterations. As an instructor, it's hard to eliminate content I know is important for them be exposed to, but the down side to cramming in more information seems to have been the expense of students understanding more completely. It seemed as if due to the changes made and focus on activities to help students apply what they learned, students had more time in class where they were able to ask questions of me and of their teammates about how to improve their work.

Student Performance

This section is arranged in three subsections – presentation of quantitative data, qualitative data, and data (both qualitative and quantitative) from the semester-end online questionnaire.

Quantitative Data
While comparisons can't be made semester over semester in a longitudinal manner due to changes in the course, data from students' assignment and course grades can shed light on how students in the spring 2016 semester (who experienced the changes outlined above) performed in the course when compared with the prior year's students (Table 1). The total points possible varied a bit between the two years, so percentage scores are used in the table. However, it's important to note that point values of the assignments listed in the chart remained the same.

Assignment	Average Score – 2015 (out of 25)	# of missing assignments 2015	Average Score – 2016 (out of 25)	# of missing assignments 2016
Organizational Profile	20.14	1	20.48	0
Fact Sheet	19.58	7	22.43	0
News Release	16.95	9	20.33	2
Social Media Analysis	21.35	3	20.19	1
Semester Grade %	85.2% (B+)		95.5% (A)	

Table 1. Comparison of student performance data from 2015 and 2016.

Overall, the information in the table indicates an increase in performance between students in 2015 and 2016, with students in spring 2016 performing better overall. When pulling the data for this table from the online grading system in Canvas LMS, it was interesting to see that appreciably fewer assignments were missed in 2016 than in the previous year, likely contributing in part to the higher semester grades.

In addition, a change in grade range emerged when comparing data from 2015 and 2016, with the range narrowing in 2016 to be from A+ to C+, whereas the range in 2015 was A+ to D+.

Qualitative Data – Student Reflections
I used several opportunities throughout the semester to gather student perceptions, mainly through reflection, both informal (in class exercises) and formal (course assignments). In this section, data from one informal reflection prompt and three formal reflection prompts (course assignments) are included to illustrate students' perceptions of the course and its changes.

One of the most significant changes in the course was the addition of the project ideation teams. My hope for these teams was to leverage the benefits of students working together without the usual stress of students having to rely on their teammates for significant portions of assignment grades. With this in mind, I created the teams and only one team points-related course assignment - the Supercommunicator Book Discussion assignment and presentation. All other uses of the project ideation teams were designed to help students maximize peer learning opportunities. Particularly because of the varied levels of knowledge and experience among students in the class, I saw teams as a way to for strong students to help less-strong students, students with more experience in public relations and communication help students with fewer of those types of experiences, and so forth. As described above, I also knew it was essential to plan time to help the students build their sense of team after announcing their team assignments. Prior to announcing the teams but after having a class discussion/brainstorm about how strong teams function well, I used an informal reflective prompt to explore student concerns about working in teams.

Informal Reflective Prompt – What concerns do you have about working in teams for this course?

Surprisingly to me, students initially responded that they had few concerns about working in teams, but quickly were able to note things that concerned them. Almost uniformly, they expressed their position of having minimal concerns, then added as if "throwing me a bone" a few items they *may* see as potential challenges. It was very interesting reading their responses and several of them worked hard to convey that they weren't really concerned for this class, but these things had been challenges experienced in the past. Student concerns about working in teams included (quotes from students in italics):

- Not wanting to disappoint their teammates "*by not being vulnerable and willing to share*" their thoughts and perceptions
- Not being invested in each other's successes – *"When we aren't working toward the same goal, it may be difficult to receive help and feedback from each other because we want to maximize our time on our own project"*
- Providing feedback that was valuable to their classmates based on not knowing anything about the other organizations
    - *"Maybe one thing I would be a little worried about is not being able to give good feedback to people working with ag organizations because I don't know anything about it. Yet, that might give people good feedback."*
    - *"I'm worried if the team's topics are too diverse it won't be helpful or related to your specific topic"*
    - *"One of my major concerns about working as a member of a team in this class has to do with our differing interests. Since this class is cross-listed ALEC and ADPR, there are a wide range of majors present. I am interested in using an ag-related company for my project. Being placed in a group without much ag background could be difficult."*

Students expressed concerns about fairness in team work or equal distribution of work and effort. Several students mentioned being concerned about getting "stuck" with doing the bulk of the work, referencing past teams having "ruined" their experiences. A number of students mentioned being unsure their teams would be able to find common times to meet and work outside of class due to all the classes, work, and activities they were involved with.

Interestingly, a few students showed a deeper level of self-awareness and expressed concerns about their abilities to be open-minded or work with those with differing opinions:

- *"I have a hard time being open minded to people with opposite opinions."*
- *"Some concerns I have for working in groups in this class are people disagreeing on a topic. I hate when two people feel strongly about something and neither of them will agree to disagree. It happens with every team/group I've been apart [sic] of. I don't like arguments; I stay out of it."*
- One student listed concerns as *"differing opinions, level of dedication, being able to share thoughts, etc."*

Midterm and Final Reflection Papers
Students completed a reflection paper instead of a midterm and final exam. This change, as discussed previously, allowed me not only to see what students learned from the course but also to get a sense of what they thought about what they learned, and even what they thought they learned (very meta). As the papers were responses to specific prompts, I chose to open code the students' responses and look for themes, using material from both reflection papers.

While the midterm reflection paper had a required prompt specifically addressing writing and anxiety, I saw a number of different yet common themes related to students' anxieties about their writing that also played out in their final reflection papers. Interestingly, several of the students, despite acknowledging significant concerns wrote about their awareness that they will improve their skills and abilities with respect to writing over time.

Students expressed anxiety about a number of different writing-related concerns including: previous negative experiences, feelings of insecurity and vulnerability about sharing their work with others, writing the "right" way, writing under deadline and to the directions and specifications of others, and not having enough oversight on their final product once they enter the workforce to ensure that their final products were worthwhile.

Themes.
Students reported having *negative previous experiences* in writing courses or with individuals assessing their work telling them they were not good writers or needed a great deal of improvement.

- *"Towards the end of my internship, I was told that I really wasn't a very good writer and was not given any advice on what I was doing wrong or what I needed to improve, so that did not do very much for my writing self-esteem. This experience provided me with more 'writing anxiety' than I already have from having to learn how to write all over again in different styles. Basically, I do not have much confidence in my writing and hope that I only have to do a minimal amount in my future career. However, I am still going to have to learn fast in my ADPR classes in order to graduate with a solid ability to write."*

Feeling insecure and vulnerable to comments and feedback from instructors and peers:
- *"When my writing is exposed I have this gut feeling of insecurity and vulnerability that causes me to retract from truly sharing my feelings because I become caught up in the details and opinions of the viewer or worry about the potential grammatical errors others may see. I prefer to not share any work that I do, whether that be photography, drawing, videography or anything that requires me to be open with others."*
- *"One other thing I dread is peer review. Sending an assignment into the professor is a totally different ball game then having a classmate read it. I know that what I did was good, but I always get a little anxious when others read it."*

Concerns about writing the "right" way for the situation, using the correct style or words:

- *"I think my biggest fear in relation to writing for my future career is that I'll make a simple mistake or completely miss the target audience. Mistakes hurt your reputation and make you seem less creditable as a writer and missing a target audience makes you look uneducated on your topic. These are my two biggest anxieties: looking uneducated or incompetent to others."*
- *"I struggle with the concept of creative writing. My biggest anxiety with writing is that I am not choosing colorful words or phrasing sentences in a way that will attract readers."*
- *"It is in turn also a very easy tactic to bore an audience with because when there is so much information that is being tried to get across it is all too easy to get carried away and then lose an audience's interest. This is why writing is very difficult for me. I feel that the most complicated task of writing is trying to effectively summarize all the information that is necessary to incorporate while trying to hold an audience's attention at the same time."*

- *"Some of my main anxieties of writing in my future career are following the guidelines of AP style, remaining unbiased, making my language/content easy-to-understand, getting my audience to care and keeping my target audience's attention."*
- *"This is an anxiety for me, I worry that I have not chosen the right words to present my content the best I can. For our purposes specifically, I am concerned that I will not have the right word choice to catch my audience's attention and share the information I need too."*

Others discussed *writing under deadline and to the specifications of others* as concerns:
- *"These anxieties include: deadlines and producing similar works. Writing takes time, which is something that this field does not allow. Producing so many works creates a fear of similarity. Each writer has their own style, but an anxiety is to have written works be monotonous. It may be difficult to continue producing creative and exciting pieces of work."*
- *"I have a hard time feeling like I can translate my thoughts into words on paper unless I am fired up or extremely passionate about something. Assigned writings have always been my enemy unless I'm able to choose a topic that I can 'rant' about."*
- *"One of the hardest parts of writing, in my opinion, is finding a way to keep someone interested long enough to really get the information across."*
- *"My biggest fear about writing in my future career is the thought that I won't reach enough people. Even if someone reads an article, they may not really understand it or care."*
- *"It does make me a little anxious about writing for my career because you have to be able to read your audience and know what they want to hear so that they are interested in what you are writing about or speaking about."*
- *"If there is one area of communication that I am not completely comfortable with yet, it is adapting my writing from a Microsoft Word document to a digital format, like blogs. I am not confident in my ability to make my writing look appealing on a website. However, I am excited to continue enhancing my knowledge and I am happy to be a part*

of a career field that is always adapting and learning. I love helping people understand topics that they are not familiar with and I can't wait to do that every day of my life."

Not having enough oversight on their writing once in professional positions:
- *"One of the largest anxieties I have is that it is not guaranteed that I will have someone there to critique or edit my writing before it is sent out or published."*
- *"The first major anxiety I have when it comes to writing is the fear of rejection. Today, we live in a world where some people may not like what you have to say or will reject what you have to say completely. When it comes to writing, the fear of rejection is one of my bigger fears because I am afraid that no one will like my finished product that I post online or on social media. The fear of rejection is at an all time high when it comes to working for a major corporation because what you post online or on social media is representing the company; so all eyes are on you."*
- *"My only real anxiety when it comes to writing in an internship or a job is because of the fast pace time frame everything is expected to be completed in. Any writing assignments that I have been given in the past years have always had a day's notice at minimum, usually two days to a week's notice. In a real-world environment, I can be expected to receive the assignment and have it done a few minutes or hours later. This doesn't allow me much time to write on it for a while, set it aside, and think about it before I finalize and submit."*

I found a few students who reported *low levels of anxiety related to their writing*:
- *"A huge part of the reason that I came to UNL's College of Journalism and Mass Communications was because of my ability to write. I feel as though I am constantly improving, especially in my ability to be concise, which I am working on at the moment. Apparently, I have a 'way with words' and I am anxious to put my talents to work in the professional world down the road."*
- *"In the past, writing has always been one of my stronger abilities. Writing thesis papers has never scared me and my experience with extemporaneous speech writing in high school has allowed me to express my ideas in an efficient manner."*

On the final reflection paper, several students reported improvements in their writing and communication abilities, as well as their perspectives about writing by the end of the semester:
- *"After reading the Supercommunicator book I now am much more relaxed with what I write. I know that I am already in the game because I am at least trying my hardest. The sections on writing in this book made me less anxious about writing in my future career. I now have the perspective that starting is the most important and you can always edit from there, your first draft is not your last."*
- *"On the other [hand], I believe that this class has made me better at written communications because of the many different types of written assignments we did throughout the semester."*
- *"In general, I have always struggled when it comes to writing and I think reading this has helped me to get a better grasp on writing and what readers are looking for and like in*

writing. My perspective about writing for my major definitely changed a little bit after reading this. Also this class gave me more confidence about speeches as well. It does make me a little anxious about writing for my career because you have to be able to read your audience and know what they want to hear so that they are interested in what you are writing about or speaking about."

- "The peer feedback we did also allowed for me to get a different perspective on what people were looking for in my writing and what I was lacking. It helped me to better my writing and made me less anxious about writing."
- "As a whole, I feel I am less anxious about writing. The biggest takeaway I had was that I need to know my audience. The better I am able to address my audience, the better I'll be at ensuring I'm hitting the relevant information. The root of my anxiety was feeling uninformed or embarrassed about my knowledge level in comparison to the other people reading the material, but the more I know the more confident I'll be in sharing my information."
- "I actually feel more confident about my writing abilities thanks to the book. There were a lot of great tips for being an effective communicator through writing in that book. I was especially worried before about reaching the right people and the right number of people to do some good. Now, I feel like no matter how many people I reach with my writing, I will be putting in the effort."
- "I am comfortable with the different types of writing that is done and I believe I can do that as well as write well. As long as I review it thoroughly and make sure it is error free and answers all the questions that need to be asked, I know I will do great; my anxiety is not nearly as high as it used to be. I know how important writing is and how vital it is to a company and their communication levels so I look forward to being able to write as part of my communication efforts for a company in the future."
- "In the end, I don't have a fear of writing because I know how writing has influenced me and my way of thinking. If my writing can inspire others like it has inspired me, why should I be apprehensive about sharing my thoughts?"

Supercommunicator Book Discussion Reflections
In coding students' reflections about their team presentations, I noticed that they generally chose to write more about things they liked and that went well in their reflections than things that didn't go well or that they disliked.

