

Course Syllabus

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 Edit

COM378, Sec. 01 Public Relations Management & Research

School of Communication

Illinois State University

Spring 2026

Class Meetings: 3:35 to 4:50 p.m. in 162 Fell Hall

Lead Student: Peter M. Smudde, Ph.D., [APR](https://www.prsa.org/Learning/Accreditation/index.html#.WFL7hLlrLRY) 

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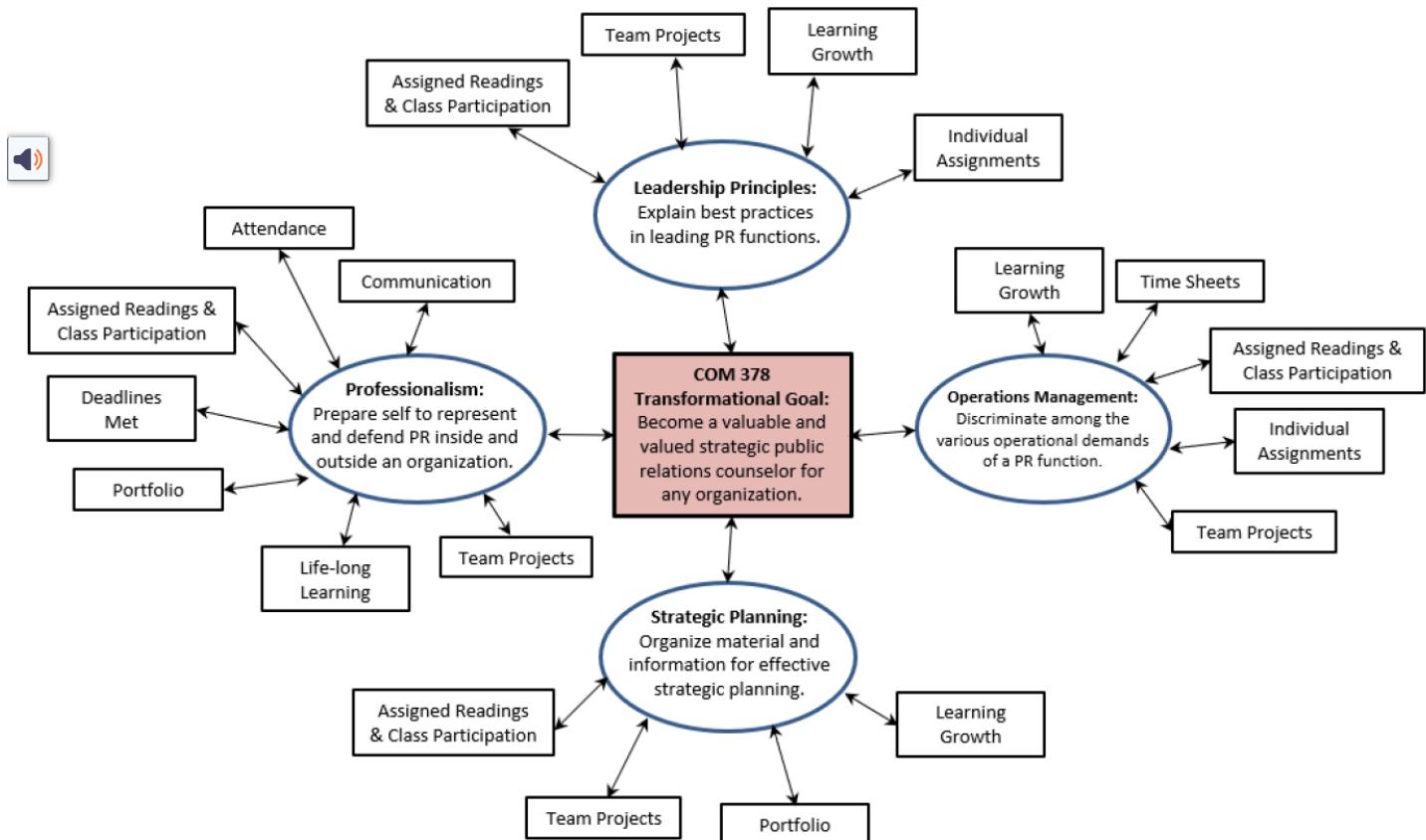
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1.0 Course Description

As the “senior capstone course” focus is on the leading and managing of the everyday matters of a public relations function. Prerequisites: COM 111, 161, 178, 268, 297

2.0 Course Design

In this course, which is the capstone course for the public relations major, you will be challenged to think, work and produce discourse that would rival that of full-time, experienced PR professionals. *In this way, by the end of this course, you should be ready to become a valuable and valued strategic public relations counselor for any organization.* With this vision for the course at the center, the following graphic shows how learning objectives support it and assignments tie to the objectives and, thereby, the vision.



Given these connections, I like to emphasize that theory and practice inform and rely on each other. Also, in the design of my courses, I apply many of the practices and demands of “real world” public relations. Make sure you read [My Teaching Philosophy 11-2021.pdf](#) (<https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6969306?wrap=1>).  (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6969306/download?download_frd=1)  https://docreader.readspeakert.com/docreader/?cid=14039&lang=en_us&url=https%3A%2F%2Finst-fs-pdx-

<prod.inscloudgate.net%2Ffiles%2F3beea1dd-bc9b-49ef-8e38-8205e32c6508%2FMy%2520Teaching%2520Philosophy%252011-2021.pdf%3Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMiJ9eyJpYXQiOjE3NjgzOTczNzAsInVzZXJfaWQiOm51bGwsInJlc291cmNljoI2ZpbGVzLzNiZWVnKHnJbOpQAMl6rewR181TMYHRO4ffvI6xyFM5Bnc7sBDUeUFsqDtasz34DltQ> to know how I approach my work with you.

You must read the assigned readings; take notes on them; prepare questions, comments, or examples about them; and be ready to discuss the material from the readings in class meetings. Lessons and skills in writing, critical thinking, problem-solving, research methods, and public relations from other PR classes will be vital.

3.0 Continued Enrollment

Your enrollment in this class constitutes agreement with all aspects of this syllabus, including the "Course Policies" section and any additions or alterations that may be made to this syllabus during the course of the semester. Additions include announcements I post for the class in Canvas or make in class, and additions include e-mail sent to class members. Such additions include information about the course, assignments, and so on. These announcements and e-mail are equally important when it comes to evaluating your work, because announcements may contain clarifications or other help that fit within assignments' requirements.

4.0 Required Texts

- American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th ed. Washington, DC: Author.
- Associated Press. (2024). *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law: 2024-2026* (57th ed.) New York: Author.
- Smudde, P. M. (2023). *Managing public relations: Business Principles and Tools for Strategic Communication* (2nd). New York: Routledge.
- Other required readings are given in Section 9.0 and are provided for you in Canvas.

5.0 Outside Preparation

Plan on spending between six to nine hours (or more, depending on how you learn) each week outside of class on your work for this course. (See ISU's [Credit Hour Policy 4.1.19](http://policy.illinoisstate.edu/academic/4-1-19.shtml) (<http://policy.illinoisstate.edu/academic/4-1-19.shtml>)). Also see "[Time Management/Credit Hour Policy](https://prodev.illinoisstate.edu/online/learner-support/#require4)" (<https://prodev.illinoisstate.edu/online/learner-support/#require4>) for weekly and daily breakdown.) You will need this time to complete assigned readings, prepare for class, write papers, develop team projects, and study for exams. *You are expected to read, think critically about, and prepare three to five comments or questions about the material before coming to each class meeting.* Also refer back to my "Welcome" note in Canvas.

6.0 Learning Assessments

Your success in this class depends greatly on you completing the assigned readings, participating in class discussions about the readings, applying lessons from other courses, visiting me with your questions, working well with your peers, following directions, and, ultimately, producing great products for the assignments. Assessment of students' learning against the course's objectives shall be done through a combination of learning assessments, which fall into the following two categories:

6.1 Informal/Ungraded Assessments

I can measure how well you are learning *in process* by observing, listening to you, and talking with you. These data reveal your personal processes, attitudes, and other matters that are part of how and how well you learn. Examples include notes/notecards for class discussions, chatting about course material before and during class, solving one or more of any chapter's exercises, the quality of questions and discussion in class, the amount of sharing/disclosure, learning ownership, assignment discussion, visits with me, and attitude.

6.2 Formal/Graded Assessments

I can measure how well you can apply your learning by evaluating the *work you produce* in response to specific assignments. *All assignments are due by 3:35:00 p.m. in Section 9.0.* Your finished work is what is graded and used to determine your final, overall level of mastery of the course's material by course's end. Basic parameters for all formal, graded assessments are given in the table below. Specific requirements and expectations for each formal assessment are provided separately on Canvas. See Section 18.0 and its subsections. If you are having trouble completing your work for this class, contact me and the Dean of Students Office immediately or see Section 8.0. Please visit with me early and often to make sure you're "on track" with any and all assignments.

Formal Assessments	Basic Description
Class Citizenship	I will keep track of your performance in the class based on how well you participate in it. This idea means you come to all class meetings (early is on time; on time is late); you come to class meetings having read, thought about, and taken notes about a day's planned material; you attend assignment meetings with drafts and self-analyses of them; you engage in class discussion with relevant, respectful, coherent, and helpful comments and questions; you listen attentively to the class' discussion and consider sharing what's on your mind; you make (and share) connections between what we cover and what you learned in

other courses or what is going on in the world that bears on this class; you follow instructions/directions for assignments and ask good questions about your work in progress; and you turn in your finished work before or by the day and time it is due. In short: You come to the meeting prepared like you must in your career after graduation. I will call on people randomly for their thoughts about the readings and note the strength or weakness of their responses as part of my tracking everyone's engagement. I would use this record of class citizenship to help round up final course grades, *if and only if* any final grade is <1 percentage point away from the next-highest letter grade.