- "I liked how they use a story to elaborate on the meaning of multimedia and explain all of the different ways we use multimedia in our own lives without realizing it."
- "I like that we are breaking this book down and really getting to the necessary information and are able to hear the different perspectives of everyone in the class."
- "I look forward to discussions like this because I get to discuss the material with other students, I am at the forefront of the ideas and opinions, and I learn more than I ever would have sitting in my seat."
- "I especially like the reading because I got pointed out to me about what it means to be a master."

- *"I just love my group so discussing material with my teammates was a wonderful experience."*
- *"I have really enjoyed this series of peer lead [sic] discussions. I feel that I am learning how to become a better public speaker and communicator."*
- *"I really enjoyed our section and what it was all about. Being able to humanize your communication in writing and in speech is actually harder than you think. You have to push yourself to go out of your box and be someone people relate to in more ways than one."*
- *"I found the material intriguing because I love storytelling and attempt to tell stories in my daily life."*

When it came to their dislikes, almost uniformly they commented on communicating and meeting with their teams to prepare for the presentation as the challenge.

- *"The discussion of material with my team was nonexistent. We did not do a great job at communicating with each other. I reached out to them twice over break, with no response until a few hours before the outline was due. I would have loved to actually have talked with them about the information. Although I understand they were busy over spring break, I was as well and still put effort in."*
- *"I was really looking forward to this project but I found the group work to be disappointing and stressful."*
- *"The only thing I wish we could have changed was to meet before class and go over the presentation together so we looked more polished and prepared instead of just 'winging' it."*
- *"There were times that I felt further practice and communication among the team would have allowed for a smoother presentation."*
- *"It was nice to be able to do all of our work online, but at the same time we lost some conversations that may have made the presentation smoother."*

Semester-End Survey Data (mixed quantitative and qualitative)
To gather additional student perspectives on the course, I chose to use a semester-end survey. The questionnaire contained 23 items, two of which were demographic in nature, two were open-ended, and 17 items were presented using a 5-point Likert scale.

Of the 20 students in the course, 17 responded for a response rate of 85%. My strategy for getting such a high response rate was borrowed from a fellow faculty member: I told students that if I received 80% participation from the class, all students would receive 5 extra credit points at the end of the semester. There were several opportunities throughout the semester for students to earn extra credit, but I know that at the end of the semester when most of those opportunities had passed students were appreciative of this final opportunity. Thankfully, enough students responded so I was able to award the extra credit.

Demographic Information. I was interested in knowing what majors students in the class were pursuing; typically a small handful of students are AESC majors, a majority are CJMC majors

(usually ADPR), and the remaining few are sprinkled CASNR majors and some additional majors in colleges such as Arts & Sciences and Business Administration. This semester, students were predominantly AESC majors (n=8), followed closely by CJMC majors (n=7), and the remaining 2 students indicated they were other CASNR majors taking the course as a general elective.

Additionally, most of the students in the course were sophomores (n=6), followed by an equal number of juniors (n=5) and seniors (n=5), and a single freshman student.

Open-ended Items. I chose to ask two open-ended items at the beginning of the survey to get students' unprompted perceptions and opinions, rather than including these items after close-ended questions, which could have primed students' answers. Simply put, I wanted to know what students' favorite and least favorite aspects of the class were. Comments below are summarized student responses:

My favorite aspect of this class was:
Relevant topics we'll use in the future
No tests, learning through projects
Researching an organization to see how it functions
Working with teams, working with the same team all semester
Group presentations
In-class examples and group activities
The organization and process of the client project – assignments spaced throughout the semester and able to be revised.
Discussion-based nature of the class and group work

My leave favorite aspect of this class was:
Lecture days – they were difficult to concentrate on
Working in the same group all semester, groups in general
Inconsistent grading
The final portfolio – the revision process seemed pointless
All the writing
Repetitive information in the class
Disliked teaching the Supercommunicator lesson to the class

Following these, there were three sets of items on Likert-type scales to gauge perceptions of particular aspects of the class – course grades, assignments, material – and to determine if students saw a connection between course material and course assignments. A note on the statistical information presented below: this information was drawn directly from the online questionnaire system used (Qualtrics). Due to the small number of students in the course (n=20) and responses (n=17), I don't have a great deal of confidence in statistical testing beyond the basic information included below. As you can see, in several of the items there is a

large amount of variance (indicated by the standard deviation scores), and that's something to keep in mind as I revise the course, and this questionnaire, for the future.

Set 1:

Please indicate the level to which you disagree or agree with the following:	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total Responses	Mean
The grades I have earned on class assignments have been reflective of the quality of my work.	1	0	1	2	13	17	4.53
The content covered in class this semester will be useful to me in my future career.	1	0	0	3	13	17	4.59
The content covered in class this semester will be useful to me in other classes I will take in the future.	1	0	0	5	11	17	4.47
The balance between lecture material and class activities was appropriate.	0	0	0	6	11	17	4.65

Statistic	The grades I have earned on class assignments have been reflective of the quality of my work.	The content covered in class this semester will be useful to me in my future career.	The content covered in class this semester will be useful to me in other classes I will take in the future.	The balance between lecture material and class activities was appropriate.
Min Value	1	1	1	4
Max Value	5	5	5	5
Mean	4.53	4.59	4.47	4.65
Variance	1.14	1.01	1.01	0.24
Standard Deviation	1.07	1.00	1.01	0.49
Total Responses	17	17	17	17

Students generally perceived the grades earned in the course were an accurate reflection of the quality of their work, believed the content from the course will be of use to them in the future

whether in other classes or in future jobs, and that the balance between lecture and activities was appropriate.

Set 2.

Please indicate the level to which you disagree or agree with the following statements:	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total Responses	Mean
Client Project assignments helped me demonstrate what I learned from **class lectures.**	0	0	0	7	10	17	4.59
Client Project assignments helped me demonstrate what I learned from the **Smith - Public Relations: The Basics textbook.**	0	1	0	4	12	17	4.59
Client Project assignments helped me demonstrate what I learned through **class activities.**	0	1	1	1	14	17	4.65
Client Project assignments helped me demonstrate what I learned from the **Pietrucha - Supercommunicator textbook.**	0	1	1	7	8	17	4.29

Statistic	Client Project assignments helped me demonstrate what I learned from class lectures.	Client Project assignments helped me demonstrate what I learned from the Smith - Public Relations: The Basics textbook.	Client Project assignments helped me demonstrate what I learned through class activities.	Client Project assignments helped me demonstrate what I learned from the Pietrucha - Supercommunicator textbook.
Min Value	4	2	2	2
Max Value	5	5	5	5
Mean	4.59	4.59	4.65	4.29
Variance	0.26	0.63	0.74	0.72
Standard Deviation	0.51	0.80	0.86	0.85
Total Responses	17	17	17	17

Students generally agreed that client projects assignments helped them demonstrate what they learned from class lectures, the Smith textbook, through class activities, and from the Pietrucha Supercommunicator book.

Set 3. The next set of items was designed to measure student perceptions related to the semester-long Project Ideation Teams. Because this was the most significant change in the course, I wanted to understand whether students saw the teams as helpful to their learning.

Please indicate the level to which you disagree or agree with the following statements:	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total Responses	Mean
Working with my project ideation team **improved my understanding of class lecture material.**	2	1	0	6	8	17	4.00
Working with my project ideation team **improved my understanding of class activities.**	1	2	1	4	9	17	4.06
Working with my project ideation team **improved my understanding of client project assignments.**	1	2	1	5	8	17	4.00
Working with my project ideation team **helped me get ideas for my client project assignments.**	2	2	0	2	11	17	4.06
Working with my project ideation team **improved the quality of my work on client project assignments.**	2	1	1	6	7	17	3.88

Statistic	Working with my project ideation team improved my understanding of class lecture material.	Working with my project ideation team improved my understanding of class activities.	Working with my project ideation team improved my understanding of client project assignments.	Working with my project ideation team helped me get ideas for my client project assignments.	Working with my project ideation team improved the quality of my work on client project assignments.
Min Value	1	1	1	1	1
Max Value	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	4.00	4.06	4.00	4.06	3.88
Variance	1.88	1.68	1.63	2.31	1.86
Standard Deviation	1.37	1.30	1.27	1.52	1.36
Total Responses	17	17	17	17	17

As you can see above, this set of items had high standard deviations, indicating a high degree of variance among responses. In my mind, this is an area ripe for improvement next time. Constructing the teams differently, or using two separate teams for the Client Project and Supercommunicator assignments, or making other adjustments could contribute to student perceptions here.

Set 4. The final set of Likert-type items was included to gauge students' perceptions about the amount of time they spent in their teams. In their Supercommunicator assignment reflections, several individuals remarked in their reflections that their groups did not meet in person outside of class, which they almost uniformly acknowledge was a detriment to the quality of their final work on the presentations. I was interested in knowing what their thoughts were about the amount of time they spent in their teams, and whether they would have liked more time in class or out of class to meet with those teams.

Please indicate the level to which you disagree or agree with the following statements:	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total Responses	Mean
I would have preferred **more time** working with my project ideation team **in class.**	2	1	2	6	6	17	3.76
I would have preferred **more time** working with my project ideation team **outside of class.**	4	5	5	2	1	17	2.47
I would have preferred **less time** working with my project ideation team **in class.**	7	5	3	0	2	17	2.12
I would have preferred **less time** working with my project ideation team **outside of class.**	3	2	4	7	1	17	3.06

Statistic	I would have preferred more time working with my project ideation team in class.	I would have preferred more time working with my project ideation team outside of class.	I would have preferred less time working with my project ideation team in class.	I would have preferred less time working with my project ideation team outside of class.
Min Value	1	1	1	1
Max Value	5	5	5	5
Mean	3.76	2.47	2.12	3.06
Variance	1.82	1.39	1.74	1.56
Standard Deviation	1.35	1.18	1.32	1.25
Total Responses	17	17	17	17

As you can see, again lots of variance in the answers, indicating that students varied widely in their perceptions of how much or how little additional time they would have liked working in their groups. Of course, this can be due to a number of factors only the first of which is that students may not have enjoyed working in their teams as much as they said they did in their reflections.

Collaboration. Again, because of feedback from the student reflections on the Supercommunicator assignment and their reports of little to no face to face time as a team outside of class meeting times, I chose to add an item to the survey about how students collaborated when working on the presentation/discussion assignment. I was curious to know what digital technologies they used (or didn't use).

Please indicate which, if any, of the following digital tools you used when working with your project ideation team this semester (mark all that apply):

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Dropbox		2	12%
2	Box		0	0%
3	Google Drive or Google Docs		17	100%
4	Google Hangouts (video or text chat)		0	0%
5	Skype		0	0%
6	Facebook		9	53%
7	Slack		0	0%
8	What'sApp		0	0%
9	GroupMe		1	6%
10	SnapChat		0	0%
11	Texting		10	59%
12	Canvas		9	53%
13	Email		13	76%
14	Other, please list:		0	0%

It's clear students in this class favored the use of Google Docs/Drive! Although UNL provides free Box accounts for students, none reported using Box (though Dropbox was used by two students). No students reported using video/chat software such as Skype or Google Hangouts to meet and work. Upon looking at the responses above, I realized that some of my response options were not constructed very well – WhatsApp and GroupMe are both group texting applications, yet I included texting as an additional separate possible response. It would have been better to ask students if they used any kind of texting, then provide the two options I was particularly interested to know if they used (WhatsApp and GroupMe) as secondary options (as an if yes to texting, did you use one of these apps to text your team?). Additionally, I noticed another problem with my response options related to email and Canvas: Canvas allows students to email one another through the LMS. So, essentially, the response options provided here were not mutually exclusive - students who reported using Canvas to work with their teams could have used the email function in the system and may not have marked the email item. More revisions for next time!

Course Conclusions

Research Question: *Can implementation of semester-long teams help students connect course material and assignments and bridge the wide range of student ability in the class?*
While certainly not representing a causal relationship, data showed grades on selected assignments and overall semester grades increased/improved between 2015 and 2016. Whether this improvement is a result of the changes made to the course that have been outlined in this portfolio, it is not possible to say. However, in looking at all the data gathered and my own experiences in organizing, planning, and teaching the course this year, I can honestly say that my belief is that the use of these semester-long teams did indeed help students see more connections between content and assignments, and ultimately helped bridge the gap of student ability in the course. They were able to rely on each other for assistance and feedback before coming to me, thus amplifying their learning.

- Subquestion - *Will the changes in teaching methods and materials contribute to improved student performance in the course?*
Having gone through this inquiry portfolio process, I believe the combination of changes made to the course contributed to the overall improvement in semester grades, as well as grades on the Client Project. Whether the implementation of semester-long project ideation teams was a direct cause of the improvement is not possible to know from this investigation. However, I believe the focus on using teams as a teaching technique definitely helped me to be a more effective teacher. The process of deciding to use teams, investigating how I might use them effectively, planning their use and related activities and assignments, all contributed to a sense of my role as the instructor as a facilitator of learning rather than the all-knowing "sage on the stage". In past semesters, I've struggled with trying to make this class fit the model of what I thought was a "typical" sophomore level introduction to strategic communications course, using textbooks and materials designed specifically for teaching public relations concepts. This

semester, while using material that was definitely public relations oriented (Smith's book), I augmented the course intentionally with the Supercommunicator book and combined that with the focus on using teams to help students learn from each other. In my view, the attention paid to assigning teams and incorporating team activities throughout the semester paid dividends in terms of student performance. Upon reflection, it's as if using the teams as a teaching strategy helped improve my performance as much as, or more than, the students'.

I spent dramatically less time providing detailed feedback for improvement on student assignments this semester. While course enrollment was 20 students this spring as compared with 30 students the prior spring, I noticed while grading that I was correcting fewer grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors, making fewer comments on assignments to articulate the need for dramatic improvement in the submitted work. Overall, my impression of the work students turned in this semester was that they spent more time and effort on their first submissions of the client project assignments. I suspect providing time in class for students to work on assignments and requiring them to discuss their work and revisions with their teammates likely contributed to the overall higher quality of work. Additionally, since I wasn't as concerned with having enough time to cram in all the content I used (or tried to use) in previous semesters, I think my overall anxiety level about the course was generally lower and less stress meant I was better able to be present for my students.

Another thing I noticed during the semester was that students seemed to enjoy their teammates, and as an extension, seemed to enjoy coming to class each day. While they may not have ended up the best of friends, and in a couple of cases conflicts over assignments emerged (which I learned about through reflection submissions), students generally enjoyed and appreciated having each other to work with and learn from:

- *"Well, I just love my group so discussing material with my teammates was a wonderful experience. We are put together so wonderfully that we all are in a different grade, meaning we all have a different level of experience. This comes in very handing for discussions because we all bring different points of views to the table. Everyone was very willing to work with each other and share their thoughts and opinions. The whole team read the section and brought comments to share. It was really great to see everyone adopt a section of their own and really connect with their own specific examples."*
- *"Our HPDN group worked very well with each other. I know that anyone in the class would likely be comfortable with each other, but I enjoyed how we stayed in the same group that we've worked and met with regarding our client projects."*
- *"My group did a great job of bouncing real-life examples off of each other. We worked in the library together and were always helping each other think of productive questions to ask our classmates. The best part about working with this team was being able to compare each other's real-world experiences to produce relatable examples for the class. Team Leap Year was very flexible and easy to work with. This presentation was easy to prepare because each of my teammates was productive and hard working."*

- Subquestion - *Did students perceive work teams as helpful to their learning in connecting classroom and textbook material to class assignment(s)?*

Most students (14 of 20) agreed that working with their teams helped with their understanding of lecture material. Slightly fewer (13 of 20) agreed that working in their teams improved their understanding of class activities, while the same number agreed that teamwork improved their understanding of client project assignments. A total of 13 students also agreed that working with their teams helped them with ideas for their client project, and 13 also agreed that the teams helped improved the quality of their work on client project assignments. Overall, it is encouraging to me that between 65 and 70 percent of students who responded believed working with their teams improved their understanding and performance in the course.

Early Course Evaluation Data

Because this course is cross-listed with ADPR in CJMC, students enrolled in the ADPR section were able to complete their course evaluations using the online evaluation system (CASNR does not allow online course evaluations to date). Online course evaluation results are shared much more quickly with faculty than traditional hard copy evaluations, and so I've chosen to include some information from the seven evaluations that were completed online and recently returned to me. It was nice to see that when given the opportunity to comment anonymously in course evaluations, these students were consistent in their feedback about what they perceived were positive aspects of the course.

- Evaluation question: What activities or assignments in this course contributed most to your learning?
    - o Group discussions along with videos, pictures, and more.
    - o All the small assignments leading up to the client project.
    - o All of the assignments for the Client Project were very helpful with finding out what I want to do with my life.
    - o I really enjoyed the client project and reading the Supercommunicator book.
    - o Presentations, assignments.
    - o This was the first class I actually learned how to do a fact sheet. Also Dr. Cannon is an amazing professor. She was strict on deadlines but made us do great work.
- Evaluation question:

	very little (1)	some (2)	quite a bit (3)	very much (4)	mean	mode	Std. Dev.
11. How much would you say that you learned in this class?	0	0	1	6	3.86	4	0.38

- Evaluation question: What could be done that would improve learning in this class?
    - o Nothing.
    - o I can't think of anything that could help improve learning in this class. It was well run and organized.
    - o Nothing really, I really enjoyed the class.

Challenges

Challenges remain, of course. After this semester, I'm confident the course does need level restrictions – probably freshman to sophomores only, including language that allows other students with consent of instructor. There is also an opportunity coming up this next year that could be used to help with this challenge. I'll be teaching a new online section of the course. It's possible that restricting the face to face section of the course to first and second year students and the online section to juniors and above may alleviate the challenge of the wide range of student abilities.

As noted in some of the student feedback, days which predominantly included lecture material need adjustments. I can think of two specifically that need to be restructured for more interactivity – the communication theory lecture and the introduction to research session. It's possible that the communication theory lecture could be eliminated, but I hesitate to do that for a couple of reasons. First, theory is discussed in Smith's book, as well as all of the textbooks I've used in previous semesters, indicating that public relations experts believe this is an important topic even for an introductory type course. Second, personally I think the concepts of theory and research are essential for students to understand, not only in public relations or communication fields, but in general. The academic and scientific research processes, of which public relations research is a variant, are frequently and heavily relied upon to provide sound information used to make decisions throughout our global society. Understanding theory and research can help students build critical thinking skills, decision-making skills, and other skills in demand by today's employers. If I can take a slice of these concepts and integrate them into my course so that students have a basic understanding of them, I consider it a personal victory for quality information.

Based on student feedback, the teams generally worked well this semester but I'll likely make an adjustment to having students work in a single team. Initially I had planned to use separate teams for the Project Ideation Teams related to the Client Project and the Supercommunicator assignments this spring, but after chatting with students informally in class, I decided to let them keep the teams they had established. Several of them reported feeling like they had just gotten to know their teammates, and I didn't have a strong strategy or reason for creating a second set of teams. However, as some of the feedback illustrates, this wasn't necessarily the case for all teams; a few students expressed desires to work with people beyond those in their four person teams.

Future Directions

An exciting opportunity for me next spring is the chance to teach a section of this course online, which I'm planning to do in addition to teaching the face to face section of the course. Early thoughts about leveraging material between the two courses includes possibly creating narrated power point presentations of the material identified above (communication theory and research) so that students in the face to face section can view those on their own time and come to class for an activity based on the material, while for the online students I can combine the lecture video with some multimedia activities. My hope is that I can use each section (face

to face and online) to make the other one "better", but I have a great deal to learn about teaching online!

I have several changes in mind for teaching this course next spring, for both the online and face to face versions. While I have yet to sit down and start planning the online section, I know I'll be making the changes detailed below to the face to face section of the course.

Changes to Teams. Since the teams seemed to have a moderately strong degree of success, I'd like to continue improving on the team experience. It's possible that using two teams, one for the Client Project and one for the Supercommunicator assignment, would be helpful. This would allow students to get feedback and experience with two groups of classmates. However, if not managed carefully, two teams might lead students to confuse assignments, information, requirements, etc. So, if I choose to use two teams, I think it will be important to have one team wrap up its work prior to beginning with the second team.

The other team-related adjustment I'm planning to make is related to team time in class and outside of class to work on projects. I plan to make more time available in class for students to work in their teams, and to be less prescriptive about what they do and how they spend that in-class team time. Instead, I'll ask students to manage their own work time, determining as a team what they need to work on during the class period, and then ask them to complete a short progress report after each meeting to help me measure their progress.

Given that several students mentioned that not meeting outside of class for the Supercommunicator assignment was a detriment, I'm going to require the students meet at least one time outside of class, either in person or via some kind of video chat (Skype, Google Hangout, etc.), especially for the Supercommunicator assignment. This might mean asking for information about students' course and work schedules on the Student Interest Inventory assignment in order to help compose groups that have some common available meeting times outside of class. Teams will have to turn in progress reports (not sure at this point whether one or more will be necessary; regardless of how many I decide to assign, I know I need to make sure that there is a clear intent and purpose for each required report) detailing what they accomplished in their groups and how they spent their time.

Content and Assignments. I have two main areas of change in mind for the course content and assignments – adding more content and activities related to social and digital media, and making alterations to the midterm and final reflection papers.

As our graduates are required to know evermore about the digital world, and to be experts in using digital tools, it seems only logical to continue to incorporate information, examples, and activities focusing on digital, social, and multimedia communication. I have to admit this is a continual challenge for me, as when I practiced strategic communication and public relations in my professional career, it was prior to the advent and boom of social and digital media. For some context: Twitter launched in 2006 – 10 years before the writing of this portfolio; Facebook was created and launched in 2004, when it was only open to Harvard students; I

began my professional public relations career in the early 2000s, and left in 2007 to return to graduate school for my doctoral degree. The practice of strategic communications has definitely changed since 2007! As such, I tend to struggle with how and what to integrate to the core communication and strategy principles I know students need to understand to be effective communicators.

While I was pleased with the outcome of the changes to the midterm and final assessments, I've come to believe that it will be better to separate reflections from these assessments. It's difficult to assess reflective writing to measure student understanding of content; the easy bit is determining whether or not what they've written is truly reflective in nature. As I wrote the questions and prompts for students to respond to on both the midterm and final reflections, I noticed that asking them to reflect and wanting them to demonstrate what they learned to that point in the semester are two different things. However, I wanted to keep my word to the students that the assessments would be reflections rather than take home essays or papers, and I believed that I'd get some good insights from the students about what they were learning by emphasizing reflection.

Moving forward, separating the midterm and final assessments and making them take home essays/papers, and using more frequent and lower stakes reflection assignments will allow me to separate what they think they've learned (which they often wrote about in their reflections) with what they have actually learned (or at least, what they can demonstrate that they've learned).

In all of these changes, I know that I'll need to clearly explain my reasoning – one thing I noticed this semester was that my emphasis on connecting class material to course assignments came through in how I talked to and interacted with my students. Almost exclusively, the reason I teach concepts is because it will help students communicate more effectively to a variety of audiences in their futures, whether in other classes, internships, or in their future careers. This was such a focus of what I wanted from the class this semester that I found myself consistently finding ways to reiterate these connections in class. From their reflections, I think it was successful to a large degree. Students seemed to understand that the material and assignments from class will help them in their futures:

- *"I feel that this class has given me a different perspective of communicating in a workplace that I never thought of before. All the tips throughout the Supercommunicator book will be something that I can take with me in the future. I can also take all the elements we did for the client project and utilize that knowledge in the future for my jobs as well. I feel that I have a better look on what people are looking for when reading or listening to a speech, you HAVE to be relatable or they won't be interested. You also have to make sure to create that connection and bond with your audience so they understand you."*
- *"Through this class, it was brought to my attention the many ways writing is incorporated into our everyday lives using certain tactics and tools to help portray or deliver a certain message. Never once had I put thought into why certain posters, flyers,*

social media posts, ads, book covers, etc. appealed to me but I now understand that it was all due to strategical and effective writing."

- *"This class has also given me a clearer picture on what I want to do with my future. I wasn't quite sure at the beginning of the semester, but after taking this course I realized that public relations is something that I am very interested in. The final client portfolio was very cool to put together and it really caught my interest. So I am thankful I have had the opportunity to do this project and take this class."*

- *"Coming into this class, my view on writing was very much based off of my own ideas and feelings. Essentially, I wrote for myself and not for the people or person who was reading my content. For example, if I was talking about something I was really passionate about, like football or marketing, I would not even think about the fact that some people might not know what I am talking about…From this class, and especially our readings, I have found the importance of really going into depth and explaining elements of my papers and projects…I have learned so much in this class about delivering content, and simplifying it to resonate with the appropriate audience. Since I would love to go into Public Relations for a professional sports team, this will really help me. All of the skills I learned in this class are very applicable to my future career."*

A final change I plan to make to my course preparation and teaching during the semester is to incorporate more of my own reflective writing into my teaching practice. As I noted earlier in this portfolio, it seemed that the change to using semester-long teams had as much of an effect on me as on the students, and quite possibly the focus with which I planned the semester and employed the teams made me a more effective teacher this year. With this in mind, I plan to make sure that each day I spend planning or preparing for the course, and after each class period that I spend at least five minutes reflecting on how I want things to go and how I believe things went. I also think it was helpful that this semester I kept an updated binder of course presentations, handouts, assignments, and activities, and made notes on each day's class outline about things I wanted to remember. Giving myself the task of spending five minutes to write reflectively about my experience after each class seems to be in line with the expectations I have for students to write reflectively, and it can certainly help improve my teaching practice.

Final Remarks

This inquiry portfolio experience has been an adventure. I took a huge leap of faith in myself by exposing my teaching practice to an in-depth inquiry in a course where I have often felt very self-conscious and ineffective as a teacher. I've often wondered what I'm really teaching students in this course, what I'm supposed to teach them, and whether that is what they think I should be teaching them. In going through the inquiry process I realized that I was indeed teaching the right concepts to students, but that adjustments to my teaching practice (rather than wholesale changes or scrapping the curriculum I've worked hard on over the past four years) could yield major changes in not only the way I felt about the course, but in how students enjoyed and performed in the course.