Readings
Quizzes

To make sure everyone completes the assigned readings, I will use quizzes 10 selected class meetings. The quizzes shall be "closed source" and consist of several items (questions and/or statements) for you to address specifically based on the material in the assigned readings. Responses to items shall be evaluated based on the accuracy and clarity of one's answers. You may use handwritten or typed notes that are on paper, including your personal notes on PowerPoint printouts; no digital devices allowed. *Make-up quizzes may be given for excused absences.*

Time Sheets

To foster understanding about time management in professional settings, you will use a time-sheet template on Canvas to track and analyze your use of time in this course. You must turn in your time sheets as attachments by email directly to me before/by the official starting time of class as indicated on the course schedule. Each timesheet is worth 10 points, and a scoring rubric is posted on Canvas.

Infographic
🔊

One 50-point infographic is required in this course. The assignment is for individuals, is available on Canvas, and is due on the date shown Section 9.0. You must follow the assignment's directions and apply critical thinking skills about the concepts covered in this course to successfully address the problem given in the assignment.

Strategic Plan
Critique (SPC)

A team-based assignment worth 100 points is a detailed critique of an organizational strategic plan. The details of the assignment and its score sheet are available on Canvas, and they will apply material covered during class meetings and the textbook. You may turn in drafts for "no stakes" feedback, and any meetings with the instructor are part of this "no stakes" feedback. Points will be awarded to all team members only for the final product. You may turn in drafts for "no stakes" feedback, and any meetings with the instructor are part of this "no stakes" feedback. Points will be awarded to all team members only for the final product.

Strategic Plan
Project (SPP)

A team-based project worth 100 points is a detailed strategic plan you conceptualize, develop, and produce in response to a real-world case. The details of the assignment, a template for your final product, and the score sheet are available on Canvas. You must apply material from this course and other PR courses. You may turn in drafts for "no stakes" feedback, and any meetings with the instructor are part of "no stakes" feedback. Points will be awarded to all team members only for the final product.

Portfolio

You will assemble examples of your best work (courses and jobs/internships) in a professional portfolio, worth 100 points. Prospective employers frequently want to see work samples. Thus, your professional interests will be well served by developing a portfolio of your actual public relations work and, to the extent possible, the results

you've achieved through this work. The assignment may be done as an electronic version or in hardcopy. The assignment and score sheet are available on Canvas.

The writing assignments given in the above table are meant to (1) apply principles and concepts covered in this course to realistic problems and (2) build upon and challenge you to improve your current skill level—to be more consistent with “real world” demands. (See “My Philosophy of Teaching and Learning.”) All written work is expected to fulfill assignments’ contexts, purposes, and audiences just as they would if they were to be written to meet actual client needs. (See other material about writing expectations provided for this class.) *If the writing in any assignment that is turned in does not meet this expectation, I reserve the right to withhold any or all points, depending on the severity of the writing's inappropriateness/ineffectiveness.*

Good writing is *both* strong in content and technically correct in its presentation (i.e., grammar, style, discourse conventions, layout, and printing). All written work must fulfill the content requirements given in the assignments, conform to American Psychological Association (APA) style for referencing sources, Associated Press (AP) style, and be free of grammar, spelling, style, formatting, and English usage errors.

7.0 Course Grading Policy

Final grades are assigned on the basis of accumulation of points compared to the set scale given below in this section, not percentages. I do not “curve” grades on any assignment, nor do I “curve” final course grades. *I evaluate the end products of your work, not effort.* Students are encouraged to keep track of the points they have accumulated, and your grades will be posted on Canvas so you can monitor your performance, which I encourage you to do frequently and discuss with me. If I make an error in grading, I'll always apologize and make things right. Here is a breakdown of the point values in this course:

Assignment	Available Points
Weekly Time Sheets (4 @ 10 pts ea.)	40
Readings Quizzes (10 @ 10 pts ea.)	100
Infographic on AI in PR	50
Strategic Plan Critique 	100
Strategic Plan Project	100
Portfolio	100
Grand Total	490

I will reveal scores in the Canvas grade book only after I have graded all students' work that was turned in. If you have questions about my evaluation of your work, please see me during office hours *within one week* after I have returned your work. I will not discuss grades at any other time. Also see the “Attendance” policy for grade impacts.

I do not “round up” or “round down” points toward final course grades, except in cases for fractions of points, and at that rate I use conventional rounding procedures, e.g. 824.5 would be rounded to 825, but 824.4 would be rounded to 824. The following scale will be used to determine letter grades at the end of this course:

A = 490-451
B = 450-402
C = 401-353
D = 352-304
F = 303-0

Note that the lowest A was calculated at **92%** of the total earnable points and rounded up, the lowest B at **82%** and rounded up, and so on. I reserve the right to revise all or part of this grading scale, which would be announced in class and/or email and Canvas. You are responsible for obtaining any such revisions.