I hope to continue an inquiry into this course, both the face to face and the new online sections, in the coming year. Over this past year I've become convinced that the intense focus on planning, questioning, teaching, and measuring students' learning involved in the Peer Review of Teaching Project is more than half the reason the course turned out as well as it did. The rest of the formula, for me, is getting the assignments, content, delivery, activities, and assessments adjusted to the right degree. It is my sincere belief that this inquiry process helped me plan and implement adjustments this year that contributed to probably the best class I've taught in my short higher education career. Now, onward and upward to more improvement!

Appendices

Appendix A: Course Syllabus and Calendar

ADPR/ALEC 207 – Communicating with Public Audiences
Spring 2016

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Instructor:
Dr. Karen Cannon
108A Ag Comm Bldg.
East Campus
Office Phone: 472-7800
Email: kcannon2@unl.edu

Meeting Times and Location:
T & R, 9:30-10:45 am
102 Ag Communications Building

Office Hours: After class until noon or by appointment

Course Description

Concepts and techniques of strategic communication. Skills and theory for relating to government, corporate, and other agricultural public audiences.

Prerequisites: College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) students must have completed all CASNR core communications course requirements prior to enrolling.

Course Objectives – What you'll learn in this course

This course allows you to learn how to create, plan, and implement strategic communication concepts using informative and persuasive writing for identified target audiences. At the conclusion of the course, you will be able to:

- Exhibit a clear understanding of the process of communicating effective messages, including crafting messages, identifying audiences and appropriate delivery methods, and evaluating effectiveness
- Generate effective communication materials using concepts discussed in the course
- Identify ways in which communication with external audiences affects the organization
- Be able to articulate goals of effective communication

Your progress in class this semester will be assessed through a combination of assignments, class discussion, and participation. Major assignments are listed in this syllabus; other assignments and readings may be given in class.

Special Note: Dr. Cannon's Participation in the Advanced Peer Review of Teaching Project

This semester, I have elected to take part in the Advanced Peer Review of Teaching Project, a UNL-wide, on-going effort to develop new and better methods for promoting student learning. This is a year-long process in which participants in the project (professors) put a great deal of thought into the design of a single course (in this case ADPR/ALEC 207) including syllabus, exams, class activities and written assignments. One of the project's ultimate goals is to improve student learning, and we cannot accomplish this goal without student input.

For the project, I will need to incorporate student work (with all identifying information removed) in my course portfolio as an archive of student performance for the course. These examples are an essential piece of the project to illustrate how much and how deeply students are learning. Once the course portfolio is completed, it will be put on a project website: www.courseportfolio.org so that it can be shared, used, and reviewed by other faculty. A separate form will be distributed during our

first class period asking for your consent to participate and signature. Your choice whether to participate or not will in no way affect your course grade.

Course Resources – Things you need to be successful in this class

The items listed in this section are REQUIRED for your success in our class (unless otherwise specified). Without access to the resources listed you will not be able to earn a satisfactory grade in this course (satisfactory = minimum grade of C).

All assigned readings are "fair game" for class activities, potential quizzes, and assignments – understand you are responsible for having read and for understanding all the assigned material.

♦ **Required Textbooks**
  - Smith, R. (2014). *Public relations: The basics*. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
  - Pietrucha, F. J. (2014). *SuperCommunicator: Explaining the complicated so anyone can understand*. New York: American Management Association

*Important note: Textbooks are available at campus bookstores or online. Reading assignments begin the first week of class, therefore you are responsible for readings as of the first day of class (January 12). Textbook orders that do not arrive on time are not an acceptable excuse for not being prepared for class.

♦ **Canvas - Piloting a new system (in place of Blackboard)**
During Spring 2016, this course will be taught using the Canvas learning management system. You may have experience using the Blackboard LMS (known on this campus as MyUNL). Canvas is a system that offers many of the same tools as Blackboard. UNL is piloting the Canvas system this semester to determine if all UNL courses should switch from Blackboard to Canvas.

When you login to this course's Blackboard site, you will see that there is no content there – only a link that will direct you to Canvas. You can access Canvas by going to canvas.unl.edu. When you do, you can login using the same username and password you typically use to login to Blackboard.

Once you login to this course's Canvas site, you will see that there is a module in the course dedicated called Intro to Canvas. This section will provide an overview of the Canvas LMS, give you access to resources about Canvas, and provide you with information about how to get help using Canvas.

As part of this Canvas pilot, you will be asked to participate in a research study concerning the system. More information about that study will be forthcoming.

This pilot is being administered by the ITS Learning and Emerging Technologies group at UNL. The ITS staff members serve as the external evaluators for the Evaluation of Canvas Learning Management System Pilot at UNL, and adhere to all federal and state legal and ethical guidelines for data security and privacy. If you have any questions about the pilot, please contact Jeremy Van Hof at jvanhof@unl.edu or 402-472-4266.

Our course Canvas page is where you will find all the resources you need for class. Take a few minutes during the first week of the semester to look around the site and familiarize yourself with where things are. The following items are on Canvas:
  - Course Syllabus – this document

- Course Calendar – updated as changes to course topics, readings and assignments occur
- Assignment Descriptions and submission slots
- Course Readings (readings not in the textbook) – by date due
- Discussion Board – use for questions you have outside of class time
- Course Grades – keep track of your points throughout the semester

♦ You also need **a working email account checked DAILY**. Make sure you consistently manage your account so that emails sent to it do not bounce back because your inbox is full!
- Be sure to update your email address in the UNL system. I will send emails through the Canvas system, so it's important that the email you have on file is correct – you don't want to miss class-related information!

Course Expectations – What I expect from you and what you can expect from me

Class Sessions
This course will be taught using a combination of methods including in-class activities and exercises, lectures, teamwork, and course assessments (assignments, quizzes, and exams). I expect you will come to class ready to work, with readings and assignments completed, and that you will be active participants in your own learning. This is not a course where I as the instructor will give you all the information through lecture for the assignments and exams – you are in charge of what you learn and I am your learning facilitator or coach.

Each week, I'll provide you a "look ahead" to the topics, activities, and assignments we'll be working on for the next few class periods. We'll proceed with the calendar plan week by week, but adjustments may be needed as we move through the material. BE PREPARED for changes to calendars, readings, assignment due dates, etc.

Readings for Class
Complete readings for class before the assigned class period. Much of our course will be based on those readings and subsequent discussions during our meetings. Readings will come from course textbooks and supplemental readings posted on Canvas.

Bring to class each day
- Course Syllabus – you'll find that answers to lots of procedural questions are in this document
- The day's assigned readings (your textbook, or a print or electronic version of supplemental readings)
A notebook/paper and pen for note taking, responding to questions or activities

Writing for Class
This course requires writing throughout the semester. I realize that for many students, writing creates anxiety and stress. However, writing is an essential part of being a professional (regardless of whether your career will be as a communications expert or not). In this class, I will do my best to help you overcome any obstacles in this area but also expect that you will give your best effort on every assignment.

Writing skill and ability vary from student to student, however, for each assignment I expect all students to:
- Use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation

- Communicate ideas clearly and effectively (be straightforward and plain in your writing)
- Use critical thinking skills

I expect you will adhere to the highest standards for ethics and quality work in this course and demonstrate critical thinking in all that you do. Should the quality of your work in this course fall below expected levels, you may be asked to seek assistance from the Oasis Student Success Program or the University Writing Center. Once you have been notified in writing that you need to seek assistance, you must do so promptly. Failure to do so may result in a lowered course grade.

Teamwork
During the semester, you will work in teams for in-class activities and out of class assignments. As a member of a team, it's important that you participate fully and completely and do the work that is expected of you by your teammates.

Should problems arise in working with your team, first focus on resolving challenges among your fellow team members. If a resolution cannot be reached, then contact me to notify me of the challenge and to discuss solutions.

- You need to have an ability to work in teams effectively and efficiently, both in this class and beyond (and you'll definitely need these skills when you enter the full-time workforce for your career). Use this class as an opportunity to hone your team and group work skills, as well as your interpersonal skills.
- Make the most of the work time you are given in class. Plan to be here and work during scheduled workdays unless otherwise directed.

Your Classroom Conduct
As members of this class, I expect you will be courteous to others at all times – to me as your instructor, to your classmates, and to any guests we host in our classroom. Courteousness includes (but is not only):
- Being on time to class each day (more about this below) and being present (participating, not using your technology for purposes other than class activities, etc.)
- Paying attention when someone is speaking – not surfing the web on your tablet, laptop or phone, looking at the speaker and interacting with him or her if requested
- Being respectful of diverse opinions and perspectives. Understand each person is entitled to his or her opinion and to be heard in our discussions, both in class and online. That said, recognize what is and isn't appropriate to say in a class setting
- Treating others as you wish to be treated

Academic Honesty and Integrity
Academic honesty is the foundation of intellectual inquiry and academic pursuit and I take it very seriously. As a student in my class, I expect you to be familiar with the ALEC Department's UNL's policy for academic integrity:

"Students are expected to adhere to guidelines concerning academic dishonesty outlined in Section 4.2 of University's Student Code of Conduct (http://stuafs.unl.edu/dos/code/). The Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication academic dishonesty procedure can be found on the departmental website (http://go.unl.edu/alec-academic-integrity-policy). Students are encouraged to contact the instructor for clarification of these guidelines if they have questions or concerns."

Work submitted for my class must be **completed specifically for this class and must be entirely your own** unless otherwise described in the assignment sheet. Bottom line? Don't let academic honesty be a problem!

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:
- Handing in work that is in whole or in part the work of another person (collaborative assignments are the exception)
- Submitting work from a class taken previously for an assignment in this class
- Using notes or other study aids or otherwise obtaining unauthorized answers for a quiz, assessment or examination
- Using the words, opinions, or ideas of another person without giving full credit and accurate citation information
  - Plagiarism consists of using phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and ideas from any source, and republishing these without attribution. Sources include, but are not limited to books, magazines, newspapers, television or radio reports, websites and papers of other students.

Instructor Conduct
It's only fair that I outline what you can expect from me in this course, as I've just told you what I expect from you.

What you can expect from me:
- I will arrive each day on time to class and be prepared to help you learn about communication and public relations.
- I will share with you my knowledge and personal experiences related to our course topics from my time as a professional communications practitioner and as a faculty member who conducts academic research in the field of communications, public relations, public opinion and agriculture.
- I will work diligently to return graded assignments to you one week after the due date. Please keep in mind, however, that circumstances change throughout the semester and this may not always be possible. Should assignments take longer than one week to return to you, I will notify you as soon as possible.
- Rules and guidelines set out in this syllabus are upheld for all students, without exception.

Technology in Class
Technology is a huge part of our lives and we rely on it everyday for all kinds of things. Especially in the field of communications, smartphones, tablet and laptop computers are essential tools for success. I encourage you to bring laptops or tablet computers to class for class work – there may be times where it's handy to have your computer in front of you to do a search for information for activities or discussions.

However, **do not use smartphones to take notes or access the web in class.** There is too much potential for distraction while using your phone. My strong recommendation is that you take notes the old fashioned way – with pen and paper – but you may use a laptop or tablet for your notes.

Technology notifications also present challenges, such as the tendency to go off during class discussions and distract us from our focus. So before every class period, you need to turn off ringers, vibrators and other notifications on phones, tablets, laptops and other devices.

If you choose to use technology to take notes or help with class activities, realize that **I expect you to use it only for class-related activities**. Do not have your device open to email and/or instant message accounts, personal websites or other items that do not directly relate to the purposes of our course. Whether you know it or not, conducting non-class-related activities on your *IS* distracting to others, and greatly impacts your own learning (and thus your grade).

Therefore, my policy regarding technology is:
- Technology use in the classroom is for the exclusive purpose of class-related activities.
- Violate the policy and you will be asked to discontinue the activity immediately.
- Violate it again (on the same day or a different day)? You will be asked to leave the class for that day. Be assured, if you are asked to leave class, you will not be eligible to make up points missed points.
- Persistent problems with the inappropriate use of technology during class will result in a reduction of your final course grade.

Course Assignments and Attendance – How to do well in class

For specific information about formatting assignments, please consult the separate formatting handout.

Turning in Assignments
Assignments for this class will be submitted via Canvas and are due by 9:30 a.m. (our class start time) on the due date. **Submissions via email are not accepted**. In rare situations at my discretion as the instructor, emergency arrangements for submitting projects may be made and will be decided on a case by case basis.

Late Assignments
Late assignments are not accepted in this course. The field of communications runs on deadlines, as do most professional career fields. In a job situation, it is not acceptable to miss a deadline and not submit a project to your boss, thus it is not acceptable in this course to miss a deadline. Assignments submitted after the due date and time will receive a score of 0.