Incompletes will be granted only when a documented emergency prevents you from completing the class, you contacted the Dean of Students Office, and you have successfully completed and passed at least approximately two-thirds (66%) of the course's formal assignments.

8.0 Student Accommodations

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 308 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit Student Access and Accommodation Service online at <https://studentaccess.illinoisstate.edu/index.php>.

9.0 Course Schedule (subject to change; make sure **you** obtain changes)

C = Canvas. RQ = Readings Quiz

Introduction:
Expectations,
1/12 assignments, & Syllabus. Smudde, "Introduction." "[New CCO Report...](https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6899778?wrap=1) (<https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6899778?wrap=1>).  (ht
executive
perspective.

Reading Tips. 1/14 Learning to Learn.	"Make it Stick (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6899769?wrap=1) ↴ (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6899843/download?download_frd=1) ↴ https://docreader.readspeakr.com/docread69695b56c96c%2FReading%2520Efficiently%2520%252B%2520Effectively.pptx?Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMi. ↳ https://docreader.readspeakr.com/docreader/?cid=14039&lang=en_us&url=https%3A%2F%2Finst-fs-pdx-prod.inscloudgate.net%2F
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**No class
meeting—Dr.
1/19 Martin Luther
King Jr.
holiday.**

Leadership & Management in PR Smudde, Ch. 1 "[CCO as Pacesetter](https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6899819?wrap=1) (<https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6899819?wrap=1>)" (<https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6899819?wrap=1>)

1/26	L&M cont'd. Effective meetings. Memos.	<p>Gardner+Mortensen (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6899829?wrap=1)</p> <p>How%2520to%2520Stay%2520Focused%2520If%2520You%25E2%2580%2599re%2520Assigned%2520to%2520Multiple%2520Projects%2520[C].Grunig+Hunt%2520Four%2520PR%2520Models (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6899845?wrap=1)</p> <p>938ca3117b73%2FGrunig%2520BHunt%2520Four%2520PR%2520Models.pptx?3Ftoken%3DeyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzUxMiJ9</p>
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Biz writing:	
1/28	Memos, letters, writing tests & AI
	All files in "Business Writing" folder [C]

Biz writing: 2/2 Document design.

Teams & evaluations.	Smudde, Ch. 2. Levine & Dean (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/files/6899844?wrap=1)
2/4 Project management. Generations	 Levine & Dean (https://docreader.readspeaker.com/docreader/?cid=14039&lang=en_us&url=https%3A%2F%2Finst-fs-pdx-prod.inscloudgate.net%2FKH0OUuMVGkydy7cBHusJghX5NAwwFhzuHMnmS3bi_aL4Eo9Lqo41m3xNCrO5Xut7HKYfKx-aXlu8j9OXOEg) [C].

2/9 Professionalism, Ethics, & Law Smudde, Ch. 3 **PRSA Code of Ethics**  (<https://www.prsa.org/about/ethics/prsa-code-of-ethics>).

2/11 Agency & Nonagency PR Smudde, Ch. 4.

2/16 Ops. Tools 1 Smudde, Ch. 5 (pp. 117-140) & Apx A.

2/18 Ops. Tools 1 cont'd. Smudde, Ch. 5 (pp. 140-155)

2/23 Ops. Tools 1 cont'd.

2/25 Ops Tools 2 Smudde, Ch. 6.

3/2 Ops Tools 2 cont'd.

Gantt & org.
3/4 charts. Budget Appendix A. tables.

3/9 **No class**
& **meetings—**
3/11 **spring break**

SPC workday &
3/16 meetings with
Pete

 SPC workday &
3/18 meetings with
Pete

Executive
3/23 Decision-making Smudde, Ch. 7

3/25 Client Communication Smudde, Ch. 8

Client
3/30 Communication cont'd.

4/1 Business Development Smudde, Ch. 9

SPP workday &
4/6 meetings with
Pete

SPP workday &
4/8 meetings with
Pete

SPP workday &
4/13 meetings with
Pete

SPP workday &
4/15 meetings with
Pete

4/20 RFPs, NBPs, & Smudde, Ch. 10
Negotiation

4/22 Career Planning Smudde, Ch. 11. [PR Council.](https://prcouncil.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/PRC-To-Lead-Or-Leave-Final-1.pdf) [\(https://prcouncil.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/PRC-To-Lead-Or-Leave-Final-1.pdf\)](https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/) [\(https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/\)](https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/)

4/27 Generations in the workplace Three or more other articles in Ch. 11 module [C]. Revisit 2/4 readings.

4/29 Job searching & career planning Bring your job-search material & any jobs you want.