Dr. Cannon's Grading Philosophy
As an instructor and the individual who will provide an assessment of your work in this course at the end of the semester (in the form of a course grade), I believe it's important to share with you my grading philosophy. Fundamentally, I believe grades are about communication – communicating an assessment of the quality and content of your work in this course. Quality, by nature, is more subjective than objective and for this reason I work to be very clear in assignment descriptions about my expectations for your assignments. When assessing student work, I look at whether or not you have completed the assignment as outlined on the assignment sheet and evaluate the demonstrated level of effort on the assignment. Should you have questions about grades, assignments, or feedback I provide on any of your assignments in this course, please come see me to discuss this. I strive to be clear and communicative in my assessment of your work in this course!

Major Course Assignments

Assignment	Brief Description	Points
Student Introduction Assignment	Tell me about yourself and what you're interested in	25 points
Supercommunicator Book Club Discussions: • Discussion outline • Team led discussion in class • Individual reflection paper • Peer Evaluation	With a small group (2-3 students) you will lead a class discussion of the Supercommunicator book using an outline developed by your group. Following the class discussion session led by your group, you will submit a reflection paper and peer evaluation of your teammates.	75 points
Project Ideation Teams	Throughout the semester, you'll work with an assigned group of teammates to help you develop ideas and improve your assignments on the Client Project. Meeting time will be provided in class, and teams will be expected to meet outside of class as well.	50 points
Client Project (CP): • Organization Choice Ranking • Organizational Profile • Factsheet/Backgrounder • News Release • Social Media Analysis • Workshop Feedback • Final Compiled and Revised Project	This project provides an opportunity for you to apply class concepts to "real world" communication situations on behalf of an organization. You'll complete several assignments throughout the semester and have the opportunity to provide feedback to your peers and edit your work based on feedback from others before submitting your final project.	200 points
In-class Activities and Participation • 0 = no submission/absent • 1 = work submitted, but low quality and no real effort • 2 = adequate work/effort, but could be improved • 3 = high quality work, full effort	These points will be used for exercises/activities in class. Points awarded based on quality of effort and total number of available points will be announced during week 15 of the semester.	Estimate 48 points minimum (3 pts week x 16 weeks = 48)
Midterm Reflection Paper	Reflective responses to a series of prompts (in place of a midterm exam)	25 points
Final Reflection Paper	Reflective responses to a series of prompts (in place of a final exam)	25 points
		Total*: 400+

Final points in the course will be available during the 15th week of the semester.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is essential for success in this course. In order to do well in this class, you must attend each meeting and participate fully in all discussions and activities. The grade you earn in this course is a direct reflection of the effort you put into it. As you enter the classroom each day, attendance will be taken.

You have two FREE absences during the semester to use at your discretion, without penalty. No questions will be asked about these two free absences and no excuses need to be provided. However, be aware that assignments and activities (including quizzes and exams) missed during these absences can not be made up unless your reason for missing class falls under the list of excused absences below and is accompanied by appropriate documentation.

Upon your third absence, regardless of the reason (whether it falls under the excused category or not), you cannot make up points missed. Excessive absences (considered missing class more than twice) has the potential to damage your final grade due to missed points.
- Students with more than 2 absences during the semester risk having their course grade lowered due to lack of participation.
- Students with 3 or more unexcused absences during the course of the semester may receive a failing grade in the course.

Excused absences are issued sparingly in this course due to the participatory nature of class sessions and are limited to the following, **which must be documented in writing**:
- Medical issues (must show proof of visiting a medical professional on the date of absence at the beginning of the class period when you return)
- University-related extra curricular activities and organizational duties – team events such as judging, representing a student organization as an officer at a conference, and a limited number of other activities
- University-approved student athletic events where you are the athlete. (No, attending a football or other game as a spectator does not count.)
- Legitimate, documentable emergencies (such as, heaven forbid, car accidents, etc.)

If you miss classwork due to an excused absence you have **1 week** from the date you return to class to make up related work, unless other arrangements have been made in writing between student and instructor. If you miss a class period where there was an opportunity for points to be earned you must provide documentation of an acceptable and excused absence.

After Missing Class for *Any* Reason:
- Consult a classmate to get notes and see if materials or handouts were distributed (these will be posted on Canvas).
  - Slide presentations will be posted on Canvas after each class period, but please do not rely on these for all the content and information from class meetings.

PLEASE NOTE – when you are absent from class, regardless of the reason, do not contact me and ask if you "missed anything important". As the teacher of this class, my perspective is everything we do in class is important. Whether you agree or not, asking this question is discourteous to me as your teacher.

Legitimate Emergencies - Absences for Health or Emergency Situations: CASNR CARES Program
- For legitimate emergencies and absences due to health problems, CASNR Cares provides students a single contact assistance in navigating the university's student services programs – the Coordinator is Nicole Smith and she can be reached at 472-0609 or n.smith@unl.edu. The primary goal of this program is to ensure that each student has every opportunity to be successful. Should you find yourself absent from class for more than one consecutive period

you are **strongly** encouraged to contact Nicole and use this outstanding resource to help you keep up with your coursework.

Don't Be Late to the Party - Class Tardiness Policy:
Arriving late to class disrupts the attention of your classmates and me as your instructor, and is therefore not acceptable. Would you arrive late to work and expect your co-workers and boss to not be unhappy? Be on time to class. Every. Day.
- If you have a class on City Campus prior to ours, please talk to me during the first week of classes so I can document your situation. Only then will your tardiness not affect your course grade.
- If your tardiness becomes a repeat problem, I reserve the right to deduct points from your final course grade.

Know UNL's Attendance Policy:

> Students are expected to attend all lectures, recitations, quizzes, and laboratories regularly. The University has no regulation that permits cutting classes.
>
> Students are responsible for the attendance policy set by instructors and should clear absences directly with them.
>
> In cases where a student is unable to contact his or her instructors due to major illness, serious injury, or hospitalization or when given military orders which are effective immediately, a notice may be sent to the student's instructors by the University Health Center, a family physician, or the Students Affairs Office, 106 Canfield Administration Building, 402-472-3755. This notice is for the instructor's information only and does not relieve the student of contacting instructors as soon as possible.
>
> Students involved in University-sponsored activities, including intercollegiate athletics, may need to be excused from a class, lab, or studio meeting. In all instances it is the student's responsibility to request permission for the absence (preferably in writing) from the instructor and to discuss how the absence will affect their ability to meet the course requirements. Students should do this as soon in the semester as possible. While instructors should seek to the greatest extent possible, consistent with course requirements, to make reasonable accommodation for a student involved in University-sponsored activities, students should recognize that not every course can accommodate absences and neither the absence (nor the notification of an absence) relieves them from meeting the course requirements.
>
> For complete information on class attendance, see the Schedule of Classes.

Contacting Dr. Cannon Outside of Class

Need to reach me outside of class for questions or concerns? Choose one of the following ways:

1. Office Hours and In-Person Visits (most preferred method)
Office hours are dedicated time set aside each week to meet with students for questions, concerns, or comments about our class, or anything else. Come see me! I don't bite (my puppy does and it hurts, so I promise no biting). Note: Issues such as concerns about your course grade, assignments, absences and other matters will only be discussed in person.

2. Phone Calls
Should you wish to contact me via phone, please use the number listed on the top of the first page of this syllabus. I will do my best to return your phone call within 24 hours if I am not out of the office. During travel to conferences or meetings, phone calls will not be returned until I arrive back in the office.

3. Email (least preferred method, but still acceptable)

As this is a communication course, any emails you write to me must follow standards of good communication. Specifically, to receive a response to any email you send me, you MUST do the following:
- Provide a subject for the email (ADPR/ALEC 207: [enter your subject])
- Use a greeting (Hello Dr. Cannon, for example)
- Use proper grammar, capitalization, and sentence structure throughout the entire message
- Conclude with your name
- Check to make sure you have attached any documents you refer to in the email
  - NOTE: Again, no assignments are accepted via email unless specific arrangements have been made with me previously.

*If you do not adhere to the requirements for emails outlined here, you will not receive a response to your email. The subsequent excuse "but you didn't respond to my email" is not valid. Be warned!

Email response times
The world we live in teaches us to expect rapid responses to our electronic requests. As your instructor, I am anxious to help you be successful in my class. When you send an email, I will make every effort possible to respond within 24 hours of receiving your message. However, please understand the following caveats:
- Sending an email **after 5pm on a weekday will not get you a response before class time** the following morning. Plan accordingly and work on assignments prior to deadline dates.
  - Helpful tip: Use the course Canvas site to ask questions of your classmates!!! Often times you'll find answers to your questions and save yourself an email.
- Not receiving a response from me is not be an acceptable excuse for submitting assignments or projects after the due date and time.
- Do not send an email if you are planning to be absent for one of your two free absences (see attendance section in syllabus).

Accommodations and Services for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

I am glad to work with students who need accommodations for a learning disability or other documented academic challenge. The first thing to do if you need an accommodation, or think you might, is contact UNL's Services for Students with Disabilities office and speak to Christy Horn (ADA Compliance) for a confidential discussion of your needs.

Course Grading

Assignment grades are based on points, and a cumulative point total yields semester grades using the following percentages:

Course Grade Breakdown:

A+ = 100%	C+ = 79% to 76%	F = Below 60%
A = 99% to 95%	C = 75% to 73%	
A- = 94% to 90%	C- = 72% to 70%	
B+ = 89% to 86%	D+ = 69% to 66%	
B = 85% to 83%	D = 65% to 63%	
B- = 82% to 80%	D- = 62% to 60%	

Be aware: Keeping track of your grades in this class is your responsibility. Yes, grades will be entered on Canvas but it is incumbent upon you as the student to keep track of your progress in class regardless. At any point in the semester, you have access to your recorded performance in class and are responsible for monitoring it.

Grade Disputes

At some point during the semester you may disagree with a grade you receive on an assignment. Here are the guidelines you must follow in the case of a grade dispute:
- Wait a minimum of 24 hours before contacting the instructor to request a grade review.
- You must provide a written response (in email or in hard copy) explaining your perspective and rationale for the re-evaluation of the assigned grade. Your argument needs to be well reasoned and based on evidence. It does not need to be long, but your rationale should be clear and articulate.
- Your request for a grade review must be submitted within seven (7) days of the date the assignment was returned to you, or the grade was posted or received. No requests will be evaluated after this time.
- You must schedule a meeting with me to further discuss your grade and bring your graded assignment with you to the meeting.

Grade Checks

Several students each semester come to me needing a grade check whether for athletics, sororities and fraternities, or Student Support Services programs. Over the past year, the number of these grade checks has increased to the point where it is time-prohibitive for me to provide individual feedback to each student regarding course progress.

The good news is YOU have the ability to check your grade at any time during the semester on Canvas – this makes completing a grade check much easier. All course grades (points) are posted in Canvas.

If you need a signed grade check at any point during the semester, you must:
- Print out a current grade report from your Canvas account showing what assignments have been completed and your grade on the assignment. The date on the report should be the day you ask for the grade check or the date immediately prior, no earlier.
- Bring it to class STAPLED to any form you need my signature on

Please note: I will not write notes on forms/grade check sheets related to course performance. I will only sign the printed grade report you provide.

Emergency Response Situation Information

Directions for Emergency Response situation:
- **Fire Alarm (or other evacuation):** In the event of a fire alarm: Gather belongings (Purse, keys, cellphone, N-Card, etc.) and use the nearest exit to leave the building. Do not use the elevators. After exiting notify emergency personnel of the location of persons unable to exit the building. Do not return to building unless told to do so by emergency personnel.
- **Tornado Warning:** When sirens sound, move to the lowest interior area of building or designated shelter. Stay away from windows and stay near an inside wall when possible.
- **Active Shooter**
  - **Evacuate:** if there is a safe escape path, leave belongings behind, keep hands visible and follow police officer instructions.
  - **Hide out:** If evacuation is impossible secure yourself in your space by turning out lights, closing blinds and barricading doors if possible.
  - **Take action**: As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter.
- **UNL Alert:** Notifications about serious incidents on campus are sent via text message, email, unl.edu website, and social media. For more information go to: http://unlalert.unl.edu.
- Additional Emergency Procedures can be found here: http://emergency.unl.edu/doc/Emergency_Procedures_Quicklist.pdf

Syllabus Points

I've created an opportunity to reward you for using your syllabus as a resource for questions about class policies this semester. Each semester during about the second or third week, students start forgetting answers to questions we cover during the first week of class – my answer always seems to be it's IN THE SYLLABUS. I get question like "when are our assignments due?" or "How do we submit assignments, Dr. Cannon? I forget…" or "where are the readings located?" The syllabus is where you can find the answers. I put a great deal of time and effort into creating this syllabus and planning the course, so it's my hope that you'll use this document to help you be successful this semester.

How Syllabus Points work:
- Beginning the second week of class (on August 31), each student in the class will receive 10 bonus points toward their final semester grade.
  - These points will be kept in a column in the grading tab on Canvas but will NOT be counted in the course point total (they are BONUS points). You can keep track of your bonus points during the semester by watching this column.
- Each time you email, call, or ask a question in class that can be answered by consulting our course syllabus, the 10-point total will be reduced by one point.
  - This does NOT include points about assignment due dates, class readings, and other calendar items as these can change based on the needs of the class. Note that the course calendar is separate from the course syllabus for this reason.

Essentially, what this means is any time you have a question related to course policies such as absences, submitting course assignments, your first step should be to consult our course syllabus. If you do that, you'll have **10 bonus points at the end of the semester to boost your final grade**!

Syllabus Disclaimer

Substantial effort and consideration were used in putting this syllabus together. While I consider this document a contract between you as the student and me as the instructor, unforeseen events may cause changes to the scheduling of assignments, course topics, etc.

As the course instructor, I reserve the right to make any changes necessary to best fulfill the course objectives. As a student registered in this course, you will be made aware of any changes in a timely fashion using reasonable means. This disclaimer does not abrogate any student rights as described by University rules and regulations.

Some syllabus humor for you:
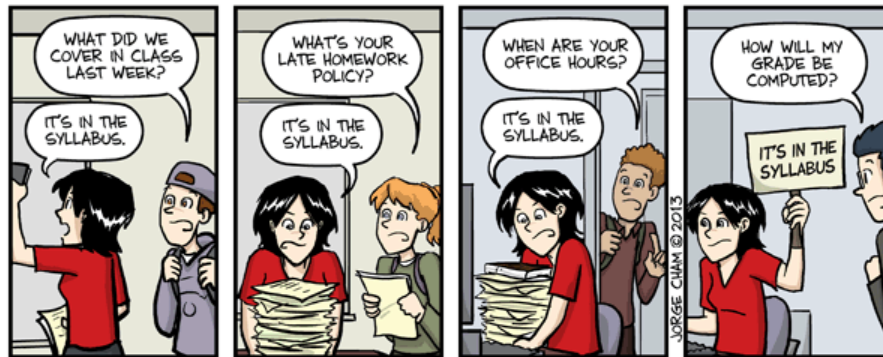
Week	Date	Unit	Course Topic	Key Info	Assignments Due
1	1/12	Unit 1 - What Is Public Relations	Welcome to ADPR/ALEC 207 – Course Introduction: Communicating to Public Audiences	Review course syllabus	
	1/14	Unit 1	What Public Relations Is and Is Not (on Canvas; no class meeting)		Online Assignment
2	1/19	Unit 1	What Public Relations Is and Introducing the Client Project		Student Introduction Assignment
	1/21	Unit 1	Identifying Public Relations Efforts		
3	1/26	Unit 1	Public Relations in Society		Organization Choice & Ranking
	1/28	Unit 1	The Client Project & Project Ideation Teams	Team Activity	
4	2/2	Unit 1	Types of Public Relations		
	2/4	Unit 1	Types of Public Relations		
5	2/9	Unit 1	Client Project: Organizational Profile Workday	Team Activity	
	2/11	Unit 2 – Practicing Public Relations	Researching an Organization: Identifying publics and stakeholders		
6	2/16	Unit 2	More on Publics and Research; activity		
	2/18	Unit 2	Practicing Public Relations: Writing, Research, Theory	Handout Fact Sheet Assignment	CP: Organization Profile
7	2/23	Unit 2	Client Project: Producing Materials		
	2/25	Unit 2	Public Relations Tactics: What they are and how to use them	Handout News Release Assignment	
8	3/1	Unit 2	Communication Strategy: Role of Goals	Handout Midterm Reflection Paper Assignment	

Week	Date	Unit	Course Topic	Book Club Group	Readings & Assignments
8	3/3	Unit 3 – Becoming a Supercommunicator	How Digital is Changing Communication & PR		CP: Fact Sheet
9	3/8	Unit 3	Social Media Analysis – Analyzing Client Organizations More on News Releases		
	3/10	Unit 3	Supercommunicator - Introducing Book Club Assignment News Release Workday	Book Club Group 1 – Dr. Cannon	Introduction (p.1) – Chapter 5 (including Chpt 5)
10	3/15	Unit 3	Digital Communication and Social Media		MIDTERM Reflection Paper DUE
	3/17	Unit 3	Digital Communication and Social Media		CP: News Release
	3/22 & 3/24		SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS		
11	3/29	Unit 3	Supercommunicator– Team Led Discussion	Book Club Group 2	Part II (p. 49-71)
	3/31	Unit 3	Supercommunicator – Team Led Discussion	Book Club Group 3	Part III (p. 75) – Part V (p. 118)
12	4/5	Unit 3	Supercommunicator – Team Led Discussion	Book Club Group 4	CP: Social Media Analysis Part VI (p. 119 – 154)
	4/7	Unit 3	Supercommunicator – Team Led Discussion	Book Club Group 5	Part VII (p. 155) – Part VIII (p. 190)
13	4/12		Supercommunicator – Team Led Discussion	Book Club Group 6	Part IX (p. 191) – Chapter 31 (p. 231 – end!)
	4/14	Unit 4 – Pulling it All Together	Compiling Your Client Project – Strategies for Revisions Providing Useful and Effective Feedback for Colleagues		
14	4/19	Unit 4	NO CLASS		
	4/21	Unit 4	In-class Workshop Day		CP: Peer Feedback Workshop
15	4/26	Unit 4	Course Evaluations & Wrap-up		
	4/28	Unit 4	No formal class meeting - Project Ideation Team and Client Project Work Time (Dr. Cannon available for workshopping)		CP: Final Revised Client Project, by 11:59pm
EXAM Week	May 4		Final Exam – Reflection Paper		Due Wednesday, May 4, by noon on Canvas

Appendix B: Supercommunicator Assignment Sheet

Supercommunicator Book Assignment
Various due dates and points values – see other side

The purpose of this assignment is to get you to engage with material from "Supercommunicator" by Frank Pietrucha, which we'll be using for this unit (Unit 3). This book has lots to offer about communicating in today's age of "all things digital." The intention of this assignment is to get you, your Teammates, and your classmates to make connections from material in the book to concepts and ideas we've discussed in class so far this semester, so that you have a better idea of what it means to be an effective communicator on behalf of an organization.

For this assignment, you'll work with your Team to read and review the section you're assigned. Your Team will create an outline of important points from the reading and examples of successful (or unsuccessful) communication efforts discussed in the reading. Then, you and your team will lead a class discussion about the reading, using the outline and examples you've developed. After your Team leads its discussion, you'll write an individual reflection about the experience, and then provide a score for yourself and your Teammates on an evaluation form.

This assignment will require you to work and think ahead, and to collaborate effectively with your Teammates. I strongly encourage you to maximize your resources and use digital tools like Google Drive and Docs, Box, Dropbox, and other technologies such as Google Hangouts if you need to "meet" virtually. We may have time for some Team work and discussions in class, but we won't have much, so be sure you communicate with your Teammates efficiently and effectively.

There are four components to this Team assignment:
1. **Outline**
   - Due at the beginning of the class period prior to your assigned discussion date
2. Team-led class **discussion**
   - Due on your assigned date
3. Individual **reflection** paper
   - Due one week after your Team leads discussion, by 9:30am on Canvas
4. **Peer evaluation**
   - Also due one week after your Team leads discussion, by 9:30am on Canvas

Directions:
- Read the section of the book assigned to your Team.
- Discuss the reading with your Teammates (this can happen virtually or via online documents, etc, but my strong recommendation is to *meet in person at least once* outside of class).
  - Consider what points and examples from the reading are important to bring up during your discussion
  - What do you want to highlight in the discussion your Team leads?

- What examples from the book, and from other sources, will you share during the discussion?

- **Create an outline** of how you will lead the class discussion on your assigned day. Be sure to do the following:
  - Include important points you think should be discussed from the reading
  - Compose at least three questions you want the class to consider when reading the assigned material
  - Have at least two examples that help illustrate the points made in the reading (beyond any examples described in the reading):
    - One example can be from our class resources – previous chapters from Smith, handouts, digital material posted on Canvas
    - One example must be found by your team (not from our class resources)
  - Make connections between the material in the Pietrucha Supercommunicator reading and the material we've covered to class in Units 1 and 2 during the semester (primarily Smith readings).
  - For any online resources you use, be sure to provide web links in your outline
  - Be sure to have a "sources cited" type reference list with your outline

- Then, on your assigned day, you and your Team will **lead a class discussion about the reading**.
  - Cover the material you included on your outline
  - Ask questions of your classmates and lead class discussion
  - Share the examples you've come up with
  - Make connections to class material as appropriate – class handouts, presentations, Smith readings, and Supercommunicator readings

- After your Team has led discussion, you'll **complete a one-page reflection** about the experience.
- You'll also complete a **peer evaluation** form so you can assess how well you and your Teammates worked together.

Graded Component	Points	Date Due
Supercommunicator Reading Assignment our Team is responsible for:		
Date of Team-Led Discussion:	25	
Date our Team Outline is due:	25	
Date Individual Reflection paper and Peer Evaluation form are due (on Canvas at 9:30am):	15 – reflection 10 – peer eval	
Total	75 points	

Appendix C: Midterm Reflection Paper

Midterm Reflection Paper
25 points; due 3/15, 9:30 a.m. on Canvas

For this assignment, you'll compose three reflective responses from the prompts below. The first prompt is required; choose two of the remaining prompts to complete the assignment. Some additional information:

- To clearly identify which prompt you're responding to, use the prompt number at the beginning of your response.
- To provide enough detail in your answers, the entire document will likely be between 2 and 3 pages long.
- Please remember to use the assignment formatting guidelines document distributed at the beginning of the semester!

1) **YOU MUST RESPOND TO THIS PROMPT**
   (5 points) *Writing in public relations.* In discussing tactics and tools available to public relations practitioners, Smith provided an extensive list of "forms of public relations writing" in Chapter 4 – Practicing Public Relations. Writing is something people are often very anxious about or despise doing. Reflect on your perspective about writing, now that you know it's a key part of practicing public relations and communicating effectively to public audiences. What anxieties, if any, do you have about writing as part of your future career (regardless of whether it's in public relations, another kind of communication, or another field entirely)

2) **Option (10 points)** In Chapter 2 – Public Relations in Society, Smith outlines four models of public relations used in modern public relations (since the 1800s). Reflect on what you've learned about the organization you're representing for your client project. From what you've learned to date (both about your organization and about public relations), which of these four kinds of public relations do you think your organization practices? Provide examples from your organization to support your thoughts.
   a. Publicity model
   b. Information model
   c. Advocacy model
   d. Relationship model

3) **Option (10 points)** At the beginning of the semester, we had several conversations about the definition of public relations and discussed how Smith didn't provide a definition of his own, but instead wrote a narrative description of what public relations encompasses. Now that we're halfway through the semester, reflect on all you know and have learned about public relations. Describe how you would explain the field of public relations to someone you're trying to convince to start studying it. What would you be sure to include? What are key elements of public relations, in your mind?

4) **Option (10 points)** We've covered lots of topics under the umbrella of public relations, including different types of public relations. In Chapter 3, Smith wrote about the Types of Public Relations, including the list below. If you had a choice (and if we have time toward the end of the semester where we have some free class periods) which of these types of public relations would you like to learn more about and why? Reflect and explain why or how learning about those particular types of public relations help you on your client project.
   a. Strategic counseling
   b. Consumer relations
   c. Employee relations
   d. Community relations
   e. Investor relations
   f. Public affairs and government relations
   g. Special events and promotions
   h. Crisis Communication
   i. Media relations

5) **Option (10 points)** Consider the organization you're representing for the Client Project and reflect on the publics your organization serves. Describe who you believe the **opinion leaders** are with respect to your organization? Why do you think these opinion leaders matter to your organization? Be specific.

*Remember, you must address three prompts; the required prompt #1 (worth 5 points), and two prompts of your choice (each worth 10 points).

Appendix D: Final Reflection Paper

Final Reflection Paper
25 points; **due Wednesday, May 4 by noon on Canvas**

For this assignment, compose reflective responses to all of the prompts below. Additionally:
- To provide enough detail in your answers, the entire document will likely be a minimum of 3 pages long (double spaced).
- Please remember to use the assignment formatting guidelines document distributed at the beginning of the semester!

1) ***Role of writing in communicating to public audiences. (5 points)*** We've discussed writing throughout the semester and you wrote about it in your midterm reflection paper. Since then, we've read Pietrucha's book, which addressed writing as part of being a "supercommunicator" capable of crafting effective messages in a multimedia and digital world. Now that you know writing is a fundamental part of communicating to public audiences, and that it's a key element in being an effective digital communicator, has your perspective about writing changed? Are you more or less anxious about writing as a part of your career? Reflect on your perspective about writing at the end of the semester.

2) ***For this prompt, think about the portion of the Supercommunicator book you and your team led a discussion about in class***. ***(10 points)*** Part of the purpose of incorporating *Supercommunicator* into this semester was to give you an opportunity to think about how to use digital and multimedia to communicate to audiences. Your client organization served as a real world example of how you might practice communicating to public audiences on behalf of a particular organization. Reflect on the section of the book you and your team were assigned (please mention the chapter titles you were responsible for in your response). What concepts and ideas from your team's assigned reading did you incorporate into your final client project submission to improve/it? If you did not specifically incorporate any of the material from the chapters you were assigned into your client project, discuss why you didn't.

3) ***Finally, reflect on the rest of the Supercommunicator readings, the ones your team wasn't responsible for presenting to the class. (10 points)*** What did you learn from them? What ideas inspired you? Now, consider your client organization. If you had to produce one more communication piece (in any form) as part of your client project, what would you create? Think big – you won't have to actually produce it! But what would you do if you could do anything? How would that piece help your client organization communicate more effectively?