5/4 Portfolio workday & meet with Pete

5/6 Portfolio workday & meet with Pete

Final Exam
5/ Period (use if needed)



Course Policies

In all my courses I challenge students to *strive for perfection* (or at least near perfection) in their work. Why? The answer is that your bosses, peers and, especially, clients will expect that from you throughout your career. So this course, like the others you've taken, is designed to extend your knowledge, strengthen your analytical skills, and refine your work habits. This course, then, challenges you to think, work and produce discourse that would approximate that of full-time professionals. To manage matters in this course, there are several policy areas given below.

10.0 Class Civility

The following 11 points are habits that, should you choose to employ them, can help you become successful in this course and contribute to a great learning environment for all of us. You also are expected to be familiar with [ISU's Code of Student Conduct](https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/) (<https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/>). The 11 points below are not individually or collectively any kind of guarantee about grades you may earn for the course. They make up a prescription for you to effectively manage your work and learn the material in this course.

1. Read, take notes on, develop comments and questions about, and seriously think about the assigned readings before coming to class.
2. Complete assignments/activities to prepare for class.
3. Arrive early and attend all class meetings and required meetings with the professor.
4. Offer helpful comments during discussions and activities and encourage comments from your fellow classmates.
5. Treat everyone with respect.
6. Participate in course activities with genuine enthusiasm and interest. Attitude is key.
7. Be attentive while others are talking or presenting.
8. Only engage in class activities during class.
9. Ensure all electronic devices are turned off during class, except for those allowed.
10. Take good notes during class meetings.
11. Visit with me, work with each other, and seek help from students who've taken the class before to learn the material outside of class.

11.0 Cell Phones, Laptops, and other Electronic Devices

Very recent research shows that taking notes by hand with pen and paper results in far better learning than when taking notes on a digital devise. (See me for the sources.) Even so, you may bring and use a laptop or tablet computer with wireless connectivity during class, but please use it only to help you in your learning this class' content and not surf the Web, chat with people, or do any other nonclass-related stuff. If you find something useful that pertains to the course's content, please share it with the class. Turn off your device's volume. No earphones or headphones are allowed. Video and audio recording is prohibited.

Please turn **off** all other electronic devices while attending class. *If your phone goes off in class, or if you are using a high-tech device that I have not approved for use in this class, you will automatically lose 5 points for each occurrence.* See me before class if you must have your cell phone on because of a legitimate need to do so. You may use a device only with my approval.

12.0 Class Format

In this course I like to connect the dots between theory and practice because they inform and rely on each other. Also, in the design of this course, I apply many of the practices and demands of "real world" so you can become prepared for how you will be managed in your jobs after graduation. We all are students, so our class meetings will be "seminar style," where we examine, discuss, and work with course material.

Because this class bridges theory and practice, it relies heavily on discussion and your participation. I will track how well (i.e., quality and quantity) everyone contributes to class discussion (see the file in Canvas' assignments list). Topics and appropriate readings are planned for each meeting, and we may pursue other avenues in our investigation of public relations. Lessons and skills in writing, critical thinking, and communication from other classes will be important. *You are expected to read and think critically about the material for each class, which will be important to succeeding in the assignments.*

13.0 Class Meetings

The following are policies about specific matters for class meetings.

- Starting On Time — The official starting time for class meetings is **not** your arrival time. Come early! We will begin on time, and this is why your assignments are due before/by the official starting time of class as stated in the semester schedule. Remember this and act on it: "Early is on time. On time is late. Late is unacceptable."
- Finishing Early — Whenever we finish our class meetings early, this still can be important time for you to help your own learning at an individual level. Visit with me, talk with each other, or get things organized for yourself in that time. You may leave, if you wish. But remember that because we all have our class meetings already blocked off in our schedules, the time can be used well for your individual needs. And you can still visit with one of us during office hours and make appointments.
- Continued/Open Topic Days — Days on the Course Schedule may be open-ended so that we can discuss subjects and issues that need extra time to cover or matters you want to cover not in the Course Schedule that are directly related to this course. If the schedule shows such days, you should submit ideas *a week or more in advance* so suitable preparation can be made for the class. Alternatively, if no ideas are offered, I will choose to address a topic that was raised in a prior class meeting that is worthy of more exploration. Anyone who submits ideas will be expected to play a lead role in class discussion, but I will assemble material for the class. Plan on being accountable for the material covered during these days on exams and assignments.
- Late Start to Class — On the very rare possibility that I am not in class promptly at the official starting time (or early), rest assured that I am on my way. Please remain in the classroom until I arrive. I will take attendance. We'll cover what material we can that is scheduled for that day. Any homework that is due will be collected. Any exam scheduled for that day will be given as planned.
- Class Cancellation — Only two conditions are likely to exist when classes are cancelled: (1) ISU's president has closed the university for a weather-related or another reason, or (2) I am unable to make it to ISU because of an illness, jury duty, or another situation. In any case, if class is cancelled, you will receive an official notice by e-mail. If I must cancel class, a notice will be posted in the classroom and/or on the doorway. Any assignment due or exam scheduled for a day when class is cancelled will be due or done at the next class meeting. If classes are cancelled and no assignment or exam is scheduled, we will forego covering the material we planned for that day and continue with material scheduled for the next class period. Any questions about material planned for a cancelled class meeting can be handled by visiting with me in my offices, sending an e-mail, using Canvas chat, or answering questions at the next class meeting. In either situation, expect me to hold class online through Canvas during an announced day and time to cover planned material, and attendance will be optional.