Appendix E: Student Introduction Assignment

Student Inventory Assignment

25 points; due 1/19, 9:30 a.m.

The goal of this assignment is two-fold: for me to get to know you better AND for you to communicate that information to me in any (clear and understandable) way you wish!

If you're a visual person, create a short video (you can even use Instagram or another online media tool if you wish, as long as you're able to address all the items below in the time allowed by the tool) or infographic, write me an essay, create a factsheet about yourself, design a flyer, etc. – communicate with me any way you choose.

What I want you to do is fairly straightforward – address each of the items below:
- **Who you are** – your name, year in school, why you chose to attend UNL for college
- **What you're studying at UNL** – your major, any minors, certificate programs, learning communities and student organizations you belong to or hold office in (examples are the leadership and entrepreneurship learning community, Nebraska Beef Industry Scholars certificate program, a Spanish minor). Essentially, tell me about what you're studying and what you're interested in.
- **Where you're from originally, and where you'd like to go** – where did you grow up? Where do you see yourself upon graduation from UNL? Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years? (geographically and career-wise)
- **Why you decided to take this class** – ADPR/ALEC 207. If the course is required for your major (applies to AESC students only) then explain why you decided to become an AESC major. If you're an ADPR or other major, briefly discuss what prompted you to take this class.
- **Any other information** you think will be good to share with me and your classmates.

The top three most creative introductions will earn 5 bonus points and have their intros shared with the class.

Remember, the focus of this class is communication, so be sure to have that in mind when you create your introduction!

Appendix F: Peer Feedback Workshop Document

Welcome to our Peer Feedback Session!

First, put YOUR name here: _____

Today our focus will be providing peer feedback - giving and receiving!

Here is a the list of things we brainstormed in class we considered important to remember when giving and receiving peer feedback:

As the person providing feedback:
- Think deeply about the material you're reading and the feedback you give
- Help the writer by giving a sense of direction with your feedback – help them figure out an answer, don't provide it for them
- Give details and specific advice about what is good and what needs to be improved
- Provide a summary of your overall feedback – start with a summary of the positives (with specific examples), then move to areas for improvement
- Be positive and provide constructive feedback
- Use a reader-centered critical view point

As the person receiving feedback:
- This session is designed to help you - take advantage of another set of eyes and ideas to incorporate and improve your work for final submission
- Consider the feedback you receive as helpful suggestions that come with good intentions

Directions

1) **Find your partner and a place to work.**
   a. Exchange the papers you have brought to class for peer evaluation. You should have TWO of the FOUR client elements – organizational profile, fact sheet, news release, social media analysis – for your partner to review.

2) **Provide feedback.**
   a. Use the attached review sheets to score and provide specific feedback for your partner's work. Write on the sheets provided AND write on your partner's assignment to provide feedback.
   b. Complete the questions and items on the reverse side of this worksheet.

3) **Discuss the feedback you've provided with your partner.**
   a. Go through the two assignments you've reviewed and explain your questions and feedback.
   b. Discuss overall summary comments
   c. Switch and do (a) and (b) above for the other partner

4) **Submit all your papers to Dr. Cannon before you leave so you get points for completing today's work!**
   a. You'll get an electronic copy of the papers back by Friday at 5pm via Canvas. Hard copies will be returned to you at the beginning of class on 4/26.

Peer Feedback Worksheet

Name of person you are providing feedback to:_____
(who's work are you reviewing today?)

Name of client organization: _____
(what is the name of your partner's client organization?)

Assignment #1 _____
                  (list name of assignment – fact sheet, news release, etc.)

- Is the main point of the assignment clear? Do you as the reader clearly understand the intent of this piece of writing?
    - If not, what's missing? If yes, how might it be improved upon?

- Does the assignment/writing follow all the directions provided?
    - Are there elements missing from the assignment that were included on the assignment sheet?Are there areas for improvement such as clarity of message, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc?

- What ideas or comments do you have that could help your peer feedback partner "take this to the next level" for revision and make it an outstanding piece of work?

Assignment #2 _____

(list name of assignment – fact sheet, news release, etc.)

- Is the main point of the assignment clear? Do you as the reader clearly understand the intent of this piece of writing?
    - If not, what's missing? If yes, how might it be improved upon?

- Does the assignment/writing follow all the directions provided?
    - Are there elements missing from the assignment that were included on the assignment sheet?Are there areas for improvement such as clarity of message, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc?

- What ideas or comments do you have that could help your peer feedback partner "take this to the next level" for revision and make it an outstanding piece of work?

Summary feedback and comments:

Peer Review: Organization Profile

Graded Elements	Comments	Points Earned
Description of organization's purpose, background/history, type of organization (7 points)		
Type of public relations practices and descriptions of examples (6 points)		
Description of organization's stakeholder groups/publics (7 points)		
Clear, concise writing style; assignment free from spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors; correct use of citation style (5 points)		
Bonus opportunity – going above and beyond the required information (up to 5 points)		
25 possible points		Total:

Peer Review: Fact Sheet

Graded Elements	Comments	Points Earned
Clear description of facts related to the organization, written in lay language (no jargon) (8 points)		
Quality and depth of information provided; answers 5 w's and 1 h (10 points)		
Clear, concise writing with no spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors (4 points)		
Creativity, layout and design of information (3 points)		
25 possible points		Total:

Peer Review: News Release

Required Element	Comments	Score
Writing Guidelines: • Publicity, product, financial, event, personnel, or tips/hint type of release • Includes headline and lead • Uses inverted pyramid and AP style • Answers who, what, where, when, why, how • Uses at least one quotation and one source attribution • Has local interest • Includes boilerplate		10 points
Formatting Guidelines: • Plain formatting, normal margins • Includes company logo at top left • Release date in upper right • Address block and contact name at top • Uses -30- or ### at end • Includes org web address		10 points
Writing Quality		5 points

Peer Review: Social Media Analysis

Required Element	Comments	Score
Description of organization's social media use: 1) Based on what you see, what is the PURPOSE of the use of this social media platform for the organization? 2) What is the CHARACTER/PERSONA your client is trying to present and cultivate? Provide 1-2 examples to support your assertions (screenshots). 3) What is the overall TONE your client uses in its posts/use of this social network? Provide 1-2 examples to support your assertions (screenshots). 4) What kind of LANGUAGE does your client use in posts on this social network? Provide 1-2 examples that support your assertions (screenshots).		10 points
Assessment of genuine two-way communication between your organization and its publics: 5) Based on what you've found, do you think your client uses social media to connect with its audiences? Is genuine two-way communication happening? Or, does the organization use its social media platform to push information out and not listen and respond to feedback?		10 points

6) Summarize how well (or poorly) your client uses its social media account based on your answers to the questions above.		5 points
Writing Quality		5 points

Appendix G: Client Project/Portfolio

Client Project: Organization Portfolio
Total project points: 200

The goal of this overall project is to give you an opportunity to think and work strategically on behalf of an organization and to produce communication materials based on the information and knowledge you build during the semester about effective communication. You'll have an opportunity to learn and apply what you learn to a "real-world" situation.

This project will be completed in sections during the semester and each assignment will have a different due date. This way, you don't have to cram to get it all done during the 15th week!

Items included in the Client Project (listed in the order in which you will submit them):
1) Organization Choice – 10 points
2) Organizational Profile – 25 points
3) Fact Sheet or Backgrounder – 20 points
4) News Release – 25 points
5) Social Media Analysis – 25 points
6) Peer Feedback from in-class workshop day – 20 points
7) Final Revised Submission: Revision of items 2-5 above, incorporation of peer and instructor feedback, and proposal letter to client organization – 75 points

A hard copy assignment sheet with a grading breakdown will be distributed for each item listed above in class on the day the assignment is introduced. An electronic copy of the assignment sheet will be posted on our course Canvas page.

A brief description of the purpose of each assignment is listed below:

Item 1 – Organization Choice Ranking: This first assignment asks you to think about what organization you would like to "represent" for the client project. A list of organizations will be presented in class, and you'll have an opportunity to do some research about the ones that interest you. Once you have done some initial research, you will provide a list of three organizations (in order of choice) and brief reasoned position statement describing why you have chosen each of the three organizations on your list. From that list, you'll be assigned to an organization. Submitted individually.

Item 2 – Organizational Profile: Conduct some background research about the organization you've chosen to represent. What does the organization do/what is its purpose? What type of organization is it: public? Private? Non-profit? What kinds of groups does the organization communicate with? Who are its stakeholders? What do you know about them?

Item 3 – Fact Sheet: Based on our discussion of strategic communication and what you've read, compile a fact sheet for your organization. Include relevant data and statistics that would be of interest to the varying stakeholders your organization represents or communicates with and arrange it in an attractive and/or interesting manner.

<u>Item 4 –News Media Release</u>: Releases are the most basic of strategic communications tools and you will create one for your organization using the principles of effective communication and writing you've learned.

<u>Item 5 – Social Media Analysis:</u> As we have and will continue to discuss in class, social media is a key component of communicating to audiences today. Using concepts and principles discussed in class, you will provide an analysis of your organization's use of social media and make recommendations about how to improve it.

<u>Item 6 – Peer Feedback Workshop</u>: In class, you will have an opportunity to work with a partner and provide feedback on his/her first drafts of items 1 through 6. Complete the worksheet in class and submit a review on Blackboard so that your partner has a copy of your edits and feedback.

<u>Item 7 – Final Revised Submission</u>: You will combine the feedback you receive from Dr. Cannon and from your peer feedback workshop partners and revise items 2 through 6 for a final time, and submit a brief evaluation outlining your thoughts about the peer workshop process. Finally, you will include a letter to your client organization, which will introduce the packet of items you are submitting for their consideration.

Client Project – Organization Choice Ranking
10 points, due January 26 by 9:30am on Canvas

Preparation:
This assignment is the first one in the semester-long Client Project (CP). You will choose three organizations from the list provided and rank them according to the order in which you'd choose them as your "client" this semester. Explain a bit about why you've chosen each of the organizations – see below for more information. Based on the rankings and explanations you provide, you'll be assigned a client organization you'll "represent" for the semester-long client project.

Directions:
- Spend some time researching organizations from the list provided that interest you. Look at their web presence (web sites, social media, what other organizations and news media say about the organization) and ask yourself which three organizations you'd most like to have as your "client" this semester.
- Choose three organizations from the list that you would like to represent for the purpose of this semester-long project. You will represent this organization as a a communication consultant, so choose carefully and select three that you think will hold your interest!
- Rank the organizations in order of your choices (1 = first choice, 3 = third choice). Provide a one-page rationale for choosing these three organizations. In the description, explain:
    1. Why you chose each organization,
    2. What about each one interests you, and
    3. Any challenges you foresee in representing each organization as a communication consultant

Below are some *guiding questions* to consider when working on this assignment. You do not need to answer each of these and there's no need to list each question and provide an answer; rather, use these questions to help you write your responses to the points above in a narrative, essay-type format.

Guiding questions:
- Do some research into the organizations on the list and spend time investigating ones you find interesting – are you passionate about agriculture? Advocating for children? Would you like to eventually work for a non-profit organization? Is working for a local, state or national governmental agency in your future?
- What about each of these organization appeals to you? Do you have a previous connection? Know someone who works there? Based on your preliminary research, do they have values or principles you adhere to?

(over)

Grading Breakdown:

- 8 points – Answers items 1-3 above, quality of thought, completeness of explanation
- 2 points – Clear, concise writing style used; assignment free of spelling, grammar and punctuation errors

Notes:

Client Project: Organization Profile

25 points, due February 18 by 9:30am on Canvas
(This is Item 2 for your Client Project)

When representing any organization as a communications professional, you need to have a clear and in-depth understanding of your client organization. You need to know a bit about the organization's history (why it was founded or how it came into being), what groups of people it serves or works with (its stakeholders and publics), and what type of organization it is.

This assignment will help you learn those things and more about your client organization. All the better prepared you will be to do a fantastic job on upcoming Client Project assignments on behalf of your client!

Directions:

- For the organization you are representing (your "client"), put together a profile of the organization that includes, *at a minimum* the following information in your own words:
    - Organization purpose – what does the organization/company do? Why was it created?
    - A brief description of the organization's background/history – who started it and why? When? Where? Is there a story behind the founding of this organization?
    - Type of organization – is it in the public sector, private sector, or the voluntary sector? Is it a trade association? Non-governmental or intergovernmental organization or agency?
- What kinds of public relations does the organization practice? (Recall Smith Chapter 3 and our class discussions about this topic.) How do you know? What evidence did you find (hint: tactics and tools) of those types of public relations?
- Describe the organization's stakeholder groups:
    - Who are the organization's stakeholder groups?
    - Provide a brief description of each of the stakeholder groups – What is their "stake" in the organization – why do they care about/support the organization? What are their interests?
- Provide a copy of organization's brand, logo, graphic identity
- Tone: Professional, write as if you were describing/providing these answers to a supervisor. Use a narrative format (do not use a bullet list or numbers).