14.0 Attendance

I expect you to come to every class meeting, just like you would attend meetings for a job you would hold, and I will take attendance for each class period. My main objective with my attendance policy is to inspire you to take responsibility for "reporting to work" and, if you cannot, take responsibility for telling me why and having *bona fide* documentation whenever possible. This objective and policy are based on industry practices. "Blowing off" class/work is bad and unacceptable behavior.

14.1 Excused and Unexcused Absences

For an absence to be considered "excused" you must inform me prior to class, if at all possible. Excused absences include participation in a university-sanctioned event, the death of a family member (see [University Policy and Procedures 2.1.27 Student Bereavement Policy](#) (<http://policy.illinoisstate.edu/students/2-1-27.shtml>), online), incapacitating illness, and natural disaster. Other absences (e.g., cold/flu, weddings, babies, car trouble, house/apartment problem, etc.) will be considered individually, and documentation will be necessary. For any absence to be excused I require written verification of the reason for missing class. If your absence will be extensive, contact the Dean of Students Office immediately.

Absences because of personal/vacation travel I typically will not excuse because the university calendar has been available, and everyone should have used it when planning such travel so that it doesn't interfere with school. (This is equivalent to when companies don't let employees take vacations when business needs are particularly high.) I may grant exceptions when travel had to have been booked significantly in advance and there is documentation to that effect.

Two-weeks' worth of unexcused absences will result in one full letter-grade reduction for your final grade for the course. Continued absences will be reported to the Dean of Students Office and all evaluation of any work you turn in will cease. You must attend and participate in class meetings (see the "Class Civility" section) to obtain my evaluation of your work.

14.2 Late Arrival to Class and Attendance Implications

Late arrival to class (i.e., less than 30 minutes after class begins) will not be penalized under the attendance policy, although I may note you were late on the attendance sheet. Late arrival after 30 minutes of class qualifies as an unexcused absence. Remember to sign in! If an assignment is due and you are late, the penalty for late work will be enforced. (See the "Assignments Expectations" section of this syllabus.) If you drive to campus, always give yourself time—at least twice the amount of time you think you need—to find a parking spot and get to class. And that should be the rule whether you drive to campus from town or from some other area of the state or country.

14.3 Your Responsibility for Course Material

If you miss class or are late, you are responsible for turning in all assignments and obtaining all assignments, notes, and any other information that is given in class, including any alterations to this syllabus. I will not "reteach" material for you, although I'd be glad to answer specific questions. Again, excused absences and late arrivals (less than 30 minutes after class begins) will not count against you.

15.0 Online Communication

I use e-mail to communicate directly to you as an individual and as a class. Clean out and check your ISU e-mail account frequently for notes or announcements from me, your fellow students, the department, and the college. *Not checking your e-mail or Canvas is not grounds for any excuse for not doing or not doing well on any assignment. It's your responsibility to (1) keep your e-mail accounts open and up-to-date and (2) monitor your e-mail and Canvas class news frequently.*

You must get used to the fact that good language use is necessary in every written document you prepare. This includes e-mail. I will only open and respond to your e-mail me within 24 hours when:

1. A clear and simple subject line is given that, within 10 words or less, says exactly which class you're in and what topic(s) you're writing about. Don't be lazy and leave an old subject line from a previous e-mail I sent that has nothing to do with your e-mail's content. I will not reply to e-mail that recycles old subject lines that are not directly related to your e-mail content.
2. Your e-mail text is written effectively and concisely, and it should be as free of errors as possible.

By the way, I will apply these rules when I send e-mail to you. Follow my example for e-mail I send you.

16.0 Online Course Material

I use Canvas extensively to organize the material for this course and make announcements about our class. You can access Canvas through My.IllinoisState.edu. If you have problems with Canvas, let me know *and* call the Help Desk at 309-438-4357.

The Canvas site for this class contains additional, required, and helpful reading material for this course. This material used in connection with the course may be subject to copyright protection. Your viewing of the material posted on Canvas does not imply any right to reproduce, to retransmit or to redisplay it other than for your own personal or educational use. Links to other sites are provided for the convenience of the site user (staff or student) or visitor and do not imply any affiliation or endorsement of the other site owner nor a guarantee of the quality or veracity of information contained on the linked site.

Many files are PDFs and should open easily with Adobe Acrobat Reader to view and print them. If you don't have this free software, go to <http://www.adobe.com> to download that software.

17.0 Academic Dishonesty

You are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the [Code of Student Conduct](https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/) (<https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/code/>), and any additional syllabus language. All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Unauthorized and unacknowledged collaboration on any work, or the presentation of someone else's work, is plagiarism. Content generated by an Artificial Intelligence third-party service or site (AI-generated content) without proper attribution or authorization would also be a form of plagiarism. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss it as soon as possible. Any allegation of a violation of this section may be referred to [Student Conduct and Community Responsibilities](https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/resolution/) (<https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conduct/resolution/>), a unit of the Dean of Students Office for possible sanctioning. In addition, a grade penalty can also be applied.

18.0 Assignments Expectations

All your study of public relations should pay off in this class, which is a capstone course for the PR major. If you go into the field of public relations or other field of communication for a career, you will be paid to be your organization's best communicators in all forms—written and oral, physical and

virtual, interpersonal and public. I designed this course around this premise, and I try to approximate “real world” problems, pressures and planning that you will need to both enter and succeed in PR.

The assignments are designed with ambiguity built in, which should inspire you to think analytically about what you know and what you’re learning so you can create the best product. So I expect you to have questions about the assignments, because in the “real world” you do not get precise recipes for everything you need to do—you’ll have a college degree, probably one or more internships, and a job where you’ll be paid to figure things out, so build this skillset now. (See “My Philosophy of Teaching and Learning.”)

18.1 Turning in Your Work

A vital part of evaluating and returning **your** work is being able to manage and retain **your** files that you turn in for all assignments. There is far too much variation in the way everyone names their files and turns them in.

So to ensure that I have and use the files correctly for everyone in class, the rules for turning in your work given below must be followed. *In fact, these rules are so important that I will impose a five-point penalty on any assignment for anyone who does not follow any of these rules. Any assignments turned in after the first one that breaks any of these rules will not be evaluated and will be scored zero (0) points.*

1. Use only the file templates I provide for assignments when I provide such template files for assignments. Use only Microsoft Office products to prepare your work. If you use another product, it must be saved in the format I can open *and* (Another product may be used only with my permission or only as a last resort, if and only if I have that software.) If your file does not match what I assigned and expect, particularly when I provide a template, your work will be evaluated accordingly (i.e., negatively).
2. Name your files with your last name (team members’ last names for group projects) then with the assignment in abbreviated form (e.g., Smudde TS1; Smudde Job Memo; Smudde-Lippert-Hunt SPP).
3. Put your name (names for group work) on the top if the first page of each assignment. Add the date and assignment name, if you wish.
4. Use only Microsoft Office products, particularly those for which templates are provided for assignments. See all assignments for directions about what is expected. Do not turn in handwritten work (including photos of such work) as responses to assignments, including extra-credit work, *if given*.
5. Email your actual file as an attachment—*NOT A LINK TO A FILE*—directly to me at my ISU email account. Do not upload to Canvas; whereas, doing so will result in no evaluation of your work and a score of zero (0) for the assignment. Your work must be turned in before/by the assignment’s deadline given in the “Course Schedule” and in accord with Section 18.2. I will use your e-mail’s time-date stamp to determine whether your work is late or not. You may choose to turn in work in advance of the due date—especially if you are going to be absent the day an assignment is due.

I will critique all work that is submitted properly; however, if a paper is not remotely close to the assignment as given, I reserve the right to withhold all points and score the work as zero (0). Documentation supporting an excused absence or late arrival to class would be considered to forgive the penalty for late work. Also see the “Learning Assessments” and “Course Grading Policy” sections in this syllabus.

18.2 Late Work Policy

All assignments are due no later than the official starting time for class on the dates indicated in the “Course Schedule” in the syllabus (or a different day and time any assignment is due that is communicated to all). **I will not accept late work, even work that is one (1) second late—late work will receive a score of zero (0) points.** In public relations (actually in all professions) deadlines must be upheld, and if you work for an agency, you can endanger the business of the firm by missing deadlines. If you are having trouble completing your work for this class, contact me and the Dean of Students Office immediately. Also see Section 8.0.

18.3 Technology and Late Work

For your own protection, as you work on any computer to complete your assignments, remember to:

- Frequently save your work.
- Always backup your work on another medium.
- Always protect your files and computer from viruses and malware.
- Always make sure your device, any of its peripheral technologies, and your software applications operate flawlessly in every way, including with online applications, for you to complete and turn in your work.
- Always make sure your work, if it is to be emailed, is submitted with enough time before a deadline (day and time) for the system to process the sending of your work.

I will not accept work turned in late because you had technology problems and did not follow these cardinal rules for technology use or couldn’t find a computer to use. Documentation supporting an actual, bonafide communications carrier system outage (e.g., ISU, Comcast, Mediacom, etc.) or genuine system-related communications errors or crashes with your device or location’s system (e.g., home/apartment internet or wireless connection) *may* be applied to forgive this penalty.