A note on what is meant by "in your own words":
Often organizations have descriptions of many of these required elements on their websites. You must summarize and paraphrase any information you find – **do not copy and paste any wording into your assignment.** This is one of many opportunities you'll have this semester to practice your writing skills, so make a concerted effort at top quality writing. Not using your own words will be considered plagiarism unless you use

direct quotations with quotation marks and proper attribution in a reference list. Plagiarized assignments will receive a score of 0.

Guiding questions:

- What is the intent of the organization? What does it do, produce, create, control? Why does it exist?
- You've thought about why this organization appeals to you when you completed Item 1 – the Organization Choice Rationale assignment. Now think about why it appeals to others. Why do they care about it?
- Recommendation: Use headings to arrange your profile. Given the directions above, what might those headings be?

Grading Breakdown:

- 7 points – Description of organization's purpose, background/history, type of organization (which sector is it in?)
- 6 points – Type(s) of public relations practices and description of examples
- 7 points – Description of organization's stakeholder groups
- 5 points – Clear, concise writing style used; assignment free of spelling, grammar and punctuation errors; if relevant, correct use of citation style.

If you use any direct quotes from the organization's website or materials, *you must*:
- Use an appropriate citation/reference style and a complete listing at the end of the paper (please use "Reference List" as the heading at the end of the assignment). Use MLA or APA style.
    - Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) resource for MLA style
      https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

- Bonus opportunity – Going above and beyond the required information for the profile could earn you up to 5 bonus points on this assignment. Make sure all the information you include is relevant and relates to the assignment!

Notes, Questions:

Client Project: Fact Sheet
Due March 3 at 9:30am on Canvas
25 points

Fact sheets are one of many communication tactics available to share information about your organization. In particular, they are a great way to break down complicated information into easily grasped, bite-sized pieces so reporters and editors can easily find useful details about your client. Other audiences use fact sheets as well – the key is fast, easily understandable information about your organization so it can be used effectively by whoever needs it.

Sometimes fact sheets are used to highlight an organization's stance on an issue and providing important details, publics involved and the organization's position (if it has one) on the issue. More often, fact sheets provide important information about an aspect of the organization. Review our class slides and your notes for specific topics for fact sheets.

For this assignment, it's up to you what the purpose of your fact sheet is – it can be about the organization generally, a specific issue or topic important to the organization and/or its audiences, or it can be prepared in case of a particular crisis that your organization might experience.

Traditionally, fact sheets have been considered part of media kits. Similarly to other items that go into a media kit, fact sheets use the 5 W's model of information: who, what, where, when why, and how. Be sure when compiling your fact sheet that you address each one of these W's (and H).

And finally, envision you're creating the fact sheet for a ***particular audience or public*** you've identified in relation to your organization. This will help determine what should go in the sheet – what things does that audience/public care about? What information will they want? What information do they need?

<u>Directions:</u>
- Create a fact sheet for your client organization that includes the following information:
    - Company/organization name and logo/graphic identity
    - An appropriate heading for the document – should include some indication that this is a fact sheet
    - Contact information – provide information that can be used to contact someone at the organization for more information.
    - Essential information about your client organization: who, what, where, when, why, and how
- Write all of the information in lay terms – in other words, assume the person who will read this will not be familiar with what your company does or any of the terminology used frequently in the industry it's in.

- Keep your text succinct and "punchy" – users want fast information!
- Use at least one chart or graphic, other than the organization's logo. You may put together your own or use one the organization already has published. Be sure to include associated information necessary to understand the chart/graphic, such as a legend or brief description of the graphic.
  - o You can create your fact sheet as an infographic if you want! Some resources:
    - ▪ Infographic Creator on Canva https://www.canva.com/create/infographics/
    - ▪ Piktochart - http://piktochart.com/
    - ▪ Vennage - https://venngage.com/
- Layout and design:
  - o Use only the front and back of a single piece of paper – it's actually best to only use the front side if you're able.
  - o Use font sizes appropriate for the text – nothing too small or too big; be sure it can be read when printed out
  - o Consider using short bulleted lists or graphics that help convey information
  - o Use your best judgment about how much white space to include, but be sure not to cram information onto the page
  - o Use bold, text boxes, graphics and other devices to break up the information
- Employ some element of creativity – what you choose to do is up to you, but whatever creative elements you add should enhance the professional look of the fact sheet and contribute to the overall aesthetic of the document.

Grading Breakdown:

- Clear description of facts related to your organization or its stance on the issue, written in lay language – 8 points
- Quality and depth of information provided, answers to the 5 W's and one H – 10 points
- Clear, concise writing with no spelling, grammar and punctuation errors – 4 points
- Creativity, layout and design of information – 3 points

Notes:

Client Project: News Release
25 points, due March 17 at 9:30 am on Canvas

As you know by now, news releases are tactics used to share information about your organization with various media outlets. Releases are one of the most used, and most important, communication tactics a professional can use on behalf of a client organization.

Review the information provided in class and on our course Canvas page to create a strong news release for your client.

The news release must have news value and relate to your organization. You can "invent" the subject of the release (have it be hypothetical), but be sure to include and address ALL of the items below in whatever you create.

The release can be (and is actually better if it really is) about something your organization is actually doing, going to do, just did. If you have questions about what's acceptable for a topic, use your Project Ideation Teams and feel free to ask me (Dr. Cannon)!

If you write the release about an event, product, or other item that is actually happening in your organization, be sure the work you do is purely your own. Don't "borrow" the language in your release from work that already exists. The purpose of this assignment is for you to create a news release of your own!

Exception to the above directions – if your organization already has and uses a boilerplate, you may use that directly. If your organization does not have one, you need to create one.

Directions:

Write a news release that adheres to the following **writing guidelines**:
- Is one of the types of releases discussed in class: publicity, product, financial, event, personnel, or tips/hint news release
- Includes a appropriate headline and lead
- Uses the inverted pyramid style of writing – most important information at the top – and AP style
- Answers the 5w's and one h – **who, what, where, when, why and how**
- Uses at least one quotation from a source and attribution (who is that source?)
    - For each quotation, include an attribution
- Has LOCAL interest – review our discussions about what constitutes local interest for a media outlet!
- Boilerplate statement about your organization

Follow these **formatting guidelines**:
- Plain formatting, standard margins (standard is 1 inch, all sides)
- Include company logo at the top left hand of the release (left justified header)

- Release date in upper right hand corner
- Address block and contact name at top left, under logo/graphic
- For releases that span more than a single page use --More-- at the bottom of first page
- Use the conventional -30- or ### at end of body copy, before boilerplate
- Include the organization's web address in an appropriate location on the page

Grading Breakdown:

- Required writing elements – 10 points
- Required formatting elements – 10 points
- Writing quality – 5 points

Client Project: Social Media Analysis
25 points, due April 5 at 9:30 am on Canvas

Our class focus is communicating to a variety of audiences using strategic communication principles. We've discussed several tools to help communicators, but social media are one of the most significant set of tools available today.

This assignment will help you learn more about your client organization's use of social media and provide an opportunity for you to evaluate it based on concepts and ideas discussed in class.

Directions:
Select one social media platform your organization uses for this assignment. It can be Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, etc., but my strong recommendation is to select the platform your client organization uses most. For example, if the organization has an account on Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest but seems to use Twitter more often (has more tweets, posts, lots of followers and content) then use it for the analysis.

Spend some time looking at the content and material shared by your client on the platform, and look at different time periods (go back and see how/what they did last fall, spring, etc.). What kind of information is it? Using the Social Media Brand Voice handout and additional resources from class, answer the questions below. Be sure to tie in concepts and material from class and our readings.

Address the following questions:
1) Based on what you see, what is the PURPOSE of the use of this social media platform for the organization?
2) What is the CHARACTER/PERSONA your client is trying to present and cultivate? Provide 1-2 examples to support your assertions (screenshots).
3) What is the overall TONE your client uses in its posts/use of this social network? Provide 1-2 examples to support your assertions (screenshots).
4) What kind of LANGUAGE does your client use in posts on this social network? Provide 1-2 examples that support your assertions (screenshots).
5) One of the main purposes of using social and digital media is to have genuine two-way communication between an organization and its publics.
   - Based on what you've found, do you think your client uses social media to connect with its audiences? Is genuine two-way communication happening? Or, does the organization use its social media platform to push information out and not listen and respond to feedback?
6) Summarize how well (or poorly) your client uses its social media account based on your answers to the questions above.

(over)

Grading Breakdown:

- Description of organization's social media use (addressing items 1-3) – 10 points
- Items 1-5 as listed above – 10 points
- Summary of how well/poorly your client uses this social account – 5 points
- Writing quality (including organization of ideas, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.) – 5 points

Final Client Project Submission
Due Thursday, 4/28 by 11:59 p.m., 75 points
NO LATE SUBMISSIONS ACCEPTED

As you know, the goal of this overall project was to give you an opportunity to produce communications pieces on behalf of an organization based on what you learned in class this semester. Now it's time to revise and turn in your final product of brilliance!

To date you have completed:
1) Organization Choice Rationale
2) Organizational Profile
3) Fact Sheet
4) News Release
5) Social Media Analysis
6) Peer Feedback from in-class workshop day – on Thursday 4/21

Step 1) Make final revisions, edits and improvements to the project elements listed below, using what you've learned this semester and the feedback you've gotten from Dr. Cannon*, your peer workshop partners, and your Project Ideation Team members:
- Organizational Profile
- Fact Sheet
- News Release
- Social Media Analysis

Important Information:
- You must incorporate feedback from Dr. Cannon to receive credit for revisions.
- You are strongly encouraged to incorporate feedback from your peer reviewer(s), as long as the suggestions are within the bounds of the assignment.
- **You must enhance each element in some way, regardless of the score you received on the first submission**. For example, if you earned a 25/25 on your Organizational Profile and have no suggested changes or revisions from Dr. Cannon, you must still update your assignment. DO NOT turn in the exact same assignment – take the opportunity to incorporate what you've learned in class between the time you turned in the first version of the assignment and when you turn in the final project. Think Supercommunicator book material!!
- Pay attention to formatting your documents so that your message is easy for readers to follow.

Step 2) Write an introduction and summary to accompany your materials.
- In your introduction, describe the purpose of each of the elements included in the project (the organizational profile, fact sheet, news release, and social media analysis). Provide an introduction to what a reader will see in your client portfolio. Briefly describe the process you went through this semester to create this portfolio about your client.
- In your summary, provide a final assessment of how well your organization communicates to its public audiences, based on what you've learned this semester. Provide three specific suggestions for what the organization could do to improve its communication, again based on what you've learned this semester.

Step 3) Once you have revised your assignments and have a final *professional* copy of your materials, submit them as **one PDF document** on Canvas.

- Very important – do not submit your work as a Microsoft Word file!!! The system will only accept PDF file documents. Work ahead of time if you are not familiar with creating and managing PDFs!!
- Submit your single PDF file to the assignment "Final Client Project – Portfolio"
- As always, be sure you include your NAME in the file document name so that when I download your work, you get credit for it!

Grading Breakdown

Revisions to PR Materials – 75 points total
- Improvements, edits and incorporation of feedback on each of the following:
    o Organizational Profile – 10 points
    o Fact Sheet – 10 points
    o News Release – 10 points
    o Social Media Analysis – 10 points
- Introduction – 15 points
- Summary – 15 points
- Overall writing quality – 5 points

Total points possible on final submission of client portfolio = 75

Appendix H: Course Outline Topics

Communicating to Public Audiences, Spring 2016
Course Outline – Content and Information

Unit 1 – What is Public Relations?
- Welcome to the course – what will we be doing this semester?
- What Public Relations IS and IS NOT (online session; no class meeting)
- What Public Relations IS revisited
  - Introducing the Client Project
- Identifying Public Relations Efforts – Tools of PR
  - Analyzing Messages – activity
- Public Relations in Society
- The Client Project
  - Project Ideation Teams – Team Activity
- Types of Public Relations (Snow Day – online activity)
- Types of Public Relations
  - Types of Organizations and "Sectors" of Industry
- Client Project – Organizational Profile Workday
  - Team Activity

Unit 2 – Practicing Public Relations
- Researching an Organization – Identifying Publics and Stakeholders
- Publics (Audiences) and Research
  - Activity on determining publics
- Practicing PR – Writing, Research, Theory
- Client Project – Producing Materials: Tactics
- Public Relations Tactics – News Releases
- Workday – Project Ideation Teams
  - News Releases and Fact Sheets

Unit 3 – Becoming a Supercommunicator
- How Digital is Changing Communication
- Introducing the Book Discussion Assignment
- Digital Communication and Social Media
- Social Media Analysis – Analyzing Client Organizations
- Digital Communication and Social Media
- Supercommunicator – Reading 1: Know Thy Audience
- Supercommunicator – Reading 2: Know Thy Subject
- Supercommunicator – Reading 3: Humanize Your Communication
- Supercommunicator – Reading 4: Getting an Audience to Care
- Supercommunicator – Reading 5: Building Blocks & Analogies
- Supercommunicator – Reading 6: Visual & Interactive

Unit 4 – Pulling it All Together

- Compiling Your Client Project – Strategies for Revision
- Providing Useful and Effective Feedback for Colleagues
- In-class workshop day
- Optional individual meetings and workshop day