18.4 Extenuating Circumstances & Turning in Work

If a student has an extenuating circumstance (e.g., illness, family emergency) that requires the student to miss class on the due date of any assignment, the student must, according to Section 14.1, provide documentation of the reason for the absence that also will be used to *consider* a possible extension for turning in the assigned work. Importantly, however, is the fact that assignments in the class have been available and addressed in class since the beginning of the semester. In this way, therefore, any student ought to have developed any assignment progressively to be ready to turn it in on or before the due date.

18.5 Feedback on Work in Progress

The first draft of any public relations or advertising writing is seldom successful. Most writing goes through numerous drafts and multiple reviews until the writer and the client are satisfied. In this class we do not have the time to simulate this experience, thus we will not rewrite assignments for credit. Instead of rewrites, I encourage you to seek my feedback while you work on your assignments. By this I mean you prepare draft material in advance of the deadlines and visit with me to review your work "in progress" and ask questions. This way you get feedback about your writing—to see if you are on "the right track."

Note that my giving feedback is not "pregrading": I will not look for everything that is good/bad or right/wrong, but I will point out aspects or patterns of your writing that work or are problematic. I also will not do proofreading—that is your job. Time permitting, you may ask for my feedback after class meetings, but it's usually best during office hours or appointments. Only two drafts are allowed per assignment, and I will not accept drafts to review after 12 p.m. three days before an assignment is due because I need time to review it for you and, most important, you need time to work with my feedback.

19.0 Evaluations of Assignments

After you submit your finished work for an assignment, I will probably give my most focused comments on the first page or two of your papers because after that the errors/problems very likely will be repetitive. I may note other things in later pages, but a lack of comments is not necessarily an indication of correctness or effectiveness. I also won't find absolutely everything because time is of the essence, and getting you your evaluated work sooner than later serves you and me well. I firmly believe that my detailed comments and corrections in the first couple pages and elsewhere that I note are enough to indicate to you what I see, and you should learn from and look for those things elsewhere in the paper. Of course, if you want more detailed help, visit with me.

20.0 Returned Work

I will make every effort to return work to you promptly. Most short assignments will be returned at the next class. Longer assignments may take one or two weeks. I will only return assignments to their authors. If you are not in class when an assignment is returned, please pick it up during your professor's office hours or after class.

21.0 Keep Your Work for Job Hunting

If you plan to pursue a career in public relations or other field, having a set of solid examples of your work in a "professional portfolio" will be important for you to get an internship and/or your first full-time job. You will be required in COM 378 to create a professional portfolio. So make sure you keep very clean copies of the work you do in this and all your PR classes. Remember: no matter what score you received on any assignment, look for ways to make your examples even better, if not "perfect." Outside of your coursework you may ask for some help from us in the PR faculty while you make your portfolio.

NOTE: We may alter aspects of these policies, the course schedule, and other topics in this syllabus as the course progresses. You are responsible for noting any such changes, which will be announced in class, emailed, and/or posted on Canvas.

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Wed Jan 14, 2026	 Reading Quiz 0 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/753309)	due by 3:35pm
Mon Jan 19, 2026	 Time Sheet #1 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737562)	due by 3:35pm
Mon Jan 26, 2026	 Reading Quiz 1 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737549)	due by 3:35pm
	 Time Sheet #2 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737564)	due by 3:35pm
Wed Jan 28, 2026	 Reading Quiz 2 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737551)	due by 3:35pm
Mon Feb 2, 2026	 Time Sheet #3 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737565)	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
Wed Feb 4, 2026	 Reading Quiz 3 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737552)	due by 3:35pm
Mon Feb 9, 2026	 Reading Quiz 4 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737553)	due by 3:35pm
Wed Feb 18, 2026	 Reading Quiz 5 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737554)	due by 3:35pm
Mon Feb 23, 2026	 Infographic on AI in PR (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737546)	due by 3:35pm
Wed Feb 25, 2026	 Reading Quiz 6 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737555)	due by 3:35pm
Mon Mar 23, 2026	 Reading Quiz 7 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737556)	due by 3:35pm
Wed Mar 25, 2026	 Reading Quiz 8 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737557)	due by 3:35pm
Wed Apr 1, 2026	 Reading Quiz 9 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737558)	due by 3:35pm
Mon Apr 6, 2026	 Strategic Plan Critique (SPC) (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737561)	due by 3:35pm
Mon Apr 20, 2026	 Reading Quiz 10 (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737550)	due by 3:35pm
Wed May 6, 2026	 Strategic Plan Project (SPP) (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737549)	due by 3:35pm
	 Portfolio (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737548)	due by 3:35pm
	 Discussion Participation (per class meeting) (https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/courses/44677/assignments/737544)	